

The Canons of Dordrecht

I. Title of Introduction:

"The Judgment of the National Synod of the Reformed Churches of the National Synod of the Reformed Churches of the United Netherlands held in Dordrecht in the year 1618-1619, which was assisted by many excellent theologians of the Reformed Churches of Great Britain, the Electoral Palatinate, Hesse, Switzerland, Wetteraw, Geneva, Bremen, and Emden, over the well-known five heads of doctrine, concerning which difference appeared in the Reformed Churches of said United Netherlands. Expressed on May 6, 1619."

II. Brief History of the Rise of Arminianism in the Netherlands:

A. Jacob Harmesen (Jacobus Arminius)--1560-1609. He was born at Oudewater in 1560. Early in life he was left fatherless, but won the favor of two Reformed ministers, Taffin and Petrus Bertius, who sponsored his education at the then small Academy of Leyden. Upon completion of his studies here at the age of 21, he went to the University of Geneva where he came under the influence of Beza, the successor of John Calvin. Beza was lecturing on the Epistle of the Romans through which Arminius became well acquainted with the Reformed views on Election and Reprobation. These teachings, however, he never really absorbed. Leaving Geneva he made a short visit to Italy and in 1587 returned to the Netherlands and became minister of the church in Amsterdam.

It was already during his ministry here that suspicions concerning his orthodoxy began to rise. His greatest opponent was the able Gomarus, a champion of Supralapsarianism and a powerful figure in the Reformed Churches of that day. He was also opposed by the able and brilliant Pancius, his fellow minister in the church of Amsterdam. But Arminius was a brilliant scholar, a well-educated man, had a pleasing personality, was refined in his manners and using deceit and underhanded methods, soon won a large following. His abilities were recognized and so he was chosen to refute the wrong views of Coornhert on Predestination and to defend the teachings of his former teacher, Beza. As he studied the matter, however, he more and more leaned toward the views of his opponent, Coornhert, until he came to the conclusion the "truth of Predestination must be entirely reconstructed."

Amazing it is that in the midst of this trouble, Arminius received the appointment as Professor of Theology at the University of Leyden. This was in 1602. Of course, this appointment was challenged by men like Gomarus and others, but he received it nevertheless. Two things account for this: First, the university was then not under ecclesiastical but under state control. Secondly, Arminius was crafty and deceitful and thus succeeded temporarily to quiet the fears of others concerning his orthodoxy. From this position, Arminius furthered the cause that bears his name until his death in 1609. His views he instilled into the students, future ministers, not only in the classroom, but also in private meetings with them in his home. And so Arminianism gained a firm footing in the churches of the Netherlands.

B. 1609-1618. The death of Arminius did not noticeably affect the Arminian movement. Another able leader named Uitenbogaert took the helm. He organized the party and in 1610 called a general meeting in the city of Gouda where the well-known document called "The Articles of the Remonstrants" was drawn up in which with cunning craftiness the views of the Arminians are set forth. We quote them in full here because we must remember that our Canons are the contra-articles which the Reformed Synod of Dordrecht drew up.

"THE REMONSTRANCE"

Article I

"That God, by an eternal, unchangeable purpose in Jesus Christ His Son before the foundation of the world, hath determined, out of a fallen, sinful race of men, to save in Christ, for Christ's sake, and through Christ, those who, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, shall believe on this his Son Jesus, and shall persevere in this faith and obedience of faith, through this grace, even to the end; and, on the other hand, to leave the incorrigible and unbelieving in sin and under wrath, and to condemn them as alienate from Christ, according to the word of the gospel in John 3:36 - "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him', and according to other passages of Scripture also."

Article II

"That, agreeably thereunto, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, died for all men and

for every man, so that he has obtained for them all, by his death on the cross, redemption and the forgiveness of sins; yet that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins except the believer, according to the word of the Gospel of John 3:16, 'God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life'. And in the First Epistle of John 2:2, 'And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.'

Article III

"That man has not saving grace (faith) of himself, nor of the energy of his free will, inasmuch as he is in the state of apostacy and sin, can of and by himself neither think, will, nor do anything that is truly good (such as saving faith eminently is); but that it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through his Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and all his powers, in order that he may rightly understand, think, will, and effect what is truly good, according to the Word of Christ, John 15:5 'Without me ye can do nothing'."

Article IV

"That this grace of God is the beginning, continuance, and accomplishment of all good, even to this extent, that the regenerate man himself without prevenient or assisting, awakening, following and co-operative grace can neither think, will, nor do good, nor withstand any temptations to evil; so that all good deeds or movements, that can be conceived, must be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ. But as respecting the mode of the operation of this grace, it is not irresistible, inasmuch as it is written concerning many, that they have resisted the Holy Ghost. Acts 7 and elsewhere in many places."

Article V

"That those who are incorporated into Christ by a true faith, and have thereby become partakers of his life-giving Spirit, have thereby full power to strive against Satan, sin, the world, and their own flesh, and to win the victory; it being well understood that it is ever through the assisting grace of the Holy Ghost; and that Jesus Christ assists them through His Spirit in all temptations, extends to them his hand, and if only they are ready for the conflict, and desire his help, and are not inactive, keeps them from falling so that they, by no craft or power of Satan, can be misled nor plucked out of Christ's hands, according to the Word of Christ, John 10:28, 'Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.' But whether they are capable, through negligence, of forsaking again the first beginnings of their life in Christ (principle of their being in Christ), of again returning to this present evil world, of turning away from the holy doctrine which was delivered them, of losing a good conscience, of becoming devoid of grace, that must be more particularly determined out of the Holy Scripture, before we ourselves can teach it with the full persuasion of our minds."

We can refrain from entering into a detailed criticism of these articles at present as we will treat them with the Canons proper and the Rejection of Errors. However, the following, quoted from "The History of the Protestant Reformed Churches", by Rev. H. Hoeksema, is a concise evaluation of their content (pgs. 297-304):

Q. 14. "Could there be any objection to the doctrine expressed in the first proposition?"

A. Seemingly not. The superficial reader might easily accept this as sound Reformed truth. No doubt, the terminology of this proposition is calculated to deceive the minds of the imprudent and inexperienced just like the terminology of many a modern sermon and also of the Three Points. It seems to teach an eternal and unchangeable counsel of God and apparently it ascribes all the work of faith and salvation to the grace of the Holy Spirit."

Q. 15. "Do you mean to say, then, that in this first proposition the Remonstrants deny the Reformed doctrine of Predestination?"

A. I most certainly maintain this."

Q. 16. "But how can you sustain this position?"

A. By pointing out, that in this first proposition the Arminians or Remonstrants do not teach that God's Counsel is sovereign and independent, but contingent and dependent on the faith and unbelief of man. The objects of God's election are those that believe; the objects of reprobation are the incorrigible and unbelieving. This is identical with the last proposition of Arminius, that God's election and reprobation are determined by His foreknowledge of those that would and those that would not believe in Christ."

Q. 17. "How would you express the difference between this proposition and the Reformed faith sharply?"

A. Thus: according to the first proposition of the Remonstrance the counsel of God is determined by the faith and unbelief of man; according to the Reformed view, the counsel of God is the ultimate determining cause of faith and unbelief both."

Q. 22. "What is your objection to the second article of the Remonstrance?"

A. That it teaches the error of universal atonement, maintaining that Jesus Christ died for all and every man."

Q. 23. "But does not the article plainly restrict the actual fruit of the death of Christ to believers?"

A. It does, yet, while it also maintains that in Christ's and God's intention the suffering of the cross is for all and every man, it makes the cross of Christ of none effect for many. And again, determining cause of the effect or non-effect of the death of Christ is the will of man."

Q. 24. "Is this also a serious error?"

A. Most certainly; for, it necessarily implies the denial of the truth of vicarious atonement. Either, Christ's death is atoning so that it actually is the satisfaction of God's justice for all our sins, but then all for whom He died and rose are certainly justified and saved; or, by the death of Christ all for whom He died are not certainly justified and saved, but then His death cannot have been atoning. The doctrine that Christ died for all men is the beginning of Modernism."

Q. 26. "Is there any objectionable element in the third proposition?"

A. Not when it is considered all by itself. The truth of the total depravity of the natural man and of his total incapability of contributing anything to his own salvation, is certainly expressed in the strongest terms. Yet, this article and its strong language are deceptive as is evident as soon as it is read in the light of the preceeding propositions and of the article that immediately follows. For although the Remonstrants seem to teach that salvation must be solely the work of God and that the natural man without grace can do nothing that is truly good, yet, in fact they deny this, when they presently add that man must show himself worthy to receive this grace. The grace of God is not irresistible."

Q. 28 "What is the serious error of the fourth proposition?"

A. That it reduces the grace of God and the work of the Holy Spirit to a mere offer and an attempt to persuade the sinner to accept the offer. It is a denial of the efficacious character of the grace of God.

Q. 29 "Does the article not imply a contradiction?"

A. It does; for, on the one hand it asserts that the grace of God is the very beginning of all good; on the other hand it leaves to the natural man the power to will or not to will to resist or not to resist this grace of the Holy Spirit. But surely, to will the grace of God is very positively a good. If the grace of God is really the beginning of all good man can do, it cannot follow but must needs precede the will to receive it."

Q. "What then is this article in effect?"

A denial of the doctrine of total depravity. For, if man is really totally depraved by nature, so that he is wholly incapable of doing, thinking, or willing any good thing; if it is maintained that he is carnal and sold under sin, and that his mind is enmity against God, he surely cannot long for or will to receive the grace of God."

Q. 31. "Is there any relation between the denial of the sovereign character of God's decree of Predestination and the denial of the total depravity of the sinner?"

A. There is. The one demands the other. He that denies the doctrine of sovereign election and reprobation must also deny the total depravity of the natural man. If salvation is an offer, there must be left in the sinner to whom the offer is made the power to accept the offer. For, to offer any good thing to one whom we know that he cannot accept it, is mere mockery."

Q. "What is objectionable in the last article?"

A. That it constitutes a denial of the perseverance of the saints even unto the end, through the almighty grace of the Holy Spirit.

Q. 34. "But do not the Remonstrants leave the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints an open question?"

A. In the last part of the article they appear to leave this a matter open for debate, for they state that they are not fully persuaded in their own minds, whether the saints can fall away from grace. But in the first part of this proposition they clearly deny the certainty of the perseverance of believers."

Q. 35. "How do they do this?"

A. By saying that Christ will assist them through His Spirit and keep them from falling, if only they are ready for the conflict and desire His help and are not inactive. For, in this statement the grace of Christ whereby only the saints are able to persevere, is made dependent once more upon the will and desire and work of man. And the truth is, that their very readiness for the conflict and desire to receive the help of Christ is dependent upon the grace of God, which is always first."

Now then, we should not fail to notice that in these Articles the Arminians make a subtle attempt to sound Reformed and even use Scriptural and Reformed language to deny the very fundamental principles of the Reformed Truth. The enemy is very clever. Further, it will be evident that the exegesis of the texts quoted in these articles is very superficial and denies the fundamental rule of letting "Scripture interpret Scripture". This is characteristic of the foes of truth, and, therefore, necessitates our being always on our guard that we may hold fast and contend for that faith once delivered to the saints and so beautifully expressed in our Canons of Dordt.

C. The Synod of Dordrecht: We cannot give the details of this Synod here nor is that necessary. We note only that there were fifty seven delegates from the Netherlands and twenty-seven from other countries. The president of the Synod was Bogerman. The leader of the Arminians was Episcopius and the best known name among the Reformers was the staunch Gomarus. The great work of the Synod is its production of the Canons in which the Reformed Truth of fundamental doctrines is set forth overagainst the heresies of the Remonstrance.

The Canons: Questions!

1. What are "Standards" or "Confessions"?
2. Should a Church have Confessions? What is their value and purpose?
3. Do Confessions have the same authority as Scripture?
4. Do they not bind the conscience of the Christian?
5. Can confessions be altered? In what way?
6. Which are the Standards of the Reformed Churches?
7. What is the difference between the Christian Reformed and the Protestant Reformed Churches as to their Confessions?
8. What is the meaning of the word "Canon"?
9. What was the occasion of the formulation of these Canons of Dordt?
10. What are Pelagians? Arminians? Remonstrants? Contra-remonstrants?
11. How many chapters do the Canons contain? What is the subject of each?

FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE

12. What do you understand by Divine Predestination? By Election? By Reprobation?
13. Can you prove the doctrine of Election from the Bible? Reprobation?
14. Why does Chapter I begin with a statement of the sin of all men in Adam? Cf. Art. 1,
15. What, according to this first article is the standpoint of the Canons? Supra- or
Infralapsarian?
16. Of what does Article 2 speak?
17. Can men be saved outside of the sphere of the preaching of the Gospel?
18. To whom is the Gospel preached? (Art. 3)
19. Why is not the Gospel preached to all men? Why not only to elect?
20. What distinction is caused by the preaching of the Gospel? (Art. 4)
21. What is the significance of the preaching of the Gospel for the reprobate unbeliever?
22. Are children also saved by means of the preaching of the Gospel if they die before the
age of discretion?
23. What does it mean to receive and embrace Christ? (Art. 4)
24. Whose is the guilt of unbelief? Whence is the gift of faith? (Art. 5)
25. Why do some receive the gift of faith, others not? (Art. 6)
26. Which expressions in Art. 6 reveal the infra-lapsarian standpoint?

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27. In what way do men wrest the doctrine of predestination to their own destruction? (Art. 6) *1 Pet 3:16*
28. What is the unspeakable consolation of the doctrine of election to holy and pious souls? Who are these?
29. How does the infra-view appear in Article 7?
30. Which other terms beside "purpose" can you find in Scripture for the Counsel of God? *Eph 1:4, 5, 9, 11 Rom 11:5 Rom 8:29*
31. Enumerate the different elements in the definition in Art. 7.
32. Unto what blessings of grace did God elect His people? (Art. 7)
33. What does Art. 8 emphasize? Why?
34. What does Art. 9 teach and against whom is it directed?
35. What did the Arminians teach instead of "personal" election? (Art. 10)
36. What is said of the doctrine of election in Art. 11?
37. How may we come to a personal assurance of our own election? (Art. 11)
38. Which fruits especially may assure us that God hath chosen us to salvation? (Art. 12)
39. What should be the effect of the doctrine of election upon them that believe? (Art. 13) What is often alleged to be the effect?
40. Ought the doctrine of election to be preached? If so, how should it be done? (Art. 14)
41. What is the relation between the doctrine of election and other doctrines?
42. Of what doctrine does Art. 15 speak? What is its standpoint?
43. Does the doctrine of reprobation make God the author of sin? Art. 15
44. What is the purpose of reprobation? (Art. 15)
45. Who need not to be alarmed at the truth of reprobation? Who should? (Art. 16)
46. What does Art. 17 say about children that die in infancy?
47. Does the Bible teach anything definite with respect to this?
48. What should be our answer to them that murmur at the doctrine of election? (Art. 18)
49. To what should a believing contemplation of election and reprobation lead us? Why? (18)

SECOND HEAD OF DOCTRINE

50. With what subject does the second chapter of the Canons deal?
51. How is this subject related to that of the first chapter?
52. What, in general, is the teaching of the Arminians with respect to the atonement of Christ?
53. What attribute of God is mentioned in Art. 1 of this second chapter? Why?
54. What follows from the justice of God with respect to the only way in which we can be saved? (Art. 1)
55. Why cannot we ourselves make satisfaction for sin? (Art. 2)
56. Who then made satisfaction and how? (Art. 2)
57. What does it mean that Christ was made sin for us? What does it not mean? (Art. 2)
58. What is said of the death of the Son of God in Art. 3?
59. In what sense can we speak of the death of the Son of God? Did Christ die as to His Divine nature? (Art. 3)
60. How must we understand that the death of Christ was sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world? Did Christ suffer more than was necessary for the salvation of the elect? (3)
61. Why is the death of Christ of infinite value? (Art. 4)
62. Is the promise of the Gospel general or particular? (Art. 5)
63. How did the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924 interpret this promise? (Art. 5)
64. Is the preaching of this promise particular or general? How general and how particular is it? (Art. 5)
65. Is the command to repent and believe general or particular? (Art. 5)
66. In what sense, then, are many called by the Gospel? Art. 6
67. To what is their unbelief to be imputed? (Art. 6) Is this all that may be said of this in the light of Scripture?
68. To whom must the faith and deliverance of believers be attributed? (Art. 7)
69. What is the chief thought of Article 8?
70. Whom did God redeem through the blood of the cross (Art. 8). See also Canons II, B, 1, 5-7
71. What did Christ purchase by His death? (Art. 8.) See also II, B, 2-4
72. What does Article 9 teach?

THIRD AND FOURTH HEADS OF DOCTRINE

73. Of what two subjects do the third and fourth heads of doctrine treat?
74. How is the third head of doctrine related to the second?
75. How are the third and fourth heads of doctrine related to each other?
76. Which elements belong to the image of God according to Art. 1?

77. What became of this image of God according to Art. 1?
78. How does Art. 2 explain the depravity of the entire human race?
79. What is the Pelagian explanation of this general depravity?
80. Prove, against gainsayers, that original sin is sufficient to condemn man.
81. Prove that knowledge, righteousness, and holiness belonged to man's nature originally. B,2
82. Prove that through the fall, the will is corrupted. B,3
83. How corrupt did man become after the fall? Art. 3
84. Prove this corruption against opponents. B,4.
85. What, according to Art. 4, remains in man after the fall?
86. Why is not this remnant sufficient to bring man to saving knowledge of God?
Prove from Scripture.
87. Is this remnant sufficient to "civil righteousness"? Art. 4
88. What use did the Synod of the Christian Reformed Churches in 1924 make of Art. 4?
89. What then is so-called civil righteousness?
90. How must the case of Jehu be explained? (II Kings 10:29-31).
91. And how about the conversion of Nineveh?
92. Why cannot the law save man? (Art. 5)
93. Who, then, brings man to a saving knowledge of God? Art. 6
94. Through what means? (Art. 6)
95. Is God willing to convert all men? (B,5)
96. What is the difference between the Old and New Dispensations? Art. 7
97. What is the cause of the distinction between one people and another? (Art. 7)
98. Does Art. 8 speak of the external or of the internal calling?
99. What is the meaning of "unfeignedly" in Art. 8?
100. What mistake is there in our English translation of Art. 8?
101. To whom does God promise eternal life in the Gospel? Art. 8.
102. What is the meaning of "offered" in Art. 9?
103. Wherein lies the fault that the reprobate do not obey the calling of the ministry
of the Word? Art. 9
104. What is the Pelagian heresy according to Art. 10?
105. Who obey the call of the Gospel and through whose power? Art 10.
106. Is God ready to reveal Christ to all men?
107. What does God work in the heart of the elect sinner to convert him? Art. 11
108. What is the Arminian view of faith and conversion? B,6
109. How does the Arminian view the grace of God in conversion? B.6
110. What does Art. 12 teach concerning regeneration?
111. What do believers experience of this regeneration? Art. 13
112. What does it mean that faith is a gift of God? Art. 14
113. What is the Arminian teaching concerning regeneration? B,8
114. Is God Sovereign to bestow or not to bestow this grace? Art. 15
115. What is the condition of those on whom this grace is not bestowed? (Art. 15)
116. What must we believe of them that are confessing Christians? Art. 15.
117. What must our attitude be towards them that have not yet been called? Art. 15.
118. In regeneration does God treat us like "stocks and blocks"? Art. 16.
119. Does the work of grace exclude the work of means? Art. 17
120. What do Pelagians conceive of the relation of grace and free will? (B,9)

FIFTH HEAD OF DOCTRINE

121. Of what does the Fifth Head of Doctrine treat?
122. How is this doctrine related to the rest of the doctrines treated in the Canons?
123. How had the Arminians expressed themselves on this subject in their Articles of
the Remonstrance?
124. What does Art. 1 teach concerning the deliverance of the Christian from the
dominion of sin? Art. 1
125. What effect do the sins of infirmity have upon the saints? Art. 2.
126. By what power can the saints persevere? Art. 3
127. Do the saints never fail? Art. 4
128. What should be the attitude of the saint with regard to the danger of temptation? Art. 4.
129. What is the result of gross sins of the saints? Art. 5

130. What, however, can the saints never lose? Why not? Art. 6.
131. What does God's mercy work in the saints when they fall? Art. 7.
132. How do the Arminians present the perseverance of the saints? B,1
133. Is, according to the Arminians, perseverance the fruit of irresistible grace? B,2.
134. Did the Arminians teach that the saints can completely fall from grace? B,3
135. Can the believers sin the "sin unto death"? B,4
136. But what is the "sin unto death"?
137. Why is it impossible that the saints fall from grace? Art. 8
138. In what way are the saints assured of their preservation? A,9
139. What did the Arminians teach concerning this assurance? B,5.
140. From what factors does this assurance spring? Art. 10.
141. Are believers always sure of this preservation? Art. 11.
142. Of what is this assurance a source? Art. 12.
143. Does this assurance render the saints careless and licentious? Art. 13; and B,6.
144. What is the importance of the means of grace in this respect? Art. 14.
145. What is the attitude of the carnal mind overagainst this doctrine? Art. 15.
146. What is the attitude of the church overagainst it? Art. 15.
147. What is the difference between saving and temporal faith? B,5,7
148. Can one be regenerated more than once? B,5,8
149. Does Christ's intercessory prayer assure us of final preservation? B,9.

Answers

1. Standards or Confessions (creeds, rules of faith) are comprehensive summaries formulated under the authority of the church, officially adopted and approved to express what a church or group of churches believes to be the truth of the Word of God. They are called Standards or Symbols because they are criteria of what is gauged and confessed in the churches uniting around them and because they declare publicly the faith of those churches. They are called creeds or confessions from the viewpoint that their contents are the object of the faith of the churches.

2. A church should have confessions or standards chiefly because it is the calling of the church as well as the individual Christian to confess the name of Christ and the Truth as it is in Jesus, and to preserve the Truth in generations even over against every attack of false doctrine.

Their value and purpose: (a) As summaries of the truth revealed in Scripture they are an aid to the understanding of the Word of God. (b) They preserve the labor of the church of the past in expounding the Scripture under the guidance of the Spirit. (c) They are a basis of the unity among believers and churches who subscribe to them. (d) To instruct children. (e) To protect the church from error.

3. They certainly do not! Scripture has original authority; the Confessions have derived authority, that is, they have authority only because, and so far as they are based upon Scripture. Scripture has unlimited authority; that is, authority over the whole church. The authority of the Confessions is limited, that is, they are valid only for those that subscribe to the Confessions. Scripture has absolute authority, that is, it has the last word, the last court of appeal. Confessions have relative authority, that is, they are admittedly subject to change.

4. That the Confessions as such bind the conscience is an objection voiced against creeds by all their opponents, especially by the following: Unitarians, Socinians, Quakers, Rationalists, Undenominationalists, etc. They claim that creeds interfere with the free interpretation of the Bible, and bind the conscience of the believer by the doctrines and institutions of men. This would be true if the creed were placed above Scripture instead of being subordinated to it and if subscription to creeds were not the free choice and act of every believer. Now, however, it is different. Any Christian is at any time at full liberty, should his conscience so dictate, in the light of the Word of God, to break with a creed. This, however, also implies that he breaks with the church professing that creed.

5. Confessions certainly may be and are altered, either because the church develops and grows in the knowledge of the truth, or because the faith of the church must be defended against new errors that arise. With respect to the way, the following must be remarked: (a) The alter-

ation must be based upon Scripture. (b) It may be suggested or requested in the regular ecclesiastical way, that is, beginning at the consistory by any individual member or group of members. (c) The alteration must be officially approved and adopted by the largest representative gathering of the church. (d) The alteration must be submitted for approval to the church at large.

6. (a) The Confession of Faith called the Belgic Confession. (b) The Heidelberg Catechism. (c) The Canons of Dordrecht, or the Five Articles against the Arminians.

