

## COMMITTEE ON TRANSLATION AND REVISION CONFSSIONAL AND LITURGICAL FORMS

## THREE FORMS OF UNITY: THE CANONS OF DORDT

Introductory Remarks

- A. The Committee took as basis for a new translation De Nederlandse Belijdenisgeschriften In Authentieke Teksten. Met Inleiding en Tekstvergelijkingen door J. N. Bakhuizen van den Brink, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Ton Bolland, 1976).

In the case of the Canons the original texts are at the same time the authentic texts, nl. the Latin and Dutch texts established by the Synod of Dordrecht 1619.

We gratefully used A New English Translation of the Canons of Dort by Anthony A. Hoekema, reprinted from the November, 1968, issue of the Calvin Theological Journal. This translation has been made directly from the Latin text. Our Committee, however, used the Dutch text not only as an official commentary on and interpretation of the Latin text, but as of equal authenticity. We also took into consideration the present English text, because it obtained an ecclesiastical character in the Canadian Reformed Churches as the text to which office-bearers subscribe.

Our method therefore differed from that of the Committee for Doctrinal and Liturgical Forms which reported to General Synod Coaldale 1977 that "in most (not all) cases where the present English version follows the Latin rather than the Dutch/is followed" Our Committee gave equal weight to the Latin and the Dutch texts and decided each case on its merits.

the Dutch

- B. We went further than Dr. A. A. Hoekema in breaking up long sentences into shorter ones. In his line an attempt has been made to find modern equivalents for archaic or obsolete words and expressions. The subheadings were not part of the official text; they should be printed in italics.
- C. The Committee made a few changes. In I 6 we took away the reference to Acts 15:18 on the basis of newer Bible Translations. In I 7 we placed "in Christ" with "chosen" in agreement with the Latin and Dutch texts.

Because the reader himself can compare the proposed new translation with the present English text, we did not indicate the stylistic changes.

For the Committee,

J. Faber, Reporter.

June 1979.

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COMMISSION ON TRANSLATION AND REVISION CONFIDENTIAL AND LITURGICAL TEXTS  
THIRD FORM OF DRAFT: THE CANONS OF DRAFT

Introductory Remarks

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For the Committee,  
J. Fisher, Reporter

June 1978

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THE CANONS OF DORDT

FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE

DIVINE ELECTION AND REPROBATION

ARTICLE I

All Mankind Condemnable Before God

Since all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse and deserve eternal death, God would have done injustice to no one if He had willed to leave the whole human race in sin and under the curse, and to condemn it on account of its sin, according to these words of the apostle: that every

Rom. 3:19

Rom. 3:23

Rom. 6:23

mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held

accountable to God. All have sinned and fall short of the

glory of God; and, the wages of sin is death.

ARTICLE II

The Sending of the Son of God

But in this the love of God was made manifest, that He sent His only Son into the world, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

I John 4:9

John 3:16

ARTICLE III

The Preaching of the Gospel

So that men may be brought to faith, God mercifully sends heralds of this most joyful message to whom He will and when He wills. By their ministry men are called to repentance and to faith in Christ crucified. For how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent?

Rom.10:14

Rom.10:15

## ARTICLE IV

### A Twofold Outcome

The wrath of God remains upon those who do not believe this gospel. But those who receive it and embrace Jesus the Saviour with a true and living faith are delivered by Him from the wrath of God and from destruction, and are given eternal life.

John 3:36

Mark 16:16

## ARTICLE V

### The Cause of Unbelief, the Source of Faith

The cause or guilt for this unbelief, as well as for all other sins, is by no means in God, but rather in man. Faith in Jesus Christ, however, and salvation through Him, is the free gift of God, as it is written: By grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God. Similarly, It has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should.... believe in Him.

Eph. 2:8

Phil. 1:29

## ARTICLE VI

### God's Eternal Decree

That God in time confers the gift of faith on some, and not on others, proceeds from His eternal decree. For all His works He knows from eternity, and He accomplishes all things according to the counsel of His will. According to this decree He graciously softens the hearts of the elect, no matter how hard they may be, and inclines them to believe; those not elected, however, He leaves in their own wickedness and hardness by a just judgment. And here especially is disclosed to us the profound, merciful and at the

Eph. 1:11

This decree

same time just, distinction between men equally worthy of condemnation, or that decree of election and reprobation which has been revealed in God's Word. ~~This decree,~~ Although perverse, impure, and unstable men twist it to their own destruction, provides for holy and God-fearing souls. unspeakable comfort

ARTICLE VII

Election Defined

Election is the unchangeable purpose of God whereby, before the foundation of the world, out of the whole human race, which had fallen by its own fault out of its original integrity into sin and perdition, He has, according to the ~~most free~~ <sup>sovereign</sup> good pleasure of His will, out of mere grace, chosen in Christ to salvation a definite number of persons, neither better nor more worthy than others, but with them involved in a common misery. Also from eternity He has appointed Christ to be the Mediator and Head of all the elect and the foundation of salvation and thus He decreed to give to Christ those who were to be saved, and effectually to call and draw them into His communion through His Word and Spirit. ~~That is,~~ He decreed to give them true faith in Him, to justify them, to sanctify them, and, after having powerfully kept them in the fellowship of His Son, finally to glorify them, for the demonstration of His mercy and the praise of the riches of His glorious grace.

