

## A DECLARATION OF THE SENTIMENTS OF ARMINIUS

ON Predestination, Divine Providence, the freedom of the will, the grace of God, the Divinity of the Son of God, and the justification of man before God.

Delivered before the states of Holland, at the Hague, on the thirtieth of October, 1608. The circumstances which led to it, are briefly related by Arminius in his introductory remarks. It was originally pronounced in Dutch, and was afterwards translated into Latin, but not by Arminius, as is evident from the style.

To the noble and most potent the states of Holland and West Friezland, my Supreme Governor, my most noble, potent, wise and prudent Lords: After the conference which, by the command of your mightinesses, was convened here at the Hague, between Gomarus and myself, had been held in the presence of four ministers and under the superintendence of their Lordships the Counselors of the Supreme Court, the result of that meeting was reported to your highnesses. Some allusion having been made in that report to the nature and importance of the controversy between us, it soon afterward, seemed good to your highnesses to cite each of us, with those four ministers, to appear openly before you in your honorable assembly, and in that public manner to intimate to all of us whatever you then judged to be expedient. After we had appeared before Your mightinesses, Gomarus affirmed, "that the controversy between him and me, was of such immense importance, that, with the opinions which I professed, he durst not appear in the presence of his maker." He likewise asserted, "that, unless some mode of prevention were promptly devised, the consequence would be, that the various provinces, churches, and cities of our native

174

land, and even the citizens themselves, would be placed in a state of mutual enmity and variance, and would rise up in arms against each other." To all those allegations I then made no reply, except "that I certainly was not conscious of entertaining any such atrocious sentiments in religion, as those of which he had spoken; and I confidently expressed a hope, that I should never afford either cause or occasion for schism and separation, in the Church of God or in our common country." In confirmation of which, I added, "that I was prepared to make an open and bona fide declaration of all my sentiments, views, and designs on every subject connected with religion, whenever I might receive a summons to appear before this august assembly, and even prior to my retiring at that time from your presence." Your highnesses having since deliberated upon the proposal and offer which I then made, deem it proper now to summon me before you, for the purpose of redeeming, in this hall, the pledge which I had previously given. To fulfill that promise, I now appear in this place, and will with all due fidelity discharge my duty, whatever it be that is demanded of me in relation to this affair.

Yet since a sinister report, has for a long time been industriously and extensively circulated about me, not only among my own countrymen but also among foreigners, in which report, I am represented to have hitherto refused, after frequent solicitations, to make an open profession of my sentiments on the matter of religion and my designs concerning it; and since this unfounded rumor has already operated most injuriously against me, I importunately entreat to be favored

with your gracious permission to make an ingenuous and open declaration of all the circumstances which relate to this business, before I proceed to the discussion of other topics. 1. Account of a Conference proposed to me, but which I refused. On the 30th of June, in the year 1605, three Deputies of the Synod of South Holland came to me at Leyden; they were Francis Lansbergius, Libertus Fraxinus, and Daniel Dolegius of pious memory, each of them the minister of their respective churches at Rotterdam, the Hague, and Delft. Two members of the Synod of North Holland accompanied them-John Bogardus, minister of the Church at Haerlem, and James Rolandus of the Church at Amsterdam. They told me, "they had heard, that at the regular meetings of certain of their classes, in the examination to which candidates

175

for holy orders must submit prior to their admission into the Christian ministry, some of the students of the University of Leyden had returned such answers to the questions propounded to them as were of a novel description and contrary to the common and received doctrine of the Churches. Those novelties," it was said, "the young men affirmed to have been instilled into them while under my tuition." In such a situation of affairs, they desired me "to engage in a friendly conference with them, by which they might have it in their power to perceive if there were any truth in this charge, and that they might afterwards be the better qualified to consult the interests of the Church." To these suggestions I replied, "that I could by no means approve of the mode of proceeding which they recommended: For such a course would inevitably subject me to frequent and almost incessant applications for a friendly interview and conversation, if any one thought it needful to pester me in that manner whenever a student made use of a new or uncommon answer, and in excuse pretended to have learned it from me. The following therefore appeared to me a plan of greater wisdom and prudence: As often as a student during his examination returned any answer, which, according to his affirmation, had been derived from my instructions, provided the brethren considered such answer to stand in opposition to the confession and catechism of the Belgic Churches, they should immediately confront that student with me; and, for the sake of investigating such an affair, I was ready to proceed at my own expense to any town, however distant, which it might please the brethren to appoint for that purpose. The obvious consequence of this method would be, that, after it had been resorted to a few times, it would cause it clearly and evidently to appear whether the student's assertion were the truth or only a calumny.

