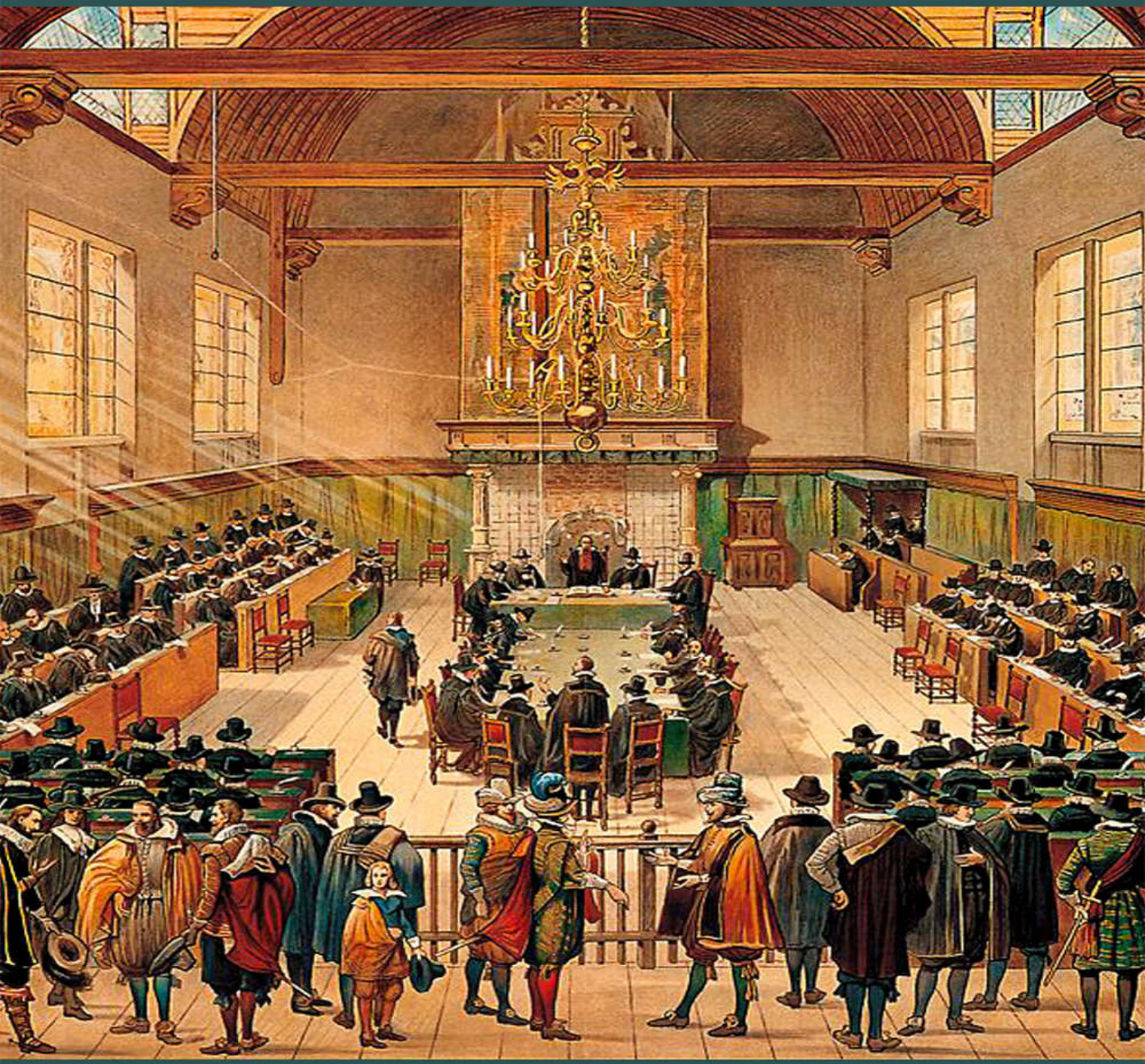
The Canons of Dort



(1618-1619)

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Historical Background:
The Canons of Dort

Jacobus Arminius was born in 1560 at Oudewater, near Utrecht in The Netherlands. His father died around the time of his birth. Then, in the early years of childhood, his whole family perished when the Spanish army invaded and destroyed his hometown. Dutch neighbors took Arminius into their home and provided for his needs.

Recognized as a capable student, he enrolled as the twelfth student at the new University of Leyden in 1576. Here for the first time on public record, he used his Latinized name, Jacobus Arminius, instead of his given name at birth, Jacob Harmenszoon. As expected, Arminius enjoyed academic excellence.

In 1582, Arminius continued his education at the Geneva Academy, headed by Theodore Beza,[1] the successor to John Calvin.[2] In 1588, Arminius was ordained a minister of the Gospel and became a pastor of the Reformed Church in Amsterdam. He married a prosperous merchant's daughter in 1590, which gave him contact with the prominent members of society. As a minister, Jacobus was eloquent, educated, and enlightened. His sermons attracted large audiences, not only for their clear content, but also for the controversy they created.

According to Arminius, the orthodox Reformation faith was wrong. He contended that 1) God does not extend His saving grace only to those whom He predestines to salvation, but to all men. 2) Nor is the will of man so bound in sin that he has no ability to act for good, but rather he is able to take a step toward God out of a spark of good within. 3) Nor does God sovereignly choose (elect) some men for salvation out of all who receive the just condemnation for their sin, but rather God elects those whom He has foreseen will believe. 4) Nor is man totally disabled by sin to merit favor with God. 5) Nor is man fully depraved.

By 1592, Arminius had been formally accused of Pelagianism[3] and departure from two creeds of the Reformation: the *Belgic Confession* [4]

and the *Heidelberg Catechism*.[5] Accusations of departing from the faith would follow him until his death in 1609.

Whereas Arminius was by nature a gentle man in presenting his views, the implications of his thinking inflamed, with combative religious zeal, the young ministers whom he had trained for the ministry. In 1610, forty-three[6] of them signed a document called *The Remonstrance*, and his proponents became known as "Remonstrants." *The Remonstrance* presented objections to the Belgic Confession and the teachings of Calvin and his followers, on several points of difference. It taught that God's election of individuals was based on His foreknowledge of their accepting or rejecting Christ by their own free will, a universal atonement, resistible grace, and the possibility of lapse from grace. These doctrines came to be known as *Arminianism*.

During his life, Arminius asked that a Church council discuss afresh the concepts of predestination, election, and reprobation. However, it was not until nine years after his death, when the whole church was caught up with theological debate, that such a council was finally held. The Remonstrants desired the Reformed church's doctrinal standards to be revised and their own minority views to be protected by the government. The Arminianism-Calvinism conflict became so severe that it led The Netherlands to the brink of civil war. Finally, in 1617, the States General voted four to three to call a national Synod to address Arminianism.

The Synod of Dort[7] was conducted by the Dutch Reformed Church in 1618-1619 in Dordrecht, The Netherlands. Although this was a national Synod of the Reformed Churches of The Netherlands, it had an international character, since it was composed not only of sixty-two Dutch delegates, but also of twenty-seven foreign delegates representing the Reformed churches[8] from eight countries, including England, Germany, and Switzerland. The first meeting was on November 13, 1618; and the final meeting, the 154th, was on May 9, 1619.

Professor Franciscus Gomarus of the University of Leiden led those representing the orthodox Reformed churches. Simon Episcopius (1583-1643) spoke for the 13 representatives of the Remonstrants who were summoned before the Synod in 1618.