— As it is written: God chose us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be His sons through

Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the  
praise of His glorious grace which He freely bestowed on us  
Eph.1:4-6 in the Beloved. And elsewhere, Those whom He predestined He  
also called; and those whom He called He also justified; and  
Rom.8:30 those whom He justified He also glorified.

#### ARTICLE VIII

##### One Decree of Election

There are not various decrees of this election, but it  
is one and the same decree concerning all those that are to  
be saved under both the Old and the New Testament. For  
Scripture declares that the good pleasure, purpose, and  
counsel of the will of God is one, <sup>According to this purpose</sup> ~~in accord with which~~ He  
has chosen us from eternity both to grace and to glory, both  
Eph.1:4,5 to salvation and to the way of salvation, which He prepared  
Eph.2:10 for us that we should walk in it.

#### ARTICLE IX

##### Election Not Based On Foreseen Faith

This election <sup>is not based on</sup> ~~has taken place, not on the basis of~~  
foreseen faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, or any  
other good quality or disposition, as a cause or condition  
in man required for being chosen, but men are chosen to faith,  
the obedience of faith, holiness, and so on. Election,  
therefore, is the fountain of every saving good, from which  
flow faith, holiness, and other saving gifts, and finally  
eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects. This the  
apostle teaches when he says, He chose us (not because we  
Eph.1:4 were, but) that we should be holy and blameless before Him.

ARTICLE X

Election Based on God's Good Pleasure

The cause of this gracious election is only the good pleasure of God. This good pleasure does not consist in this, that out of all possible conditions God chose certain qualities or actions of men as a condition for salvation, but in this, that out of the common mass of sinners he adopted certain persons to be His own possession. For it is written, Though they (the children) were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, and so on, she (namely, Rebecca), was told, 'The elder will serve the younger.' As it is written, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated.' And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

Rom.9:11-13

(Mal.1:2,3)

Acts 13:48

ARTICLE XI

Election Unchangeable

As God Himself is most wise, unchangeable, all-knowing, and almighty, so His election can neither be undone and redone, nor changed, revoked or annulled; neither can the elect be cast away, nor their number be diminished.

ARTICLE XII

The Assurance of Election

The elect in due time, though in various stages and in different measure, are made certain of this their eternal and unchangeable election to salvation. They attain this assurance, however, not by inquisitively prying into the hidden and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves, with spiritual joy and holy delight, the unfailing

fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God - such as a true faith in Christ, a childlike fear of God, a godly sorrow for their sins, and a hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

#### ARTICLE XIII

##### The Value of this Assurance

The awareness and assurance of this election provide the children of God with greater reason for daily humbling themselves before God, for adoring the depth of His mercies, for cleansing themselves, and for fervently loving Him in return who first so greatly loved them. It is therefore not true at all that this doctrine of election and the reflection on it makes them lazy in observing the commands of God or falsely secure. In the just judgment of God, this usually happens to those who rashly presume to have the grace of election, or idly and boldly chatter about it, but refuse to walk in the ways of the elect.

#### ARTICLE XIV

##### How Election is to be Taught

This doctrine of divine election, according to the most wise counsel of God, was preached by the prophets, by Christ Himself, and by the apostles, under the Old as well as the New Testament, and was then committed to writing in the Holy Scriptures. <sup>Therefore, too/</sup> ~~Also~~ today, this doctrine should ~~therefore~~ be taught in the church of God, for which it was particularly intended, in its proper time and place, provided it be done with a spirit of discretion, in a reverent and holy manner,

Acts 20:27



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Rom. 12:3 without inquisitively prying into the ways of the most High,  
Rom. 11:33,34 to the glory of God's most holy name, and for the living  
comfort of His people.

#### ARTICLE XV

##### Reprobation Described

Holy Scripture illustrates and recommends to us this eternal and undeserved grace of our election, especially when it further declares that not all men are elect but that some have not been elected, or have been passed by in the eternal election of God. Out of His most free, most just, blameless, and unchangeable good pleasure, God has decreed to leave them in the common misery into which they have by their own fault plunged themselves, and not to give them saving faith and the grace of conversion. These, having been left in their own ways and under His just judgment, God has decreed finally to condemn and punish eternally, not only on account of their unbelief but also on account of all their other sins, for the declaration of His justice. This is the decree of reprobation, which by no means makes God the author of sin (the very thought is blasphemous!), but rather <sup>declares</sup> ~~makes~~ Him an awesome, blameless and just judge and avenger thereof.

#### ARTICLE XVI

##### Responses to the Doctrine of Reprobation

Some do not yet clearly discern in themselves a living faith in Christ, an assured confidence of heart, peace of conscience, a zeal for childlike obedience and a glorying in God through Christ, nevertheless they use the means through

which God has promised to work these things in us. They ought not to be alarmed when reprobation is mentioned, nor to count themselves among the reprobate. Rather they must diligently continue in the use of these means, fervently desire a time of more abundant grace and expect it reverently and humbly.