7. The difference is that the former acknowledge the three points. The former, since 1924, are bound to read the Confessions in the light of the Three Points adopted by the Synod of Kalamazoo. They call these three points interpretations and even so they have changed the Confessions. They are, however, additions and essentially corruptions of the Reformed Symbols.

8. It means "rule" (creeds). It may be applied to faith or life. When applied to a Confession, it is the "rule of faith". This is the meaning in the title: "Canons of Dordt."

9. The occasion was the teaching of Jacobus Harmson (James Arminius) and his followers in the last part of the sixteenth and the first part of the seventeenth centuries. A teaching which implied a denial of the teaching of Predestination and related doctrines.

10. (a) Pelagians: from the fifth century. They taught that man had a free will, denying original sin and total depravity. (b) Arminians: sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They taught that God's election and reprobation depended upon foreseen faith and unbelief and also maintained related errors. (c) Remonstrants: Arminians of the sixteenth century. Are called thus because a representative group of them in 1610 drew up a document which they called a Remonstrance in which they briefly set forth their belief in five formulas of doctrine. (d) Contra-remonstrants: a name applied to the Reformed Fathers of the sixteenth century because they formally answered and opposed the Remonstrants.

11. Five chapters: (a) Election; (b) Redemption through Christ; (c and d) the depravity of man and his conversion to God; (e) the Perseverance or Preservation of the saints.

12. (a) God's Counsel with respect to the eternal destiny of His moral and rational creatures. (b) It is the gracious and sovereign counsel of God whereby He ordained some to eternal life and glory; (c) It is the righteous and sovereign counsel of God whereby He ordained some to eternal damnation and punishment for their sin.

13. (a) Reprobation and Election: Rom. 9:13; 9:18; II Tim. 1:9; (b) Reprobation: Jude 1:4; Prov. 16:4; and many others.

14. The purpose of the authors of the Canons was to portray the fallen human race. The Canons present the doctrine of election as the decree of God according to which He chose some to eternal life out of the fallen human race. It is the purpose of the Canons to prove that God could justly so choose some because He might have left all in their sin and condemnation.

15. Supra holds that God's Counsel was made before the foundation of the earth. Infra places the counsel of election after the fall and creation. The standpoint of the Canons is Infra.

16. Of the manifestation of God's love in sending His Son into the world for the salvation of them that believe. The Canons proceed in the following: (a) Man is fallen; (b) God saves them that believe in His Son; (c) God gives faith to the elect only who are called to faith by the Gospel.

17. There is no Scriptural ground for the position that even in the heathen world outside of the sphere of the Gospel there is salvation. On the contrary we may surely believe that God will send His Gospel where He has His elect. The apostles were sometimes forbidden to preach the Gospel in a certain place, while in other places they had to labor at length because of God's elect there.

18. The Gospel is preached to whom, when, and where it pleases God. It is God that prepares to preach the Gospel. It is God, too, that in due time prepares and calls them to preach the Gospel.
19. The Gospel is not preached to all men, in fact, there are comparatively but few that ever heard it. Ultimately it must be preached to all nations, but it need not be preached to every individual. The positive reason for this is that the Gospel must be preached only in those places and at that time, where and when, God has His elect. The negative reason, that the whole world organically considered, may be condemned when its representatives to whom the Gospel is preached reject Christ. To condemn the world it is not necessary that Christ be preached to every individual reprobate. On the other hand, the Gospel is not to be preached to the elect only even if this were possible. God wills that also reprobates shall hear the Gospel in order that sin may become fully manifest as sin.
20. The distinction caused by the preaching of the Gospel is that between faith and unbelief. By the preaching of the Gospel both election and reprobation are brought to the surface. Fierce conflict is the result, a conflict that culminates in the wars between Christ and Antichrist. II Corinthians 2:14-17.
21. The significance of the preaching of the Gospel for the reprobate unbeliever is: (a) that it reveals the perverseness of the sinful nature; (b) that it hardens him in sin; (c) that it aggravates his guilt; (d) that it makes his condemnation and damnation more severe.
22. Children are not saved through the preaching of the Gospel if they die before the age of self-consciousness. Regeneration, therefore, in the narrow sense, in them is certainly immediate.
23. There is a difference between receiving the Gospel of Christ and embracing Him. Receiving Him rather looks at the matter from the viewpoint of that act of Christ whereby He imparts Himself to us and He prepares a place for Himself in our hearts. Embracing or accepting Him considers the same matter from the viewpoint of the activity of saving faith whereby we appropriate Him as our personal Redeemer. The former is always first.
24. The guilt of unbelief is of the sinner himself. The gift of faith is from God through His grace.
25. This is solely to be attributed to God's Sovereign election and reprobation. No other consideration enters in. It is on this point that Reformed people radically differ from all others. Faith is not an occasion; it is not the condition; it is not the cause of election; but it is the fruit. Only when this is maintained can absolute predestination be accepted as the truth.
26. The Infra standpoint is evidently taken from the following: "While He leaves the non-elect in His just judgment to their own wickedness and abudracy". "And the righteous discrimination of men equally involved in ruin". In the first expression the decree of reprobation is referred to as the leaving of the non-elect in their sin. This presupposes sin. God, therefore, saw in His decree the reprobate as fallen and the wicked presuppose sin before the decree is made. Both expressions are infra.
27. Men wrest the doctrine of predestination to their own destruction in Art. 6 is evidently taken from II Peter 3:16, "As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction." The ungodly do ~~this~~ (a) by answering against God, Rom. 9:19, for they manifest the spirit of rebellion; (b) by denying the truth and teaching free will. By doing this they set themselves against God's works.
28. The unspeakable consolation of this doctrine to pious souls is that they are assured that nothing can separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus their Lord, Rom. 8:37-39. This consolation, however, does not rest in a natural and a doctrinal assurance, for this reason that it is only for the holy and pious souls, that is, for those

believers that walk carefully sealing their faith and confession by a sanctified life and an earnest desire to walk in all good works. All believers are not always holy and pious souls, and even believers have this comfort only as they walk in holiness.

29. Article 7 states that election is the purpose of God whereby He hath chosen from the whole human race which had fallen through their own fault into sin. This is evidently the infra standpoint-- "God chose from a fallen race". The same is true of the following expression: "This elect number involved in one common misery God had decreed to give to Christ."

30. Note the following: "He hath chosen us...Eph. 1:4; Predestination...Eph. 1:5; The good pleasure of his will...Eph. 1:5; Mystery of His will...Eph. 1:9; The Counsel of His own will...Eph. 1:11; The purpose of God according to His election...Rom. 8; Election of His grace...Rom. 11:5; Foreknowledge...Rom. 8:29."

31. (a) It is the unchangeable purpose of God; (b) It is unconditional (mere grace); (c) It is sovereign (sovereign good pleasure); (d) It is from the whole human race; (e) It is unto redemption in Christ; (f) Christ is the chief elect, appointed the Head over all.

32. They were elected unto the following blessings: (a) to give to Christ; (b) to be saved (redeemed); (c) to be called and drawn into His communion; (d) faith; (e) justification; (f) sanctification; (g) preservation; (h) glorification.

33. Art. 8 emphasizes the oneness and unchangableness of the decree of election in opposition to the Arminians who spoke of various decrees of election, general and indefinite; particular and definite; and the latter conditional or unconditional unto faith and unto final glory according as God foresaw that men would believe or not believe; persevere or not persevere. The Arminians invented their theory because they wished to maintain that the ground and reason of election is in man. See B, 1,2.

34. That election is ultimate. It is the foundation and final ground of our salvation. All the blessings of grace flow from it as its only source. Election is not based on anything in man which God foresaw. The latter is the teaching of the Arminians or Remonstrants against whom Art. 89 is directed.

35. The Arminians teach instead of a "personal" election, that God had not elected a definite number of persons known unto him by name while He had rejected another number equally well known unto Him; but that election means that He had determined upon certain qualities or actions of men with which man must comply in order to be saved. He might have chosen many things such as the law and the righteousness of the law as conditions of salvation. Instead He chose faith as the quality that must characterize the group that is to be saved. IB, 3-5.

36. The decrees of God are rooted in God's Being Himself and are characterized by all God's attributes. As God is unchangeable, so are His decrees. But the Arminians, making God's decree dependent on changeable men, presented the matter of election as being itself changeable. (See I B C). Hence, Art. 11 emphasizes the unchangeableness of God's decree and of the number of the elect.

37. We may come to a personal assurance of our own election. The Arminians naturally deny that one could ever be certain of his election unto glory seeing it depends to the very last upon man's own will and faithfulness whether or not he is elected. But the Reformed fathers who taught that faith, sanctification, and perseverance, are not the ground but the fruit of election, maintained that the Christian does become assured of his election by observing in himself these fruits. And this is also the teaching of Scripture. II Peter 5:1-10 teaches that we make our calling and election sure in the way of faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, charity. For the Arminian denial, see 1,B,7.

38. The fruits that especially assure us that God has chosen us to salvation are enumerated in the article. We may notice that the article refers especially to inward spiritual fruits rather than to outward good works. And, again among these such as hunger and thirst after righteousness, filial fear and godly sorrow for sin are very important because the elect

christian remains sinful and imperfect until the day of his death. Hence, it is not perfection as a fruit but the inward spiritual attitude according to which we hate sin and long for perfection that may and does assure us of our election.

39. The effect of the doctrine of election upon us should be daily humiliation before God and an earnest desire to walk in all good works and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. This is the fruit of the faith of election and personal assurance regarding it. For it causes us to acknowledge our own insignificance and the greatness of God's mercy, and it is quite impossible that the doctrine of election should cause carelessness and carnal security in the elect. The canons correctly emphasize that such profanity is never found with them that really believe their personal election but only with wanton triflers that boast of election but know nothing of the conscious joy of the assured christian and have no desire at all to walk in the way of the elect.

40. The doctrine of election should be preached. Most certainly this doctrine must be preached and taught in the church. The Canons remark that the prophets declared the doctrine; Christ preached it; and so did the apostles. It does not then belong to the secret but to the revealed things. The article, however, emphasizes that it must be done with reverence and in the spirit of piety and discretion. A mere old discussion of the dogma of election is not preaching. It should be a spiritual testimony of the significance of which is realized by the people of God. Besides, it must be done at the proper time and place. That it is not a doctrine separated from the rest so that for instance, once a year a sermon is preached on the doctrine of predestination, but so that its proper connection with the whole of the truth becomes manifest. Nor must ~~it~~ be contradicted in the sermon which pretends to preach it. And the Canons ~~firmly~~ finally mention that ~~we~~ must not curiously investigate the secret ways of God. So, for instance, we must not attempt to discover our personal election except in the way which God has ordained. The secret things belong unto the Lord our God.

41. The relation is such that it is of central significance. By the acceptance or denial of election or reprobation, the entire system of the truth is effected. Just think of the doctrine of total depravity, of atonement, of regeneration, faith, conversion and the perseverance of the saints. Principally they all stand and fall according as we accept or deny the doctrine of predestination. Hence, our fathers were wont to refer to this doctrine as "the heart of the church".

42. Of the doctrine of reprobation. Its standpoint is decidedly *infra* as is evident from the expressions "passed by in the eternal decree" and "hath decreed to leave in the common misery". However, the expression "passed by in the decree" does not mean that the reprobate have no place in the decree, but that God sovereignly decreed not to save them.

43. The doctrine of reprobation does not make God the author of sin, as we have noticed before. Nevertheless, it does not merely present Him as the righteous judge and avenger of sin as Art. 15 has it, but also as absolutely sovereign performing all His good pleasure.

44. The purpose of reprobation is, according to Art. 15, the revelation of the justice of God and no doubt this is also true, but it is not the entire truth. There is also, according to Scripture, another purpose which must not be overlooked. It is that reprobation must serve the realization of election as the chaff serves the wheat.

45. Those who do not discern the work of God's grace but faithfully walk in the covenant way should not be alarmed at this doctrine. They have no reason to draw the conclusion that they belong to the reprobates even when they do not have sufficient light confidently to confess that they are of the elect. Neither must the imperfect children of God who are troubled by their sin draw such a conclusion but they that walk in sin and lead a carnal life can in that way never have any other testimony in their hearts than that of being reprobate.