“Episcopius was their chief speaker; and with great art and address did he manage their cause. He insisted on being permitted to begin with a refutation of the Calvinistic doctrines, especially that of reprobation, hoping that, by placing his objections to this doctrine in front of all the rest, he might excite such prejudice against the other articles of the system, as to secure the popular voice in his favor. The Synod, however, very properly reminded him that they had not convened for the purpose of trying the Confession of Faith of the Belgic Churches, which had been long established and well known; rather, since the Remonstrants were accused of departing from the Reformed faith, they were bound first to justify themselves by giving Scriptural proof in support of their opinions. The Arminians would not submit to this plan of procedure because it destroyed their whole scheme of argument. However, the Synod firmly refused to make any concessions on this point of order. Day after day the Synod reasoned with the Arminians and urged them to defend scripturally their published doctrines...The Arminians would not submit to this course and were thus compelled to withdraw. Upon their departure, the Synod proceeded without them.”[9]

It is doubtful that Arminius himself would have openly endorsed the positions that have become associated with his name. His thinking was more subtle, his language more cautious. His writings are so carefully worded that Moses Stuart (1831) found it possible to argue that Arminius was not an Arminian (i.e., that Arminius would not hold to the modern views associated with his name). Nevertheless, Arminius played a role in denying accepted Protestant biblical truths, such as the depravity of man, the bondage of the will to sin, and the election of some souls unto salvation out of the judgment all deserve. He planted the seeds that led to the five systematic points of *Arminianism*, which has proven to be a great challenge to the Church for the souls of men.

The Synod concluded with a rejection of these views and set forth the Reformed doctrine on each point, namely, Total depravity, Unconditional election, Limited atonement (arguing the efficacy of Christ’s atoning work was applicable only to the elect and not the unregenerate world), Irresistible (or irrevocable) grace, and the Perseverance of the saints. Many remember these “doctrines of grace” by using the mnemonic “TULIP.”

The Decision of the Synod of Dort on the Five Main Points of Doctrine in Dispute in The Netherlands, popularly known as the *Canons of Dort*, is the explanation of the judicial decision of the Synod. In the original preface, the Decision is termed a "judgment, in which both the true view, agreeing with God's Word, concerning the aforesaid five points of doctrine is explained, and the false view, disagreeing with God's Word, is rejected."

The *Canons* are not intended to be a comprehensive explanation of Reformed doctrine, but only an exposition on the five points of doctrine in dispute. Those who continued to interpret the Scriptures according to the historic teachings of the Reformation formulated a five point response to the five articles of the 1610 Remonstrance. The *Canons'* third and fourth sections were purposely combined into one since the Dortian divines considered them inseparable, and hence are designated as "Head of Doctrine 3/4." All things considered, it is perhaps more accurate to consider the *Canons* as the orthodox faith's five answers to the five errors of Arminianism.

A brief summary of the direct conflict between the historic Reformation teaching and Arminianism may be stated as follows:

Doctrines of Grace	**Arminianism**
1. Election is unconditional depending only on the sovereign choice of God.	1. Election and condemnation are conditioned upon the foreseen faith or unbelief of fallen man.
2. The atonement is limited to the elect. A definite redemption was made.	2. The atonement was made universally for all, including those who refuse to believe. The effects of Christ's redemption depend upon man's believing or not.
3. Man is depraved, and has	3. Man is only partially depraved, and still has a free

no ability to contribute to his own salvation, or merit the merits of Christ.	will capable of submitting to God's truth.
4. God's grace is irresistible.	4. God's grace can be resisted.
5. The saints will persevere in the faith, being kept by the power of God. Their salvation is certain.	5. There is the possibility that man, having chosen for God, can also in like manner fall away from God's grace.

The Canons form a remarkably scriptural and balanced document on the specific doctrines expounded. They are unique in being the sole Form of Unity composed by an ecclesiastical assembly and in representing a consensus of all the Reformed churches of their day. Both Dutch and foreign delegates without exception affixed their signatures to the Canons, whether of infralapsarian[10] or supralapsarian[11] persuasion. A service of thanksgiving was held upon the Canons' completion to acknowledge the Lord for preserving the doctrine of sovereign grace among the Reformed churches.

Though the Synod of Dort officially condemned Arminian theology, its influence did not expire—multitudes in the Anglican Church embraced it, as did many in dissenting denominations, including Baptists and Methodists. Today, Arminian theology tends toward Semi-Pelagianism, which holds to the notion that the fallen human will has some power to incline to good, while also accepting the necessity of grace for salvation. It teaches that God gives grace only *after* man wills to take the first step; thus, man does not receive Christ because of God's grace, but rather receives grace after he decides to receive Christ—denying the sovereignty of God. In many modern denominations, Arminian theology continues to be widely accepted, mostly by default and often without any teaching of Reformation truth to bring biblical perspective.

The Canons of Dort

The Decision of the Synod of Dort on the Five Main Points of Doctrine in Dispute in The Netherlands

The First Main Point of Doctrine: Divine Election and Reprobation

The Judgment Concerning Divine Predestination Which the Synod Declares to Be in Agreement with the Word of God and Accepted Till Now in the Reformed Churches, Set Forth in Several Articles

Article 1: God's Right to Condemn All People

As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death, God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin, according to the words of the apostle: *That every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.* (Rom 3:19). And: *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God* (Rom 3:23). And: *For the wages of sin is death* (Rom 6:23).

Article 2: The Manifestation of God's Love

But in this the love of God was manifested, that He *sent his only begotten Son into the world, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life* (1Jo 4:9; Joh 3:16).

Article 3: The Preaching of the Gospel

And that men may be brought to believe, God mercifully sends the messengers of these most joyful tidings to whom He will and at what time He pleases; by whose ministry men are called to repentance and faith in Christ crucified. *How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard?*

And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? (Rom 10:14-15).

Article 4: A Twofold Response to the Gospel

The wrath of God abides upon those who believe not this gospel. But such as receive it and embrace Jesus the Savior by a true and living faith are by Him delivered from the wrath of God and from destruction, and have the gift of eternal life conferred upon them.

Article 5: The Sources of Unbelief and of Faith

The cause or guilt of this unbelief as well as of all other sins is no wise in God, but in man himself; whereas faith in Jesus Christ and salvation through Him is the free gift of God, as it is written: *By grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God* (Eph 2:8). Likewise: *To you it hath been granted in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him,* etc. (Phi 1:29).

Article 6: God's Eternal Decree

That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree. For *known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world* (Act 15:18). *Who worketh all things after the counsel of his will* (Eph 1:11). According to which decree He graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe; while He leaves the non-elect in His just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. And herein is especially displayed the profound, the merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men equally involved in ruin; or that decree of election and reprobation, revealed in the Word of God, which, though men of perverse, impure, and unstable minds wrest it to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation.

Article 7: Election

Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, He has out of mere grace, according to the

sovereign good pleasure of His own will, chosen from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault from their primitive state of rectitude into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom He from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect and the foundation of salvation. This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God has decreed to give to Christ to be saved by Him, and effectually to call and draw them to His communion by His Word and Spirit; to bestow upon them true faith, justification, and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of His Son, finally to glorify them for the demonstration of His mercy, and for the praise of the riches of His glorious grace; as it is written: *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved* (Eph 1:4-6). And elsewhere: *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified* (Rom 8:30).

Article 8: A Single Decision of Election

There are not various decrees of election, but one and the same decree respecting all those who shall be saved, both under the Old and the New Testament; since the Scripture declares the good pleasure, purpose, and counsel of the divine will to be one, according to which He has chosen us from eternity, both to grace and to glory, to salvation and to the way of salvation, which He has ordained that we should walk therein (Eph 1:4-5; 2:10).

Article 9: Election Not Based on Foreseen Faith

This election was not founded upon foreseen faith and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition in man, as the prerequisite, cause, or condition on which it depended; but men are chosen to faith and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc. Therefore election is the fountain of every saving good, from which proceed faith, holiness, and the

other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects, according to the testimony of the apostle: *he hath chosen us* (not because we were, but) *that we should be holy and without blame before him in love* (Eph 1:4).

Article 10: Election Based on God's Good Pleasure

The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election; which does not consist herein that out of all possible qualities and actions of men God has chosen some as a condition of salvation, but that He was pleased out of the common mass of sinners to adopt some certain persons as a peculiar people to Himself, as it is written: *(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;)It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.* (Rom 9:11-13). A*nd as many as were ordained to eternal life believed* (Act 13:48).

Article 11: Election Unchangeable

And as God Himself is most wise, unchangeable, omniscient, and omnipotent, so the election made by Him can neither be interrupted nor changed, recalled, or annulled; neither can the elect be cast away, nor their number diminished.