Others seriously desire to be converted to God, to please Him only and to be delivered from the body of death. Yet they cannot reach that point on the way of godliness and faith which they would like. They should ever less be terrified by the doctrine of reprobation, since a merciful God has promised not to quench the smoking flax nor to break the bruised reed.

Still others disregard God and the Saviour Jesus Christ and have completely given themselves over to the cares of the world and the lusts of the flesh. For them this doctrine of reprobation is rightly fearsome as long as they are not seriously converted.

ARTICLE XVII

Children of Believers Who Die in Infancy

We must judge concerning the will of God from His Word, which declares that the children of believers are holy, not by nature but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they are included with their parents.

Gen.17:7                   Therefore, godfearing parents ought not to doubt the  
Acts 2:39                   election and salvation of their children whom God calls out  
1 Cor. 7:14               of this life in their infancy.

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ARTICLE XVIII

No Protest but Adoration

To ~~one~~<sup>those</sup> who argue~~d~~ against this grace of undeserved election and the severity of righteous reprobation, we reply with this word of the apostle: But who are you, a man, to answer back to God? And with this word of our Saviour, Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?

Rom 9:20

Matt. 20:15

We however, with reverent adoration of these mysteries, exclaim with the apostle: O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counsel Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen.

Rom.11:33-36

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THE SECOND HEAD OF DOCTRINE

THE DEATH OF CHRIST AND THE REDEMPTION OF MAN BY IT

ARTICLE I

The Justice of God Requires Punishment

God is not only supremely merciful but also supremely just. And as He Himself has revealed in His Word, His justice requires that our sins, committed against His infinite majesty, should be punished not only in this age, but also in the age to come, both in body and soul. We cannot escape these punishments unless satisfaction is made to the justice of God.

ARTICLE II

The Satisfaction Made by Christ

We ourselves, however, cannot make this satisfaction and cannot free ourselves from God's wrath. God, therefore, in His infinite mercy has given His only Son as our Surety. For us or in our place <sup>He</sup> was made sin and a curse on the cross so that He might make satisfaction on our behalf.

ARTICLE III

The Infinite Value of the Death of Christ

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

ARTICLE IV

His Death Had Infinite Value

This death <sup>is</sup> of such great value and worth because the person who submitted to it is not only a true and perfectly holy man, but also the only Son of God, of the same eternal and infinite essence with the Father and the Holy Spirit, for these qualifications were necessary for our Saviour. Further, this death is of such great value and worth because it was accompanied by a sense of the wrath and curse of God which we by our sins had deserved.

## ARTICLE V

### The Universal Proclamation of the Gospel

John 3:16

The promise of the gospel is that whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish but have eternal life. This promise ought to be announced and proclaimed universally and without discrimination to all peoples and to all men to whom God in His good pleasure sends the gospel, together with the command to repent and believe.

## ARTICLE VI

### Why Some Do Not Believe

That, however, many who have been called by the gospel neither repent nor believe in Christ but perish in unbelief does not happen because of any defect or insufficiency in the sacrifice of Christ offered on the cross, but through their own fault.

## ARTICLE VII

### Why Others Do Believe

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But those who truly believe and are by the death of Christ freed from their sins and saved from perdition, this benefit comes only through God's grace given to them from eternity in Christ. God owes this grace to no one.

## ARTICLE VIII

### The Efficacy of the Death of Christ

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For this was the most free counsel of God the Father that the life-giving and saving efficacy of the most precious death of His Son should extend to all the elect. It was His most gracious will and intent to give them alone justifying faith and thereby to bring them unfailingly to salvation. This means, God willed that Christ through the blood of the cross (by which He confirmed the new covenant) should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation and tongue all those and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation and were given to Him by the Father. God further willed that Christ should give to them faith which, together with other saving gifts of the Holy Spirit, He acquired for them

Eph. 5:27

by His death. He should cleanse them by His blood from all sins, both original and actual, both those committed after : · faith and before faith. He should guard them faithfully to the end and at last present them to Himself in splendour without any spot or wrinkle.

#### ARTICLE IX

##### The Fulfillment of God's Counsel

This counsel, proceeding from eternal love for the elect, has from the beginning of the world to the present time been powerfully fulfilled and will also continue to be fulfilled though the gates of hell vainly try to frustrate it. In due time the elect will be gathered together into one and there will always be a church of believers founded on the blood of Christ. This church shall steadfastly love and faithfully serve Him as Her Saviour (~~who~~ as a bridegroom for his bride laid down His life for her on the cross) and celebrate His praises here and through all eternity.

#### THIRD AND FORTH HEADS OF DOCTRINE THE CORRUPTION OF MAN, HIS CONVERSION TO GOD, AND ITS MANNER

#### ARTICLE I

##### The Effect of the Fall

In the beginning man was created as the image of God. He was adorned in his mind with true and wholesome knowledge of his Creator and of all spiritual things; his will and heart were upright, all his affections pure, and therefore man was completely holy.

But, revolting from God through the instigation of the devil and through his own free will, he deprived himself of these excellent gifts, and instead brought upon himself blindness, horrible darkness, vanity and perverseness of judgment in his mind; malice, rebelliousness, and stubbornness in his will and heart; and impurity in all his affections.

