

# Amyraldianism: Theological Criteria for Identification and Comparative Analysis

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**Abstract:** Historians and theologians have made mutually exclusive claims about the soteriology of several post-Reformation protestants. The task of this article is to examine the different labels used for those of the Calvinist tradition who fall under the category of Amyraldianism. This paper seeks to relate Amyraldianism to Calvinism in a more precise way. First, current definitions of Amyraldianism are evaluated for differentiation and scope. Next, Amyraldianism is considered as a theological system rather than as the theology of Moise Amyraut alone. Finally, a set of historically sensitive criteria is offered for identifying Amyraldianism as a system.

## Introduction

Just what exactly Calvinism includes becomes a pertinent question in light of the number of theologians and pastors who are said to have held to a nuance of Calvinism typically called Amyraldianism. This is of interest to both Dispensational and Reformed camps because the list includes, but is not limited to, John Bunyan, John Davenant, Richard Baxter, Lewis S. Chafer, Samuel Hopkins, Heinrich Heppel, and Jonathan Edwards.<sup>1</sup>

There are some who would state that Amyraldians are Calvinists; others see Amyraldianism as being outside of Calvinism, but not yet part of Arminianism.<sup>2</sup> This problem of locating Amyraldianism on the theological

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<sup>1</sup> David Ponter, *The Offer and Call of the Gospel Examined in the Light of Scripture and History* (unpublished, 1993), <http://www.thevine.net/~phillipj/ponter.htm> (accessed February 27, 2004), adds to this list in footnote 2: "There have been many who have subscribed to Amyraldian tenets, such as Richard Baxter, Thomas Boston, Andrew Fuller and Ralph Wardlaw." Louis Berkof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 394, gives a more extensive list of those who were "Calvinistic Universalists" with regard to the atonement. He includes Cameron, Amyraldus, Testardus, Wardlaw, John Brown, James Richards, Emmons, Taylor, Park, and Beman. Also see Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997), 166.

<sup>2</sup> Although B. B. Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation* (Avinger, TX: Simpson), 17, sees Amyraldianism as "inconsistently particularistic," he criticizes it as having the same problems as Lutheranism and Arminianism. Joel R. Beeke, *The Quest for Full Assurance—The Legacy of Calvin and His Successors* (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 1999), 224 n. 51, quotes Edward Dowden as saying that the Puritan Richard Baxter (a contemporary of Bunyan and labeled as an Amyraldian) was "too Arminian for the high Calvinists and too Calvinistic for the Arminians."

spectrum affects not only the methodology of investigation into the history of the doctrine but also the terminology used throughout the scholarly works.

Labels other than Amyraldianism have been given to those within the Reformed theology who have held to a soteriology belonging to a variant of Calvinism usually associated with a mediate view of the atonement. These labels include the following: "The Other Reformed Tradition," "New Methodism," "Hypothetical Universalism," "Dualism," "Neo-Amyraldianism," "Salmurianism," and "Baxterianism."<sup>3</sup> The label that is most common is "Amyraldianism" (Amyraldism), which comes from the name of the French post-Reformation theologian Moise Amyraut (1596-1664).<sup>4</sup>

Amyraut and his teacher John Cameron intended to return Reformed thought back to what they believed Calvin taught. Alan Sell states with regard to John Cameron, "His aim was to restore concept of predestination to the place Calvin's Institutes had given it, rather than to make it the first premise

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<sup>3</sup> G. Michael Thomas, *The Extent of the Atonement* (Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 1997), 81. The term "New Methodism" appears peculiar in light of the fact that it occurs before the Methodist (circuit rider) movement; see Peter Toon, *Puritans and Calvinism* (Swengel, PA: Reiner, 1973), 85. Also see Alan Clifford, *Calvinus: Authentic Calvinism; A Clarification* (Norwich, UK: Charenton Reformed, 1996), 15. Regarding "hypothetical universalism," B. B. Warfield, *The Plan of Salvation*, 16, states, "The scheme is therefore known not merely by the name of its author, as Amyraldianism, but also, more descriptively, as Hypothetical Redemptionism, or, more commonly as Hypothetical Universalism." Presbyterian scholar David Ponter, *The Offer and Call of the Gospel*, uses the term "neo-Amyraldianism" in regard to R. B. Kuiper's theology. Regarding "Salmurianism," see Martin Klauber, *Between Reformed Scholasticism and Pan-Protestantism* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Press, 1994), 26. Alan Clifford wrote regarding "Baxterianism," "Baxter gave his name to an English free-church tradition of 'moderate' Calvinists, the most notable late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century 'Baxterians' being the Presbyterians Daniel Williams (1644-1716) and Edmund Calamy III (1671-1732) and the Congregationalists Isaac Watts (1674-1748) and Philip Doddridge (1702-51)." Alan Clifford, *Atonement and Justification* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1990), 76. For a broad use of "Amyraldianism," see Curtis Daniel, *The History and Theology of Calvinism* (Dallas, TX: Scholarly Reprint, 1993), 73.