Article 12: The Assurance of Election

The elect in due time, though in various degrees and in different measures, attain the assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election, not by inquisitively prying into the secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God such as, a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc.

Article 13: The Fruit of This Assurance

The sense and certainty of this election afford to the children of God additional matter for daily humiliation before Him, for adoring the depth of His mercies, for cleansing themselves, and rendering grateful returns of ardent love to Him who first manifested so great love towards them. The consideration of this doctrine of election is so far from encouraging remissness in the observance of the divine commands or from sinking men in carnal security, that these, in the just judgment of God, are the usual effects of rash presumption or of idle and wanton trifling with the grace of election, in those who refuse to walk in the ways of the elect.

Article 14: Teaching Election Properly

As the doctrine of divine election by the most wise counsel of God was declared by the prophets, by Christ Himself, and by the apostles, and is clearly revealed in the Scriptures both of the Old and the New Testament, so it is still to be published in due time and place in the Church of God, for which it was peculiarly designed, provided it be done with reverence, in the spirit of discretion and piety, for the glory of God's most holy Name, and for enlivening and comforting His people, without vainly attempting to investigate the secret ways of the Most High (Act 20:27; Rom 11:33-34; 12:3; Heb 6:17-18).

Article 15: Reprobation

What peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election is the express testimony of sacred Scripture that not all, but some only, are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal decree; whom God, out of His sovereign, most just, irreprehensible, and unchangeable good pleasure, has decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have willfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion; but, permitting them in His just judgment to follow their own ways, at last, for the declaration of His justice, to condemn and punish them forever, not only on account of their unbelief, but also for all their other sins. And this is the decree of reprobation, which by no means makes God the Author of sin (the very thought of which is blasphemy), but declares Him to be an awful, irreprehensible, and righteous Judge and Avenger thereof.

Article 16: Responses to the Teaching of Reprobation

Those in whom a living faith in Christ, an assured confidence of soul, peace of conscience, an earnest endeavor after filial obedience, a glorying in God through Christ, is not as yet strongly felt, and who nevertheless make use of the means which God has appointed for working these graces in us, ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to rank themselves among the reprobate, but diligently to persevere in the use of means, and with ardent desires devoutly and humbly to wait for a season of richer grace. Much less cause to be terrified by the doctrine of reprobation have they who, though they seriously desire to be turned to God, to please Him only, and to be delivered from the body of death, cannot yet reach that measure of holiness and faith to which they aspire; since a merciful God has promised that He will not quench the smoking flax, nor break the bruised reed. But this doctrine is justly terrible to those who, regardless of God and of the Savior Jesus Christ, have wholly given themselves up to the cares of the world and the pleasures of the flesh, so long as they are not seriously converted to God.

Article 17: The Salvation of the Infants of Believers

Since we are to judge of the will of God from His Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they together with the parents are comprehended, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom it pleases God to call out of this life in their infancy (Gen 17:7; Act 2:39; 1Co 7:14).

Article 18: The Proper Attitude Toward Election and Reprobation

To those who murmur at the free grace of election and the just severity of reprobation we answer with the apostle: *Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?* (Rom 9:20), and quote the language of our Savior: *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?* (Mat 20:15). And therefore, with holy adoration of these mysteries, we exclaim in the words of the apostle: *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and*

knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen (Rom 11:33-36).

Rejection of the Errors by Which the Dutch Churches Have for Some Time Been Disturbed

Having set forth the orthodox teaching concerning election and reprobation, the Synod rejects the errors of those,

I. *Who teach: That the will of God to save those who would believe and would persevere in faith and in the obedience of faith is the whole and entire decree of election unto salvation, and that nothing else concerning this decree has been revealed in God's Word.*

For these deceive the simple and plainly contradict the Scriptures, which declare that God will not only save those who will believe, but that He has also from eternity chosen certain particular persons to whom, above others, He will grant, in time, both faith in Christ and perseverance; as it is written: *I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world* (Joh 17:6). *And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed* (Act 13:48). And: *According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love* (Eph 1:4).

II. *Who teach: That there are various kinds of election of God unto eternal life: the one general and indefinite, the other particular and definite; and that the latter in turn is either incomplete, revocable, non-decisive, and conditional, or complete, irrevocable, decisive, and absolute. Likewise: That there is one election unto faith and another unto salvation, so that election can be unto justifying faith, without being a decisive election unto salvation.*

For this is a fancy of men's minds, invented regardless of the Scriptures, whereby the doctrine of election is corrupted, and this golden chain of our

salvation is broken: *Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified* (Rom 8:30).

III. ***Who teach: That the good pleasure and purpose of God, of which Scripture makes mention in the doctrine of election, does not consist in this, that God chose certain persons rather than others, but in this, that He chose out of all possible conditions (among which are also the works of the law), or out of the whole order of things, the act of faith which from its very nature is undeserving, as well as its incomplete obedience, as a condition of salvation, and that He would graciously consider this in itself as a complete obedience and count it worthy of the reward of eternal life.***

For by this injurious error the pleasure of God and the merits of Christ are made of none effect, and men are drawn away by useless questions from the truth of gracious justification and from the simplicity of Scripture, and this declaration of the apostle is charged as untrue: *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began* (2Ti 1:9).

IV. ***Who teach: That in the election unto faith this condition is beforehand demanded that man should use his innate understanding of God aright, be pious, humble, meek, and fit for eternal life, as if on these things election were in any way dependent.***

For this savors of the teaching of Pelagius,[12] and is opposed to the doctrine of the apostle when he writes: *Among whom we also all once lived in the lust of our flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest; but God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus; for*

by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory (Eph 2:3-9).

V. ***Who teach: That the incomplete and non-decisive election of particular persons to salvation occurred because of a foreseen faith, conversion, holiness, godliness, which either began or continued for some time; but that the complete and decisive election occurred because of foreseen perseverance unto the end in faith, conversion, holiness, and godliness; and that this is the gracious and evangelical worthiness, for the sake of which he who is chosen is more worthy than he who is not chosen; and that therefore faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, godliness, and perseverance are not fruits of the unchangeable election unto glory, but are conditions which, being required beforehand, were foreseen as being met by those who will be fully elected, and are causes without which the unchangeable election to glory does not occur.***

This is repugnant to the entire Scripture, which constantly inculcates this and similar declarations: *Election is not of works, but of him that calleth* (Rom 9:11). *And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed* (Act 13:48). *He chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy* (Eph 1:4). *Ye did not choose me, but I chose you* (Joh 15:16). *But if it is by grace, it is no more of works* (Rom 11:6). *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son* (1Jo 4:10).

VI. ***Who teach: That not every election unto salvation is unchangeable, but that some of the elect, any decree of God notwithstanding, can yet perish and do indeed perish.***

By this gross error they make God to be changeable, and destroy the comfort which the godly obtain out of the firmness of their election, and contradict the Holy Scripture, which teaches that the elect can not be led astray (Mat 24:24), that Christ does not lose those whom the Father gave him (Joh 6:39), and that God also glorified those whom he foreordained, called, and justified (Rom 8:30).

VII. ***Who teach: That there is in this life no fruit and no consciousness of the unchangeable election to glory, nor any certainty, except that which***

depends on a changeable and uncertain condition.

For not only is it absurd to speak of an uncertain certainty, but also contrary to the experience of the saints, who by virtue of the consciousness of their election rejoice with the apostle and praise this favor of God (Eph 1); who according to Christs admonition rejoice with his disciples that their names are written in heaven (Luk 10:20); who also place the consciousness of their election over against the fiery darts of the devil, asking: *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?* (Rom 8:33).

VIII. ***Who teach: That God, simply by virtue of His righteous will, did not decide either to leave anyone in the fall of Adam and in the common state of sin and condemnation, or to pass anyone by in the communication of grace which is necessary for faith and conversion.***

For this is firmly decreed: *He hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth* (Rom 9:18). And also this: *unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given* (Mat 13:11). Likewise: *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight* (Mat 11:25-26).

