

The Flacian Controversy

**Set Forth and Reconciled in a Christian Way according to the Direction of God's Word,
by the Formula of Concord, Article I. Of Original Sin**

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Matthias Flacius. Portrait by Nicolas Haublin.¹

¹ Olson, Oliver K., *Matthias Flacius and the Survival of Luther's Reform*, Wiesbaden, 2002, p. 4.

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I. Foreword

Most of us (with the exception of those holding to the tradition of Palm Sunday confirmations) will soon be asking a few select youth of our congregations to publicly confess their faith and declare their promises in a confirmation service. One of the blessings of being a pastor that I enjoy the most is being forcefully reminded of my own confirmation. If I were not a pastor, I seriously doubt I still would be able to recite very many Bible passages or any of Luther's Small Catechism. Being a pastor especially reminds me of my own confirmation vows, as I now am the one asking the questions. Therefore I will again be reminded of what I promised when I was asked:

Do you hold all the canonical books of the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, and the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, drawn from the Bible, as you have learned it from Luther's Small Catechism, to be the true and correct one?

Confirmation studies in the Small Catechism were only a first step in learning the “doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.” When I was ordained to begin serving as a called minister, I additionally promised as I was asked:

Do you believe that the Unaltered Augsburg Confession is a true exposition of the Word of God and a correct exhibition of the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church; and that the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the two Catechisms of Martin Luther, the Smalcald Articles, and the Formula of Concord—as contained in the Book of Concord—are also in agreement with this one Scriptural faith?

In the spirit of keeping these promises, our pastoral conferences have been studying the Formula of Concord. According to our fun-loving Hebrew exegete and Steering Committee chairman, this paper is the fifth in a 9- or 10-part series, in which we look chronologically at the controversies that led to the composition of the articles of the Formula of Concord. Before we begin our study of the Flacian Controversy, however, it would be good to briefly review all four of the preceding controversies.

II. Former Controversies

The Flacian Controversy can be remembered by the middle initial in the acronym AMAS F. CODE. AMAS stands for Adiaphoristic, Majoristic, Antinomian, Synergistic. CODE, by the way, stands for Crypto-Calvinistic, Osiandrian, Descent into hell, and Eternal election. We look forward to the fun of studying these last four too, but not today.

Adiaphoristic Controversy:

This was settled by Article X, *Of Church Rites*. It began in 1548 in response to the Leipzig Interim and Melancthon’s fearful yielding to the pope’s promise of persecution if the Lutherans did not reinstate abolished papal ceremonies.

Professor Flacius of Wittenberg, only twenty-eight, at the risk of losing his position, attacked the Interim, seconded by Wigand, Gallus, Brenz, and others. They held it wrong to observe even indifferent ceremonies when a false impression is thereby created. “Nothing is an adiaphoron when confession and offense are involved.”²

Majoristic Controversy:

This was settled by Article IV, *Of Good Works*. It began in 1551 when Amsdorf published a tract against George Major’s renewal of Melancthon’s 1535 statement, “Good works are necessary to salvation.”

Justus Menius taught a like error and was attacked by Flacius and others. Major was willing to discontinue the phrase as ambiguous, but unwilling to condemn it as wrong. In the heat of battle Amsdorf also overshot the mark by saying: “Good works are harmful to salvation,” for which he was attacked by Flacius and Wigand. The bitter controversy was settled in Art. IV of the Formula of Concord, which sharply differentiates between faith and good works and yet makes clear the intimate connection between the two as root and fruit.³

Antinomian Controversy:

² Lueker, Erwin L. *Lutheran Cyclopedia*. Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1954, p. 6.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 648.

This was settled by Article V, *Of the Law and the Gospel*, and Article VI, *Of the Third Use of the Law*. The controversy certainly was nothing new. Luther fought it as early as 1525 when he opposed Agricola, “the father of the Antinomians in the days of the Reformation.”⁴

In the Second Antinomistic Controversy the main issue was the Third Use of the Law. Poach, Otto, and others denied that, with respect to good works, the Law was of any service whatever to Christians. Theses such as these were defended: “The Law does not teach good works. Evangelical preachers are to preach the Gospel only and no Law.” (*Conc. Trigl.*, Intro.)— Finally, following Melancthon, the Philippists taught: “The Gospel alone is expressly and particularly, truly and properly, a preaching and a voice of repentance, or conversion...” The Formula of Concord settled the matter by recognizing the triple use of the Law — 1) for outward decency, 2) for revealing sin, 3) for the rule of life to the regenerate, who need it on account of their Old Adam. These controversies served to bring out with yet greater clearness the distinction between the Law and the Gospel, justification and sanctification.⁵

Synergistic Controversy:

This was settled by Article II, *Of Free Will*. This controversy has its early roots in Melancthon’s *Loci*, where he wrote in the second edition (1535) that there were three co-operating causes in conversion: 1) God’s Word, 2) the Holy Spirit, 3) man’s will not resisting the Word of God.

...when Pfeffinger, in 1555, taught the same, only more boldly, and was upheld by Major, Eber, and Crell, then Stolz, Amsdorf, Flacius, and others publicly opposed the error... The matter was debated at Weimar August 2-8, 1560, when Strigel held that in the will of the unregenerate there was a latent power co-operating toward conversion... But Flacius...in the heat of debate at Weimar had asserted original sin was not an “accident,” but of the “substance” of man... The Formula of Concord, in Articles I and II, rejects the extremes of Strigel and Flacius, and teaches that man is purely passive in the instant of conversion and after that, of course, co-operates with the Holy Ghost.⁶

Since the Flacian Controversy grew out of the Synergistic Controversy, there will be some unavoidable duplication of the historical background for today’s subject of study. This controversy began during the 1560 Weimar Disputation between Professor Victorin Strigel (1524-1569) and Professor Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520-1575). But before we go back to the debate that started the Flacian Controversy, it will help us to understand the issues involved if we know the 1) zeal for pure doctrine, 2) literary accomplishments, 3) theological training, and 4) personal characteristics of the man whose name was given to this controversy.