<sup>4</sup> Other spellings include *Moyse* or *Moses Amyraldus*. See E. F. Karl Muller, "Amyraut, Moise," in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1951), 160. For continuity, I will use "Moise Amyraut" and "Amyraldianism," unless these occur in a quotation. The spelling of the French Academy of Saumur has variations that include "Salmurian." Unless the term occurs in a quotation, I will use "Saumur."

of a scholastic dogmatic structure.”<sup>5</sup> Alan Clifford also comments on a desire in the Academy of Saumur to return to Calvin’s doctrine: “Despite the angry assaults of the high orthodox party, the Amyraldians argued that they were simply perpetuating and reproducing Calvin’s theology.”<sup>6</sup>

Others view Amyraldianism as a variant that is outside of the circle of legitimate Reformed or Calvinistic theology, even though it may be said to leave “unchanged the special doctrines of Calvinism.”<sup>7</sup> “Even if it is granted that Calvinism and Amyraldianism are congruous, the confusion regarding their relationship remains. The doctrines of Amyraldianism and the history of it make it difficult to produce criteria that will allow Amyraldianism to be identified and compared with other soteriological positions. This article seeks to place a step forward both by evaluating current definitions<sup>8</sup> and by proposing a constructive addition to them that will aid in evaluating various theologians.

### Evaluation of Current Definitions

“Amyraldianism” is the entry in historical and theological dictionaries that seems to exasperate Particularists and Arminians alike. Evidence from several sources shows the need for an expanded definition of the term or, at the very least, an objective and standard set of criteria.

### An External Question

An external question could be posed to the whole project: why differentiate Amyraldianism from Calvinism at all? This is an important question in light of the analysis that views the Amyraldian controversy as merely “indicative of scholastic method.”<sup>9</sup>

The answer lies in the nature of the controversies surrounding Amyraldianism. The definition of Amyraldianism (i.e., what it is and what its core components are) will delineate its relationship to Calvinism or Reformed theology. The nature of the controversy between Amyraldianism and Calvinism could be described as multi-perspectival. From a confessional perspective, it is questioned whether Amyraldianism is compatible with the

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<sup>5</sup> Alan Sell, *The Great Debate: Calvinism, Arminianism and Salvation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998), 31.

<sup>6</sup> Clifford, *Calvinus: Authentic Calvinism; A Clarification*, 15.

<sup>7</sup> E. F. Karl Muller, “Amyraut, Moise,” in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1951), 160.

<sup>8</sup> For example, Alan Clifford has contributed two works: *Atonement and Justification and Calvinus: Authentic Calvinism; A Clarification*.

<sup>9</sup> Richard Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 15.

Canons of Dort (1618). From a historical perspective, great interest centers around continuity with Calvin's doctrines.<sup>10</sup> From a pastoral perspective, the issues of assurance of salvation and free offer of the Gospel come into focus.

The most fundamental theological issue raised in the discussion of the relationship between Calvinism and Amyraldianism is the nature and extent of the atonement. Sell's definition of Amyraut's theology as "the view that the atonement, though universal in its scope and therefore in harmony with God's antecedent decree of salvation, is effectual only in the case of the elect"<sup>11</sup> captures this well. The atonement plays a crucial role in the controversy because of its practical and pastoral implications. Both Amyraldianism's allies and its opponents see ramifications for the offer of the gospel and personal assurance of salvation.