IX. ***Who teach: That the reason why God sends the gospel to one people rather than to another is not merely and solely the good pleasure of God, but rather the fact that one people is better and worthier than another to which the gospel is not communicated.***

For this Moses denies, addressing the people of Israel as follows: *Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.* (Deu 10:14-15). And Christ said: *Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes* (Mat 11:21).

The Second Main Point of Doctrine: Christ's Death and Human Redemption through It

Article 1: The Punishment Which God's Justice Requires

God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. And His justice requires (as He has revealed Himself in His Word) that our sins committed against His infinite majesty should be punished, not only with temporal but with eternal punishments, both in body and soul; which we cannot escape, unless satisfaction be made to the justice of God.

Article 2: The Satisfaction Made by Christ

Since, therefore, we are unable to make that satisfaction in our own persons, or to deliver ourselves from the wrath of God, He has been pleased of His infinite mercy to give His only begotten Son for our Surety, who was made sin, and became a curse for us and in our stead, that He might make satisfaction to divine justice on our behalf.

Article 3: The Infinite Value of Christ's Death

The death of the Son of God is the only and most perfect sacrifice and satisfaction for sin, and is of infinite worth and value, abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world.

Article 4: Reasons for This Infinite Value

This death is of such infinite value and dignity because the person who submitted to it was not only really man and perfectly holy, but also the only begotten Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, which qualifications were necessary to constitute Him a Savior for us; and, moreover, because it was attended with a sense of the wrath and curse of God due to us for sin.

Article 5: The Mandate to Proclaim the Gospel to All

Moreover, the promise of the gospel is that whosoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have eternal life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the gospel.

Article 6: Unbelief Man's Responsibility

And, whereas many who are called by the gospel do not repent nor believe in Christ, but perish in unbelief, this is not owing to any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice offered by Christ upon the cross, but is wholly to be imputed to themselves.

Article 7: Faith God's Gift

But as many as truly believe, and are delivered and saved from sin and destruction through the death of Christ, are indebted for this benefit solely to the grace of God given them in Christ from everlasting, and not to any merit of their own.

Article 8: The Saving Effectiveness of Christ's Death

For this was the sovereign counsel and most gracious will and purpose of God the Father that the quickening and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect, for bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to salvation; that is, it was the will of God that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby He confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation and given to Him by the Father; that He should confer upon them faith, which, together with all the other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, He purchased for them by His death; should purge them from all sin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preserved them even to the end, should at last bring them, free from every spot and blemish, to the enjoyment of glory in His own presence forever.

Article 9: The Fulfillment of God's Plan

This purpose, proceeding from everlasting love towards the elect, has from the beginning of the world to this day been powerfully accomplished, and will henceforward still continue to be accomplished, notwithstanding all the ineffectual opposition of the gates of hell; so that the elect in due time may be gathered together into one, and that there never may be wanting a Church composed of believers, the foundation of which is laid in the blood of Christ; which may steadfastly love and faithfully serve Him as its Savior (who, as a bridegroom for His bride, laid down His life for them upon the cross); and which may celebrate His praises here and through all eternity.

Rejection of the Errors

Having set forth the orthodox teaching, the Synod rejects the errors of those,

I. ***Who teach: That God the Father has ordained His Son to the death of the cross without a certain and definite decree to save any, so that the necessity, profitableness, and worth of what Christ merited by His death might have existed, and might remain in all its parts complete, perfect, and intact, even if the merited redemption had never in fact been applied to any person.***

For this doctrine tends to the despising of the wisdom of the Father and of the merits of Jesus Christ, and is contrary to Scripture. For thus says our Savior: *I lay down my life for the sheep, and I know them* (Joh 10:15, 27). And the prophet Isaiah says concerning the Savior: *when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand* (Isa 53:10). Finally, this contradicts the article of faith according to which we believe the catholic Christian Church.

II. ***Who teach: That it was not the purpose of the death of Christ that He should confirm the new covenant of grace through His blood, but only***

that He should acquire for the Father the mere right to establish with man such a covenant as He might please, whether of grace or of works.

For this is repugnant to Scripture which teaches *that Christ hath become the surety and mediator of a better, that is, the new covenant, and that a testament is of force where there hath been death* (Heb 7:22; 9:15-17).

III. ***Who teach: That Christ by His satisfaction merited neither salvation itself for anyone, nor faith, whereby this satisfaction of Christ unto salvation is effectually appropriated; but that He merited for the Father only the authority or the perfect will to deal again with man, and to prescribe new conditions as He might desire, obedience to which, however, depended on the free will of man, so that it therefore might have come to pass that either none or all should fulfill these conditions.***

For these adjudge too contemptuously of the death of Christ, in no wise acknowledge the most important fruit or benefit thereby gained, and bring again out of hell the Pelagian error.

IV. ***Who teach: That the new covenant of grace, which God the Father, through the mediation of the death of Christ, made with man, does not herein consist that we by faith, inasmuch as it accepts the merits of Christ, are justified before God and saved, but in the fact that God, having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of faith, regards faith itself and the obedience of faith, although imperfect, as the perfect obedience of the law, and does esteem it worthy of the reward of eternal life through grace.***

For these contradict the Scriptures: *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood* (Rom 3:24-25). And these proclaim, as did the wicked Socinus, a new and strange justification of man before God, against the consensus of the whole Church.

V. ***Who teach: That all men have been accepted unto the state of reconciliation and unto the grace of the covenant, so that no one is worthy of condemnation on account of original sin, and that no one shall***

be condemned because of it, but that all are free from the guilt of original sin.

For this opinion is repugnant to Scripture which teaches that we are *by nature children of wrath* (Eph 2:3).

VI. ***Who use the difference between meriting and appropriating, to the end that they may instil into the minds of the imprudent and inexperienced this teaching that God, as far as He is concerned, has been minded to apply to all equally the benefits gained by the death of Christ; but that, while some obtain the pardon of sin and eternal life, and others do not, this difference depends on their own free will, which joins itself to the grace that is offered without exception, and that it is not dependent on the special gift of mercy, which powerfully works in them, that they rather than others should appropriate unto themselves this grace.***

For these, while they feign that they present this distinction in a sound sense, seek to instil into the people the destructive poison of the Pelagian errors.

VII. ***Who teach: That Christ neither could die, nor needed to die, and also did not die, for those whom God loved in the highest degree and elected to eternal life, since these do not need the death of Christ.***

For they contradict the apostle, who declares: Christ *loved me, and gave himself up for me* (Gal 2:20). Likewise: *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ Jesus that died* (Rom 8:33-34), namely, for them; and the Savior who says: *I lay down my life for the sheep* (Joh 10:15). And: *This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends* (Joh 15:12-13).

The Third and Fourth Main Points of Doctrine: Human Corruption, Conversion to God, and the Way It Occurs

Article 1: The Effect of the Fall on Human Nature

Man was originally formed after the image of God. His understanding was adorned with a true and saving knowledge of his Creator, and of spiritual things; his heart and will were upright, all his affections pure, and the whole man was holy. But, revolting from God by the instigation of the devil and by his own free will, he forfeited these excellent gifts; and in the place thereof became involved in blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity, and perverseness of judgment; became wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in his affections.

Article 2: The Spread of Corruption

Man after the fall begat children in his own likeness. A corrupt stock produced a corrupt offspring. Hence all the posterity of Adam, Christ only excepted, have derived corruption from their original parent, not by imitation, as the Pelagians of old asserted, but by the propagation of a vicious nature, in consequence of the just judgment of God.

Article 3: Total Inability

Therefore all men are conceived in sin, and are by nature children of wrath, incapable of saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto; and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, or to dispose themselves to reformation.

Article 4: The Inadequacy of the Light of Nature

There remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural understanding, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the difference between good and evil, and shows some regard

for virtue and for good outward behavior. But so far is this understanding of nature from being sufficient to bring him to a saving knowledge of God and to true conversion that he is incapable of using it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay further, this understanding, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and hinders in unrighteousness, by doing which he becomes inexcusable before God.

Article 5: The Inadequacy of the Law

Neither can the Decalogue delivered by God to His peculiar people, the Jews, by the hands of Moses, save men. For though it reveals the greatness of sin, and more and more convinces man thereof, yet, as it neither points out a remedy nor imparts strength to extricate him from this misery, but, being weak through the flesh, leaves the transgressor under the curse, man cannot by this law obtain saving grace.