III. Flacius, the Firm Fighter

Personal Characteristics

Matthias Flacius was born in the town of Labin, Illyria (present day Croatia) on March 3, 1520—“the year justification by faith was first preached in Venice” by a Franciscan.⁷ He was born Mataja Vlacic to a Slavic father, Andreas Vlacic (latinized as Flacius) and his wife, the daughter (name unknown) of the nobleman,

⁴ Bente, F., “Historical Introductions to the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.” *Concordia Triglotta*. Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1921, p. 161.

⁵ Lueker, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

⁶ Lueker, *op. cit.*, p. 1029.

⁷ Olson, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

Bartholomaeus Luciani. Mataja had two brothers and three sisters, all older because his mother died giving him birth. His father died when he was only twelve.⁸

Although he was raised in the South, his adult life was spent in the North, primarily in Germany. Since he did not have a German heritage, “he practiced Italian manners, was mimicked for speaking German with a foreign accent, and was reviled for being *un-deutsch*.”⁹ Yet he was highly regarded by many. “According to Eberhard Gothein, Flacius was ‘the last creative head among the Reformers, unsurpassed in talent, zeal, purity and inflexibility.’”¹⁰ Especially before the controversy over original sin erupted, Flacius’ contemporaries expected him to pick up where Luther had left off.

Luther’s old friend, the mathematician and Pastor of Brueck, Michael Stifel... described his difficulties controlling his emotions when he saw Flacius for the first time. “It seemed to me,” he wrote, “that I was seeing a second Luther.”¹¹

Some time after the controversy broke, however, Stifel was forced to resign from his parish in Brueck “as a Flacian,”¹² which may reveal a bit of a bias. But the statement shows at least that Flacius’ reputation resembled Luther’s at that time in his life.

Theological Training

Such high expectations were the result of Flacius’ orthodox theological training, his literary accomplishments, and his great zeal for pure doctrine. His education in theology began at an early age and eventually included direct instruction from Martin Luther.

At the age of seventeen he decided to study theology and applied for admission to a Franciscan monastery, but was persuaded... to go to Germany to study theology. At Basel in Switzerland he studied theology under Simon Grynaeus in 1539, but in the same year went to Tuebingen... From here he went to Regensburg in 1541 and eventually to Wittenberg, where he studied Greek and Hebrew under Luther, Melanchthon, and Winshemius. Here he... became firmly grounded in the doctrine of justification by grace, earned a master’s degree, and became professor of Hebrew in 1544.¹³

Literary Accomplishments

His personal characteristics and his orthodox theological training combined to create great literary accomplishments.

The greatest accomplishment of Flacius in the literary field is doubtless his “Magdeburg Centuries,” a comprehensive survey of church history by centuries, which he planned in Magdeburg and completed years later. The first three centuries were published in 1557 and the entire series was completed in 1574. He also produced a *Catalogus Testium Veritatis* in poetic form describing the doctrinal corruption of the church. His other greater work was the *Clavis Scripturae Sacrae* [“The Key to Sacred Scripture”] which appeared in 1567, a Bible dictionary in which theological terms are arranged alphabetically and are thoroughly defined and researched much in the style of later Bible dictionaries such as Cremer or Kittel. He also wrote at length on

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 28.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 328

¹³ Vogel, Heinrich J., “On Original Sin, the Flacian Aberration,” *No Other Gospel*, edited by Arnold J. Koelpin. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1980, p.124.

the subject of original sin during the controversy over this doctrine in which he was personally deeply involved.¹⁴

Zeal for Pure Doctrine

Finally it is necessary for a correct understanding of Matthias Flacius and the controversy over original sin to know that he had a great zeal for defending the doctrines of Scripture. It has been said that “it was due to Flacius more than any other individual that true Lutheranism and with it the Lutheran church was saved from annihilation as a result of the Augsburg and Leipzig Interims.”¹⁵

...as a result of the Leipzig Interim [he] soon became involved in controversy with his former friend and benefactor Melancthon over the doctrine of indifferent matters (the Adiaphoristic Controversy). Like the theologians of lower Saxony, he was not willing to concede anything to the papists, and soon accompanied his friend Nicolas Gallus of Regensburg to Magdeburg. Here he worked for a time as proofreader in a print shop and wrote several treatises against the Interim and the Adiaphorists. He also attacked Osiander’s doctrine of justification and the subjectivism of Schwenkfeld, staunchly defending the proper use of the means of grace. He also attacked George Major on his attitude toward the necessity of good works for salvation. In these years his profound interest in doctrinal controversy became apparent.¹⁶

Before the Weimar Disputation in 1560, and for about 7 years afterward, Matthias Flacius was considered a staunch defender of orthodox doctrine. He labored enthusiastically to teach the truth of Scripture. To his dying day he consistently adhered to his beliefs, “apparently never doubting that he was only defending Luther’s doctrine.”¹⁷ Due to this desire some have said of him:

His polemical writings... in the second Reformation generation, served the church doctrinally as a “principle of stability.” ...If Luther’s theological legacy was saved after the Reformer’s death from creative rivals, that, too, in a special way was due to Flacius.¹⁸

As professor of Hebrew Old Testament in Jena, he is described as “leading students *ad fontes*—to original sources. The most important source was the Holy Scriptures... He challenged the Melancthonian curriculum, cautioning against a new intrusion of secondary sources into the curriculum.”¹⁹ Flacius even sold “copies of volumes in the Jena edition of Luther’s Works... which he offered for sale in Nuremberg, Luebeck, Strassburg and other cities.”²⁰

As a result of the Synergistic Controversy, a colloquium was planned for Worms “as an instrument for reuniting the Western church” (i.e., for uniting the Catholics and Protestants under the pope). A few weeks before the colloquium, “in his instructions to the delegates, August 9, 1557, Flacius urged that the basis of the negotiations should be the Augsburg Confession, the Apology and the Smalcald Articles. Further, the Anabaptists, Zwinglians, Osiandrians, Majorists, Schwenkfeldians and Servetians²¹ should be rejected in advance.”²² Flacius appealed for steadfastness as he confessed:

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 124-125.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

¹⁶ Vogel, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

¹⁸ Olson, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Michael Servetus (1511-53) was a “noted Spanish physician and anti-Trinitarian.” Lueker, *op.cit.*, p. 971.

