

Introduction to the Canons of Dort

by Jim Ellis 1995

The convocation and proceedings of the Synod of Dort (1618- 1619) may be considered "among the most interesting events of the seventeenth century. The Westminster Assembly was indeed more immediately interesting to British and American Presbyterians, yet the Synod of Dort had a species of importance peculiar to itself and altogether pre-eminent. It was not merely a meeting of select divines of a single nation, but a convention of the Calvinistic world, to bear testimony against a rising and obtrusive error; to settle a question in which all the Reformed churches of Europe had an immediate and deep interest. The question was, whether the opinions of Arminius, which were then agitating so many minds, could be reconciled with the confession of the Belgic churches," ^1. The following is a brief introduction to the theological conflict which occurred in Holland during the early 1600's and some background comments regarding the Synod which will help provide an historical context for the reading of the Canons of Dort.

In 1610, just one year after the death of Dutch seminary professor James Arminius, five articles of faith were drawn up by his followers. The Arminians, as they came to be called, presented these five doctrines to the State of Holland in the form of a "Remonstrance", i.e. a protest. The Arminian party saw their teaching as an improvement over the perceived harshness of some of the Calvinistic doctrines of the Churches of Holland. They insisted that the Belgic Confession of faith and the Heidelberg Catechism (the official doctrinal position of the Churches of Holland) be revised to reflect the doctrinal perspective of the Remonstrance.

J. I. Packer summarizes the Arminian doctrine as follows: "The theology contained in the Remonstrance stemmed from two philosophical principles: first, since the Bible regards faith as a free and responsible human act, it cannot be caused by God, but is exercised independently of Him; second, since the Bible regards faith as obligatory on the part of all who hear the gospel, the ability to believe must be universal. Hence they maintained, Scripture must be interpreted as teaching the following [five] positions: (1) Man is never so completely corrupted by sin that he cannot savingly believe the gospel when it is put before him, nor (2) is he ever so completely controlled by God that he cannot reject it. (3) God's election of those who shall be saved is prompted by His foreseeing that they will, of their own accord, believe. (4) Christ's death did not ensure the salvation of anyone, for it did not secure the gift of faith to anyone (there is no such gift); what it did was rather to create the possibility of salvation for everyone if they believe. (5) It rests with believers to keep themselves in a state of grace by keeping up their faith; those who fail here fall away and are lost. Thus, Arminianism made man's salvation depend ultimately on man himself, saving faith being viewed throughout as man's own work, not God's in him," ^2

The opinions set forth by the Arminians were not new, in fact substantially the same views had been taught long before Arminius appeared on the scene. The doctrine of Cassian in the fifth century, commonly called Semi-Pelagianism, was almost exactly the same system. It should be remembered that just as Augustine had Pelagianism condemned at the Council of Ephesus in the year 431, so Semi Pelagianism was condemned at the Synod of Orange in 529 A.D. Semi Pelagianism, however, never died. It continued in the church in latent forms, variations of which eventually became the common understanding in the Roman church. Now this revived Semi Pelagian doctrine, under the name Arminianism, was threatening the protestant churches of the Reformation.

A national Synod was called by the States-General of Holland to meet in the city of Dordrecht (or Dort), for the purpose of examining the views of the Arminians in light of Scripture. It was originally intended that this Synod be formed of delegates from the Belgic churches only. But the controversy was also of great interest to the churches and secular commissioners in the surrounding countries as it had been the subject of growing concern for several years. At the pointed request of James I, King of England, it was determined to invite eminent men from foreign churches to sit and vote in the Synod.

This great synod convened on November 13, 1618 consisting of 39 pastors and 18 ruling Elders from the Belgic churches, 5 professors from the universities of Holland, 19 delegates from the Reformed churches in Germany and Switzerland, and 5 professors and bishops from Great Britain. France was also invited but did not attend. The Synod was thus constituted of 86 voting members in all. There were 154 formal sessions and many side conferences held during the six months that the Synod met to consider these matters. The last session of the Synod was held on May 9, 1619. Thomas Scott notes that it was some time before the delegates of the Remonstrants, or Arminian party, made their appearance. By his account, it was "the 22nd session of the Synod before Episcopius and his 12 colleagues, who had been summoned for this purpose, presented themselves to make their explanation and defense. In undertaking this task, they manifested the same disposition to delay, to elude inquiry, and to throw obstacles in the way of every plan of proceeding that was proposed. 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; but that, as 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," ^3.

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 they were reasoned with and urged to come and scripturally defend 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.