The relationship between Amyraldianism and Calvinism also impacts one's approach to the whole controversy. This is particularly clear in the analyses from Presbyterian and Reformed traditions, which hold to the Westminster Standards and explicitly adhere to a Particular Redemption. Approaching Amyraldianism *a priori* as outside the Reformed tradition influences what criteria are used to define someone as Amyraldian.

This is why the terms of debate require closer examination. First, "Calvinism" and "Calvinistic" are not specific enough to distinguish the opponents of Amyraldianism. Historically speaking, it is reasonable to identify movements such as Amyraldianism as controversial variations within Calvinism itself. Second, while the definition of "limited" or "definite" atonement is readily available in numerous volumes, Amyraldianism has received comparatively little treatment.<sup>12</sup> Though Amyraldianism was exonerated of heresy, it was the cause of turmoil and debate in its time.<sup>13</sup> The controversy has abated today, but use of the label "Amyraldianism" continues despite the lack of a comprehensive definition. The issue continues to be important because this controversy has implications for the theologically central matter of Christ's person and work.

### **Amyraldianism: System or Idiosyncrasy?**

Another significant question is whether or not Amyraldianism should be considered a broad movement or an idiosyncratic theology held by Moise

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<sup>10</sup> The multi-faceted origin of the Reformed theology casts doubt on the significance of this question.

<sup>11</sup> Sell, *The Great Debate: Calvinism, Arminianism and Salvation*, 99.

<sup>12</sup> For example, Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), does not interact with Amyraldianism at all.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation reformed dogmatics: Prolegomena to Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2003), 77.

Amyraut and his colleagues. This is an important matter to settle as it will determine whether Amyraldianism can be defined from Amyraut alone or whether a historical survey is required. To answer this question, current definitions of the terms will be evaluated followed by a brief historical survey.

***Evaluation of Definitions.*** The works defining Amyraldianism or describing the beliefs of Moise Amyraut take approaches to the subject that demonstrate both unity and significant variations. This survey will consider two areas: 1) differentiation of terms and 2) the scope of terms.

The first consideration is whether or not a reference work differentiates Amyraldianism from the personal theology of Moise Amyraut. Generally speaking, dictionaries and theological works tend to avoid differentiation. For example, both the *Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia*<sup>14</sup> and *The Columbia Encyclopedia*<sup>15</sup> include only “Amyraut, Moise.” Likewise, the *Chambers Biographical Dictionary*<sup>16</sup> does not mention any system of thought beyond Amyraut’s own theology, which it describes as a departure “from the doctrine of predestination in the direction of ‘hypothetical universalism.’” Sell’s definition of Amyraldianism in the glossary of his work on the Calvinist vs. Arminian debate also sees Amyraldianism as Moise Amyraut’s personal beliefs.<sup>17</sup>

While differentiation between Amyraut and Amyraldianism is rare, some recent works point to a drift in historical theology that grants each a distinct consideration. The *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*<sup>18</sup> separates Amyraut from the system named after him by including “Amyraut, Moise” and “Amyraldianism” as two independent entries. Bruce Demarest acknowledges in his article for the *EDT* that Amyraldianism is a “system . . . propounded by associates at the Saumur Academy” in the seventeenth-century France. However, these associates are mentioned only in passing, and no attempt is made to define Amyraldianism as a *system* outside Amyraut’s own beliefs. The definition that Roger Nicole gives in the *New Dictionary of Theology*<sup>19</sup> is the closest to acknowledging the widespread controversy surrounding the

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<sup>14</sup> E. F. Karl Muller, “Amyraut, Moise,” in *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1951), 160.

<sup>15</sup> See K. Muller, “Amyraut, Moise,” 160-161. Also see “Amyraut, Moise,” in *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 1843.

<sup>16</sup> Magnus Magnusson and Rosemary Goring, eds., “Amyraut,” in *Chambers Biographical Dictionary* (Edinburgh, UK: Chambers, 1990), 42.

<sup>17</sup> Sell, *The Great Debate: Calvinism, Arminianism and Salvation*, 99.

<sup>18</sup> B. A. Demarest, “Amyraldianism” and “Amyraut, Moise” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. W. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1984), 41.

<sup>19</sup> Roger Nicole, “Amyraldism,” in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair Ferguson and David Wright (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1988), 17.