²² Olson, *op.cit.*, pp. 330, 331.

...the sad example of the extinct doctrine of the Hussite churches, similar to our situation, also really frightens me. It was not erudition [scholarship], not even the strength of the enemies that was able to destroy them, since the Lord was mercifully protecting them, but their own inconstancy and faithless domestic vanity... For by that time they had been divided partly by long wars and unparalleled destruction, and partly they were weary of the truth and because of the controversies about it that had arisen... Not much different, our church and religion also began to change for the worse after the death of Luther of pious memory. May God prevent a similar end and ruin as the Bohemians!²³

When Flacius himself came to the talks in Worms on August 28, Law Professor Basilius Monner, an associate of Melancthon, described his arrival:

All our theologians here received him in the most honorable manner, and adore him like a deity. When he came out of Church three days ago, everyone greeted him as his preceptor, but I stood aloof. When he saw me, he said, rather coldly, “doctor!” and touched my hand slightly. He turned away from me immediately, and departed to his lodgings, accompanied by a large number of persons.²⁴

This happened about three years before Flacius’ fatal flaw first formed. Since Flacius was so renown as a firm fighter for the doctrines of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, it was natural that he would debate Victorin Strigel at Weimar in 1560 to fight against synergism and defend justification sola gratia (“by grace alone”).

IV. Flacius’ Failures

Before Weimar

Matthias Flacius gave his inaugural lecture as Professor of Hebrew Old Testament for the university in Jena on May 17, 1557.²⁵ In 1559 Victorin Strigel, also a professor at Jena, together with Huegel, his pastor, began espousing the cause of the Philippists. They opposed Flacius “and refused to endorse the so-called *Book of Confutation* which Flacius had caused to be drafted against the Wittenberg Philippists and Synergists.”²⁶ Soon the fighting turned vicious:

Even before the *Book of Confutation* was adopted, Strigel had been polemicizing against Flacius, but now he began to denounce Flacius at every opportunity as the “architect of a new theology” and “enemy of the Augsburg Confession.” Flacius reciprocated by charging Strigel with scheming to establish a Philippistic party in Ducal Saxony. The situation erupted when Pastor Huegel refused to read and explain the *Book of Confutation* from the pulpit, and Strigel presented his objections to the Duke.²⁷

Duke John Frederick decided to end the fighting by force. Both Strigel and Huegel were arrested in March of 1559. They remained in prison for about 6 months, when they “were released after making some doctrinal concessions and promising not to enter into any disputation on the Confutation.”²⁸ So far, Flacius had been

²³ Olson, *op. cit.*, pp. 331-332.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 329-330.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 323.

²⁶ Vogel, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

blameless. Although some blamed him as the instigator of Strigel and Huegel's arrest and imprisonment, he maintained that "it had been done without his knowledge or consent."²⁹

The Weimar Disputation of 1560

Less than a year after their release from jail, at the request for a public disputation by Flacius and his colleagues together with Strigel, the Weimar Disputation was scheduled for August 2-8, 1560. The Duke was very willing to arrange this disputation, since "dissatisfaction with his drastic procedure against Strigel and Huegel had spread beyond the boundaries of his dukedom."³⁰ They met for thirteen sessions over 7 days to publicly debate what part human free will does or does not play in conversion from unbelief to faith in Christ. The doctrine of original sin was essential to the discussion (it certainly wasn't "accidental"). Without a correct understanding of original sin, conversion cannot be understood correctly. For "faith finds entrance only in crushed hearts."³¹

First of all, let us consider Strigel's arguments. Early in the week-long debates, he claimed to believe correctly about conversion and original sin.

Strigel maintained that he *had never attributed the beginning of conversion to man's innate powers*, but that it is wrought by God, that is, by the Holy Spirit, or by the Son of God, through the Word. The discussion led quite naturally to the consideration of original sin. Strigel stated that "original sin means disorder, that is, the removal of all powers of man, but never means the destruction or annihilation, that is, the total or universal perishing of the substance of man or of his properties which distinguish man from the animals and from all other creatures." He went on to say that "it is one thing to say that the free will is depraved and corrupted, and another to say that it is altogether removed, extinguished, fundamentally destroyed and rooted out." Strigel summed up his argument by saying, "I detract nothing from original sin, I do not minimize this horrible evil, by which the human nature has been depraved and corrupted, but I distinguish this evil or privation from the substance and from the property which cannot be removed unless we want to convert man into a statue which cannot be done without affecting his essence; and I do not say that this property is effective without the operation of the Holy Spirit's effective operation." Strigel went on to say that man after the fall into sin retained his intellect and his will. "Of these properties I speak. I have never exaggerated or glorified human powers, but I do not want man transformed into a statue or a mere torso. I make a distinction between substance (*substantia*) and quality (*accidens*), and that is not a sophistical or fabricated distinction. All educated men in this assembly and elsewhere understand it."³² (emphasis added)

Although Strigel claimed that he "never attributed the beginning of conversion to man's innate powers," yet later in the debate he would say, "It is impossible that conversion takes place without consent... I state clearly, that in original sin I attribute a blindness concerning God to the intellect, which brings forth horrible and sad doubts concerning God and divine things. But this way of thinking does not eliminate a philosophical knowledge of God, which lies as a spark in the ashes."³³ So the unbeliever does not believe by himself without God's Word and Spirit, but God's Word and Spirit do not convert the unbeliever without human consent or cooperation. "Strigel believed that in unregenerate man there is still some knowledge of God, some ability on

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

³¹ Pieper, Francis, *Christian Dogmatics*. Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1950, vol. 1, p.30.