46. Article 17 on the surface appears to teach that all children of believers that die in infancy are surely saved. However, it may be remarked: (1) that for such an absolute statement there would be no ground in Scripture. The Bible certainly teaches that not all the

the children of believers are elect. (Rom. 9:6-8) Only the children of the promise are counted for the seed. This must also be born in mind when we read in Scripture that the children of believers are holy. The Bible does not clearly teach that all the children of believers that die in infancy are saved. (2) That, however, upon closer consideration it is evident that Art. 17 does not make such a statement: (a) it does not speak of all believers but of godly parents. That is, parents that walk in the way of God's covenant, receive their children from Him in answer to their prayers, earnestly consecrates them to God and instructs them in the fear of the Lord, and (b) the article looks at the matter from the viewpoint of those parents and merely expresses that they have no reason to doubt the election and salvation of their infant children that have died.

47. Yes! The above is also true here. The examples of David and his child that was taken away and the child of Jereboam are not to the point in question. Jeroboam and his wife are not godly parents and not even believing parents; and David's expression evidently merely means that he shall also die as his child died. He is not thinking of the child's salvation. Hence, although we will not deny that such children are saved and surely believe that the elect among them are saved, yet, we would never assert without qualification that all such children are surely saved. It is our conviction that here we are dealing with a matter that strictly falls in the class of secret things that belong to the Lord our God.

48. Our answer to them that murmur should not be an attempt to defend God. For instruction in the truth of predestination we can turn to Scripture and clearly show that the doctrine is Biblical. But, if anyone understanding the doctrine, murmurs at it, opposes it by human arguments, we should do as the Scripture does in Rom. 9 and appeal to the high sovereignty of God over against mere man.

49. A believing contemplation of the truth of election and reprobation leads us on the one hand to humble ourselves with thankful hearts; on the other hand, to glorify and adore the living God. The glory of God is the manifestations of His divine, infinite goodness; to glorify Him is to know that infinite goodness and to express it. There is no doctrine that so maintains that God is all and man is nothing than the doctrine of sovereign election and equally sovereign reprobation. It leaves God as God and puts man in the dust.

50. The subject of the second chapter of the canons is the vicarious atonement of Christ.

51. The vicarious atonement is related to the subject of the first chapter as effect is related to cause. The two doctrines are inseparably connected. There can be no atonement if there is no election. The doctrine of election or the denial of this doctrine necessarily determines our view of the death of Christ.

52. As far as the character of Christ's death is concerned, the Arminians by no means argue among themselves, but they all maintain that in Christ and in God's intention, the death of the cross is for the salvation of men without distinction. A salvation which is to be realized on condition of the free choice of man.

53. From the attribute of God's justice it follows that there is no salvation possible except in the way of satisfaction, and satisfaction for him that has sinned can be made only by walking obediently in the way of death which is the punishment for sin. We cannot satisfy God's justice and atone for sin merely by suffering the punishments but only by bringing the sacrifices of that suffering from the motive of the love of God.

55. We cannot make satisfaction for sin: (a) because we constantly owe our all to God, and, therefore, would never be able to pay any debt to him; (b) because we are dead in sin and cannot, and will not, and cannot will to love God and bring to Him a sacrifice pleasing to Him. Yet, let us remember such must be the act of satisfaction. It must not merely be the bearing of the punishment, but the active, willing, and loving suffering of that punishment; (c) because we could never bear the infinite wrath of God and live.

56. God's only-begotten Son in the flesh was able to make this satisfaction because: (a) being the Son of God, He could bear the punishment and live; (b) being in the flesh, He could suffer that punishment which He could not suffer in His divine nature; (c) being without sin, He

could not suffer in His divine nature; (c) being without sin He could be perfectly obedient and love God in His suffering; (d) and having been ordained the Head of His people, He could die vicariously in their stead.

57. The expression that Christ was made sin for us is Biblical, II Cor. 5:21. It may not be understood in an ethical way. Ethically Christ was perfectly righteous and holy, nor was it possible for Him to fall away from His righteousness. He could not will to sin, the reason being that He was the person of the Son of God in the human nature. The expression does mean, however, that He stood judicially at the head of His sinful people. He was Head of the corporation of the elect, and as their Head He was responsible for them. And, secondly, it means that God treated Him as if He were the sinner among sinners by causing Him to bear our punishment.

58. Article 3 has three elements. It speaks of the death of the Son of God: (a) as the only and most perfect sacrifice; (b) as being of infinite value; (c) as being sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world.

59. Christ died not according to His divine nature, but according to His human nature. We must remember that Jesus is the eternal person of the Son of God. That, as such, He eternally dwells in the Divine nature; but that the second Person of the Holy Trinity in the fulness of time united Himself with the human nature. The divine nature cannot die because it is eternal life. The human nature was obligated to die if sin had been committed. Nevertheless, when Christ died it was not a human, but a divine person that tasted death in human nature.

60. Christ did not suffer more than was necessary for the salvation of the elect, nor does the question as to the extent of the application of Christ's death have anything to do with the depth and value of Christ's suffering. Christ died for the elect because He represented them. But, apart from this, it certainly may be said that the value of the death of Christ is infinite, and from that viewpoint, sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world.

61. Article 4 teaches that the death of the Son of God is of infinite value because: (a) it was the person of the Son of God that died in human nature. This is really the sole factor in the answer. The article, however, adds (b) because His death was attended with a sense of the wrath of God. Here we must remember that Christ personally could not be the object of God's anger. God loved Him even at the cross, both as His Son and as His Servant, but as the Mediator He fully tasted all the suffering and misery of the wrath of God against the sins of His people.

62. The promise of the Gospel, according to Art. 5, is plainly particular, not general in its contents. For it is the promise of eternal life, not to all without distinction, but definitely to them that believe in Christ crucified and since faith is the gift of God to the elect only, it is to these that the promise of the Gospel appears.

63. The Christian Reformed Church refer to this article as proof for the first point which teaches that the Gospel is a general offer of salvation, and that this general offer is grace on the part of God. Accordingly they interpret the promise of the Gospel as applying to all that hear the preachers. They, however, are not in harmony with Art. 5 which speaks of a promise to believers. It is, besides, Arminian, for a general offer must depend on man's will for its realization.

64. The preaching of the promise of the Gospel according to Art. 5 is to all to whom God in His good pleasure sends the Gospel. This is general in a sense, namely, in as far as it does not only reach the elect, but also some of the reprobates. It is, however, particular in as far as God in His good pleasure does not send the gospel to all men. In fact, comparatively few of all men that are and have been, have ever heard the Gospel.

65. The command to repent and believe is general. God cannot deny Himself and, therefore, he cannot abandon His demand that man shall love Him. All men must acknowledge God is good. This Word of God, however, is realized in two ways: it is realized in the elect when God gives them the grace of repentance so that they do love Him in the face of Christ Jesus. It is also

realized in an antithetical way in the damnation of the reprobate for these shall eternally attribute their sufferings and desolation to the rejection of God the fount of all good. Their remorse is the antithesis of the salvation by grace of the elect. It is the testimony of their own conscience that they should have turned because God is good.

66. That many, therefore, are called by the Gospel certainly does not mean that God offers them grace which they reject, but it means that as natural men, that is, in sin and darkness, they are brought into contact with the revelation of God in Christ and with the demands that they turn from their wicked way, repent, and acknowledge that God is good. All this, however, is not accompanied by that grace of God whereby the heart makes acceptance of the work of God in the saving sense.

67. The unbelief of those that do not accept the Gospel is according to Art. 6 not due to the insufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ, but must be imputed to themselves. We would say this is, of course, truly the guilt of unbelief in man. But it is not the final word in this matter. For the Scripture teach that in His righteous judgment God hardens whom He wills. Romans 9:18. Because of this hardening judgment of God, the Jews of Jesus' time could not believe; John 12:39-40. We must remember that also the reprobate come into contact with the living Word of God. And that this living Word is to them a savor of death.

68. The faith and salvation of believers according to Art. 7 must be attributed not to any merit of their own, but only to the grace of God. In God's counsel this grace in Christ is given them from eternity, that is, God is eternally gracious to His people with an unchangeable grace. It is according to the eternal grace of God that He bestows this gift of faith on those to whom He is gracious, that is, the elect. And these elect are not distinguished by any merit, virtue, or act of their own. The cause of their distinction is in God's counsel only. For the same reason nothing on the part of man receives that gift of grace. It precedes every good work. Eph. 1:3,4; Eph. 3:8-10.

69. The chief thought of Art. 8 is that the sovereign counsel of God is the sole and ultimate source of redemption and all the blessings of salvation in Christ and of their being applied and bestowed upon the elect. In accordance with this counsel, Christ redeems; that is, he purchases His people, merits for them all the blessings of salvation, and in accordance with that same counsel He confers these blessings upon them from regeneration and justifying faith even to their final perfection.

70. The Arminians argue that God ordained His Son to the death of the cross without a definite purpose or device to save any. As far as God is concerned, all men have been reserved in the state of reconciliation. The grace of reconciliation is also freely offered to all without exception; but whether it shall be appropriated depends on the free will of man in joining itself to that offer of grace. It will be evident that there is no conceivable difference between this view and that of the first point of 1924. Yet, our fathers condemned this view in II, B, 1, 5-7. The Arminians also argue that it would be folly to say that Christ died for those whom God eternally loved. These did not need the death of Christ. All of these errors are reported by the Canons. And Art. 8 maintains that Christ redeemed the elect and them only.

71. It stands to reason that the Arminians must needs deny the atoning character of the death of Christ. For, if Christ died for all, either all are saved, or the death of Christ is not saving. They taught, therefore, that Christ merely merited a right for God to open a new deal with man; that the latter might have another chance of life. This new way did not consist of justification by faith through the blood of Christ, but, in this, that God would regard faith in itself as perfect obedience to the law, and that because faith acknowledges the righteousness and justice of God as manifested in the death of Christ. That Christ merited for His people justification and the justifying faith, all the saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, regeneration, sanctification, forgiveness, final perseverance and eternal life, the Arminians deny.

72. On this basis of the Arminian view it is of course impossible that there be any certainty with regard to the salvation of the individual nor with respect to the number of them that are saved. Nothing is powerfully accomplished since it ultimately depends on the will of man.

There may be times when there is no church in the world and Christianity may finally die out. The Lord, however, teaches: "All that the Father giveth unto me shall come unto me." (John 6:37) Article 9 maintains that the purpose of God unto the salvation of the elect, as it proceeds from everlasting love, has always been powerfully accomplished in the past, is being accomplished in the present, and shall be accomplished until the whole church for whom Christ died shall have been gathered. And this purpose shall be reached in spite of all the powers of opposition. The gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.

73. Of the corruption of man, his conversion to God and the manner thereof.

74. Intimately related to the second. The latter speaks of the redemption through Christ, the former of the natural state of the sinner. Our view of redemption determines our view of the natural man. If redemption in God's intention is made general, the power to will that redemption must be left to the natural man. If redemption is an offer, the natural man must be able to accept it.

75. The third and fourth heads of doctrine are also mutually related. If man is confessed to be totally depraved, his conversion must be wholly the work of God alone. On the other hand, if total depravity is denied, the conversion of man will be his own work, at least in part.

76. The elements in the image of God in Art. 1 are those of true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness--and this is according to Scripture. The first element is mentioned in Col. 3:10: "And have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him Who created Him." The second and third are mentioned in Eph. 4:24, "And that he put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." The same three elements you may find in Art. 14 of our Netherlands Confession. The image of God according to Scripture and according to the Confession is a positive, spiritual idea. A very usual distinction is that between the image of God in the wider and narrower sense. What is meant by the former, is that which distinguishes man from an animal--his rationality, morality, and immortality. The distinction is not taught in Scripture and may lead to confusion and it is better simply to maintain that God's image in man consists of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.