Academy of Saumur. This is because Nicole goes so far as to give attention to John Cameron and his students, Louis Cappel and Josué de la Place, thus extending the system beyond Amyraut.

Because criteria for defining Amyraldianism move between Amyraut's personal thought and a wider scope, including the Academy of Saumur and beyond, they lack objectivity and are prone to variations. In summary, current definitions of Amyraldianism acknowledge that it is a system larger than Moise Amyraut, but for the most part, description is limited to Amyraut's life and his particular thought. This is problematical for a consistent method of historical investigation into the system of Amyraldianism.

Secondly, a survey of definitions will show that the understanding of what is essential to Amyraldianism differs among theological and historical dictionaries. Karl Muller states that the "essential point then of Amyraldianism is the combination of real particularism with a purely ideal universalism. . . . [The] main proposition is this: God wills all men to be saved, on condition that they believe . . . . God also wills in particular to save a certain number of persons."<sup>20</sup> While Karl Muller, Stephen Strehle, and Louis Berkof see Amyraldianism as hinging upon the twofold will, Arthur McGiffert says that the Academy of Saumur modified Reformed theology at "two or three points," referring not just to the atonement but to the nature of the human will.<sup>21</sup> Robert Letham and John Frame both include the decisive work of the Holy Spirit in their discussion of key features of Amyraldianism.<sup>22</sup> Roger Nicole, on the other hand, includes as essential "divine grace, predestination and the extent of Christ's atonement."<sup>23</sup> More variance is seen when Nicole's dictionary entry is compared to the five precise components of Amyraldianism as found in his bibliography on the subject.<sup>24</sup>

This survey of theological and historical works has demonstrated that definitions are not contrary but different in scope. Currently, there is no broad

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<sup>20</sup> K. Muller, "Amyraut, Moise," 161.

<sup>21</sup> Stephen Strehle, "Universal Grace and Amyraldianism," *Westminster Theological Journal* 51, no. 2 (1989): 356. Though Louis Berkof refers to the twofold decree of God, it is essentially the same as Karl Muller's twofold will of God. See Louis Berkof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 394. Also see Arthur McGiffert, *Protestant Thought before Kant* (New York: Scribner's, 1931), 151.

<sup>22</sup> See Robert Letham, *The Work of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: IVP, 1993 ), 228, and John Frame, "Brian Armstrong: Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy," *Westminster Theological Journal* 34, no. 2 (1972): 188.

<sup>23</sup> Nicole, "Amyraldism," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, 17.

<sup>24</sup> Roger Nicole, *Moise Amyraut: A Bibliography with special reference to the controversy on Universal Grace* (New York: Garland, 1981), 9-10.

consensus as to what the scope of Amyraldianism is as different essential criteria are proposed.

### Evidence of a System

The need for defining Amyraldianism as a system can also be demonstrated from the fact that Amyraut is the figurehead of a movement or tradition of thought. Using Richard Muller's timeline, the controversy begins during the "early orthodox" period of Reformed thought (1565-1640) and culminates in the "high orthodox" period (1640-1725) with *Formula Consensus Helvetica* of 1675.<sup>25</sup>

**John Davenant.** Though Amyraut did not become a theology professor at Saumur till 1633, Paul Helm deems the theology of John Davenant (1576-1641) at the Synod of Dort (1618-19) to be "broadly Amyraldian."<sup>26</sup> John Davenant's position was akin to that of James Ussher, who is said to have "sought a middle course" between the "two extremes" of Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism.<sup>27</sup> W. R. Godfrey notes:

Although Ussher stated his position in terms of the order of the acts of Christ's priesthood, rather than in terms of the order of God's decrees, his formulation was very similar to that of Moise Amyraut (Amyraldus). Although the term is anachronistic, Ussher's views on the atonement as expressed in this document must be called Amyraldian.<sup>28</sup>

G. Michael Thomas echoes this with his statements that John Davenant relied both on "other Reformed theologians"<sup>29</sup> and on "the fathers and scholastics"<sup>30</sup> to form his doctrine of universal atonement. Thomas also connects Amyraldianism and Davenant when he asserts that Davenant was a "forerunner of the theology of Saumur."<sup>31</sup>

That Amyraut is the figurehead of a theological system going at least as far back as Davenant is buttressed by the criteria that Roger Nicole uses to define Amyraut's theology. Nicole's five criteria as found in his

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<sup>25</sup> Richard Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 4-5.