³² Vogel, *op. cit.*, pp. 127-128.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 130, 131.

man's part to apply himself to grace, some innate powers which have not totally perished, which by God's grace can be fanned into flame and made to function, made to cooperate in man's conversion."³⁴

Flacius fell for Strigel's false claim that original sin cannot totally corrupt human free will "without affecting his essence." Flacius' argument was this:

Original sin is not a quality (*accidens*). Scripture calls it the old man, the flesh, the work of the law written in their hearts (Ro 2:15), a foolish heart, an evil heart, not a quality in the heart... Luther clearly denies that it is a quality (*accidens*)... Scripture testifies that man in his intellect is not only dead, killed and removed as regards divine things, but is also transformed into the image of Satan, dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh (Col. 2:13). There Paul speaks of the inherent evil or the loss of good powers. Thus it happens that the will is taken captive by the devil (2 Tm 2:26). Just as a Christian captured by a Turk is not free, but is forced to do what his master wills and commands, so Satan effectually holds the hearts of his victims captive and leads them about like a bull by the nose as he wills... Scripture and Luther affirm that it is a substance (*substantia*), and this is contrary to what you have said. A dead nature is not efficacious. Man is dead. Ergo.³⁵

Flacius wanted to emphasize the absolute inability of human free will to assist in conversion. But he went too far. He said that "original sin had become man's nature and essence (*substantia, essentia*)."³⁶ In regard to the issue of free will, Flacius was correct and Strigel was in error. Strigel was a synergist, as condemned by Article II of the Formula of Concord 20 years later. If Flacius had simply maintained that original sin destroyed human free will in spiritual matters without destroying his nature and essence, he would have remained an orthodox Lutheran theologian.

During and after the Weimar Disputation, the friends of Flacius tried to warn him not to insist on saying that original sin is the very essence of human nature. But he refused. He had used the terms quality (*accidens*) and essence (*substantia*) with a different definition than their usual meaning. He had quoted Luther out of context, and as a result decided to keep and defend his use of these terms because he believed he was defending Luther and Scripture in his own way. Professor Vogel's evaluation of the situation was:

Both Flacius and his opponents used terms such as essence, substance, substantial form, formal substance, accidents, qualities, without carefully defining the scope and content of these expressions. This caused them not only to misunderstand one another, but also to argue past one another. Add to this that each party to the dispute overstated his case in an attempt to persuade the adversary, and the bitterness and inconclusiveness of the controversy appear as a necessary consequence of such procedure.³⁷

The 1567 Tract

In 1567 Flacius published a tract entitled, *De Peccato Originalis aut Veteris Adami Appellationibus et Essentia* ("The Names and the Essence of Original Sin or the Old Adam.") In this tract he goes into great detail to express his concept of original sin, saying in part:

If therefore the substance itself is utterly changed and deprived of its good essence or the image of God, and is transformed into the opposite image, it clearly follows inevitably that that great evil produced and aroused in us by the devil is not only some quality in man, but is his inverted

³⁴ Vogel, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-129.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

³⁷ Vogel, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

and transformed essence itself, of his new nature, just as if some excellent medicine were changed into deadly poison, where the poison would not be just some quality of that medicine, but the corrupted medicine itself... We were formerly, in the first creation, something very good, both as to attributes (*accidentalibus*) and as to substance (*substantia*). Later we were changed essentially (*essentialiter*) into something very bad as to its substance (*substantia sua*), as when the best wine were changed into the sourest vinegar.³⁸

It was this tract, published and widely circulated, that began a war of writings against him from friend and foe alike. After this Flacius “lost the support of many of his friends and associates and was regarded by many as a heretic.”³⁹

The Literary War

The first opposition to Flacius came from two friends he asked to approve the teaching on original sin as explained in his 1567 tract. They were Joachim Moerlin and Martin Chemnitz in Braunschweig. Chemnitz wrote to Flacius:

It would be sufficient and greatly to be desired that we could preserve in the church and transfer to our descendants what Luther has achieved and handed down to us. We should be willing to cease and desist from trying to improve on him. It is enough if we are able to retain what Luther has won (*parta tueri*): let us abandon all desires to go beyond (*ulterius quaerere*).⁴⁰

Moerlin wrote about Flacius:

Finally, in all his writings, even when he treats and defends sound doctrine, he diligently seeks to speak in novel and different terms and does not use the customary expressions (*usitata fundamenta*), but everything must be new and different, and often he includes in the title “hitherto explained by no one or by few.”⁴¹

Letters and books were published and sent back and forth between Flacius and former friends, such as Tilemann Hesshusius, Andrew Schoppe, Wigand, Moerlin, and Chemnitz from 1568 until 1575 when Flacius died. During this time Flacius was accused of teaching Manichaeism, which taught a dualistic philosophy that good and evil formed two eternal kingdoms of light and darkness. Hesshusius charged that “Flacius made the devil a creator of substance.”⁴² Flacius denied that his teaching was Manichaean. “I most solemnly condemn the Manichean insanity concerning two creators. I have always denied that original sin is something, or has ever been something outside of man; I have never ascribed to this sin any materiality of its own.”⁴³ Flacius is never condemned by name because his error was regarded as an aberration of Manichaeism.

His last years of life were spent in miserable wandering. Beginning in 1561 when he was deposed from his professorship in Jena, he escaped arrest by fleeing to Regensburg. In 1566 he went to Antwerp. The next year war drove him out, and he wandered around to various places until he found asylum in a cloister at Frankfurt.⁴⁴ This provided a peaceful place to continue writing his “Magdeburg Centuries” history of the church he had begun in 1557. He finished it in 1574, the year before his death.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

⁴⁰ Vogel, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Bente, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 150

⁴⁴ Lueker, *op. cit.*, p. 379.

As the books and letters did not settle the issue, so the death of Flacius did not put an end to the controversy over original sin. He had many followers. In Mansfeld, “some of them were punished with excommunication, some were thrown into prison, and even denied Christian burial. Spangenberg fled secretly from Mansfeld but continued to defend the doctrine of Flacius.”⁴⁵ Flacianists fled from Regensburg to Austria, where the Lutherans were numerous.