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## ARTICLE II

### Corruption Propagated

Such as man was after the fall, such children he also brought forth; a corrupt father corrupt children.

Thus the corruption has spread from Adam to all his descendants, with the exception of Christ alone, not by imitation as the Pelagians of old maintained, but by the propagation of a vicious nature, according to the righteous judgement of God.

## ARTICLE III

### Man's Total Inability

Therefore all men are conceived in sin and are born as children of wrath, incapable of any serving good, inclined to evil, dead in sins, and slaves of sin. And without the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit they neither will nor can return to God, reform ~~correct~~ their depraved nature, or prepare themselves for its reformation.

## ARTICLE IV

### The Inadequacy of the Light of Nature

To be sure there is left in man after the fall, some light of nature, whereby he retains some notions about God, about natural things, and the difference between what is honorable and shameful and shows some regard for virtue and outward order. But so far is he from arriving at the saving knowledge of God and true conversion through this light of nature that he does not even use it properly in natural and civil matters. Rather, whatever this light may be, man wholly pollutes it in various ways and suppresses it by his wickedness. By doing this, he makes himself inexcusable before God.

## ARTICLE V

### The Inadequacy of the Law

What holds for the light of nature also applies to the decalogue, given by God through Moses particularly to the Jews, for through it reveals the greatness of sin, and more and more convicts man of his guilt, yet it neither points



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out a remedy nor gives him power to free himself from this misery. Rather weakened by the flesh, it leaves the transgression under the curse. Man cannot, therefore, through the law obtain saving grace.

#### ARTICLE VI

##### The Need for the Gospel

What, therefore, neither the light of nature nor the law can do, God performs by the power of the Holy Spirit through the word or ministry of reconciliation, which is the gospel of the Messiah, by which it has pleased God to save men who believe, both under the old and new dispensation.

#### ARTICLE VII

##### Why the Gospel is Sent to Some and Not to Others

Under the old dispensation God revealed this mystery of His will to few. Under the new dispensation, however, He took the distinction between the peoples away and revealed it to more. The cause of this very distribution of the Gospel is not to be ascribed to the worthiness of one people above another nor to the better use of the light of nature but to the sovereign good pleasure and undeserved love of God. Therefore we to whom so great a grace is granted, beyond and contrary to all we deserve, ought to acknowledge it with a humble and grateful heart. But as regards others to whom this grace is not given, we ought with the apostle to adore the severity and righteousness of the judgements of God, but by no means inquisitively to pry into them.

#### ARTICLE VIII

##### The Earnest Call by the Gospel

But as many<sup>as</sup> are called by the gospel are earnestly called, for God earnestly and most sincerely reveals in His Word what is pleasing to Him, namely, that those who are called should come to Him. He also earnestly promises rest of soul and eternal life to all who come to Him and believe.

## ARTICLE IX

### Why Some of the Called Do Not Come

It is not the fault of the Gospel, nor of the Christ offered by the Gospel, nor of God who calls through the Gospel and who even confers various gifts upon them, that ————— many who are called through the ministry of the Gospel do not come and are not converted, The fault lies in themselves. Some of them do not care and do not receive the word of life. Others do indeed receive it, but not into their hearts, and therefore, after a joy of a temporary faith has vanished, they turn away. Still others choke the seed of the Word by the thorns of the cares and the pleasure of this world, and bring forth no fruit. This our Saviour teaches in the parable of the seed. (Matthew 13)

## ARTICLE X

### Why Others Who Are Called Do Come

Others who are called by the ministry of the gospel do come and are converted. This is not to be ascribed to man. He does not distinguish himself by his free will above others who are furnished with equal or sufficient grace for faith or conversion (as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains.) It is to be ascribed to God. He has chosen His own in Christ from eternity and calls them effectually in time, He gives them faith and repentance; He delivers them from the power of darkness and transfers them to the kingdom of His Son. All this He does that they may declare the wonderful deeds of Him who called them out of darkness into His marvelous light, and may boast not of themselves but of the Lord, according to the testimony of the apostles in various places.

Col. 1:13  
IPet. 2:9  
ICor. 1:31

## ARTICLE XI

### How God Brings About Conversion

God carries out His good pleasure in the elect and works in them true conversion in the following manner.. He takes care that the Gospel is preached to them, and powerfully enlightens their minds by the Holy Spirit so that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God. By the efficacious working of the same regenerating Spirit He also

ICor. 2:14

penetrates into the innermost recesses of man. He opens the closed and softens the hard heart, circumcises that which was uncircumcised and instills new qualities into the will. He makes the will which was dead alive, which was bad good, which was unwilling willing and which was stubborn obedient. He moves and strenghtens it so that, like a good tree, it may be able to produce the fruit of good works.

#### ARTICLE XII

##### The Divine Character of Regeneration.

This conversion is that regeneration, new creation, resurrection from the dead, making alive, so highly spoken of in the Scriptures, which God works in us without us. But this regeneration is by no means brought about only by outward preaching, by moral persuasion, or by such a mode of operation that, after God has done His part, it remains in the power of man to be regenerated or not regenerated, converted or not converted. It is, however, clearly a supernatural, most powerful and at the same time most delightful, marvelous, mysterious and inexpressible work. According to Scripture, inspired by the Author of this work, regeneration is not inferior in power to creation or the resurrection of the dead. Hence all those in whose hearts God works in this amazing way are certainly, unfailingly, and effectually regenerated and do actually believe. Therefore the will so renewed is not only acted upon and moved by God but, acted upon by God, the will itself also acts. Hence also man himself, is rightly said to believe and repent through the grace he has received.