"The Synod gave a very close examination to the 'five points' which had been advanced by the Remonstrants, and compared the teaching in them with the testimony of Scripture. Failing to reconcile that teaching with the Word of God, . . . they unanimously rejected them. They felt however, that a mere rejection was not sufficient. It remained for them to set forth the true Calvinistic teaching in relationship to those matters which had been called into question. This they proceeded to do, embodying the Calvinistic position in five chapters which have ever since been known as "the five points of Calvinism" ^4.

"It will undoubtedly seem strange to many that the Synod of Dort rejected as heretical the five doctrines advanced by the Arminians, because these doctrines have gained wide acceptance in the modern church. In fact, they are seldom questioned today. But the vast majority of the Protestant theologians of that day took a much different view of the matter. They maintained that the Bible set forth a system of doctrine quite different from that advocated by the Arminian party. Salvation was viewed by the Synod as a work of grace from beginning to end. In no sense did they believe

that the sinner saved himself or contributed to his salvation. Adam's fall had completely ruined the race. All men were by nature spiritually dead and their wills were in bondage to sin and Satan. The ability to believe the gospel was itself a gift from God, bestowed only upon those whom He had chosen to be the objects of His unmerited favor. It was not man, but God, who determined which sinners would be shown mercy and saved." ^5. This, in essence, is what the members of the Synod understood the Bible to teach, and that which the Canon's of Dort articulate in a powerful way.

^1. Thomas Scott, *The Articles of the Synod of Dort*, Sprinkle Publ., 1993 reprint, p.5.

^2. J. I. Packer, *Introductory Essay to John Owen's Death of Death in the Death of Christ*, p.4.

^3. Scott, *op. cit.*, p.39.

^4. Steel and Thomas, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, P&R, 1963, p. 14, quoting Ben A. Warburton.

^5. Steel and Thomas, *ibid.*, p. 15.

THE CANONS OF DORT

CHAPTER 1

Divine Election and Predestination

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 1. 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 silenced and the whole world held accountable to God." (Rom 3:19). And: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," (Rom 3:23). And: "For the wages of sin is death." (Rom 6:23).

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 2. But in this the love of God was manifested, that He "sent his one and only Son into the world, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (1 John 4:9, John 3:16).

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 3. And that men may be brought to believe, God mercifully sends messengers of this 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. For "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?" (Rom 10:14-15)

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 4. The wrath of God abides upon those who believe not this gospel. But such as receive it and embrace Jesus the Savior with 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.

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 5. 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: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8). Likewise: "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him" (Phil 1:29).

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 6. 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" (Acts 15:18). "who works out everything in conformity with the purpose 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 obstinacy. 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 to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation.

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 7. 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 the 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 "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves." (Eph 1:4-6). And elsewhere: "And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified." (Rom 8:30).

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 8. 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 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).

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 9. This election was not founded upon foreseen faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition in man, as the prerequisite cause or condition of which it depended; but men are chosen unto faith and unto 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: "For he chose us (not because we were, but) to be holy and blameless in his sight." (Eph 1:4).

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 10. 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: "Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad-in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls-she (Rebekah) was told, 'The older will serve the younger.' Just as it is written: 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.'" (Rom 9:11- 13). "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48).

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 11. 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.

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 12. 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 of God, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc.

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 13. The sense and certainty of this election afford the children of God with 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 a love towards them. The consideration of this doctrine of election is so far from encouraging laxity 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 willful trifling with the grace of election, in those who refuse to walk in the ways of the elect.

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 14. As the doctrine of 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 (Acts 20:27; Rom 11:33f; 12:3; Heb 6:17f).

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 15. 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.

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 16. Those in whom a living faith in Christ, and 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.

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 17. 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; Acts 2:39; 1 Cor 7:14).

CHAPTER 1: ARTICLE 18. To those who murmur at the free grace of election and the just severity of reprobation we answer with the apostle "But who are you, O man, to talk back to God?" (Rom 9:20), and quote the language of our Savior: "Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own?" (Matt 20:15). And therefore, with holy adoration of these mysteries, we exclaim in the words of the apostle: "Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 'Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?' 'Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?' For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen." (Rom 11:33-36).

Rejection of Errors

The true doctrine concerning election and reprobation having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:

CHAPTER 1: PARAGRAPH 1. 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, 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 revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. (John 17:6). "and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. (Acts 13:48)". And "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. (Eph 1:4)."

CHAPTER 1: PARAGRAPH 2. 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: "And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. (Rom 8:30)."