No less than forty of the Lutheran ministers of Austria are said to have shared the views of Flacius. Only a few of these showed symptoms of fanaticism, which resulted in their dismissal. Among them was Joachim Magdeburgius, an exile at Efferding. He taught “that the bodies of believing Christians after their death were still essential original sin, and that God’s wrath remained over them till the Day of Judgment.”⁴⁶

Finally one document would bring “order out of the confusion of this controversy by rejecting both the synergistic as well as the Manichaeian aberrations in the doctrine of original sin.”⁴⁷ This document was Article I of the Formula of Concord.

V. The Formula Fixes the Feud

The first part of the Formula of Concord is the *Epitome*, or “Summary.” This first part is subdivided into three sections: 1) *Status Controversiae* (Nature of the Controversy), 2) *Affirmativa* (The Pure Doctrine), and 3) *Negativa* (False Opposite Dogmas). The Epitome “asserts the necessity of a distinction between nature and sin, the reasons for that distinction, and the total corruption of human nature which original sin entails.”⁴⁸

The second part is the *Thorough Declaration*, or “Solid, Plain, and Clear Repetition and Declaration.” This part also is summed up concisely by Allbeck:

The Solid Declaration makes three affirmative points: that mankind’s inherited spiritual malady is truly sin; that nature comes from God but sin from the devil; that the corruption of human nature is complete and total. These points are followed by a summary of the declarations of the Apology with reference to the results, extent, terribleness, penalty, and cure of original sin.⁴⁹

Rather than try to explain the basic points myself, I shall let the *Epitome* speak for itself and summarize how the Lutherans finally brought order out of the confusion of this controversy.

ARTICLE I. OF ORIGINAL SIN.

Status Controversiae: The Principal Question in This Controversy.

1] Whether original sin is properly and without any distinction man’s corrupt nature, substance, and essence, or at any rate the principal and best part of his essence [substance], namely, the rational soul itself in its highest state and powers; or whether, even after the Fall, there is a distinction between man’s substance, nature, essence, body, soul, and original sin, so that the nature [itself] is one thing, and original sin, which inheres in the corrupt nature and corrupts the nature, another.

⁴⁵ Vogel, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁴⁸ Allbeck, Willard D., *Studies in the Lutheran Confessions*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968, p. 265.

⁴⁹ Allbeck, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

Affirmativa: The Pure Doctrine, Faith, and Confession according to the Aforesaid Standard and Summary Declaration.

2] 1. We believe, teach, and confess that there is a distinction between man's nature, not only as he was originally created by God pure and holy and without sin, but also as we have it [that nature] now after the Fall, namely, between the nature [itself], which even after the Fall is and remains a creature of God, and original sin, and that this distinction is as great as the distinction between a work of God and a work of the devil.

3] 2. We believe, teach, and confess also that this distinction should be maintained with the greatest care, because this doctrine, that no distinction is to be made between our corrupt human nature and original sin, conflicts with the chief articles of our Christian faith concerning creation, redemption, sanctification, and the resurrection of our body, and cannot coexist therewith.

4] For God created not only the body and soul of Adam and Eve before the Fall, but also our bodies and souls after the Fall, notwithstanding that they are corrupt, which God also still acknowledges as His work, as it is written Job 10, 8: *Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about.* Deut. 32, 18; Is. 45, 9ff; 54, 5; 64, 8; Acts 17, 28; Job 10, 8; Ps. 100, 3; 139, 14; Eccl. 12, 1.⁵⁰

5] Moreover, the Son of God has assumed this human nature, however, without sin, and therefore not a foreign, but our own flesh, into the unity of His person, and according to it is become our true Brother. Heb. 2, 14: *Forasmuch, then, as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same.* Again, 16;⁵¹ 4, 15: *He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, yet without sin.* 6] In like manner Christ has also redeemed it as His work, sanctifies it as His work, raises it from the dead, and gloriously adorns it as His work. But original sin He has not created, assumed, redeemed, sanctified; nor will He raise it, will neither adorn nor save it in the elect, but in the (blessed] resurrection it will be entirely destroyed.

7] Hence the distinction between the corrupt nature and the corruption which infects the nature and by which the nature became corrupt, can easily be discerned.

8] 3. But, on the other hand, we believe, teach, and confess that original sin is not a slight, but so deep a corruption of human nature that nothing healthy or uncorrupt has remained in man's body or soul, in his inner or outward powers, but, as the Church sings:

Through Adam's fall is all corrupt,
Nature and essence human.

⁵⁰ **Deuteronomy 32:18**, You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth.

Isaiah 45:9-12, "Woe to him who quarrels with his Maker, to him who is but a potsherd among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?' Does your work say, 'He has no hands'? Woe to him who says to his father, 'What have you begotten?' or to his mother, 'What have you brought to birth?' "This is what the LORD says—the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: Concerning things to come, do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands? It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts."

Isaiah 54:5, For your Maker is your husband—the LORD Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.

Isaiah 64:8, Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.

Acts 17:28, "'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'"

Job 10:8, "Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me?"

Psalms 100:3, Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.

Psalms 139:14, I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Ecclesiastes 12:1, Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them."

⁵¹ **Hebrews 2:16**, For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.

9] This damage is unspeakable, and cannot be discerned by reason, but only from God's Word. **10]** And [we affirm] that no one but God alone can separate from one another the nature and this corruption of the nature, which will fully come to pass through death, in the [blessed] resurrection, where our nature which we now bear will rise and live eternally without original sin and separated and sundered from it, as it is written Job 19, 26: *I shall be compassed again with this my skin, and in my flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold.*

Negativa: Rejection of the False Opposite Dogmas.

11] 1. Therefore we reject and condemn the teaching that original sin is only a *reatus* or debt on account of what has been committed by another [diverted to us] without any corruption of our nature.

12] 2. Also, that evil lusts are not sin, but con-created, essential properties of the nature, or, as though the above-mentioned defect and damage were not truly sin, because of which man without Christ [not grafted into Christ] would be a child of wrath.