#### ARTICLE XIII

##### Regeneration is Incomprehensible

As long as they are in this life, believers cannot fully understand the way in which God does this work. Meanwhile, however, it is enough for them to know and experience that by this grace of God they believe with the heart and love their Saviour.

#### ARTICLE XIV

##### Faith a Gift of God

Eph. 2:8

Faith is therefore a gift of God, not because it is merely offered by God to the free will of man, but because it is actually conferred on man, instilled and infused into him. It is not a gift in the sense that God confers only the power to believe and then awaits from man's free will the consent to believe or the act of believing. It is however, a gift in the

Phil.2:13

sense that He who works both to will and to work brings about in man both the will to believe and the act of believing, and indeed all things in all.

#### ARTICLE XV

##### Christian Attitude with Respect to God's Undeserved Grace

Rom.11:35

This grace God owes to no one. For what could He owe to man? Who has given Him first that he might be repaid? What could God owe to one who has nothing of his own but sin and falsehood? He, therefore, who receives this grace owes and renders eternal thanks to God. He who does not receive this grace, however, either does not care at all for these spiritual things and is pleased with what he has, or in false security vainly boasts that he has what he does not have. Further, about those who outwardly profess their faith and amend their lives we are to judge and speak in the most favourable way, according to the example of the apostles, for the inner recesses of the heart are unknown to us. As for those who have not yet been called, we should pray for them to God, who calls into existence the things that do not exist. But we must by no means act haughtily towards them, as if we had distinguished ourselves.

#### ARTICLE XVI

##### Man's Will Not Taken Away But Made Alive

Man through fall did not cease to be man, endowed with intellect and will; and sin, which has pervaded the whole human race, did not deprive man of his human nature, but brought upon him depravity and spiritual death. So also this divine grace of regeneration does not act upon man as stocks and blocks and does not take the will and its properties, or

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violently coerce it, but makes the will spiritually alive, heals it, corrects it, sweetly/at the same time powerfully bends it. As a result, where formerly the rebellion and resistance of the flesh fully dominated, now a prompt and sincere obedience of the Spirit begins to prevail- in which the true, spiritual renewal and freedom of our will consists. And unless the admirable Author of all good should deal with us in this way, man would have no hope of rising from his fall through his free will, by which he, when he was still standing, plunged himself into ruin.

#### ARTICLE XVII

##### The Use of Means

The almighty working of God whereby He brings forth and sustains this our natural life does not exclude but requires the use of means, by which He according to His infinite wisdom and goodness has willed to exercise His power. So also the ~~a~~for-mentioned supernatural working of God whereby He regenerates us, in no way excludes or overthrows the use of the gospel, which the most wise God has ordained to be the seed of regeneration and the food of the soul. For this reason the apostles and the teachers who succeeded them, in the fear of the Lord, instructed the people concerning this grace of God, to His glory and to the abasement of all pride. In the meantime, however, they did not neglect to keep them, by the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the administration of the Word, the sacraments and discipline. So today those who give or receive instruction in the church should not dare to tempt God by separating what He in His good pleasure has willed to be kept very close together. For grace is conferred through admonitions, and the more readily we do our duty, the more this favour of God, who works in us, usually manifests itself in its lustre and the more directly His works proceeds. To God alone all glory, both for the means and for their saving fruit and efficacy is due throughout eternity. Amen.

FIFTH HEAD OF DOCTRINE  
THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

ARTICLE I

The Regenerate Not Free from Indwelling Sin

Those whom, according to His purpose God calls into the fellowship of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by His Holy Spirit, He certainly sets free from the dominion and slavery of sin, but not entirely in this life from the  
Rom.7:24 flesh and from the body of sin.

ARTICLE II

Daily Sins of Weakness

Therefore daily sins of weakness spring up and defects cling to even the best works of the saints. These are for them a constant reason to humble themselves before God, to flee to the crucified Christ, to put the flesh to death more and more through the Spirit of prayer and by holy exercises of godliness, and to long for the goal of perfection until at last, delivered from this body of death, they reign with the Lamb of God in heaven.

ARTICLE III

God Preserves His Own

Because of these remains of indwelling sin and also because the temptations of the world and of satan, those who have been converted could not persevere in that grace, if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who mercifully confirms them in the grace once conferred upon them and powerfully preserves them in that grace to the end.

ARTICLE IV

Saints May Fall into Serious Sins

The power of God whereby He confirms and preserves true believers in grace is so great that it cannot be conquered by the flesh yet the converted are not always so led and moved by God that they cannot in certain particular actions turn aside through their own fault from the guidance of grace and be

seduced by and yield to the lusts of the flesh. They must therefore constantly watch and pray that they may not be led into temptation. When they do not watch and pray, they not only can be drawn away by the flesh, the world and satan into serious and atrocious sins, but with the righteous permission of God are sometimes actually drawn away. The lamentable fall of David, Peter and other saints, described in Holy Scripture, demonstrates this.