<sup>26</sup> Paul Helm, *Calvin & the Calvinists* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1998), 36.

<sup>27</sup> Godfrey notes that Davenant and Ussher did not know each other before the Synod of Dort, nor were their ideas identical. W. Robert Godfrey, "Reformed Thought on the Extent of the Atonement to 1618," *Westminster Theological Journal* 37, no. 2 (1975): 167, 170.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas, "The Extent of the Atonement," 151.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

bibliography<sup>32</sup> are nearly identical to the five criteria that John Davenant used to explain his doctrine of atonement in *A Dissertation on the Death of Christ*.<sup>33</sup>

**The Synod of Dort.** While some have seen the need for a narrow definition of the extent of the atonement in response to Amyraut and the Saumur Academy, it would be inappropriate to state as a matter of fact that Saumur theology “differed from the prevailing orthodoxy as represented by the Synod of Dort (1618)” on this point.<sup>34</sup> Berkhof’s reference to the Saumur Academy as an “attempt to *tone down* the rigorous Calvinism of the Synod of Dort”<sup>35</sup> arguably supports the view that Saumur was nuancing the theology of Dort, not contradicting or differing from it.<sup>36</sup> It is significant for this point that those from the school of Saumur (including Moise Amyraut) who generally supported unlimited atonement were supportive of the decisions of the Synod of Dort.<sup>37</sup> Alan Sell also describes Amyraut as making a *development* of Dort’s theology: “Amyraut’s development of the Dort position to the effect that since Christ died sufficiently for all though effectually only for the elect, there was an external call addressed to the pious heathen, caused further consternation in the Calvinist ranks.”<sup>38</sup>

**Academy of Saumur.** The definition of Amyraldianism as a system must reflect the fact that the controversy within Reformed circles involved the

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<sup>32</sup> Nicole, *Moyse Amyraut: A Bibliography*, 9-10.

<sup>33</sup> John Davenant, *A Dissertation on the Death of Christ* (1832; repr., Springfield, IL: Good Books, 2002).

<sup>34</sup> Andrew T. B. McGowan, “Amyraldianism,” in *The Dictionary of Historical Theology*, ed. Trevor A. Hart (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 13. A comparison of Davenant’s and Amyraut’s theology can be found in chapter 5 of the following article: Mark Shand, “John Davenant: A Jewel of the Reformed Churches or a Tarnished Stone? pt. 2,” *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* 32, no. 1 (1998): 18.

<sup>35</sup> Emphasis mine. Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985), 190.

<sup>36</sup> Smeaton, *The Doctrine of the Atonement According to the Apostles* (1870; repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 540, speculates that the intentions of those from Saumur were more rebellious: “It was a revolt from the position maintained at the Synod of Dort, under the guise of an explanation; for the propounders of the theory would not allow that they were out of harmony with its decrees.”

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Strehle, “The Extent of the Atonement and the Synod of Dort,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 51, no. 1 (1989): 23.

<sup>38</sup> Sell, “*The Great Debate: Calvinism, Arminianism and Salvation*.” 31. Richard Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 15, concurs with this assessment.

whole Academy of Saumur. Among those involved were Amyraut's teacher John Cameron (1579-1623), several of his colleagues and students, and "the pastors of the influential Reformed Church of Charenton near Paris."<sup>39</sup> This fact is reflected in the use of the term "Salmurian theology" as a parallel of the term "Amyraldianism."<sup>40</sup> A. A. Hodge also views Amyraut not as a solitary voice but as a figurehead of the broader movement in the Academy.<sup>41</sup>

**After Saumur.** The term Amyraldian is also used to describe the position of theologians who lived after Amyraut and the influential period of the Saumur Academy.<sup>42</sup> To continue with the aforementioned example, John Bunyan (1628-1688), the author of *Pilgrim's Progress*, has been described as being a member of the British equivalent of Amyraldianism.<sup>43</sup> Though it is possible that Bunyan was exposed to chaplains in Cromwell's army who were versed in the theology of Moise Amyraut, there is no evidence that he read any of his books.<sup>44</sup> This is but one example of the term Amyraldianism referring not to direct readers or followers of Amyraut and Saumur theologians but to members of a particular movement within the larger scope of Reformed or Calvinistic thought. Using such a label for Bunyan, to say nothing of its accuracy, is to categorize him in a fashion that is outside the scope of most dictionary definitions of Amyraldianism.