13] 3. We likewise reject the Pelagian error, by which it is alleged that man's nature even after the Fall is incorrupt, and especially with respect to spiritual things has remained entirely good and pure *in naturalibus, i. e.*, in its natural powers.

14] 4. Also, that original sin is only a slight, insignificant spot on the outside, dashed upon the nature, or a blemish that has been blown upon it, beneath which [nevertheless] the nature has retained its good powers even in spiritual things.

15] 5. Also, that original sin is only an external impediment to the good spiritual powers, and not a despoliation or want of the same, as when a magnet is smeared with garlic-juice, its natural power is not thereby removed, but only impeded; or that this stain can be easily wiped away like a spot from the face or pigment from the wall.

16] 6. Also, that in man the human nature and essence are not entirely corrupt, but that man still has something good in him, even in spiritual things, namely, capacity, skill, aptness, or ability in spiritual things to begin, to work, or to help working for something [good].

17] 7. On the other hand, we also reject the false dogma of the Manicheans, when it is taught that original sin, as something essential and self-subsisting, has been infused by Satan into the nature, and intermingled with it, as poison and wine are mixed.

18] 8. Also, that not the natural man, but something else and extraneous to man, sins, on account of which not the nature, but only original sin in the nature, is accused.

19] 9. We reject and condemn also as a Manichean error the doctrine that original sin is properly and without any distinction the substance, nature, and essence itself of the corrupt man, so that a distinction between the corrupt nature, as such, after the Fall and original sin should not even be conceived of, nor that they could be distinguished from one another [even] in thought.

20] 10. Now, this original sin is called by Dr. Luther nature-sin, person-sin, essential sin, not because the nature, person, or essence of man is, without any distinction, itself original sin, but in order to indicate by such words the distinction between original sin, which inheres in human nature, and other sins, which are called actual sins.

21] 11. For original sin is not a sin which is committed, but it inheres in the nature, substance, and essence of man, so that, though no wicked thought ever should arise in the heart of corrupt man, no idle word were spoken, no wicked deed were done, yet the nature is nevertheless corrupted through original sin, which is born in us by reason of the sinful seed, and is a fountainhead of all other actual sins, as wicked thoughts, words, and works, as it is written

Matt. 15, 19: *Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts.* Also Gen. 6, 5;⁵² 8, 21: *The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.*

22] 12. Thus there is also to be noted well the diverse signification of the word nature, whereby the Manicheans cover their error and lead astray many simple men. For sometimes it means the essence [the very substance] of man, as when it is said: God created human nature. But at other times it means the disposition and the vicious quality [disposition, condition, defect, or vice] of a thing, which inheres in the nature or essence, as when it is said: The nature of the serpent is to bite, and the nature and disposition of man is to sin, and is sin; here the word *nature* does not mean the substance of man, but something that inheres in the nature or substance.

23] 13. But as to the Latin terms *substantia* and *accidens*, because they are not words of Holy Scripture, and besides unknown to the ordinary man, they should not be used in sermons before ordinary, uninstructed people, but simple people should be spared them.

24] But in the schools, among the learned, these words are rightly retained in disputations concerning original sin, because they are well known and used without any misunderstanding, to distinguish exactly between the essence of a thing and what attaches to it in an accidental way.

25] For the distinction between God's work and that of the devil is thereby designated in the clearest way, because the devil can create no substance, but can only, in an accidental way, by the providence of God [God permitting], corrupt the substance created by God.⁵³

VI. Edification from the Formula's Fix

How do we apply the lessons learned from the Flacian Controversy to our lives today? That depends on what you believe the lessons are. I'm sure you can think of your own and I welcome your insights during the discussion. I see these lessons to be learned:

Learning from the Doctrine

Humility before our gracious God

I believe the place to begin is with my own heart. If all I do is learn about original sin, read about the historical controversies revolving around the doctrine of original sin, and even talk correctly about original sin, but I never recognize original sin in myself, believe its damning effects, and confess my total unworthiness to my Maker, then I have studied in vain. If I do not confess that I was born and conceived in original sin (Psalm 51:5), if I do not believe that I am by nature an object of God's wrath (Ephesians 3:2), then I will not recognize and appreciate God's totally undeserved love in Christ. Then hypocrisy will creep in and kick out faith in Jesus as the Christ who saves *sola gratia*.

Since I am also a teacher and preacher of God's Word, I want to lead others also to take the doctrine of original sin to heart. It's not something people know or believe from a natural knowledge or by human reason, as Luther pointedly wrote in *The Smalcald Articles*: "This hereditary sin is so deep and [horrible] a corruption of nature that no reason can understand it, but it must be [learned and] believed from the revelation of Scriptures."⁵⁴ In celebration of the 400th Anniversary of the Formula of Concord, Professor Armin Schutze gave this good pastoral advice:

Simply to say, we are all conceived and born in sin, may by its frequent repetition leave the hearer insensitive to its full import. Our Confessions describe what this means. We cited some of

⁵² **Genesis 6:5**, The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.

⁵³ *Triglott Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church*. Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1921, pp. 779-785.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 477:3.

those descriptions. We need to present this truth in vivid, fresh, convicting ways so that no one may find a way to excuse himself, so that we are driven by the terrors of conscience which the knowledge of sin effects to cry out: God be merciful to me a sinner. We do not simply teach and preach about original sin. We are to convict people of it. We need to show them how even the good which they are doing, or rather think they are doing, is infected with sinful motives, thoughts, feelings, emotions, with inherent wickedness. True teaching and preaching of sin makes each one feel that the finger is pointed at him with the words: "Thou art the man." This drives out thoughts of work-righteousness.⁵⁵

The great treasure of the gospel

Of course preaching the Law in all its severity is not an end in itself. It serves the Gospel of our salvation in Christ Jesus. This is mentioned in the *Thorough Declaration* as the main reason why it is so important to have a correct understanding of original sin:

3] Now this controversy concerning original sin is not unnecessary wrangling, but if this doctrine is rightly presented from, and according to, God's Word, and separated from all Pelagian and Manichean errors, then (as the *Apology* says) the benefits of the Lord Christ and His precious merit, also the gracious operation of the Holy Ghost, are the better known and the more extolled; moreover, due honor is rendered to God, if His work and creation in man is rightly distinguished from the work of the devil, by which the nature has been corrupted.⁵⁶

When I have been emptied of all hope of a righteousness of my own, the gospel of Christ's righteousness being given to me as a free, no-strings gift makes my heart "soar on wings like eagles" (Isaiah 40:31). When I have walked with Christ during Lent and felt the passion of his soul forsaken by the Father for my sins, I eagerly rise with Christ before the dawn on Easter Sunday and spend the days and weeks following with life-changing joy in my heart and Alleluia's on my lips! Yet even while I am joyful, I have to be careful.