#### ARTICLE V

##### The Effects of such Serious Sins

By such gross sins, however, they greatly offend God, incur deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, suspend the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences and sometimes for a while lose the sense of 'God's favour -- until they return to the right way through sincere repentance and God's fatherly face again shines upon them.

#### ARTICLE VI

##### God will not Permit His Elect to be Lost

But God who is rich in mercy, according to the unchangeable purpose of His election, does not completely withdraw His Holy Spirit from His own even in their deplorable fall. Neither does He permit them to sink so ~~far~~ deep that they fall away from the grace of adoption and the state of justification, or commit the sin unto death or the sin against the Holy Spirit and, totally deserted by Him, plunge themselves into eternal ruin.

#### ARTICLE VII

##### God will again Renew His Elect to Repentance

For in the first place, in their fall, He preserves in them His imperishable seed of regeneration, so that it does not perish and is not cast out. Further, through His Word and Spirit He effectually renews them to repentance. As a result they grieve from the heart ~~and~~ according to God for the sins they have committed; they seek and obtain through faith with a contrite heart forgiveness in the blood of the Mediator;

they again experience the favour of a reconciled God, adore His mercies and faithfulness. And from now on they more diligently work out their own salvation with fear and trembling.

#### ARTICLE VIII

##### The Grace of the Triune God Preserves

So it is not through their own merits or strength but through the undeserved mercy of God that they neither totally fall back from faith and grace nor persist in their backslidings and are finally lost. As far as they are concerned, this could not only easily happen but would undoubtedly happen. But as far as God is concerned, this cannot possibly happen, since His counsel cannot be changed, His promise cannot fail, the calling according to His purpose cannot be revoked, the merit, intercession, and preservation of Christ cannot be nullified, and the sealing of the Holy Spirit can neither be frustrated nor destroyed.

#### ARTICLE IX

##### The Assurance of This Preservation

Believers themselves can be certain and are certain of this preservation of the elect to salvation and the perseverance of true believers in the faith. This assurance is according to the measure of their faith, by which they surely believe that they are and always shall remain true and living members of the church, and that they have forgiveness of sins and life eternal.

#### ARTICLE X

##### The Ground of This Assurance

This assurance is not produced by a certain private revelation besides or outside the Word, but by faith in the promises of God, which He has most abundantly revealed in His Word for our comfort; by the testimony of the Holy Spirit, Rom. 8:16, 17 witnessing with our spirit that we are children and heirs of God; and, finally, by the serious and holy pursuit of a good conscience and of good works. And if the elect of God did not



have in this world the solid comfort of obtaining the victory and this unfailing pledge of eternal glory, they would be of all men the most miserable.

#### ARTICLE XI

##### This Assurance Not Always Felt

Scripture meanwhile testifies that believers in this life have to struggle with various doubts of the flesh and, placed under severe temptation, do not always feel this full assurance of faith and certainty of persevering. But God, the

ICor.10:13 Father of all comfort, will not let them to be tempted beyond their strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape and by the Holy Spirit again revive#in them the certainty of persevering.

#### ARTICLE XII

##### This Assurance Does Not Lead to Complacency

So far, however, is this certainty of perseverance from making true believers proud and complacent that, on the contrary, it is the true root of humility, childlike reverence, genuine godliness, patience in every conflict, fervent prayers, constancy in the cross and in the confession of the truth, and lasting joy in God. Further, the consideration of this benefit is for them an incentive to the serious and constant practice of gratitude and good works, as is evident from the testimonies of Scripture and the examples of the saints.

#### ARTICLE XIII

##### This Assurance Does Not Lead to Carelessness

This renewed confidence does not produce carelessness or neglect of godliness, in those who have been restored after the fall; rather it renders them more careful and diligent to discern the ways of the Lord so that by walking in them they may retain the certainty of persevering. They do this lest, because of their abuse of His Fatherly goodness, the reconciled God should again turn away from them His face, ( the contemplation of which is to the godly sweeter than life, and the withdrawal of it more bitter than death) and they should fall into more severe torments of soul.

Eph.2:10

#### ARTICLE XIV

##### The Use of Means Included

As it has pleased God to begin this work of grace in us by the preaching of the gospel, so He maintains, continues and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation upon it, by its exhortations, threatenings, and promises, and by the use of the sacraments.

#### ARTICLE XV

##### This Doctrine Hated by Satan but Loved by the Church

This doctrine of the perseverance of true believers and saints, and of the certainty of it, which God has most abundantly revealed in His Word for the glory of His name and for the consolation of the godly, and which He impresses on the hearts of believers, the flesh does not really understand. Satan hates it, the world ridicules it, the ignorant and hypocrites abuse it, and the heretics oppose it. The Bride of Christ, however, has always most tenderly loved and constantly defended it as a treasure of inestimable value, and God, against whom no counsel can avail and no strength can prevail, will see to it that she continues to do so to the end. To God alone, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, be honour and glory forever. Amen.