Article 6: The Saving Power of the Gospel

What, therefore, neither the innate understanding nor the law could do, that God performs by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the word or ministry of reconciliation; which is the glad tidings concerning the Messiah, by means whereof it has pleased God to save such as believe, as well under the Old as under the New Testament.

Article 7: God's Freedom in Revealing the Gospel

This mystery of His will God revealed to but a small number under the Old Testament; under the New Testament (the distinction between various peoples having been removed) He reveals it to many. The cause of this dispensation is not to be ascribed to the superior worth of one nation above another, nor to their better use of the innate understanding of God, but results wholly from the sovereign good pleasure and unmerited love of God. Hence they to whom so great and so gracious a blessing is communicated, above their desert, or rather notwithstanding their demerits, are bound to acknowledge it with humble and grateful hearts, and with the apostle to adore, but in no wise curiously to pry into, the severity and

justice of God's judgments displayed in others to whom this grace is not given.

Article 8: The Serious Call of the Gospel

As many as are called by the gospel are unfeignedly called. For God has most earnestly and truly declared in His Word what is acceptable to Him, namely, that those who are called should come unto Him. He also seriously promises rest of soul and eternal life to all who come to Him and believe.

Article 9: Human Responsibility for Rejecting the Gospel

It is not the fault of the gospel, nor of Christ offered therein, nor of God, who calls men by the gospel and confers upon them various gifts, that those who are called by the ministry of the Word refuse to come and be converted. The fault lies in themselves; some of whom when called, regardless of their danger, reject the Word of life; others, though they receive it, suffer it not to make a lasting impression on their heart; therefore, their joy, arising only from a temporary faith, soon vanishes, and they fall away; while others choke the seed of the Word by perplexing cares and the pleasures of this world, and produce no fruit. This our Savior teaches in the parable of the sower (Mat 13).

Article 10: Conversion as the Work of God

But that others who are called by the gospel obey the call and are converted is not to be ascribed to the proper exercise of free will, whereby one distinguishes himself above others equally furnished with grace sufficient for faith and conversion (as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains); but it must be wholly ascribed to God, who, as He has chosen His own from eternity in Christ, so He calls them effectually in time, confers upon them faith and repentance, rescues them from the power of darkness, and translates them into the kingdom of His own Son; that they may show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvelous light, and may glory not in themselves but in the Lord, according to the testimony of the apostles in various places.

Article 11: The Holy Spirit's Work in Conversion

But when God accomplishes His good pleasure in the elect, or works in them true conversion, He not only causes the gospel to be externally preached to them, and powerfully illuminates their minds by His Holy Spirit, that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God; but by the efficacy of the same regenerating Spirit He pervades the inmost recesses of man; He opens the closed and softens the hardened heart, and circumcises that which was uncircumcised; infuses new qualities into the will, which, though heretofore dead, He quickens; from being evil, disobedient, and refractory, He renders it good, obedient, and pliable; actuates and strengthens it, that like a good tree, it may bring forth the fruits of good actions.

Article 12: Regeneration a Supernatural Work

And this is that regeneration so highly extolled in Scripture, that renewal, new creation, resurrection from the dead, making alive, which God works in us without our aid. But this is in no wise effected merely by the external preaching of the gospel, by moral suasion, or such a mode of operation that, after God has performed His part, it still remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not, to be converted or to continue unconverted; but it is evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation or the resurrection from the dead, as the Scripture inspired by the Author of this work declares; so that all in whose heart God works in this marvelous manner are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated, and do actually believe. Whereupon the will thus renewed is not only actuated and influenced by God, but in consequence of this influence becomes itself active. Wherefore also man himself is rightly said to believe and repent by virtue of that grace received.

Article 13: The Incomprehensible Way of Regeneration

The manner of this operation cannot be fully comprehended by believers in this life. Nevertheless, they are satisfied to know and

experience that by this grace of God they are enabled to believe with the heart and to love their Savior.

Article 14: The Way God Gives Faith

Faith is therefore to be considered as the gift of God, not on account of its being offered by God to man, to be accepted or rejected at his pleasure, but because it is in reality conferred upon him, breathed and infused into him; nor even because God bestows the power or ability to believe, and then expects that man should by the exercise of his own free will consent to the terms of salvation and actually believe in Christ, but because He who works in man both to will and to work, and indeed all things in all, produces both the will to believe and the act of believing also.

Article 15: Responses to God's Grace

God is under no obligation to confer this grace upon any; for how can He be indebted to one who had no previous gifts to bestow as a foundation for such recompense? Nay, how can He be indebted to one who has nothing of his own but sin and falsehood? He, therefore, who becomes the subject of this grace owes eternal gratitude to God, and gives Him thanks forever. Whoever is not made partaker thereof is either altogether regardless of these spiritual gifts and satisfied with his own condition, or is in no apprehension of danger, and vainly boasts the possession of that which he has not. Further, with respect to those who outwardly profess their faith and amend their lives, we are bound, after the example of the apostle, to judge and speak of them in the most favorable manner; for the secret recesses of the heart are unknown to us. And as to others who have not yet been called, it is our duty to pray for them to God, who calls the things that are not as if they were. But we are in no wise to conduct ourselves towards them with haughtiness, as if we had made ourselves to differ.

Article 16: Regeneration's Effect

But as man by the fall did not cease to be a creature endowed with understanding and will, nor did sin which pervaded the whole race of mankind deprive him of the human nature, but brought upon him depravity

and spiritual death; so also this grace of regeneration does not treat men as senseless stocks and blocks, nor take away their will and its properties, or do violence thereto; but it spiritually quickens, heals, corrects, and at the same time sweetly and powerfully bends it, that where carnal rebellion and resistance formerly prevailed, a ready and sincere spiritual obedience begins to reign; in which the true and spiritual restoration and freedom of our will consist. Wherefore, unless the admirable Author of every good work so deal with us, man can have no hope of being able to rise from his fall by his own free will, by which, in a state of innocence, he plunged himself into ruin.

Article 17: God's Use of Means in Regeneration

As the almighty operation of God whereby He brings forth and supports this our natural life does not exclude but require the use of means by which God, of His infinite mercy and goodness, has chosen to exert His influence, so also the aforementioned supernatural operation of God by which we are regenerated in no wise excludes or subverts the use of the gospel, which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration and food of the soul. Wherefore, as the apostles and the teachers who succeeded them piously instructed the people concerning this grace of God, to His glory and to the abasement of all pride, and in the meantime, however, neglected not to keep them, by the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the influence of the Word, the sacraments, and ecclesiastical discipline; so even now it should be far from those who give or receive instruction in the Church to presume to tempt God by separating what He of His good pleasure has most intimately joined together. For grace is conferred by means of admonitions; and the more readily we perform our duty, the more clearly this favor of God, working in us, usually manifests itself, and the more directly His work is advanced; to whom alone all the glory, both for the means and for their saving fruit and efficacy, is forever due. Amen.

Rejection of the Errors

Having set forth the orthodox teaching, the Synod rejects the errors of those,

I. ***Who teach: That it cannot properly be said that original sin in itself suffices to condemn the whole human race or to deserve temporal and eternal punishment.***

For these contradict the apostle, who declares: *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned* (Rom 5:12). And: *The judgment came of one unto condemnation* (Rom 5:16). And: *the wages of sin is death* (Rom 6:23).

II. ***Who teach: That the spiritual gifts or the good qualities and virtues, such as goodness, holiness, righteousness, could not belong to the will of man when he was first created, and that these, therefore, cannot have been separated therefrom in the fall.***

For such is contrary to the description of the image of God which the apostle gives in Ephesians 4:24, where he declares that it consists in righteousness and holiness, which undoubtedly belong to the will.