The great danger of a little false doctrine

Jesus said, "*Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees*" (Matthew 16:6), because, as Paul warned, "*A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough*" (Galatians 5:9); and again: "*Their teaching will spread like gangrene*" (2 Timothy 2:17). Strigel's false teaching on original sin could not be allowed to stand because its synergism would deny the most basic doctrine of Christianity, *sola gratia*. When the least bit of human co-operation in conversion was taught, Luther would say, "*Du bist mir an die Kehle gefahren,*" "you have attacked the vital part at once," or "*iugulum petisti,*" "you have me by the throat" (St. Louis XVIII:1967. Opp. v. a. VII, 367).⁵⁷ That this is most certainly true is borne out by reading liberal Lutheran theologians today. Paul R. Sponheim was Professor of Systematic Theology at Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, when he wrote under the heading "The Origin of Sin":

The nature of sin points to the origin of sin in a fall, a human reality disrupting the integral goodness of the creature. As the object of God's special creative endowment, *the creature is good*; as one called in finite freedom to God's special intention, the creature is *not yet perfect*, but able to be tempted and able to sin; and in the mystery of freedom, the creature originates sin...

⁵⁵ Schutze, Armin W., "Major Emphases of the Lutheran Confessions Applied to Our Teaching and Preaching Ministry." Conference Paper presented to a pastor-teacher conference at Lake Mills, Wisconsin, May 5, 1980, p. 3.

⁵⁶ *Triglot, op. cit.*, pp. 859-861.

⁵⁷ *Pieper, op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 29.

If sin roots in freedom, *it cannot be finally explained...* The Adamic myth, with its emphasis on human responsibility, pleads that all such explanatory talk regarding the origin of sin is necessary but not sufficient... “Sin presupposes itself” when we say glibly that a good Adam fell into sin because of pride, of wanting to be like God. Just when we may think we are halfway to an explanation, we discover we have slipped in an appeal to sin in speaking of the path to sin... If freedom is as we have described it, perhaps the act of the fall itself does not itself reside somewhere to be unearthed with the other relics in a cave. It is not only that despite the scientific consensus that humankind roots in a single stem (monophyletism), the scale on which science works requires one to say with Chardin that “man came silently into the world” and also fell as silently. In order to have a start, sin must come from the center of the person, and that defies the most avid paleontologist.⁵⁸ (emphasis added)

In all his philosophizing, Sponheim is careful that he does not “violate the boundaries of the ‘good, not perfect’ theme.”⁵⁹ He is clearly a synergist who is offended by Paul’s answer to the origin of sin in Romans 5:18-19,

Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

The end result of synergism’s rejection of original sin’s “condemnation for all men” is a rejection of Christ’s “justification... for all men,” as the rest of *Christian Dogmatics* proves. In Luther’s day Rome’s doctrine was not based on Scripture alone, but on Scripture in light of the traditions and councils of the church, and the decrees of the Pope. Liberal Lutherans today have reduced the Scriptures to mere myths to be interpreted by the traditions and councils of the church, and above all by their own pope, “scientific consensus.” Therefore the ultimate origin of sin “cannot be finally explained” by all their philosophizing, especially without violating “the boundaries of the ‘good, not perfect’ theme.” These moderns prove the truthfulness of the *Thorough Declaration*’s judgment that:

no philosopher, no papist, no sophist, yea, no human reason, however acute it may be, can give the right explanation, but all understanding and every explanation of it must be derived solely from the Holy Scriptures, which testify that original sin is an unspeakable evil and such an entire corruption of human nature that in it and all its internal and external powers nothing pure or good remains, but everything is entirely corrupt, so that on account of original sin man is in God’s sight truly spiritually dead, with all his powers dead to that which is good.⁶⁰

On the other hand Flacius’ false teaching in Luther’s name could not be allowed to fester because it would also infect other basic doctrines, such as creation, the incarnation of Christ, sanctification, and the resurrection of the body. The *Thorough Declaration* elaborates the dangers of the Flacian falsehood briefly mentioned in the *Epitome*:

41] Now, if there were to be no difference whatever between the nature or essence of our body and soul, which is corrupted by original sin, and original sin, by which the nature is corrupted, it would follow either that God, because He is the Creator of this our nature, also

⁵⁸ Sponheim, Paul R., *Christian Dogmatics*, edited by Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986, vol. 1, pp. 385, 399, 403.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 401.

⁶⁰ *Triglot, op. cit.*, p. 879:60.

created and made original sin, which, accordingly would also be His work and creature; or, because sin is a work of the devil, that Satan would be the creator of this our nature, of our body and soul, which would also have to be a work or creation of Satan if, without any distinction, our corrupt nature should have to be regarded as sin itself; both of which teachings are contrary to the article of our Christian faith...

43] Secondly, in the article of Redemption the Scriptures testify forcibly that God's Son assumed our human nature without sin, so that He was in all things, sin excepted, made like unto us, His brethren, Heb. 2, 14...

44] Now, if there were no distinction between the nature or essence of corrupt man and original sin, it must follow that Christ either did not assume our nature, because He did not assume sin, or that, because He assumed our nature, He also assumed sin; both of which ideas are contrary to the Scriptures. But inasmuch as the Son of God assumed our nature, and not original sin, it is clear from this fact that human nature, even since the Fall, and original sin, are not one [and the same] thing, but must be distinguished.