ARTICLE XIV

THE CREATION AND FALL OF MAN AND HIS  
INCAPABILITY OF DOING WHAT IS TRULY GOOD.

Gen. 1:26

We believe that God created man of dust from the ground and He made and formed him after His own image and likeness, good, righteous and holy. His will could conform to the will of God in every respect. But, when man was in this high position he did not appreciate it nor did he value his excellency. He lent his ears to the words of the devil and wilfully subjected himself to sin and consequently to death and the curse. For he transgressed the commandment of life which he had received; by his sin he broke away from God, who was his true life; he corrupted his whole nature. By all this he made himself liable to physical and spiritual death.

Rom. 1:20

Since man became wicked and perverse, corrupt in all his ways, he has lost all his excellent gifts which he once received from God. He had nothing left but some small traces, which are sufficient to make man inexcusable. For whatever light is in us has changed into darkness, as Scripture teaches us, The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it, where the apostle John calls mankind darkness.

John 1:5

John 8:34

Therefore we reject all contrary teaching concerning the free will of man, since man is but a slave to sin and

John 3:27

no one can receive anything except what is given from heaven. For who dares to boast that he of himself can do

John 6:44

any good, when Christ says: No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him? Who will glory in his

Rom. 8:7

own will, when he understands that the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God?

ICor.2:14

Who can speak a word of his knowledge, since the unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the spirit of God?

2Cor.3:5

In short, who dares to claim anything, when he realizes that we are not competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but that our competence is from God?

Phil.2:13

Therefore what the apostle says must justly remain sure and firm, God is at work in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. For there is no understanding

John 15:5 or will conform to the understanding and will of God unless Christ has brought it about; as He teaches us: Apart from me you can do nothing.

ARTICLE XV  
ORIGINAL SIN

We believe that by the disobedience of Adam original sin has spread throughout the whole human race. It is a corruption of the entire nature of man and a hereditary evil which infects even infants in their mothers womb. As a root it produces in man all sorts of sin. It is, therefore, so vile and abominable in the sight of God that it is sufficient to condemn the human race. It is not abolished nor eradicated even by baptism\* for sin continually streams forth like water welling up from this woeful source. Yet, in spite of all this, original sin is not imputed to the children of God to their condemnation but by His grace and mercy forgiven them. This does not mean, that the believers may sleep in their sin, but that the awareness of this corruption makes them often groan as they eagerly wait to be delivered from this body of death.

In this regard we reject the error of the Pelagians who say that this sin is only a matter of imitation.

\* In this instance we prefer the original text of Guido de Bres of 1561.

ARTICLE XVI  
DIVINE ELECTION

Eph. 1: 4,5

We believe that, when the entire offspring of Adam had plunged into perdition and ruin by the transgression of the first man, God has manifested Himself to be as He is: merciful and just. Merciful, in rescuing and saving from this perdition those whom in His eternal and unchangeable counsel He has elected in Jesus Christ our Lord by His pure goodness, without any consideration of their works. Just, in leaving the others in the fall and perdition into which they have plunged themselves.

ARTICLE XVII

THE RESCUE OF FALLEN MAN.

We believe that, when He saw that man had thus plunged himself into physical and spiritual death and made himself completely miserable, our gracious God in His marvelous wisdom and goodness set out to seek man who was fleeing from Him, trembling all over. He comforted him with the promise that

.Gal. 4:4 He would give him His Son, born of woman, to bruise the head  
Gen. 3:15 of the serpent, and to make man blessed.

ARTICLE XVIII

THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD.

We confess, therefore, that God has fulfilled the promise which He had made to the fathers by the mouth of His holy prophets when, at the time appointed by Him, He sent His one and only eternal Son into the world. He took the form of a servant and was born in the likeness of men. He truly assumed a real human nature with all its infirmities, without sin, for He was conceived in the womb of the blessed virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit and not by the act of a man. He not only assumed human nature as to the body, but also a true human soul, in order that He might be a real man. For since the soul was lost as well as the body, it was necessary that He took both to save both.

Phil. 2:7

4 of

Over against the heresy of the Anabaptists, who deny that Christ assumed human flesh ~~from~~ His mother, we, therefore, confess that Christ partook of the flesh and blood of the children.

Hebr. 2:14 He is a fruit of the loins of David;  
Acts 2:30 born of the seed of David according to the flesh;  
Rom. 1:3 a fruit of the womb of the virgin Mary;  
Luke 1:42 born of woman;  
Gal. 4:4 a branch of David;  
Jer. 33:15 a shoot from the stump of Jesse;  
Is. 11:1 sprung from the tribe of Judah;  
Hebr. 7:14 descended from the Jews according to the flesh;  
Rom. 9:5 of the seed of Abraham, since the Son was concerned with  
Hebr. 2:16, 17 the descendants of Abraham. Therefore He had to be made like  
Hebr. 4:15 his brethren in every respect, yet without sin.  
Mt. 1:23 In this way He is in truth our Immanuel, that is God with us.