77. The usual answer is that Adam lost the image of God. This is true, but it is not the truth. The truth is that the image of God which consisted of the operation of true knowledge, of righteousness, and holiness was changed into the very opposite--into darkness, unrighteousness, and corruption. The change took place in the very heart of man whence are the issues of life, according to the Scripture. This is also very definitely the teaching of Art. 1 which speaks of blindness of mind, darkness, vanity, perverse means of judgment, wickedness, rebellion, obduracy of heart and will and impurities in all his affections.

78. Art. 2 explains the corruption of the whole human race in Adam from the viewpoint of original corruption rather than from the aspect of original guilt. From the legal viewpoint, Adam was our head and from the organic viewpoint, our father. Also in Lord's Day 3, Adam is our first father and the root of the entire race; as our first father, he was the bearer of the entire human nature, and by his sin he corrupted that nature, the nature propagated in the case of every human being that is born. The living organism of his psychological, physical nature comes from the parents while the spiritual person comes from God; and as the nature is corrupted in our first father, it is corrupted in all his children and brings forth fruit of corruption in every individual human being.

Concerning the origin of the human soul, we refer to the creation narrative in Genesis. God formed man out of the dust and breathed in his nostrils the breath of life and thus became a living soul; God called out of the ground a living soul nature which is adapted to be personal. God tied all living things in one point, the spirit of man, through that act of God whereby He called the soul nature personal. God breathed in him His spirit and the soul of man becomes a spiritual soul--not a spirit soul and body, but a spiritual soul and physical nature. What God did in creation, He still does when a baby is born. Human nature is from the parents. This is God's providence. The soul performs all the actual sins of that corrupt nature. The person of God is then not another substance. The nature is corrupt and the person is guilty.

There are several theories concerning soul and body. Traditionalism--soul and body are

both of the parents. Creationalism--body is of the parents and the soul of God. Pre-existentialism--all souls had a pre-existence in a star or some other form (Rom. 5:12). St. Augustine, the great scholar thought that all souls were actually in Adam and all sin also. If he had known Greek or English better, he would have thought differently.

79. Pelagians deny general depravity as having its cause in the nature of man. Man's nature is inherently good since the fall, although he has lost the "donum superadditum"...the image and gifts by which he could aspire to heavenly realities. All evil performed by man is not due to depravity, but is the result of imitation according to the Pelagians.

80. Original sin is guilt and is sufficient to condemn man. Rom. 5:12-18; Ps. 51:4,5. Also, infants must be redeemed and regenerated in order to be saved. See the beginning of our Baptism Form.

81. See Answer 76. Col. 3:10 and Eph. 4:24 plainly teach that the image of God in the Christian is not a new creation, but a restoration from which it follows that the human nature was originally endowed with knowledge, righteousness, and holiness mentioned in those texts. The Pelagians believe that the will of man as created was neutral and will is always neutral and as such it is always and must needs be the power to choose the good and evil. The will, therefore, was not originally endowed with positive righteousness or any good qualities or virtues and, therefore, man could not have lost these virtues which he did not possess. This is plainly against Scripture in the above texts. It is also contrary to the narrative of the creation and the fall.

82. The Pelagians taught that the will itself was not corrupted by the fall. It did not lose the power to choose the good. It is inherently free. The understanding is indeed somewhat darkened so that the natural man does not discern the good clearly and the affections and habits are not longer pure by the will itself and able to overcome these obstacles and to choose the good that is presented to it. Overagainst this, the Reformed always held that the will has lost the power to choose the good, that it is free only to choose sin. The Canons refer to Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is desperately wicked in all things." This is a very proper reference for out of the heart are the issues of life and also of the will. Canons mentions Eph. 2:3. The Reformed position is also plainly proven in Rom. 8:5-8 and many other passages.

83. In art. 3, occurs the expression that man is incapable of saving good. Much is made of this expression in our day, and the usual interpretation is that the Canons here makes a distinction between saving good and other good. Now what is meant by the Canons "saving good" is plain (III IV, B, A.4) namely, the power whereby man can yet hunger and thirst after righteousness and life and offer the sacrifice of a contrite and broken spirit which is pleasing to God. This, therefore, the natural man cannot do and they teach this ~~is~~ not in order to suggest that the natural man is able to do natural or civil good, but in opposition to the Arminians who taught that by his natural light, man could improve himself sufficiently to make himself worthy of salvation. Besides, the suggestion that the natural man could be able to perform the good in the spheres of the natural would be quite contrary to the rest of this article which describes the natural man as dead in sin, in bondage to sin, not willing to reform the depravity of his nature, not even to dispose himself to such reformation and such a suggestion is still more definitely excluded by the next article.

84. The Canons prove this from Scripture by referring to Eph. 2:1-5, Gen. 6:5-8, 8:21, but it is also proven from many other passages: Rom. 1:18-23; Rom. 3:9-18; Rom. 8:5-8; Ps. 14.

85. According to Art. 4, there remains in man after the fall: (a) glimmerings of natural light. Natural light is so distinguished from the spiritual light that the latter implies a moral appreciation and love of the light. The former is devoid of it. A man can have natural light and hate that which is virtuous and that which he knows to be good. (b) Knowledge of God of natural things and of the difference between good and evil. The natural man knows that God is and Who He is (Rom. 1:18-20) but his knowledge does not imply that he is willing to seek and to serve Him. He has knowledge of natural things as is evident from all the developments of science and industry. By means of this knowledge, he develops his earthly life in

order to press it into the service of sin. The knowledge of the difference between good and evil does by no means bade him follow after what is good. (c) Some regard for virtue, good order, and external deportment. The natural man can respect virtue when he sees it. He can even attempt to be outwardly virtuous because he knows that such is good for him and for the same reason he tries to maintain a certain outward virtue in his social life.

86. By saving knowledge of God is meant spiritual knowledge as including: (a) true knowledge of sin and repentance rooted in the love of God. (b) True knowledge of Christ as the only ground of righteousness. (c) A coming to Christ to appropriate Him as the only Savior by a true faith. (d) A joy in God's precepts and a hatred of all sin. To the saving knowledge of God the natural man can never come because his natural light is devoid of the love of God. Though he knows that God is, and Who He is, he does not desire him nor seek Him and this is also plainly shown in Scripture (John 6:44-65; Matt. 11: 25-27; John 12:39-40).

87. Article 4, however, also plainly teaches that this natural light is insufficient to enable man to do civic good. By civic good is meant moral good in the spheres of this present life--the family, state, society, and the institution of the church. Those who teach that the natural man is able to perform real good read this article as if it teaches that although man cannot come to Christ by means of his natural light, he is able to perform good works in various departments of this world. This, however, is a mistake, quite contrary to the teaching of Art. 4, for it emphasizes that even in things natural such as eating and drinking and all the physical and intellectual activities of man in the world and civil life such as the affairs pertaining to state and society, man wholly pollutes this life and holds it in to unrighteousness. The meaning is evidently that many would not be able to sin if he would not have this light for without it they would not be a rational being. They pollute it, however, by acting contrary to it and thus they come without excuse before God.

88. The Christian Reformed Church since 1924 quote Art. 4 in order to prove that man by nature is able to perform civil good. However, they attribute this to an influence of God, of which Art. 4 does not speak at all. It merely speaks of the remnants of natural light without any reference to an influence of so-called common grace. It is remarkable too, that the Synod of the Chr. Ref. Church quoted only the first half of this article. The second part, which must needs have condemned them, they left off from their quotation.

89. (1) A testimony that the natural man can see that the law of God is good for him. (2) A natural love of man apart from God (humanism). (3) An attempt to conform his outward life to the law, not, however, for God's sake but for his own sake. (4) In this attempt he succeeds to a degree, but more often fails. That there is no operation of grace in these must be evident in itself. The very attempt is sinful and wholly polluted.

90. The case of Jehu must be explained in this same way. He received the command of God to destroy the house of Ahab. He does not love God, however, nor does he destroy the house of Ahab because he hates Ahab's sin. For he himself walked in the way of Jeroboam. He beholds, however, God's command as an opportunity to satisfy his own ambition, and from that motive he executes the command of God very well. He is also successful, realizes his ambition and becomes king of Israel in his generations. However, according to Hosea 1:4, god punishes him for his able execution of God's command which for all its ability was nevertheless evil.

91. Regarding the conversion of Nineveh, we must remember: (1) that the book of Jonah is a prophecy and that the preaching of Jonah and the conversion of the Ninevites has prophetic significance. For this reason the Lord speaks of Jonah in Nineveh as a sign, and compares it to his own death, burial, and resurrection and his becoming the Savior of the world. Matt. 16:4, Matt. 12:39-40. The meaning is that as Jonah through his stay in the fish is separated from the nation of Israel and becomes a prophet to Nineveh, so Christ, through His death, burial, and resurrection, leaves national Israel and becomes the Savior of the world. Nineveh is, therefore, a type of the world that contains the elect and must not be destroyed until the elect are saved. (2) That, therefore, everything is in favor of the view that the conversion of the Ninevites was a true conversion in heartfelt repentance. In favor of this is the fact that only on this assumption is Nineveh truly a type of the world that contains the elect. In favor of this is, secondly, the very language that describes the repentance of

the Ninevites. John 3:5-10. And in favor of this is, lastly, the fact that the Lord speaks of the conversion of the Ninevites as a true repentance. Matt. 12:41; Luke 11:32. (c) The explanation, therefore, is that for the purpose of realizing the prophetic sign of Jonah, the prophet, God had at that time his elect in Nineveh that must be converted and called before the city could be destroyed. This will also explain Jonah 4:11.

92. The law cannot save man: (1) As far as the law is concerned, it can only demand without imparting strength to fulfill. It promises life to the obedient and curses the disobedient. (2) As far as man is concerned, even if the individual sinner should keep the law all his life, he would thereby not atone for his original guilt. Besides, he is not subject to the law of God, neither can be; and is wholly incapable of keeping it. The law, therefore, can not save man because it is weak through the flesh. Romans 8:3.

93. God performs this work of salvation. Remember that the question is concerning the work of salvation in us. This GOD begins in regeneration, or the rebirth and finishes in glorification or the resurrection. The author of this work is especially the Holy Spirit as He is promised and given to Christ and as He dwells in the church as Christ's body. And as far as this work of salvation touches our conscious rational life, the Spirit performs His work through the Word of the Gospel.

94. GOD performs this work of salvation according to Art. 6 through the Word which is called the ministry of reconciliation: I Cor. 5:18. This is called the ministry because it is God Who through man proclaims the Gospel concerning His Son. And it is called ministry of reconciliation because by it God Himself declares that He reconciled us unto Himself in Christ and this ministry of reconciliation is the same in the Old and New Testaments.

95. The Pelagians teach that man by his natural gifts and light, which the Arminians called "common grace", can attain to the grace of salvation by accepting the offer of God in the Gospel. For according to them, the Gospel is general grace and in it God shows that He is willing to reveal Christ to all men, and that He is willing to make them partakers of His grace. This view, which is virtually that of Point I of 1924, is contradicted by the Scriptures according to B,5; Acts 16:7. It is also strongly contradicted in Matt. 11:25,26; Rom. 9:16; I Cor. 2:14; II Cor. 2:15.

96. The mystery of God's will of which Art. 7 speaks is the mystery to save such as believe through the ministry of reconciliation. In the Old Dispensation before the coming of Christ, the mystery was revealed only in part and through the shadows of the law. Reality was not yet, but through the shadows believers were saved in hope. In the Old Dispensation, this mystery was revealed to only a few and for a long time it was in general limited to the nation of Israel. In the New Dispensation, this national distinction is removed. The ministry of reconciliation is ministered to all nations without distinction.

97. The Pelagians would naturally have to explain this limitation from superior worth of Israel and from the better use they made of the light of nature. This Pelagian view, however, is contradicted: (1) Directly in the Scriptures; Deut. 7:6-8; 9:4-7; 32:5-12. (2) By the entire history of Israel. There is no more idolatrous nation in all the world than Israel according to the flesh. (3) By the fact that in the New Dispensation the distinction is entirely removed. It would indeed be strange if all of a sudden all the nations made a better use of the light of nature. But the distinction was due only to God's sovereign good pleasure. Is. 43:1-4; Mal. 3:6. And no man or nation can boast in His presence.