III. ***Who teach: That in spiritual death the spiritual gifts are not separate from the will of man, since the will in itself has never been corrupted, but only hindered through the darkness of the understanding and the irregularity of the affections; and that, these hindrances having been removed, the will can then bring into operation its native powers, that is, that the will of itself is able to will and to choose, or not to will and not to choose, all manner of good which may be presented to it.***

This is an innovation and an error, and tends to elevate the powers of the free will, contrary to the declaration of the prophet: *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked* (Jer 17:9); and of the apostle: *Among whom* (sons of disobedience) *also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind* (Eph 2:3).

IV. ***Who teach: That the unregenerate man is not really nor utterly dead in sin, nor destitute of all powers unto spiritual good, but that he can yet hunger and thirst after righteousness and life, and offer the sacrifice of a contrite and broken spirit, which is pleasing to God.***

For these things are contrary to the express testimony of Scripture: *Ye were dead through your trespasses and sins* (Eph 2:1, 5). And: *Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually* (Gen 6:5; 8:21). Moreover, to hunger and thirst after deliverance from misery and after life, and to offer unto God the sacrifice of a broken spirit, is peculiar to the regenerate and those that are called blessed (Psa 51:17; Mat 5:6).

V. ***Who teach: That the corrupt and natural man can so well use the common grace (by which they understand the light of nature), or the gifts still left him after the fall, that he can gradually gain by their good use a greater, that is, the evangelical or saving grace, and salvation itself; and that in this way God on His part shows Himself ready to reveal Christ unto all men, since He applies to all sufficiently and efficiently the means necessary to conversion.***

For both the experience of all ages and the Scriptures testify that this is untrue. *He showeth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his ordinances unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his ordinances, they have not known them* (Psa 147:19-20). *Who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own way* (Act 14:16). And: *And they* (Paul and his companions) *having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia, when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus suffered them not* (Act 16:6-7).

VI. ***Who teach: That in the true conversion of man no new qualities, powers, or gifts can be infused by God into the will, and that therefore faith, through which we are first converted and because of which we are called believers, is not a quality or gift infused by God but only an act of man, and that it cannot be said to be a gift, except in respect of the power to attain to this faith.***

For thereby they contradict the Holy Scriptures, which declare that God infuses new qualities of faith, of obedience, and of the consciousness of His love into our hearts: *I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts* (Jer 31:33). And: *I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed* (Isa 44:3).

And: *the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.* (Rom 5:5). This is also repugnant to the constant practice of the Church, which prays by the mouth of the prophet thus: *Turn thou me, and I shall be turned* (Jer 31:18).

VII. ***Who teach: That the grace whereby we are converted to God is only a gentle advising, or (as others explain it) that this is the noblest manner of working in the conversion of man, and that this manner of working, which consists in advising, is most in harmony with mans nature; and that there is no reason why this advising grace alone should not be sufficient to make the natural man spiritual; indeed, that God does not produce the consent of the will except through this manner of advising; and that the power of the divine working, whereby it surpasses the working of Satan, consists in this that God promises eternal, while Satan promises only temporal goods.***

But this is altogether Pelagian and contrary to the whole Scripture, which, besides this, teaches yet another and far more powerful and divine manner of the Holy Spirits working in the conversion of man, as in Ezekiel: *A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh* (Eze 36:26).

VIII. ***Who teach: That God in the regeneration of man does not use such powers of His omnipotence as potently and infallibly bend mans will to faith and conversion; but that all the works of grace having been accomplished, which God employs to convert man, man may yet so resist God and the Holy Spirit, when God intends mans regeneration and wills to regenerate him, and indeed that man often does so resist that he prevents entirely his regeneration, and that it therefore remains in mans power to be regenerated or not.***

For this is nothing less than the denial of all the efficiency of God's grace in our conversion, and the subjecting of the working of Almighty God to the will of man, which is contrary to the apostles, who teach that we *believe, according to the working of his mighty power* (Eph 1:19); and that God fulfills *all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith*

with power (2Th 1:11); and that *his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness* (2Pe 1:3).

IX. ***Who teach: That grace and free will are partial causes which together work the beginning of conversion, and that grace, in order of working, does not precede the working of the will; that is, that God does not efficiently help the will of man unto conversion until the will of man moves and determines to do this.***

For the ancient Church has long ago condemned this doctrine of the Pelagians according to the words of the apostle: *So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy* (Rom 9:16). Likewise: *For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?* (1Co 4:7). And: *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure* (Phi 2:13).

The Fifth Main Point of Doctrine:
The Perseverance of the Saints

Article 1: The Regenerate Not Entirely Free from Sin

Those whom God, according to His purpose, calls to the communion of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, He also delivers from the dominion and slavery of sin, though in this life He does not deliver them altogether from the body of sin and from the infirmities of the flesh.

Article 2: The Believer's Reaction to Sins of Weakness

Hence spring forth the daily sins of infirmity, and blemishes cleave even to the best works of the saints. These are to them a perpetual reason to humiliate themselves before God and to flee for refuge to Christ crucified; to mortify the flesh more and more by the spirit of prayer and by holy exercises of piety; and to press forward to the goal of perfection, until at length, delivered from this body of death, they shall reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.

Article 3: God's Preservation of the Converted

By reason of these remains of indwelling sin, and also because of the temptations of the world and of Satan, those who are converted could not persevere in that grace if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who, having conferred grace, mercifully confirms and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end.

Article 4: The Danger of True Believers' Falling into Serious Sins

Although the weakness of the flesh cannot prevail against the power of God, who confirms and preserves true believers in a state of grace, yet converts are not always so influenced and actuated by the Spirit of God as not in some particular instances sinfully to deviate from the guidance of

divine grace, so as to be seduced by and to comply with the lusts of the flesh; they must, therefore, be constant in watching and prayer, that they may not be led into temptation. When these are neglected, they are not only liable to be drawn into great and heinous sins by the flesh, the world, and Satan, but sometimes by the righteous permission of God actually are drawn into these evils. This, the lamentable fall of David, Peter, and other saints described in Holy Scripture, demonstrates.

Article 5: The Effects of Such Serious Sins

By such enormous sins, however, they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes for a while lose the sense of God's favor, until, when they change their course by serious repentance, the light of God's fatherly countenance again shines upon them.

Article 6: God's Saving Intervention

But God, who is rich in mercy, according to His unchangeable purpose of election, does not wholly withdraw the Holy Spirit from His own people even in their grievous falls; nor suffers them to proceed so far as to lose the grace of adoption and forfeit the state of justification, or to commit the sin unto death or against the Holy Spirit; nor does He permit them to be totally deserted, and to plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.

Article 7: Renewal to Repentance

For in the first place, in these falls He preserves in them the incorruptible seed of regeneration from perishing or being totally lost; and again, by His Word and Spirit He certainly and effectually renews them to repentance, to a sincere and godly sorrow for their sins, that they may seek and obtain remission in the blood of the Mediator, may again experience the favor of a reconciled God, through faith adore His mercies, and henceforward more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

Article 8: The Certainty of This Preservation

Thus it is not in consequence of their own merits or strength, but of God's free mercy, that they neither totally fall from faith and grace nor continue and perish finally in their backslidings; which, with respect to themselves is not only possible, but would undoubtedly happen; but with respect to God, it is utterly impossible, since His counsel cannot be changed nor His promise fail; neither can the call according to His purpose be revoked, nor the merit, intercession, and preservation of Christ be rendered ineffectual, nor the sealing of the Holy Spirit be frustrated or obliterated.

Article 9: The Assurance of This Preservation

Of this preservation of the elect to salvation and of their perseverance in the faith, true believers themselves may and do obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith, whereby they surely believe that they are and ever will continue true and living members of the Church, and that they have the forgiveness of sins and life eternal.

Article 10: The Ground of This Assurance

This assurance, however, is not produced by any peculiar revelation contrary to or independent of the Word of God, but springs from faith in God's promises, which He has most abundantly revealed in His Word for our comfort; from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, witnessing with our spirit that we are children and heirs of God (Rom 8:16); and lastly, from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience and to perform good works. And if the elect of God were deprived of this solid comfort that they shall finally obtain the victory, and of this infallible pledge of eternal glory, they would be of all men the most miserable.