The example of John Bunyan demonstrates that theologians who never read Amyraut's works nor followed his *personal* theology are still labeled Amyraldian. Amyraldianism has been largely defined in the context of the theology of Amyraut himself, and not in light of how the term Amyraldianism

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<sup>39</sup> Stephen Strehle, "The Extent of the Atonement and the Synod of Dort," 17.

<sup>40</sup> Stephen Strehle, "Universal Grace and Amyraldianism," *Westminster Theological Journal* 51, no. 2 (1998): 345-57, states, "The Amyraldian system begins with John Cameron."

<sup>41</sup> A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology* (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983), 128, states, "modified form of Calvinism, which in that century emanated from the Theological School of Saumur, [was] represented by Amyraldus, Placaesus, etc." (emphasis mine).

<sup>42</sup> Another example of an English Amyraldian is Richard Baxter. "The views of the School of Saumur were practically shared by Davenant, Calamy, and especially Richard Baxter, in England" (Louis Berkhof, *The history of Christian doctrines* [Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985], 190).

<sup>43</sup> Curt Daniel, *The History and Theology of Calvinism* (Dallas, TX: Scholarly Reprints, 1990), 73.

<sup>44</sup> Frank Mott Harrison, *John Bunyan* (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 1995), 11, states, "During his garrison days Bunyan would have heard many a sermon by Puritan preachers, both at the parish church of Newport Pagnell, and also from those who were acting as chaplains."

is actually used in historical theology. The definition of any term is obviously inadequate when it is consistently used differently from its lexical entry. The term is used both of theologians before Amyraut's prominence and after his popularity as a teacher waned. While Amyraut's individual doctrine needs to be defined, the current definitions available do not do justice to the usage of the term nor the breadth of its meaning.

**Evaluation Summary.** We can summarize the following facts about Amyraldianism from this evaluation. Firstly, Amyraldianism is closely related to Calvinistic doctrine and therefore needs to be defined very specifically. Secondly, although Amyraldianism is often tied too closely to Amyraut's personal theology, it needs to be treated as an entity or system in its own right. Thirdly, a solid definition must take into account the fact that Amyraut was merely the most famous individual of a movement that progressed through Reformation history and eventually centered around the Academy at Saumur. This is evidence that calling the theology of Saumur "Amyraldian" is akin to calling the theology of Dort "Calvinism." The movement is known by its most influential and prominent leader yet encompasses more than its leader.<sup>45</sup>

### A Constructive Addition

As we have seen, there is a need to differentiate Amyraldianism as a system from Amyraut's personal thoughts. However, there is variance in the core criteria for determining which theologians are Amyraldian. A constructive addition to the current definition begins where previous criteria leave off.

As was noted, Nicole's five core criteria for Amyraldianism are nearly identical to the five core criteria that John Davenant used in his discussion on the nature of the atonement. Defining the system of Amyraldianism by merging these criteria would have several benefits. On the one hand, it would reflect the thought of French theology of Amyraut and the English theology of Davenant; on the other, it would reflect slightly different time frames, with Davenant preceding Amyraut by a few years. While these two sources can provide the basis for stable and objective criteria, there is a third source that can be used.

The third source is the *Formula Consensus Helvetica* of 1675. Roger Nicole concludes his definition of Amyraldianism with this statement: "In 1675 J. H. Heidegger in concert with F. Turretin (1623-1687) and L. Gernler issued the *Formula Consensus Helvetica* designed specifically as an anti-Salmurian document, but the influence of Saumur was felt in all the countries to which French Protestants fled after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes."<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Klauber, *Between Reformed Scholasticism and Pan-Protestantism*, 20.

<sup>46</sup> Nicole, "Amyraldism," in *New Dictionary of Theology*, 17.

Because the *Formula Consensus Helvetica* (*FCH*)<sup>47</sup> of 1675 was a direct response to the Saumur Academy, it provides a third source for an objective set of criteria. An analysis of this confession will yield what the High Calvinists saw as the main points of contention with the Amyraldian system. This document provides a window into how Calvinists who were involved in the disputations at the time defined Amyraldianism.