98. Art. 8 might possibly refer to the internal calling. We might read the article as follows: "As many as are internally called by the external preaching of the Gospel are unfeignedly called," but there are many objections against such an explanation: (1) The word "unfeignedly" has no meaning if the calling is conceived as internal; (2) The internal calling is not only by the Gospel but ~~xx~~ by the Spirit. (3) The article speaks of what God truly declares in His Word. (4) Art. 9 certainly speaks of the external calling and is most closely connected with Art. 8. Hence, it was the purpose of the fathers to refer to the external calling.

99. Unfeignedly signifies that God means what He says in the Gospel. He does not lie, nor

put to shame, but fulfills all His Gospel promise. To the calling by the Gospel, this may be applied in a two-fold way. First, God sincerely demands that all men repent of their sin. And secondly, the external preaching of the Gospel does not promise salvation and grace to all without distinction so that by the Word of the Gospel God only calls and blesses His own and promises to them eternal life.

100. Compare the Holland translation. Also that in the Psalter Hymnal which has "that those who are called should come unto Him" which is better than the Psalter which has "that all who are called should comply with the invitation".

101. The article states that God promises eternal life to those that come to Him and believe on Him. This coming and believing, however, is itself the fruit of grace bestowed on God's elect only. This is the plain teaching of the Canons. See, i.e., Art. 10 of this chapter. Also the Word of God which emphasizes that "no one can come to Christ except the Father draw him, and that faith is the gift of God." John 6:44; Eph. 2:8. The conclusion, therefore, is that even according to Art. 8, the promise of the gospel is particular.

102. The word "offered" is a translation of a Latin word which means "to bring before one's views, to present, to set forth." The term, therefore, does not imply as it is so frequently understood, or at least explained, in our day, a willingness on the part of God to give Christ to all, and that it is up to man to accept this gift. But merely that in the Gospel, Christ is set forth, declared, and explained to all that hear the Gospel. He is brought to their attention.

103. Art. 9 answers the question whose fault it is that some who hear the gospel do not come and are not converted. We must bear in mind that fault is blameworthiness, guilt. This fault for rejecting the gospel, so the article teaches, must not be sought in the Gospel, in Christ or in God. Not in the gospel because it speaks clear language which men do understand; not in Christ because all that is in Him is a reason to come to Him. There is nothing repulsive in Christ. If He repels, the fault must be in the person repelled, not in Him; and not in God because He declares plainly in the Gospel what is pleasing to Him, and He bestows upon men all natural gifts necessary to understand the truth. The fault lies in man's corrupt heart, from which are the issues of life, and according to which he will not and cannot will to receive that which is for his own eternal good. Under the preaching of the Gospel this corruption of the heart becomes manifest in various ways. Sometimes as a cold indifference, at other times, and especially under the influence of emotional preaching, as a superficial and deceitful joy. Sometimes as a seeking and preferring of the things of the world, but never does it want or receive the things of God.

104. The proud heresy of the Pelagians according to Art. 10 is: (a) all men receive grace sufficient to believe and be converted. (b) all men have a free will, by which the Pelagians mean, a will to do with God's grace as they please. (c) Some exercise this freedom of the will properly, so that they obey the call of the Gospel and they distinguish themselves above others. (d) Thus others resist this grace and refuse to heed the call of the gospel. This, therefore, is a double heresy, namely: the heresy of free-will to do good and the heresy of a resistible grace. The Canons call this a proud heresy because it not only exalts one man above the other, but it exalts man above God.

105. Only the elect and the elect surely obey the call. And this obedience is presented in the article as the fruit of election. This must be clearly and definitely stated. Also the Arminians would say that only the elect obey the gospel. But the elect are those whom God eternally knew that they would come and thus obey. According to this view, their election follows their obedience and their obedience is not the fruit but the ground of their election. Art. 10, however, clearly teaches that it is the fruit of election. God bestows on His chosen ones the grace necessary to receive Christ. To Him alone belongs all the glory.

106. By the term "to reveal" in this article is meant that work of God whereby Christ is spiritually known and appropriated by man. When he is so revealed to any man, He is known in all the preciousness of His salvation and grace. It was a teaching of the Arminians that God, as far as He was concerned, is willing and ready thus to reveal Christ to everybody, and that He even bestows upon all men the so-called common grace whereby they might attain

to the saving knowledge of Christ. This article teaches, however, that God is not ready to or willing to reveal Christ to all, and it supports this by several passages from Scripture. A strong passage against the Arminian teaching is the thanksgiving of Christ in Matt. 11:25. For the truth is that God not only reveals Christ and the things of His kingdom unto whomsoever He wills, but He also hides them from whom He wills. We may well remark in this connection that the Canons are far from supporting the view of a well-meaning offer of salvation to all men on the part of God as is the official doctrine of the Christian Ref. Church since 1924.

107. Art. 11 uses the term conversion in a broad sense. It is the spiritual turning about of the whole man from death to life, from sin to righteousness, a change of the inmost heart, the mind, the will, and the outward walk of man. The article calls this God's working out of His good pleasure in the elect. In accomplishing this, God performs the following acts that can be distinguished: (1) the external preaching of the Gospel. Also this is God's work and without it there is no conversion. (2) the powerful illumination of the mind so that it can discern the things of the spirit. (3) a pervading of the inmost heart of man; opening of the heart that is closed by nature; softening of the heart that is hard by nature. Notice, that the door of the heart is not opened from within by man while Christ stands without begging and knocking. (4) circumcision of the heart, that is, a principle separation of the inmost man from the power of sin. (5) a quickening, a changing about, and a strengthening of the will to bring forth good fruit.

108. According to the Pelagian and Arminian viewpoint, in conversion God does not bestow new spiritual qualities on the person that is converted. This would be unnecessary. Sin did not deprive man of the power to choose the good, did not essentially change the nature of man in a moral spiritual sense. All men have by nature the power to believe, and in this general sense, faith may be called a gift which with which God endows the will and mind of every man. But faith is not a particular gift of grace. It is rather an act of which every man by nature is capable. If this were true, no work of God's grace would be necessary before the sinner can believe in Christ. The article, however, denies that this is the truth of Scripture and quotes different passages proving that the very opposite is true. Under this heading we might also refer to Eph. 2:8-10 where the Word of God teaches us that faith is not of ourselves; it is the gift of God; and that we are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus so that even the good works are prepared for us that we might walk in them.

109. All the Arminians have left of the operation of grace is a sort of human persuasion. The presentation of this matter is such that it would be contrary to the very nature of man as a rational moral being, if God would irresistibly, efficaciously convert a man, and that it is entirely in harmony with his nature that he merely be urged and advised, leaving the consent to the choice of his will. This view, however, is contrary to the Scripture: (a) because ~~Scripture teaches~~ it proceeds from the denial of man's depravity. Scripture teaches that the imagination of man's heart is only evil continually. How then shall he consent to the advice to repent? (b) Because Scripture teaches plainly that the grace of God is an irresistible power whereby God raises us from the dead and causes us to discern spiritual things which the natural man can never perceive. (c) Because it is a denial of the power of God to change a man within, without violating his rational, moral nature. God indeed advises, persuades, and calls; but He also gives the power and will to heed the advice and turn upon God's calling. Conversion, therefore, is not a matter of mere persuasion, but of almighty grace.

110. It is plain that in Art. 12 the term "regeneration" is used in a broad sense and is applied to all the work of God necessary to the first renewal of the sinner. The Article calls it a resurrection (John 5:24-25). It is a making alive. It is wrought in us without our aid. God is its only author. It does not assume the character of a resistable, moral, persuasion, but it is a super natural and almighty work of God. It is as efficacious as the work of creation and, therefore, surely leads to conversion. It is only as a result of this work of God that the sinner becomes active, seeks God in Christ, repents and believes.

111. Art. 13 teaches: (a) that the manner of operation of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is not to be fully comprehended by us. How the Spirit regenerates us and when this is done, we cannot understand. (b) That, however, the fact of regeneration may be experienced and

actually is experienced so that one may indeed know whether he is regenerated. The article mentions two elements in this experience- believe with the heart and love of the Savior. To believe with the heart is that activity of saving faith whereby the sinner cleaves to Christ with his whole soul and puts all his trust in Him for his righteousness before God. That activity, however, is never to be separated from the activity of love. This love is not natural but spiritual. It is not a matter of sentiment, but an act of the will which reveals itself in keeping Christ's commandments. In this activity of faith and love of the Savior Jesus Christ, which are the fruits of regeneration, we may know and experience the regenerating grace of God.

112. In Art. 14 the statement that faith is the gift of God is further defined and explained: (a) the gift is not the same as an offer. An offer is the expression of a willingness on the part of him that offers to bestow certain gifts, but it does not become a gift until the one to whom it is offered accepts it. In this sense faith is not an offer, it is a gift. God actually works, infuses, this faith in the heart of the sinner. It is granted and bestowed before and without the consent of the sinner! (b) The gift of faith, so the article further teaches, does not only refer to the power to believe, still less, it is the gift of the power to believe or not to believe. On the contrary, also the activity of saving faith is included in the gift. The power of faith infused in regeneration is called into conscious activity by the Spirit through the Word of God.

113. The Arminians deny all irresistible grace. This they must needs do because they deny sovereign election. The final decision, whether or not a sinner shall be saved must always be with the free choice of the sinner. Hence, also with respect to regeneration, the Remonstrants denied that it is an irresistible operation of the Holy Spirit which causes this. And they teach that when God has done all He can and will do to regenerate the sinner, such as: preach the word, persuade, gently move the heart, knock at the door, try to induce him by the glory of heaven and try to frighten him by the desolation of hell, the latter can refuse or accept the grace of regeneration. This doctrine is rightly condemned with an appeal to several Scriptural passages in Arts. B, VIII.

114. God can never be obligated to man. Such is the first argument of the article to show that God is free to bestow grace upon whom He wills and this is a fundamental truth. Man is always the receiver, never the giver, in relation to God. Even the service of God is God's gift to him. Hence, he can never merit anything with God. How much less can a sinner who is dead in sin merit the grace of regeneration. But this is not the last word that may be said with respect to God's sovereignty. For according to Romans 9 He is the Divine Potter and we are the clay. And He is absolutely free to let that clay serve His glory in whatever form it pleases Him. And, He is merciful to whom He will, but it is equally true that whom He wills He hardens. Rom. 9:18, 19.

115. According to the article the condition of the unregenerate reprobate is either that of manifest carnal indifference or that of imaginary righteousness of works. The former are characterized by profanity like Esau. They care not for things spiritual, and trample them underfoot. They have no desire to hear of the things of the Kingdom. Things earthly satisfy them and of the things heavenly they have no conception. The latter, however, lead a life of outwardly good works. They are people that emphasize character, and a life and walk of outward righteousness: philanthropy and the improvement of the world, making of the works their ground of boasting. They are in no apprehension of the danger of judgement, and seem to walk their way without fear. The implication is, therefore, that it never happens that one earnestly seeks the Kingdom of heaven and fails to find it.

116. The same article speaks of professing Christians that lead regular lives and teaches us that we must speak and judge of them in the most favorable manner. The meaning is that we must consider and treat all that confess Christ in word and deed as Christians. Of the heart God alone can judge. This is an important rule, plainly taught in Scripture. It is to be observed by the Consistory when members make confession of their faith and it is to be remembered by the members in their mutual relationships. They should not call one another hypocrites and treat one another as if they held the balances of God's judgment.

117. It is evident from the article itself that by those that are not yet called are not meant all that might be comprehended under that statement. The expression is used in a limited sense. The article does not refer to them that are outside but to them that are inside the church and under the influence of the external calling. Again the article does not refer to them that are careless and profane for these have been mentioned before. The reference in the article is, therefore, to those covenant children that live outwardly a regular life, make use of the means of grace, but are not yet come to a conscious assurance that they have a living part with Christ. Inwardly they are not yet called. The article tells us that our attitude towards them must not be one of haughtiness. The apostle Paul admonishes us in I Cor. 4:7 "we have nothing that we have not received." We should, therefore, rather pray for them that God may also cause them to partake of the blessed grace He bestowed on us, and admonish and instruct them in the Word of God.