Article 11: Doubts Concerning This Assurance

The Scripture moreover testifies that believers in this life have to struggle with various carnal doubts, and that under grievous temptations they do not always feel this full assurance of faith and certainty of persevering. But God, who is the Father of all consolation, does not suffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that they may be able to endure it (1Co

10:13), and by the Holy Spirit again inspires them with the comfortable assurance of persevering.

Article 12: This Assurance as an Incentive to Godliness

This certainty of perseverance, however, is so far from exciting in believers a spirit of pride, or of rendering them carnally secure, that on the contrary it is the real source of humility, filial reverence, true piety, patience in every tribulation, fervent prayers, constancy in suffering and in confessing the truth, and of solid rejoicing in God; so that the consideration of this benefit should serve as an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works, as appears from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.

Article 13: Assurance No Inducement to Carelessness

Neither does renewed confidence of persevering produce licentiousness or a disregard of piety in those who are recovered from backsliding; but it renders them much more careful and solicitous to continue in the ways of the Lord, which He has ordained, that they who walk therein may keep the assurance of persevering; lest, on account of their abuse of His fatherly kindness, God should turn away His gracious countenance from them (to behold which is to the godly dearer than life, and the withdrawal of which is more bitter than death) and they in consequence thereof should fall into more grievous torments of conscience.

Article 14: God's Use of Means in Perseverance

And as it has pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so He preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, and by the use of the sacraments.

Article 15: Contrasting Reactions to the Teaching of Perseverance

The carnal mind is unable to comprehend this doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and the certainty thereof, which God has most abundantly revealed in His Word, for the glory of His Name and the consolation of pious souls, and which He impresses upon the hearts of the believers. Satan abhors it, the world ridicules it, the ignorant and hypocritical abuse it, and the heretics oppose it. But the bride of Christ has always most tenderly loved and constantly defended it as an inestimable treasure; and God, against whom neither counsel nor strength can prevail, will dispose her so to continue to the end. Now to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.

Rejection of the Errors Concerning the Teaching of the Perseverance of the Saints

Having set forth the orthodox teaching, the Synod rejects the errors of those

I. ***Who teach: That the perseverance of the true believers is not a fruit of election, or a gift of God gained by the death of Christ, but a condition of the new covenant, which (as they declare) man before his decisive election and justification must fulfill through his free will.***

For the Holy Scripture testifies that this follows out of election, and is given the elect in virtue of the death, the resurrection, and intercession of Christ: *But the election obtained it, and the rest were hardened* (Rom 11:7). Likewise: *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?* (Rom 8:32-35).

II. ***Who teach: That God does indeed provide the believer with sufficient powers to persevere, and is ever ready to preserve these in him if he will do his duty; but that, though all things which are necessary to persevere in faith and which God will use to preserve faith are made use of, even***

then it ever depends on the pleasure of the will whether it will persevere or not.

For this idea contains an outspoken Pelagianism, and while it would make men free, it makes them robbers of God's honor, contrary to the prevailing agreement of the evangelical doctrine, which takes from man all cause of boasting, and ascribes all the praise for this favor to the grace of God alone; and contrary to the apostle, who declares that it is God, *who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1Co 1:8).

III. ***Who teach: That the true believers and regenerate not only can fall from justifying faith and likewise from grace and salvation wholly and to the end, but indeed often do fall from this and are lost forever.***

For this conception makes powerless the grace, justification, regeneration, and continued preservation by Christ, contrary to the expressed words of the apostle Paul: *that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him* (Rom 5:8-9). And contrary to the apostle John: *Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God* (1Jo 3:9). And also contrary to the words of Jesus Christ: *And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand* (Joh 10:28-29).

IV. ***Who teach: That true believers and regenerate can sin the sin unto death or against the Holy Spirit.***

Since the same apostle John, after having spoken in the fifth chapter of his first epistle, vs. 16 and 17, of those who sin unto death and having forbidden to pray for them, immediately adds to this in vs. 18: *We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not* (meaning a sin of that character); but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not (1Jo 5:18).

V. ***Who teach: That without a special revelation we can have no certainty of future perseverance in this life.***

For by this doctrine the sure comfort of the true believers is taken away in this life, and the doubts of the papist are again introduced into the Church, while the Holy Scriptures constantly deduce this assurance, not from a special and extraordinary revelation, but from the marks proper to the children of God and from the very constant promises of God. So especially the apostle Paul: *nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Rom 8:39). And John declares: *And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us* (1Jo 3:24).

VI. ***Who teach: That the doctrine of the certainty of perseverance and of salvation from its own character and nature is a cause of indolence and is injurious to godliness, good morals, prayers, and other holy exercises, but that on the contrary it is praiseworthy to doubt.***

For these show that they do not know the power of divine grace and the working of the indwelling Holy Spirit. And they contradict the apostle John, who teaches the opposite with express words in his first epistle: *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure* (1Jo 3:2-3). Furthermore, these are contradicted by the example of the saints, both of the Old and the New Testament, who though they were assured of their perseverance and salvation, were nevertheless constant in prayers and other exercises of godliness.

VII. ***Who teach: That the faith of those who believe for a time does not differ from justifying and saving faith except only in duration.***

For Christ Himself, in Matthew 13:20, Luke 8:13, and in other places, evidently notes, besides this duration, a threefold difference between those who believe only for a time and true believers, when He declares that the former receive the seed in stony ground, but the latter in the good ground or

heart; that the former are without root, but the latter have a firm root; that the former are without fruit, but that the latter bring forth their fruit in various measure, with constancy and steadfastness.

VIII. ***Who teach: That it is not absurd that one having lost his first regeneration is again and even often born anew.***

For these deny by this doctrine the incorruptibleness of the seed of God, whereby we are born again; contrary to the testimony of the apostle Peter: *Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible* (1Pe 1:23).

IX. ***Who teach: That Christ has in no place prayed that believers should infallibly continue in faith.***

For they contradict Christ Himself, who says: *I made supplication for thee* (Simon), *that thy faith fail not* (Luk 22:32), and the evangelist John, who declares that Christ has not prayed for the apostles only, but also for those who through their word would believe: *Holy Father, keep them in thy name, and: I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one* (Joh 17:11, 15, 20).

Conclusion: Rejection of False Accusations

And this is the perspicuous, simple, and ingenuous declaration of the orthodox doctrine respecting the five articles which have been controverted in the Belgic Churches; and the rejection of the errors, with which they have for some time been troubled. This doctrine the Synod judges to be drawn from the Word of God, and to be agreeable to the confession of the Reformed Churches. Whence it clearly appears that some, whom such conduct by no means became, have violated all truth, equity, and charity, in wishing to persuade the public:

- That the doctrine of the Reformed Churches concerning predestination, and the points annexed to it, by its own genius and necessary tendency, leads off the minds of men from all piety and religion; that it is an opiate administered by the flesh and the devil; and the stronghold of Satan, where he lies in wait for all, and from which he wounds multitudes, and mortally strikes through many with the darts both of despair and security; that it makes God the author of sin, unjust, tyrannical, hypocritical; that it is nothing more than an interpolated Stoicism,[13] Manicheism,[14] Libertinism,[15] Mohammedanism;[16]
- that it renders men carnally secure, since they are persuaded by it that nothing can hinder the salvation of the elect, let them live as they please; and, therefore, that they may safely perpetrate every species of the most atrocious crimes; and that, if the reprobate should even perform truly all the works of the saints, their obedience would not in the least contribute to their salvation;
- that the same doctrine teaches that God, by a mere arbitrary act of his will, without the least respect or view to any sin, has predestinated the greatest part of the world to eternal damnation, and has created them for this very purpose; that in the same manner in which the election is the fountain and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety; that many children of the faithful are torn, guiltless, from their mothers breasts, and tyrannically plunged into hell: so that neither baptism nor the prayers of the Church at their

baptism can at all profit them; and many other things of the same kind which the Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge, but even detest with their whole soul.