The *FCH* was born out of a direct response to the theology of Saumur (Amyraldianism) and an indirect response to the loose definitions of atonement at the Synod of Dort (1618-1619). This is attested to in the comments of Philip Schaff: "It [the *FCH*] is a defense of the scholastic Calvinism of the Synod of Dort against the theology of Saumur (*Salmurium*), especially against the universalism of Amyraldus. Hence it may be called a *Formula anti-Salmuriensis*, or *anti-Amyraldensis*."<sup>48</sup> Martin Klauber comments similarly: "The Helvetic Formula Consensus developed out of a need to respond to the growing popularity of remonstrant thought and the moderate compromise position of the Saumur Academy."<sup>49</sup> Alan Clifford also views the Synod of Dort as a precursor to later problems when he states:

Article 3 of the second canon [of Dort] states, 'The death of the Son of God . . . is . . . abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world.' Here is the suggestion that, notwithstanding the limited efficacy of the atonement, its universal sufficiency is as much part of its design. Allowing for some degree of ambiguity at this point, the second canon does not necessarily teach that the atonement's sufficiency is merely a consequence of its 'infinite worth and value'. Therefore, Dort really teaches a limited efficacious atonement, not a limited atonement as such. Such was the understanding of Baxter and Amyraut, and doubtless it would have been Calvin's too, judging by his comment on the repentant thief on the cross: 'Our Lord made effective for him His death and passion which he suffered and endured for all mankind . . .'<sup>50</sup>

In summary, even though the *FCH* reacted directly to Moise Amyraut and the Saumur Academy,<sup>51</sup> the history leading up to this formulation involved pre- and post-Dort controversy. This is significant because the term

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<sup>47</sup> For brevity's sake, the *Formula Consensus Helvetica* of 1675 will be referred to as *FCH*.

<sup>48</sup> Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, vol. 1, *The History of the Creeds*, 6th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), 478.

<sup>49</sup> Martin I. Klauber, "The Helvetic Formula Consensus (1675): An Introduction And Translation," *Trinity Journal* 11, no. 1 (1990): 103.

<sup>50</sup> Alan Clifford, *Atonement and Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 73-74.

<sup>51</sup> Klauber, *Between Reformed Scholasticism and Pan-Protestantism*, 25.

“Amyraldianism” is used in an anachronistic way (referring to theology both before and after Amyraut). While the Synod of Dort may have been a more direct impetus to debate about the extent of the atonement and ensuing *FCH*, in many ways the controversy originated earlier, with the second generation of Reformers.

G. Michael Thomas traces the concept of unlimited atonement and related doctrines of Amyraldianism in Reformed thought from Calvin and Bullinger to the Englishmen Davenant and Ward, then on to Cameron and Amyraut.<sup>52</sup> The legalistic flavor of the German Reformed conditional covenant and the radical concepts of Remonstrants resulted in the Synod of Dort, where the “different strands of Reformed teaching on the covenant, and the extent of the atonement, encountered each other directly, and could not be consistently reconciled.”<sup>53</sup>

Furthermore, the rejection of the *FCH* by both French and Swiss parties was not based on perceived inaccuracies regarding Amyraldianism. The rejection was based on its divisive nature, its perceived irrelevancy in light of the closing of the Academy of Saumur in 1681,<sup>54</sup> and the progress toward Pan-Protestant union. While the reception of the *FCH* at the Academy of Saumur is a topic for further investigation, current evidence points toward its acceptance as accurate.

Ultimately, the criteria from an analysis of this document should not yield results dramatically different from those already present in historical and theological dictionaries because most of them do describe some aspect of the theology of Amyraut or the Academy of Saumur. What is important, though, is that the *FCH*, in conjunction with other criteria, provides more ground for a uniform and objective investigation.

The aim of this study of the *FCH* has been to demonstrate that it can be used as a third leg (along with Nicole and Davenant) to support the core criteria in defining the Amyraldian system. A consideration of these three sources results in the following five core criteria:

1. Sin affects men in such a way that it removes all moral ability regarding salvation yet leaves all natural ability (i.e., understanding, will, emotions) intact.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Thomas, *The Extent of the Atonement*, 250.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 249.