118. By the expression, "stocks and blocks" is meant a creature without a rational will, utterly and passively subject to the will of another. Reformed people have often been accused of presenting man in relation to the work of salvation as a "stock and block" because they teach that man by nature is dead in sin, can do nothing to his salvation and is passive in the work of regeneration. And Reformed people have sometimes been frightened by this accusation, retracted from the strict doctrine of man's spiritual death and reply that man is able to do something, such as pray for his salvation, walk in the covenant way, etc. This, of course, is a mistake. Yet, man is never a stock and a block. He remains a rational moral creature. Before His regeneration he is a rational, willing slave of sin, and through regeneration he becomes a rational, willing servant of righteousness. Art. 16 emphasizes that the work of regeneration never destroys man's will or violates it in any way. God draws and we come. God gives us faith and we believe. God converts us and we turn. He spreads abroad His love in our hearts and we taste His love, but in all this operation of God's grace the sinner never for a moment loses his rational moral nature. We must, however, never be tempted by the accusation that we present man as a stock and block to attribute to the natural man the power to do good and to cooperate in his own salvation.

119. Let us bear in mind that the Canons speak of regeneration in a broad sense. As, for instance, in James 1:18 (bringing it to consciousness) and I Cor. 4:15 (preaching of the Gospel instrumentally) and I Peter 1:23 (that we are regenerated out of incorruptible seed by the Word of God). In this sense regeneration is through the Word of God. Besides the regenerated life is sustained and nourished through the means of grace. Means are things through which God always works the same effect. The knowledge of this makes it possible for us to use them. Means of grace are things which God has given to His church to bestow His grace upon His people and without which He does not bestow that grace. These means are mentioned in the article, namely, the Word of God and the sacraments, and they are kept and in a special way applied through Christian discipline.

120. Pelagians conceive of grace and free will as cooperating in conversion. The technical term for this is Synergism (working together). God gives grace to

him that first wills it and all through the conversion of man and his sanctification both the grace of God and the will of man are the factiors that co-operate to save the sinner. The relation, however, is such that the will of man always takes the precedence. Man must first will before God gives grace. Salvation, therefore, depends not on God's determination but on man's will. The Canons condemn this view in B, IX with an appeal to Rom. 9:16, I Cor. 4:7, and Phil. 2:13
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121. The Fifth Head of doctrine treats the perseverance of the saints. This implies the following elements: (1) that the Christian in this life is not wholly delivered from his sinful nature. Regeneration and sanctification do not imply that he is perfect and no longer exposed to the temptations of sin. (2) That this imperfect Christian lives in the midst of a world that opposes him and if possible will prevent his being saved. The devil and the world tempt him and threat his downfall. (3) That the Christian thus imperfect and tempted may and often does indeed fall into sin tho he can never wholly and finally fall away from grace. He shall surely persevere unto the end. It is impossible that he should remain in sin and be lost.

122. The doctrines heretofore explained in the Canons and their several relations to this doctrine are as follows: (1) The doctrine of sovereign election and reprobation, i. e., election and reprobation without regard to any foreseen works whether of faith or of unbelief. The believer is predestined not because of faith and because of foreseen perseverance but unto faith and unto perseverance as the way of his salvation. If, therefore, even the Christian's faith and perseverance are sovereignly predestined by God, it must be evident that he cannot fail to persevere unto the end. (2) The doctrine of particular redemption. This implies that Christ's death is not an intention or willingness to save those that will be saved but an actual and definite payment and satisfaction for the sins of all the elect. Their sins are, therefore, really blotted out and it follows that the redeemed can never more come into condemnation. They must persevere. (3) The doctrine that man is by nature dead in sin and of himself has no power to believe in or come to Christ. Then, however, he is saved by almighty grace. Faith is wholly a gift of God, not to the worthy and willing but to those that are in themselves unwilling and unworthy and the gifts of God are without repentance. Surely God shall accomplish what He once began and the saints shall surely reach perfection.

123. Apparently the Arminians in the Fifth Article of the Remonstrance leave it an open question whether or not there is a falling away from grace on the part of the once regenerated saints. They seem to be willing to be convinced of the truth of perseverance provided this is determined out of the Holy Scriptures. However, after all they had expressed in the first four articles of their remonstrance it was quite impossible for them to believe in the truth that the saints will surely persevere. And this is very evident from the first part of the article in which they teach that Jesus will assist the saints and keep them from falling provided that they are ready for the conflict, are not inactive, and desire His help. Their perseverance, therefore depends in the last instance in themselves.

124. Art. 1 of the Fifth Chapter speaks of the nature of sanctification in this life. It makes a clear distinction between being delivered from the sinful nature. The natural man is a slave of sin. His will and all his desires are dominated by sin. Sin is his mistress, and he delights in her service. From that dominion the regenerated child of God is completely delivered. Sin has no more dominion over him and he is no longer sin's willing servant. But from the body of sin, the old sinful nature and the infirmities of the flesh, the sinful inclinations and tendencies of that old nature he is not delivered until death.

125. Because of this body of sin of the sinful nature, the Christian commits what the article calls sins of infirmity. The baptism form speaks of falling into sin through weakness. The form for the Lord's Supper speaks of sins that against our will remain in us. To these sins the article here refers. They defile our best works. However, with them the Christian has no rest. To him they become the cause of : (1) daily humiliation, (2) fleeing to Christ for refuge, (3) mortification of the flesh by prayer, (4) daily exercises of piety, such as reading the Word of God, prayer, striving against sin, etc., (5) pressing forward in hope to perfection.

126. Article 3 teaches that the saints could never persevere in their own strength. First, by reason of indwelling sin, and secondly, because of the temptation of the world and sin without. The Christian, therefore, is a sinful saint in a sinful world. The enemy of his new life is both within and without. Notice that the article says that of himself, The Christian could not persevere in a state of grace. If after he is regenerated, God would leave him to himself, the influence of sin would soon overpower the new life and cause him to return to his former state. However, his perseverance does not at all depend on his faithfulness but on God's. And God never forsakes the work of His own hand. He confirms the saints and causes them surely to persevere.

127. Saints do fall and sometimes fall deeply. The Arminians would point to these sins of the saints in order to prove that in perseverance the saint must be first. The Spirit only lets the child of God go. So the Arminian would say when he sins first and hankers after sin. This, however, is plainly contrary to the Scripture. God is always first and when his saints do fall they indeed do sin and are responsible, but the fact of their sin can only be explained by saying that the Holy Spirit drops them and lets them go into ways of sin. The question, therefore, arises: Why does the Holy Spirit drop them into sin and permit them to fall? To that question we may answer the following: (a) Even in preserving us God always deals with us as rational moral creatures. (b) The Spirit sometimes recedes from us to a certain extent to teach us to know our own weaknesses when we felt strong in ourselves. The article mentions that the saints are apt to be drawn into great sins when watching and prayer are neglected. That is, therefore, when they feel strong in themselves. (c) The saints are permitted to fall into sin to bring them to a deeper humiliation, confession of sin and repentance. (d) Often by falling into sin, God delivers His people from certain persistent sin of character, i. e., with Peter. In general we may, therefore, say that from God's point of view, He even uses the stumblings of His people unto their salvation. It will be plain that this can never mean for the people of God that they, therefore, seek sin that good may come out of it. On the contrary, it becomes more and more their earnest prayer: "Lead us not into temptation."

128. The article states that the attitude of the Christian must be one of constant watching and prayer, that he may not be led into temptation. This does not mean that it is possible that the Christian never be tempted. For that he could pray that he might never meet with the forces of temptation. He is surrounded by temptations every day and it is not God's purpose that He should not be. The meaning of the article, however, is that the saints should constantly pray and watch against the danger of being overcome by temptation or falling into it and yielding to it. And this attitude implies first that we are humbly conscious of our own weaknesses and secondly, that constantly we seek our strength in the Lord. In Him only we are strong.

129. The article states first of all that these gross sins of the saints very highly offend God. It is well that we should bear in mind that, although God love loves His people unchangeably He is nevertheless highly displeased with their sins, and especially the gross sins of His saints are a cause that His Name is

blasphemed. The saints should feel that God is displeased with their sins and the consciousness of it should lead them to daily sorrow after God. The article states further that the saints by the sins incur a deadly guilt. The meaning is not that they could ever fall out of their state of righteousness in Christ but: (a) that these sins in themselves are worthy of death; (b) that the saints feel the guilt of their sins before God. The true saint feels guilty for all his sin; (c) that in case of gross sins for the which they do not immediately come to repentance, they are often for a time in darkness, and when they do come to the consciousness of their sin, feel as if they were in the state of damnation. Another result mentioned in the article, they grieve the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit it is meant the Spirit as He dwells in the church. The Spirit rejoices in holiness. He is displeased with and grieved at the sins of His saints so that He seems to withdraw His comforting presence from them, and from this follows other results for the exercise of their faith. They cannot lay hold on the blessings of salvation. They wound their conscience so that for a time it is less sensitive in the consciousness of sin and they lose the sense of God's favor and of His fellowship, and notice that the Article emphasizes that God's favor only returns in the way of sincere repentance.

130. (1) The grace of adoption. This is that grace according to which believers are legally received as children of God. Scripture speaks of our sonship, in a twofold sense. We are children by adoption and we are children by birth, born of God. The former refers to our state. This is our legal relation, as sons of God. Upon this legal relation depends all we receive as children, and out of this sonship the Christian can never fall. This does not mean that he cannot lose the consciousness of this grace for a time. But God never ceases to call us His sons, and to treat us as such. This is closely related to the grace of adoption. In fact, the latter is implied in the former. Justification is the legal position before God, according to which God declares the believer perfectly righteous on the ground of Christ's obedience. No sin of the saint can alter this state. (2) The article also states that the believer cannot commit the sin unto death. To this sin unto death we shall refer in connection with ques. 135, 136. (3) The reason for this assurance, that the the Christian cannot fall from his state of grace, is according to the article, that God does not wholly withdraw His Holy Spirit from His own people. The Spirit of Christ abides in them forever. He does not desert them and permit them ~~and xxxxxxxxxx~~ to plunge into destruction. This abiding indwelling of the Holy Spirit is according to God's unchangeable purpose of election.

131. God works in His saints that fall into gross sins: (1) that the incorruptible seed of regeneration is preserved in them. (John 3:9, I Peter 1:23) By this incorruptible seed is meant the spiritual principle of the new life implanted by God immediately in the hearts of the elect which contains the spiritual essence of all that the Christian shall ever be. (2) That He leads them back to a conscious state of sonship by His word and Spirit. This reveals itself in a sincere sorrow over sin, which is a sorrow rooted in the love of God, in the seeking of remission in the blood of Christ, in a renewed experience of reconciliation and of the favor of God in a new and thankful adoration of God's mercies. (3) That there is a more diligent working out of their own salvation with fear and trembling.

132. The Arminians deny that perseverance is a fruit of election. Election according to them does not receive perseverance, but following (B) they teach that perseverance depends upon the believers free will, even though he cannot persevere without the help of God's grace. Two things depend upon his own choice, namely, first whether or not he will receive that gracious help for God gives His grace only to them that want it and, secondly, whether or not he will use that grace unto his own perseverance and salvation when God bestows it upon him.

And thus perseverance is a condition which man must fulfill unto salvation. Article V, B I shows that this doctrine is contrary to Scripture. Christ died, was raised, is exalted, and makes intercession for the elect and nothing can separate them from the love of God in Him.

133. From the Article B II we learn that the Arminians teach: (1) that believers do receive sufficient grace from God to persevere. It is indeed only through grace, so He teaches, that the Christian can be faithful at all. And this grace God will bestow him and persevere in him. (2) But this grace is not irresistible. It does not violate or overpower man's free will. It is of such a nature that man can make use of it or not as he pleases. If he does, he will persevere through the power of that grace. If he does not he will finally fall away in spite of the fact that he had sufficient grace to persevere. The article characterizes this doctrine: (a) as outspoken Pelagianism robbing God of His honor, (b) as contrary to the prevailing agreement of evangelical doctrine which takes from man all cause of boasting, which always gives God the glory, (c) as contrary to Scripture which teaches that God confirms believers unto the end.