CHAPTER 1: PARAGRAPH 3. 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, that act of faith which from its very nature is undeserving, as well as it 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 has saved us and called us to a holy life, not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time (2 Tim 1:9)."

CHAPTER 1: PARAGRAPH 4. Who teach: That in the election unto faith this condition is beforehand demanded that man should use the light of nature 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, and is opposed to the doctrine of the apostle when he writes: "All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature children of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in sins (it is by grace you have been saved). And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one can boast (Eph 2:3-9)."

CHAPTER 1: PARAGRAPH 5. 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 by works but by him who calls (Rom 9:12)." "And all who were appointed for eternal life believed (Acts 13:48)." "For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight (Eph 1:4)." "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name (John 15:16)." "And if by grace, then it is no longer by works (Rom 11:6)." "This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son (1 John 4:10)."

CHAPTER 1: PARAGRAPH 6. 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 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 (Matt 24:24), that Christ does not lose those whom the Father gave him (John 6:39), and that God also glorified those whom he foreordained, called, and justified (Rom 8:30).

CHAPTER 1: PARAGRAPH 7. Who teach: That there is in this life no fruit and no consciousness of the unchangeable elect 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; who according to Christ's admonition rejoice with his disciples that their names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20); who also place the consciousness of their election over against the fiery darts of the devil, asking: "Who will bring any charge against God's elect? (Rom 8:33)."

CHAPTER 1: PARAGRAPH 8. 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 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: "God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden (Rom 9:18)." And also this: "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them (Mat 13:11)." Likewise: "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure (Mat 11:25-26)."

CHAPTER 1: PARAGRAPH 9. 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: "To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet the Lord set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today (Deu 10:14-15)." And Christ said: "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes (Mat 11:21)."

CHAPTER 2**The Death of Christ, and the Redemption of Men thereby**

CHAPTER 2: ARTICLE 1 . 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.

CHAPTER 2: ARTICLE 2. 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.

CHAPTER 2: ARTICLE 3. 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.

CHAPTER 2: ARTICLE 4. This death is of such infinite value and dignity because the person who submitted to it was not only truly and perfectly a holy man, 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.

CHAPTER 2: ARTICLE 5. 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.

CHAPTER 2: ARTICLE 6. 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.

CHAPTER 2: ARTICLE 7. 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.

CHAPTER 2: ARTICLE 8. 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.

CHAPTER 2: ARTICLE 9. 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 may always be 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 Errors

The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:

CHAPTER 2: PARAGRAPH 1. 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. (John 10:15, 27)." And the prophet Isaiah says concerning the Savior: "Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand (Isa 53:10)." Finally, this contradicts the article of faith according to which we believe that there is a church of God.

CHAPTER 2: PARAGRAPH 2. 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 "Jesus has become the guarantee of a better covenant that is a new covenant ..." and that "it never takes effect while the one who made it is living. (Heb 7:22; 9:15, 17)."

CHAPTER 2: PARAGRAPH 3. Who teach: That Christ by His satisfaction merited neither salvation itself for any one, 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 the death of Christ, in no way acknowledge that most important fruit or benefit thereby gained, and bring again out of hell the Pelagian error.

CHAPTER 2: PARAGRAPH 4. 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, in as much 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 came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, 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.

CHAPTER 2: PARAGRAPH 5. 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 opposes Scripture which teaches that we are by nature children of wrath (Eph 2:3).

CHAPTER 2: PARAGRAPH 6. Who use the difference between meriting and appropriating, to the end that they may instill into the minds of the imprudent and inexperienced this teaching that God, as far as He is concerned, has willed to apply to all equally the benefits gained by the death of Christ; and 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 pretend that they present this distinction in a sound sense, seek to instill into the people the destructive poison of Pelagianism.

CHAPTER 2: PARAGRAPH 7. 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 for me (Gal 2:20)." Likewise: "Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ Jesus who died (Rom 8:33-34)", namely, for them; and the Savior who says: "I lay down my life for the sheep (John 10:15)." And: "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends (John 15:12-13)."

CHAPTER 3-4

The Corruption of Man, and the Manner of His Conversion to God

CHAPTER 3-4: ARTICLE 1. 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 obstinate in heart and will, and impure in his affections.

CHAPTER 3-4: ARTICLE 2. 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.

CHAPTER 3-4: ARTICLE 3. 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.

CHAPTER 3-4: ARTICLE 4. There remain, however, in man since the fall, the glimmerings of natural light, whereby he retains some knowledge of God, and 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 light 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 light, such as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted and hinders in unrighteousness, which by doing he becomes inexcusable before God.