<sup>54</sup> Klauber, *Between Reformed Scholasticism and Pan-Protestantism*, 147.

<sup>55</sup> Point one corresponds to Roger Nicole’s points four and five in his bibliography (Nicole, *Moyse Amyraut: A Bibliography*, 10) and to the articles XXI and XXII in *FCH* (see John H. Leith, *Creeds of the Churches* [Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1982], 320). Richard Lum agrees with Brian Armstrong that this was intended by Amyraut and Cameron to unite the faculty of the will and the understanding.

2. God, moved by an earnest love and desire to save all mankind, decided to give in ransom His Son, Jesus Christ, who died equally for all men and makes a universal offer of salvation to all men.<sup>56</sup>
3. Remission of sins and eternal life are offered to all on the conditions of faith and repentance.<sup>57</sup>
4. Christ himself, through his goodness and love, intercedes for the elect by supplying faith in the hearts of the elect via the Holy Spirit.<sup>58</sup>
5. The death of Christ satisfied God the Father for the entire human race, yet actual reconciliation does not take place until an individual believes.<sup>59</sup>

### Conclusion

Many examples from historical theology discussions could demonstrate that labels are often used without the realization that labels alone cannot be used for discussing the *meaning* behind them. One could ask, what does it mean to be Amyraldian? The surveyed sources give answers that are varied. While excellent definitions are available, none take the step to seek or describe a set

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Richard Lum, "Preface" in Moyse Amyraut, *Brief Treatise on Predestination and Its Dependent Principles*, trans. Richard Lum (Springfield, IL: Scholarly Reprints, 1985), v. Kevin Vanhoozer, *First Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP), 122 n. 114, suggests a solution to bypass the controversy over this point.

<sup>56</sup> Point two corresponds to point two in Roger Nicole's bibliography. See Roger Nicole, *Moyse Amyraut: A Bibliography with special reference to the controversy on Universal Grace*, 9. It also corresponds to John Davenant's first point in his comments on the atonement. See John Davenant, *A Dissertation on the Death of Christ* (1832; repr., Springfield, IL: Good Books, 2002), 401. Further correspondence is found in the *FCH* of 1675, article VI. See Leith, *Creeds of the Churches*, 312.

<sup>57</sup> Point three corresponds to the *FCH*'s denial of the "impossible condition, provided they believe; that he obtained for all a salvation, which, nevertheless, is not applied to all." See article XVI of the *FCH* of 1675 in Leith, *Creeds of the Churches*, 316.

<sup>58</sup> Point four corresponds to Paul Helm's assessment of Amyraldianism. According to him, for the Amyraldian position, this particular aspect is accomplished through the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul Helm, *Calvin & the Calvinists* (Edinburgh, UK: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 36, writes, "The Amyraldians appear to have . . . [argued] that the work of Christ *as a totality* was for all and that this total saving work was applied by the Holy Spirit to the elect alone" (emphasis his).

<sup>59</sup> Point five corresponds to Roger Nicole's reference to Amyraut's universal "ransom." See Nicole, *Moyse Amyraut: A Bibliography*, 9. Davenant refers to a universal "reconciliation." See Davenant, *A Dissertation on the Death of Christ*, 441. Although these are different, they are encompassed by universal "satisfaction." This point corresponds with what articles XII, XV and XVI of the *FCH* refute. See Leith, *Creeds of the Churches*, 315-316.

of criteria that is objective and can approximate Amyraldianism as a theological *system*.

In many ways, the proposal here is simply taking work that is already done to its logical conclusion. It is oriented around developing an objective and history-sensitive set of core criteria to form the basis for a method of comparison and identification. The five criteria as proposed here are not to be indicative of any single person's theology (e.g., Cameron, Amyraut, Davenant, Calvin, etc.). The criteria are the result of an attempt to incorporate the complexities of history in an encapsulated format in order to provide the basis for identifying a system or "trajectory" of thought.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Richard Muller's axiom is important to consider for this study: "On the one hand, generalized conceptions of the Middle Ages, Renaissance, and Reformation fail to do justice to the complexity of history and on the other hand, they fail to illuminate very specific trajectories of thought that bear directly on the specifics of Calvin's own work." See Richard Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 185.