Wherefore, this Synod of Dort, in the name of the Lord, conjures as many as piously call upon the name of our Savior Jesus Christ to judge of the faith of the Reformed Churches, not from the calumnies which on every side are heaped upon it, nor from the private expressions of a few among ancient and modern teachers, often dishonestly quoted, or corrupted and wrested to a meaning quite foreign to their intention; but from the public confessions of the Churches themselves, and from this declaration of the orthodox doctrine, confirmed by the unanimous consent of all and each of the members of the whole Synod. Moreover, the Synod warns calumniators themselves to consider the terrible judgment of God which awaits them, for bearing false witness against the confessions of so many Churches; for distressing the consciences of the weak; and for laboring to render suspected the society of the truly faithful.

Finally, this Synod exhorts all their brethren in the gospel of Christ to conduct themselves piously and religiously in handling this doctrine, both in the universities and churches; to direct it, as well in discourse as in writing, to the glory of the Divine name, to holiness of life, and to the consolation of afflicted souls; to regulate, by the Scripture, according to the analogy of faith, not only their sentiments, but also their language, and to abstain from all those phrases which exceed the limits necessary to be observed in ascertaining the genuine sense of the Holy Scriptures, and may furnish insolent sophists with a just pretext for violently assailing, or even vilifying, the doctrine of the Reformed Churches. May Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who, seated at the Father’s right hand, gives gifts to men, sanctify us in the truth; bring to the truth those who err; shut the mouths of the calumniators of sound doctrine, and endue the faithful ministers of his Word with the spirit of wisdom and discretion, that all their discourses may tend to the glory of God, and the edification of those who hear them. Amen.

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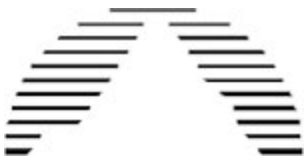
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[1] **Theodore Beza** (1519-1605)**:** French Protestant Christian theologian and scholar who played an important role in the early Reformation. A member of the *Monarchomaque* movement, which opposed absolute monarchy, he was a disciple of John Calvin and lived most of his life in Switzerland.

[2] **John Calvin** (1509-1564) – the father of Reformed and Presbyterian theology. During the course of his ministry in Geneva, lasting nearly twenty-five years, Calvin lectured to theological students and preached an average of five sermons a week, in addition to writing a commentary on nearly every book of the Bible as well as numerous treatises on theological topics; Born in Noyon, Picardie, France.

[3] **Pelagianism** – a fifth century heresy that denied the doctrine of original sin and the transmission of Adam's guilt to his posterity, and emphasized the freedom of man's will. It became one of the most persistent heresies to corrupt the gospel of salvation by free grace alone.

[4] **Belgic Confession** (1561) – a doctrinal standard document to which many of the Reformed churches subscribe. The name *Belgic Confession* follows the seventeenth-century Latin designation *Confessio Belgica*. "Belgica" referred to the whole of the Low Countries, both north and south, which today is divided into The Netherlands and Belgium. The confession's chief author was Guido de Bres, a preacher of the Reformed churches of The Netherlands, who died a martyr to the faith in 1567. In its composition, the author availed himself to some extent of a confession of the Reformed churches in France, written chiefly by John Calvin, published two years earlier. The work of de Bres, however, is not a mere revision of Calvin's work, but an independent composition. In 1566, the text of this confession was revised at a synod held at Antwerp. In The Netherlands, it was at once gladly received by the churches, and it was adopted by national synods held during the last three decades of the sixteenth century. The text, not the contents, was revised again at the Synod of Dort in 1618-19 and adopted as one of the doctrinal standards to which all office-bearers in the Reformed churches in the Low Countries were required to subscribe.

The Belgic Confession consists of 37 articles that deal with the doctrines of God (1-2, 8-13), Scripture (3-7), humanity (14), sin (15), Christ (18-21), salvation (16-17, 22-26), the Church (27-36), and the end times (37).

[5] **Heidelberg Catechism** (1563) – one of the most influential of the Reformed catechisms, which takes the form of a series of questions and answers for use in teaching Reformed Christian doctrine.

Elector Frederick III, sovereign of the region around Heidelberg, Germany, from 1559 to 1576, commissioned the composition of a new Catechism for his territory. Zacharius Ursinus is commonly regarded as its principal author. Frederick wanted to even out the religious situation of the territory and to combine the best of Lutheran and Reformed wisdom that could instruct ordinary people on the basics of the newfound biblical faith. One of the aims of the catechism was to counteract the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, and so it based each of its statements on the text of the Bible.

Divided into fifty-two sections, it was to be taught on each of the 52 Lord's Days of the year. The Synod of Heidelberg approved the catechism in 1563. In The Netherlands, the Catechism was approved by the Synods of Wesel (1568), Emden (1571), Dort (1578), the Hague (1586), as well as the great Synod of Dort. Elders and deacons were required to subscribe and adhere to it, and ministers were required to preach on a section of the Catechism each Sunday to increase the often poor theological knowledge of the church members. In many Dutch Reformed denominations this practice continues.

[6] Some put the number at forty-five.

[7] **Synod of Dort** – also known as the Synod of Dordt or the Synod of Dordrecht. "Dort" was a contemporary colloquial English term for the town of Dordrecht and is still the local colloquial

pronunciation of the name.

[8] The Reformed churches of today are a group of Protestant denominations characterized by Calvinist doctrines. They are descended from the Swiss Reformation that soon spread to the rest of Northern Europe. They were the major Protestant counterpart to the Lutheran churches. Several of these national or specific language based churches later expanded to worldwide denominations. There are now several hundred different Reformed denominations. Original reformed doctrine continues to be reflected in the official confessions, but in some cases is no longer necessarily typical of these churches.

The first Reformed churches were established in Europe after 1519 and were part of the Protestant Reformation. Reformed doctrine is expressed in various confessions, some of the confessions still commonly in use are: French Confession (1559), Scots Confession (1560), and the Three Forms of Unity [Heidelberg Catechism (1563), Belgic Confession (1566), Canons of Dordrecht (1619)].

[9] Thomas Scott (1747-1821), *The Articles of the Synod of Dort*, Sprinkle Publications, 1993 reprint, 5.

[10] **infralapsarian** – pertaining to the theory that posits a logical (not temporal) order in the decrees of God, according to which the decrees to create man and to permit him to fall precede the decree of election unto salvation—hence *infra-* or *sub-lapsarianism*, "under the fall" (Latin, *lapsus*).

[11] **supralapsarian** – pertaining to the theory that the decree of election came *before* or *above* (Latin, *supra*) the decrees to create man and to permit his fall.

[12] **Pelagius** (c. 354-c. 420) – British monk, who argued for a totally free human will to do good and held that divine grace was bestowed in relation to human merit. His views were condemned as heresy by the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 431).

[13] **Stoicism** – was a school of Hellenistic philosophy founded in Athens by Zeno of Citium in the early 3rd century BC. The Stoics considered destructive emotions to be the result of errors in judgment, and that a sage, or person of "moral and intellectual perfection," would not suffer such emotions. Stoic doctrine was a popular and durable philosophy, with a following throughout Greece and the Roman Empire, from its founding until the closing of all philosophy schools in A.D. 529 by order of the Emperor Justinian I, who perceived their pagan character to be at odds with the Christian faith.

[14] **Manicheism** – was one of the major Iranian Gnostic religions, originating in Sassanid Persia. Manichaeism taught an elaborate cosmology describing the struggle between a good, spiritual world of light, and an evil, material world of darkness. Through an ongoing process which takes place in human history, light is gradually removed from the world of matter and returned to the world of light from which it came. When Christians first encountered Manichaeism, they deemed it a heresy, since it had originated in a heavily Gnostic area of the Persian Empire. Augustine of Hippo (A.D. 354-430) converted to Christianity from Manichaeism, in the year 387. This was shortly after the Roman Emperor Theodosius I had issued a decree of death for Manichaeans in A.D. 382 and shortly before he declared Christianity to be the only legitimate religion for the Roman Empire in 391. According to Augustine's Confessions, after nine or ten years of adhering to the Manichaean faith as a member of the group of "hearers", he became a Christian and a potent adversary of Manichaeism.

[15] **Libertinism** – a term used in theology to refer to one who puts no check on indulgence of fleshly lusts, rejecting all standards of morality.

[16] **Mohammedanism** – is a term for those who follow the Islamic prophet Muhammad.

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