134. The Arminians taught not only that the final and complete falling away of the saints is possible, but that this actually does take place. They appeal to such passages as Heb. 6:4-8, II Pet. 2:1. However, the Article of the Canons B, III refutes this position by stating: (1) that these teachings make powerless the grace of Christ, the justification, regeneration, and perseverance by Christ. (2) that this is contrary to Scripture in the following texts: Romans 4: 8-9 where we are taught that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. That thus we are justified by His blood and that being justified we shall be much more saved by His life. I John 3:9 teaches that the seed of regeneration can never be lost. John 10:28-29 teaches that Christ shall surely preserve His own unto eternal life.

135. The Arminians maintained that the believer can and sometimes does sin the 'sin unto death' or 'the sin against the Holy Spirit'. This implies that he who once was saved in Christ, can even in this life fall into a state of being hopelessly lost. The article V, B, 4 appeals to Scripture in the very context of the passages that speak of the sin unto death, and proves that the regenerated cannot possibly become guilty of this sin unto death. He that is begotten of God keepeth himself (note--not is able to but actually does keep himself from this sin, and the evil one toucheth him not).

136. For an answer to the question what constitutes the sin unto death, the following passages ought to be considered: I John 5:16, 17; Matt. 12:31, 32; Mark 3:28, 29; Luke 12: 10. Compare also Heb. 6:4-6; Jer. 7:17, 14:11. In the first passage we read (I John 5:16-17) (1) that John is here speaking of a particular sin or kind of sin which is called the sin unto death; (2) that it is evidently a sin committed by one in the church who is nominally a Christian for he is known as a brother; (3) that it is a sin not committed in the heart, in the hidden recesses of the thoughts or the desires, but openly the sin is seen, perceived by the brothers or brethren. (4) that it is a sin that leads inevitably to and necessarily to damnation. Death, in the text, is the opposite of life. The sin unto death, therefore, is the sin unto damnation. (5) that he that commits it is excluded from the intercessory prayer by the saints. The sin is, therefore, unpardonable. In Matt 12:31, 32 we read: "Wherefore, I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto man. And whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. Mark 3:28-29 is similar to the preceding and it adds the following words: "but is in danger of eternal damnation." And vs. 30 explains that the Lord said this because the Scribes said that He had an unclean spirit. Luke 12:10 is also similar and adds no new element. From these passages we learn that the sin unto death, the unpardonable sin consists in blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

It is, therefore, not all manner of sin, not even grave sin that is meant, nor can it be said that it is any sin against the Holy Ghost. It must be plain that all sin that is committed is also against the Holy Spirit and that the people of God grieve the Spirit often. But the unpardonable sin is very definitely the sin of blasphemy of the Holy Spirit.

This sin is committed only where there is a clear revelation of the Holy Spirit and His work. This is essential. It is not any doubtful feeling or inclinations which we find in our own heart, and which perhaps we falsely mistake as ~~the~~ the work of the Spirit, but the very evident work of the Spirit Himself against which the blasphemy is committed. It was the moment when Jesus was casting out devils which was a manifest revelation of the Holy Spirit, and thus also in the new dispensation the manifest work of the Spirit is in the church, whether through the officers or otherwise, and presents the occasion for committing the sin against the Holy Spirit.

137. (1) God's calling cannot be revoked; that would be possible if it were a calling according to our will. A calling that had become efficacious by our consent. But, the Scripture teaches that it is a calling according to God's purpose. So the calling is unchangeable. (2) Christ's meritorious work cannot be made of none effect. He gave His life a ransom. Those for whom He died must certainly be redeemed and glorified. (3) Christ's intercessory prayer is certainly answered as it is based on God's promise and on His mediatorial work. (4) Christ's perseverance is infallible. No one can pluck His own out of His hand. (5) The sealing by the indwelling Spirit. This cannot be frustrated or obliterated. Scripture teaches that believers are sealed by the Spirit until the day of redemption. A seal is a mark of genuineness and ownership and can never be violated or broken. They that have the firstfruits of the Spirit are marked indelibly as God's eternal property. For all these reasons, which are fundamentally one, it is impossible that believers should finally and utterly fall from faith and grace.

138. Can a Christian in this life, not only know he has the faith, but that he can persevere, the he will never fall away? We do not always live according to the measure of our faith. We are not always equally strong; what we might call a smaller or greater measure of faith, and why do not I always have an equal measure of faith? You know personally, spiritually that there are all kinds of spiritual ailments as there are always bodily ailments. It may be due to ignorance, not a complete knowledge of God. It may be a matter of misunderstanding, maybe you do not want to be assured in the right way; you love certain sins more than Christ, and perhaps you neglect the study of the Word of God. That is what the Catechism means. Therefore one must watch over the measure of his faith. Article 9 states, that the believers do obtain assurance of their preservation and perseverance according to the measure of faith. This means that faith is in itself a certain persuasion that even as we now experience forgiveness of sin, so shall we inherit eternal life, and will continue true and living members of the church. That this assurance varies, is more or less clear and firm, according to the measure of our active conscious faith is here stated. There may be many and different reasons why at times our faith is weak. Whether they be reasons of misunderstanding or of a careless walk. And according as our faith is, so is also our assurance that we shall persevere.

139. The Arminians taught that assurance of final salvation can be obtained only through special revelation. Such a method, however, is not only contrary to Scripture, as the Art. points out, but would indeed be detrimental and conducive to a profane and careless life. The article speaks of the doubts of the papist. It is well known that the Roman Catholic seeks assurance through all kinds of superstitious means; the declaration of the priests assures him of the forgiveness of sin, an indulgence signed by the pope assures him of a place in heaven, masses read for his soul promise him a speedy deliverance out of purgatory. The true assurance, however, can never be obtained in this way.

140. Faith in God's promise is the factor from which this assurance springs. God has revealed this in His Word unto those who have received of Him the Spirit of Truth; whereby they are able to discern the things that are spiritual. And the Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we are children and heirs of God. By the Spirit of God within us, we have a serious and holy desire to maintain a good conscience before God, and also to perform good works, which undoubtedly spring forth as a fruit of our faith. If the elect of God could not have the comfort and assurance in this life concerning their future salvation, living in the hope that when the good fight of faith is ended, they shall finally obtain the victory and if they did not have the infallible pledge that God is faithful and merciful and will keep His promises through all eternity, then would the elect of God be of all men most miserable

141. Believers are not always sure of their preservation. The reason undoubtedly lies in the fact that their faith falters. Carnal doubts confront the believer which causes a continual struggle to be faithful in the calling wherewith God has called them. Under grievous temptations in this life, which tend to test their faith, they are not always aware of this full assurance of faith and unflinching perseverance. But God does not tempt His people above that which they are able to bear. I Cor. 10: 13. And with the comfortable assurance of persevering in His unflinching grace.

142. The real source of this assurance lies in the humility of the believer. Just the reverse from pride, or a feeling of self confidence and conceit. Filial reverence, true piety, patience, in every tribulation, fervent prayers, long suffering, and boldly confessing the truth, and a firm rejoicing in God are the results of these virtues proceeding from a humble spirit. So, considering this benefit of assurance, it should serve as an incentive, encouraging the constant practice of gratitude and good works as appears evident from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints and martyrs of the bygone centuries. Psalm 34:18 "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit." Vs. 19: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Fervent prayers because it is the consciousness of one's own weakness and dependence upon God. Constantly confessing the truth, patience in suffering and tribulation because the assurance of final perseverance causes us to acknowledge and know that all things work together for good. Rejoicing in God, who only is the author and finisher of our salvation. A true practical thankfulness manifesting itself in good works.

143. Article 13 speaks of a Christian who stands in renewed confidence of perseverance, after having returned from backsliding. With regard to such, so well as with regard to all Christians, the Arminians would say that a sense of security is harmful and dangerous and leads to licentiousness and carelessness. It is safer to doubt than to stand in full assurance. The article, however, as well as the teaching of the Westminster B. C., affirms that the very opposite is true and when God's people return from a way of backsliding and sin, in true repentance they are more solicitous and careful than before. Even though they again stand in the assurance that God will keep them unto the end. And in general the grace of assurance is the source of a firm hope and the true Christian's hope is to see Him as He is, and this is a strong incentive to purify one's self even as He is pure.

144. By the means of grace, the preaching of the Word and the use of the Sacraments, God preserves and perfects His work of grace in us. The underlying reason for this is that even in the work of salvation, though it is all of His sovereign grace, God deals with us as rational moral creatures. He works, not without, but through our mind and will. This explains all those passages in Scripture that admonish us to fight the good fight, to keep that which we have, to watch and pray, as if it actually depended on our own effort whether or not we would ever reach the goal. Hence, all other things being equal, he is the stronger Christian who the more faithfully uses the means of grace.

146. Art. 15. is a most fitting and beautiful conclusion of this chapter. It first of all describes the attitude of the carnal mind over against the truth of infallible perseverance, and in connection with it, of sovereign predestination. We must remember that the carnal mind is enmity against God, and it is especially in the doctrine of predestination and related truths, that God Who is really God, is confessed. Small wonder then that the carnal mind hates this doctrine, when the article states that it cannot comprehend it. The meaning is not that it is incapable of intellectually understanding it, but it does not spiritually discern the truth about God. And because it is a spiritual question he ridicules and abuses it; draws wrong conclusions from it, and tries to show that it is absurd and wicked. For further information concerning the attitude of opposition of the wicked see the conclusion to the Canons. We may find comfort in the fact that the truth has always been thus opposed, for by it we are strengthened in the conviction that with our confession we are in the company of the believers. This also is with what the article further states. It does not hesitate to maintain that the true church, here called the spouse of Christ, has loved and defended the truth constantly, and that nothing can persuade her to abandon it. This is very plain from the history of the church. We do indeed stand in the line of the most positive development of the truth, in the history of doctrine, when we confess the truth of preservation and perseverance of the saints.

147. Naturally the Arminians in order to maintain the error of a final falling away from grace, taught that there is no difference between saving and temporal faith. However, the latter is not faith. It is rather an effectation of the emotions caused under certain conditions. To such as perhaps have severe sickness, or adversity or under emotional Bible preaching. It is superficial and finds no delight in the truth. It is not rooted in the heart, does not control the will, and does not bring forth fruit of repentance. Even though for a time it may appear to be even more real and fruitful than saving faith itself. From the parable of the sower the article of the Canons draws a threefold conclusion or distinction between saving and temporal faith; (1) The latter is not the former is a matter of the heart; (2) The latter has no root, the former has; (3) the latter does not bring forth fruit, the former does.

148. The Remonstrants by their doctrine of free will and possibility of a repeated falling from grace, were forced to teach that a person could be regenerated repeatedly, and they claimed that this actually took place more than once. The Word of God and the Canons in V, B VIII teach: (1) That the seed of regeneration is incorruptible. By this seed of regeneration is meant the very essential beginning of it. I Pet. 1:23. (2) That this seed of regeneration which is the seed of God in Christ remains in the regenerated. I John 3:9. (3) That therefore, a person who is once regenerated is born again forever and the very ideas of a repeated regeneration is absurd indeed.

149. The Arminians also denied that Christ, in His intercessory prayer, prayed for the infallible continuation of the believers in the faith. This they were compelled to deny, seeing that Christ's prayer is always and surely heard. If, therefore, the Lord prays for the infallible preservation of believers and their final salvation, they surely cannot fall from grace. But this is the very essence of Christ's intercession. What would be the meaning of Christ's prayer in behalf of His people if it be not that they may also be where He is? By maintaining that the intercessory prayer of the Lord does not ask for the infallible continuation of believers in faith and grace, the Arminians deny the very essence of Christ's intercession. The article quotes the historic example of Christ's prayer for Peter when Peter was preserved because Christ prayed that his faith fail not. Lu.22:32. And again the article refers us to the prayer, of High Priestly prayer of John 17, especially verses 15-20.