CHAPTER 3-4: ARTICLE 5. In the same light are we to consider the law of the decalogue, delivered by God to His peculiar people, the Jews, by the hands of Moses. 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 his misery, but, being weak through the flesh, leaves the transgressor under the curse, and man cannot by this law obtain saving grace.

CHAPTER 3-4: ARTICLE 6. What, therefore, neither the light of nature 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 gospel 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.

CHAPTER 3-4: ARTICLE 7. This mystery of His will God reveals 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 light of nature, 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.

CHAPTER 3-4: ARTICLE 8. As many as are called by the gospel are sincerely 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. CHAPTER 3-4: ARTICLE 9. 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 many 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, do not allow it 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 (Matt 13).

CHAPTER 3-4: ARTICLE 10. 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.

CHAPTER 3-4: ARTICLE 11. But when God accomplishes His good pleasure in his 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.

CHAPTER 3-4: ARTICLE 12. 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.

CHAPTER 3-4: ARTICLE 13. Believers in this life cannot fully comprehend the manner of this operation. 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.

CHAPTER 3-4: ARTICLE 14. 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 do, works in man both to will and to believe, and indeed He works all in all.

CHAPTER 3-4: ARTICLE 15. 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 way to conduct ourselves towards them with haughtiness, as if we had made ourselves to differ.

CHAPTER 3-4: ARTICLE 16. 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.

CHAPTER 3-4: ARTICLE 17. As the almighty operation of God whereby He brings forth and supports this our natural life does not exclude but requires the use of means by which God in 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 way 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 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 manifest 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 Errors

The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:

CHAPTER 3-4: PARAGRAPH 1. 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: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned (Rom 5:12)." And: "The judgment followed one sin and brought condemnation (Rom 5:16)." And "the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23)."

CHAPTER 3-4: PARAGRAPH 2. 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 Eph. 4:24, where he declares that it consists in righteousness and holiness, which undoubtedly belong to the will.

CHAPTER 3-4: PARAGRAPH 3. 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 affection; and that, these hindrances having been removed, the will can then bring into operation its natural 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 beyond cure (Jer 17:9)"; and of the apostle: "All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts (Eph 2:3)."

CHAPTER 3-4: PARAGRAPH 4. 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: "you were dead in your transgressions and sins (Eph 2:1, 5)." And: "every inclination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil all the time. (Gen 6:5, 8:21)." Moreover, to hunger and thirst for deliverance from misery and for life, and to offer unto God the sacrifice of a broken spirit, is peculiar to the regenerate and those that are called blessed (Ps 51:17; Matt 5:6).

CHAPTER 3-4: PARAGRAPH 5. 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 has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel. He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws (Psa 147:19-20)." "In the past, he let all nations go their own way (Acts 14:16)." And: "Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to (Acts 16:6-7)."

CHAPTER 3-4: PARAGRAPH 6. 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: ""This is the covenant I

will make with the house of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts (Jer 31:33)." And: "For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants (Isa 44:3)." And: "God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us (Rom 5:5)." This is also repugnant to the constant practice of the Church, which prays by the mouth of the prophet thus: "Restore me, and I will return (Jer 31:18)."

CHAPTER 3-4: PARAGRAPH 7. Who teach: That the grace whereby we are converted to God is only a gentle persuasion, 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 man's 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 benefits, while Satan promises only temporal good. 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 Spirit's working in the conversion of man, as in Ezekiel: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh (Ezek 36:26)."

CHAPTER 3-4: PARAGRAPH 8. Who teach: That God in the regeneration of man does not use His omnipotence to potently and infallibly bend man's will to faith and conversion; but that all the works of grace having been employed which God uses to convert man, man may yet so resist God and the Holy Spirit, when God intends man's 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 man's power to be regenerated or not.

For this is nothing less than the denial of all that 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 the strength of his might (Eph 1:19); and that God fulfills every desire of goodness and every work of faith with power (2 Th 1:11); and that "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3)."

CHAPTER 3-4: PARAGRAPH 9. 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: "It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy (Rom 9:16)." Likewise: "For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it (1 Cor 4:7)?" And: "for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose (Phil 2:13)."

CHAPTER 5

The Perseverance of the Saints

CHAPTER 5: ARTICLE 1. 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.

CHAPTER 5: ARTICLE 2. 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.

CHAPTER 5: ARTICLE 3. By reason of these remains of indwelling sin, and also because 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.