## ARTICLE XIX

## THE TWO NATURES IN THE ONE PERSON OF CHRIST.

We believe that by this conception the person of the Son of God is inseparably united and joined with the human nature so that there are not two sons of God, nor two persons, but two natures united in one single person. Each nature retains its own distinct properties: His divine nature has always remained uncreated, without beginning of days or end of life, Jer. 23:24 filling heaven and earth; His human nature has not lost its properties: it has beginning of days and remains created. It is finite and retains all the properties of a true body. Even though, by His resurrection, He has given immortality to His human nature, He has not changed the reality of the same, since our salvation and resurrection also depend on the reality of His body.

However these two natures are so closely united in one person that they were not even separated by His death. There- Luke 23:46 fore, what He, dying committed into the hands of His Father was a real human spirit that departed from His body. In the meantime His divinity always remained united with His human nature, even when He was lying in the grave. And the divine nature always remained in Him just as it was in Him when He was a little child, even though it did not manifest itself as such for a little while.

For this reason we profess Him to be true God and true man. True God in order to conquer death by His power; and true man that He might die for us according to the infirmity of His flesh.

## ARTICLE XX

## THE JUSTICE AND MERCY OF GOD IN CHRIST

We believe that God, who is perfectly merciful and just, sent His Son to assume that nature in which disobedience had been committed, to make satisfaction in that very nature; and to bear the punishment of sin by His most bitter passion and death. God therefore demonstrated His justice against His Son when He laid our iniquity on Him, and showered His goodness and mercy on us who are guilty and worthy of damnation. By a most perfect love He gave His Son to die for us and He raised

Is. 53:6  
Rom. 4:25

Him for our justification that through Him we might obtain immortality and life eternal.

ARTICLE XXI

THE SATISFACTION OF CHRIST THE HIGHPRIEST.

Heb.7:1 We believe that Jesus Christ is a Highpriest for ever, after  
 Heb.7:17,21 the order of Melchizedek, which God has confirmed with an oath. He presented Himself in our behalf before His Father to appease His wrath by His full satisfaction, by offering  
 I I Pet.2:24 Himself on the tree of the cross where He poured out His precious blood for the purification of our sins, as the prophets had foretold. For it is written, Upon Him was the chastisement that made us whole and with His stripes we are healed;  
 Is.53:5,7,12 Like a lamb He was led to the slaughter; He was numbered with the transgressors, and condemned as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, though He had first declared Him innocent. He paid back what we had stolen.  
 I Pet.3:18 As the righteous for the unrighteous, He suffered in body and soul so that He felt the horrible punishment due to our  
 Luke 22:44 sins and His sweat became like great drops of blood falling  
 Mt. 27:46 down upon the ground. Finally He exclaimed, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? All this He endured for the forgiveness of our sins.  
 I Cor.2:2 We say therefore, with good reason, with Paul, to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. We count every-  
 Phil. 3:8 thing as refuse because of the surpassing love of Christ Jesus our Lord. We find all kinds of comfort in His wounds and are not in need to seek or invent any other means of  
 Heb. 10:14 reconciliation with God, than this one and only sacrifice once offered by which the believers are perfected for all times.  
 Mat. 1:21 This is also the reason why the angel of God called Him Jesus, that is Saviour, because He would save His people from their sins.

## ARTICLE XXII

## OUR JUSTIFICATION THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST

We believe that, in order that we may obtain the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Spirit kindles in our hearts a true faith. This faith embraces Jesus Christ with all His merits, makes Him our own, and does not seek anything besides Him. For the dilemma is, either all we need for our salvation is not in Jesus Christ or, if it is all in Him, one who has Jesus Christ through faith, has complete salvation. It is, therefore, a terrible blasphemy to assert that Christ is not sufficient, but that something else is needed besides Him: For the conclusion would then be, that Christ were only half a Saviour.

Rom.3:28 Therefore we rightly say with Paul that we are justified by faith alone, or by faith apart from works of law. Meanwhile strictly speaking, we do not mean that faith as such justifies us, for faith is only the instrument by which we embrace Christ our righteousness; He imputes to us all His merits, and as many holy works as He has done for us and in our place. Therefore Jesus Christ is our righteousness and faith is the instrument that keeps us with Him in the communion of all His benefits; When those benefits become ours, they are more than sufficient to acquit us of our sins.

## ARTICLE XXIII

## OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS BEFORE GOD

We believe that our blessedness lies in the forgiveness of our sins for Jesus Christ's sake and that therein our righteousness before God consists, as David and Paul teach us. They pronounce a blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works. The apostle also says, that we are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Rom.4:6  
Ps. 32:1

Rom.3:24

Therefore we always hold to this firm foundation; We give all the glory to God, humble ourselves before Him, and acknowledge ourselves for what we are; We do not claim anything for ourselves or our merits, but rely and rest on the only obedience of Jesus Christ crucified; His obedience is ours when we believe in Him.



This is sufficient to cover all our iniquities and to give us confidence; It frees our conscience of fear, terror and dread to draw nigh to God, so that we do not follow the example of our first father Adam who trembling, tried to hide and covered himself with fig leaves. For indeed, if we had to appear before God, relying -be it ever so little- on ourselves or some other creature, ~~woe~~ to us, we would be consumed. There-  
Gen.3:7 fore everyone must say with David, O LORD, enter not into judgment with Thy servant, for no man living is righteous before Thee.  
Ps.143:2