45] Thirdly, in the article of Sanctification Scripture testifies that God cleanses, washes, and sanctifies man from sin, 1 John 1, 7, and that Christ saves His people from their sins, Matt. 1, 21. Sin, therefore, cannot be man himself; for God receives man into grace for Christ's sake, but to sin He remains hostile to eternity. Therefore it is unchristian and horrible to hear that original sin is baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity, sanctified and saved, and other similar expressions found in the writings of the recent Manicheans, with which we will not offend simple-minded people.

46] Fourthly, in the article of the Resurrection Scripture testifies that precisely the substance of this our flesh, but without sin, will rise again, and that in eternal life we shall have and retain precisely this soul, but without sin.

47] Now, if there were no difference whatever between our corrupt body and soul and original sin, it would follow, contrary to this article of the Christian faith, either that this our flesh will not rise again at the last day, and that in eternal life we shall not have the present essence of our body and soul, but another substance (or another soul), because then we shall be without sin; or that [at the last day] sin also will rise again, and will be and remain in the elect in eternal life.⁶¹

From this we learn that we must avoid every false doctrine, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant. We must also confidently confront it with God's Word, even if we are accused of engaging in "unnecessary wrangling."⁶² False doctrine should be treated the same way gangrene is treated. Cut it out before it poisons and kills the whole body!

Learning from the Controversy

Overstating an Argument

Does the Flacian error exist today? I don't know, maybe in Austria. Besides the error, how the error arose is also instructive to me. When the toe has gangrene, the doctor does not need to cut off the entire leg! So when a false teaching infects the Church, we don't want to overstate our arguments. In any heated debates, such as current debates over the Church Growth Movement, for example, there always exists the possibility of overstating an argument. It can happen to the most zealous defender of true doctrine among us. That doesn't mean we should lose our zeal and become lukewarm about true doctrine. Rather it reminds us to remain humbly aware that Satan seeks to discredit the true doctrines by tempting its defenders to say more than Scripture says.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 871, 872-875.

⁶² *Triglot*, op. cit., p. 859:3.

Importance of the Confessions

In the *Thorough Declaration* the confessors repeatedly show their reliance on, agreement with and subscription to the previously accepted Lutheran Confessions. Reference is made to the *Augsburg Confession* (861:7), the *Apology* (861:3,8), the *Smalcald Articles* (861:8, 875:52), and Luther's *Small Catechism* (871:38). In the same way we will want to study the Confessions, use the Confessions for our personal growth in faith, and quote the Confessions as appropriate in our teaching, preaching and conference-paper-writing, not "in so far as" they agree with Scripture, but "because" they agree, teach and confess the true doctrines of Scripture. This will not eliminate every controversy in the church. Satan is constantly active, inventing new controversies to plague the Church. But at least we will be spared rehashing old controversies already settled and we will have a good pattern to guide us in settling new controversies.

Unity in fellowship

When Flacius instructed the delegates preparing to attend the colloquium in Worms in 1557, he urged them to negotiate with Rome on the basis of the Confessions and not try to unify with other sects in opposition to Rome just because there was some degree of greater agreement with them. If there is not full agreement with all the teachings of Scripture, there can be no unity. We may patiently bear with weak believers who are willing to learn and grow in their grasp of Bible teachings, but we cannot be silent about or tolerate those who are fully satisfied with departures from anything that Scripture declares.

To recognize the danger of false doctrine means continually striving for true unity of confession in all Scriptural doctrines, as well as unity of expression in all religious practices. If a brother begins to depart from the straight and narrow, then just as the friends and colleagues of Flacius warned and urged him to return, we also will "with great patience and careful instruction" want to "correct, rebuke and encourage" him (2 Timothy 4:2). On the other hand if a brother refuses to listen after such efforts, we are obliged by love to separate from him—no matter how great may be his personal characteristics, theological training, literary accomplishments or zeal for pure doctrine!

VII. Final Formulations

Original Sin as taught in the Lutheran Confessions is a teaching that separates true Lutherans from both the Roman Catholic and the Reformed churches. Rome teaches the synergism of Semi-Pelagianism: "In the Sacraments the sinner has *infused* into him Sanctifying Grace (*Donum Superadditum*)... always, however, only with the cooperation of the person."⁶³ The Reformed also pervert original sin both by their "decision theology" and by their denial of the effects of original sin until some "age of accountability." Therefore only faithful Lutherans retain Scripture's *sola gratia*.

In 1980 Professor Wilbert Gawrisch prepared a sermon study on Psalm 51:10-12 that would treat both Article I, *Of Original Sin*, and Article II, *Of Free Will*, in one sermon to celebrate the Formula's anniversary. Since it was necessary to be concise, Gawrisch summarized the Flacian Controversy better than I've seen anywhere. He wrote:

Strigel was right in stating that original sin is an accident, but he was wrong in minimizing it as a mere superficial blemish. Flacius was right in insisting that it is a deep-seated corruption which has thoroughly permeated man's nature ever since the Fall, but he was wrong in not distinguishing carefully between it and man's substance.⁶⁴

⁶³ Behm, E. G., *The Papacy Evaluated*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Northwestern Publishing House, 1962, p.25.

⁶⁴ Gawrisch, Wilbert R., "Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God!—A Sermon Study on Psalm 51:10-12." Series of Sermon Studies prepared by the homiletics department of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for the WELS *Formula of Concord Anniversary Committee*, 1980, p. 1.

In 1980 I was in my Junior year at NWC, so I never saw this sermon study before researching this paper. I'm not sure, even after 18 years in the ministry, that I would attempt to cover both of these articles in one sermon. However one more word of advice from the professor's sermon study seems appropriate, especially as we again confirm our youth and remember our ordination vow of agreement with the Formula of Concord:

Whenever we sing the Offertory in our services after the sermon, we are asking God to create a clean heart in us. We are asking Him to give us a heart that recognizes its guilt, that rejoices in its Savior, and that reflects its gratitude. The Formula of Concord shows us from Scripture how much we need to pray this prayer. God give us all such a heart!⁶⁵

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⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.