CHAPTER 5: ARTICLE 4. 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 moved by God that they cannot depart in some particular instances from the guidance of divine grace, and be seduced by the lusts of the flesh and obey them. Wherefore they must continually watch and pray, lest they should be led into temptation. Which when they do not, they may be not only be carried away by the flesh, the world, and Satan into great and heinous sins; but they are sometimes drawn into these evils by the righteous permission of God. This, the lamentable fall of David, Peter, and other saints described in Holy Scripture, demonstrates.

CHAPTER 5: ARTICLE 5. 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.

CHAPTER 5: ARTICLE 6. 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 does He allow 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 plunge themselves into everlasting destruction.

CHAPTER 5: ARTICLE 7. 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.

CHAPTER 5: ARTICLE 8. 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.

CHAPTER 5: ARTICLE 9. 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.

CHAPTER 5: ARTICLE 10. 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.

CHAPTER 5: ARTICLE 11. 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 (1 Cor 10:13), and by the Holy Spirit again inspires them with the comfortable assurance of persevering.

CHAPTER 5: ARTICLE 12. 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.

CHAPTER 5: ARTICLE 13. 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 (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.

CHAPTER 5: ARTICLE 14. 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.

CHAPTER 5: ARTICLE 15. 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 Errors

The true doctrine having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those:

CHAPTER 5: PARAGRAPH 1. 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 the intercession of Christ: "What Israel sought so earnestly it did not obtain, but the elect did. The others were hardened (Rom 11:7)." Likewise: "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died-more than that, who was raised to life-is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ (Rom 8:32-35)?"

CHAPTER 5: PARAGRAPH 2. 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 furnished to us, even then it ever depends on the pleasure of the will whether it will persevere or not.

For this idea contains outspoken Pelagianism, and while it would make men free, it make 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 "will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 1:8)."

CHAPTER 5: PARAGRAPH 3. 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 of justification and regeneration, and the continued preservation by Christ, contrary to the expressed words of the apostle Paul: "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him (Rom 5:8-9)." And contrary to the apostle John: "No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God (1 John 3:9)." And also contrary to the words of Jesus Christ: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all ; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand (John 10:28-29)."

CHAPTER 5: PARAGRAPH 4. 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 anyone born of God does not

continue to sin (meaning a sin of that character); the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him (1 John 5:18)."

CHAPTER 5: PARAGRAPH 5. 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: "neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:39)." And John declares: "Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us (1 John 3:24)."

CHAPTER 5: PARAGRAPH 6. Who teach: That the doctrine of perseverance and the assurance 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: "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure (1 John 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.

CHAPTER 5: PARAGRAPH 7. 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 Matt 13:20, Luke 8:13, and in other places, evidently notes, beside 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 on 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.

CHAPTER 5: PARAGRAPH 8. 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: "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable (1 Pet 1:23)."

CHAPTER 5: PARAGRAPH 9. Who teach: That Christ has in no place prayed that believers should infallibly continue in faith. For the contradict Christ Himself, who says: "I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail (Luke 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, protect them by the power of your name," and "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one (John 17:11, 15, 20)."

CONCLUSION

This is the clear, simple, and sincere declaration of the orthodox doctrine concerning the five articles which have been disputed in the Belgic Churches, and a rejection of the errors by which they have for some time been troubled. The Synod judges this doctrine 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 it by no means became, have violated all truth, equity, and charity, in wishing to persuade the public of the following perversion:

Namely, "That the doctrine of the Reformed Churches concerning predestination, with its associated points, by its own genius and necessary tendency, leads the minds of men away from all piety and religion; that it is an opiate administered by the flesh and the devil; the stronghold of Satan, where he lies in wait for all, and from which he wounds multitudes, and mortally pierces many with darts both of despair and security; that this same doctrine makes God the author of sin, unjust, tyrannical, hypocritical; that it is nothing more than interpolated Stoicism, Manicheism, Libertinism, Turcism; 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 conversely that, in this Reformed doctrine of predestination, 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 this same doctrine teaches that God, by a mere arbitrary act of his will, without the least respect or view to any sin, has predestined 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 they go on to suggest many other things of the same kind which the Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge but detest with their whole soul.

Wherefore, this Synod of Dort, in the name of the Lord, entreats as many as reverently call upon the name of our Savior Jesus Christ to judge the faith of the Reformed Churches, not from the slander which on every side is heaped upon it, nor from the private expressions of a few among ancient and modern teachers, often dishonestly quoted, or corrupted and taken 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 slanderers 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 suspect 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 slanderers of sound doctrine, and endow 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.