But when Francis Lansbergius, in the name of the rest of his brethren, continued to urge and solicit a conference I gave it as a further reason why I could not see the propriety of entering into a conference with them, that they appeared before me in the character of deputies, who had afterwards to render to the Synod an account of all their proceedings; and that I was not therefore at liberty to accede to their wishes, unless, not only with the knowledge and consent, but at the express command of others who were my superiors, and whom I was equally with them bound to obey. Besides, it would be connected with no small risk and danger to me, if, in the

176

relation of the event of our conference which they might hereafter give to the Synod, I should leave that relation entirely to their faithfulness and discretion. They had likewise no cause for

demanding any thing of this kind from me, who was quite unconscious of having propounded a single doctrine, either at Leyden or Amsterdam, that was contrary to the word of God or to the Confession and Catechism of the Churches in the Low Countries. For no such accusation had ever yet been brought against me by any person; and, I was confident, no attempt would be made to substantiate against me a charge of this description, if he who preferred such a charge were bound at the same time either to establish it by proofs, or, in failure of his proofs, to confess his uncharitable offense."

2. An offer on my part, of a conference with these Deputies, which they refused.

I then told these five gentlemen, "that, notwithstanding all this, if they would consent to relinquish the title Deputies, and would each in his own private capacity enter into a conference with me, I was ready at that very moment to engage in it." The conditions which I proposed to be mutually observed by us, were these:

- (i.) That they should explain their opinions on every single article and then I would explain mine;
- (ii.) They should adduce their proofs, and I would adduce mine; and
- (iii.) That they should at last attempt a refutation of my sentiments and reasons, and I would in return try to refute theirs.
- (iv.) If in this manner either party could afford complete satisfaction to the other, the result would be agreeable: but, if neither party could satisfy the other, then no mention of the subjects discussed in our private conference, or of its unfavorable termination, should be made in any place or company whatever, until the whole affair should be referred to a national Synod."

But when to this proposition they had given a direct refusal, we should have separated from each other without further discourse, had I not requested "that they would offer a conference in the same manner to Gomarus, as well as to Trelcatius of pious memory, because it did not

177

appear to me, that I had given them any cause for making such a demand upon me, rather than upon either of my two colleagues." At the same time I enforced my concluding expressions with several arguments, which it would be too tedious now to repeat in the presence of your mightinesses. When I had finished, the deputies replied, "that they would comply with my request, and would wait on the two other professors of divinity and make them a similar offer:" and prior to their departure from Leyden, they called and assured me, that they had in this particular fulfilled their promise.

This, then, is the first of the many requests that have been preferred to me. It was the cause of much conversation at the time when it occurred: For many persons spoke about it. Some of them related it imperfectly, and in a manner very different from what were the real circumstances of the whole transaction; while others suppressed many essential particulars, and studiously

concealed the counter-proposal which I had tendered to the deputies and the strong reasons which I produced in its support.

3. Another application is made to me.

A few days afterwards, that is, on the 28th of July in the same year, 1605, a request of a similar character was likewise presented to me, in the name of the Presbytery of the Church of Leyden: but on this condition, that if I approved of it, other persons, whom such a request equally concerned, should also be summoned before the same ecclesiastical tribunal: but if this offer did not receive my approbation, nothing further should be attempted. But when I had intimated, that I did not clearly perceive, how this request could possibly obtain approval from me, and when I had subjoined my reasons which were of the same description as those which I had employed on the preceding occasion, my answer was perfectly satisfactory to Bronchovius the Burgomaster [of Leyden] and Merula of pious memory, both of whom had come to me in the name of that Church of which they were the elders, and they determined to abandon all ulterior proceedings in that business.

4. The request of the Deputies of the Synod of South Holland to their Lordships, the ,visitors of the University, and the answer which they received.

178

On the ninth of November, in the same year, 1605, the deputies of the Synod of South Holland, Francis Lansbergius, Festus Hommius, and their associates, presented nine questions to their Lordships, the curators of the University of Leyden; these were accompanied with a petition, "that the Professors of Divinity might be commanded to answer them." But the curators replied, "that they could on no account sanction by their consent the propounding of any questions to the Professors of Divinity; and if any one supposed that something was taught in the University contrary to truth and rectitude, that person had it in his power to refer the matter of his complaint to a national Synod, which, it was hoped, would, at the earliest opportunity be convened, when it would come regularly under the cognizance of that assembly, and receive the most ample discussion." When this answer had been delivered, the deputies of the Synod did not hesitate earnestly to ask it as a particular favor, "that, by the kind permission of their Lordships, they might themselves propose those nine questions to the Professors of Divinity, and might, without troubling their Lordships, personally inform themselves what answer of his own accord, and without reluctance, each of those three Divines would return." But, after all their pleading, they were unable to obtain the permission which they so strenuously desired. The whole of this unsuccessful negotiation was conducted in such a clandestine manner, and so carefully concealed from me, that I was totally ignorant even of the arrival of those reverend deputies in our city; yet soon after their departure, I became acquainted with their mission and its failure.

5. A fourth request of the same kind.

After this, a whole year elapsed before I was again called to an account about such matters. But I must not omit to mention, that in the year 1607, a short time before the meeting of the Synod of South Holland at Delft, John Bernards, minister of the Church at Delft, Festus Hommius,

minister of Leyden, and Dibbetius of Dort, were deputed by the Synod to come to me and inquire what progress I had made in the refutation of the Anabaptists. When I had given them a suitable reply concerning that affair, which was the cause of much conversation among us on both sides, and when they were just on the point of taking their leave, they begged "that I would not hesitate to reveal to them whatever views and designs I had formed on the subject of religion, for the purpose of their being

179

communicated to the Synod, by the Deputies, for the satisfaction of the brethren." But I refused to comply with their entreaties, "because the desired explanation could not be given either conveniently or to advantage; and I did not know any place in which it was possible to explain these matters with greater propriety, than in the national Synod; which, according to the resolution of their most noble and high mightinesses, the States General, was expected very shortly to assemble." I promised "that I would use every exertion that I might be enabled in that assembly openly to profess the whole of my sentiments; and that I would employ none of that alleged concealment or dissimulation about any thing of which they might then complain." I concluded by saying, "that if I were to make my profession before them as deputies of the Synod of South Holland, I could not commit to their fidelity the relation of what might transpire, because, in matters of this description, every one was the most competent interpreter of his own meaning." After these mutual explanations, we parted from each other.

6. The same request is privately repeated to me, and my answer to it. In addition to these different applications, I was privately desired, by certain ministers, "not to view it as a hardship to communicate my views and intentions to their colleagues, the brethren assembled in Synod:" while others entreated me "to disclose my views to them, that they might have an opportunity of pondering and examining them by themselves, in the fear of the Lord," and they gave me an assurance "that they would not divulge any portion of the desired communication" To the first of these two classes, I gave in common my usual answer, "that they had no reason for demanding such an account from me, rather than from others, but to one of these ministers, who was not among the last of the two kinds of applicants, I proposed a conference at three different times, concerning all the articles of our religion; in which we might consider and devise the best means that could possibly be adopted for establishing the truth on the most solid foundation, and for completely refuting every species of falsehood. It was also a part of my offer that such conference should be held in the presence of certain of the principal men of our country; but he did not accept of this condition. To the rest of the inquirers, I returned various answers; in some of which I plainly denied what they requested of me, and in others, I made some disclosures to the inquirers. My sole rule in

180

making such a distinction, was, the more intimate or distant degree of acquaintance which I had with the parties. In the mean time it frequently happened, that, a short time after I had thus revealed any thing in confidence to an individual, it was slanderously related to others — how seriously soever he might have asserted in my presence, that what I had then imparted to him

was, according to his judgment, agreeable to the truth, and although he had solemnly pledged his honor that he would on no account divulge it.

#### 7. What occurred relative to the same subject in the Preparatory Convention.

To these it is also necessary to add a report which has been spread abroad by means of letters, not only within these provinces, but far beyond their confines: it is, "that, in the preparatory convention which was held at the Hague, in the month of June, 1607, by a company of the brethren who were convened by a summons from their high mightinesses, the States General, after I had been asked in a manner the most friendly to consent to a disclosure, before the brethren then present, of my views on the subject of the Christian faith, I refused; and although they promised to endeavor, as far as it was possible, to give me satisfaction, I still declined to comply with their wishes." But since I find by experience that this distorted version of the matter has procured for me not a few proofs of hatred and ill will from many persons who think that far more honorable deference ought to have been evinced by me towards that assembly, which was a convention of Divines from each of the United Provinces. I perceive a necessity is thus imposed upon me to commence at the very origin of this transaction, when I am about to relate the manner in which it occurred: Before my departure from Leyden for the convention at the Hague which has just been mentioned, five articles were put into my hands, said to have been transmitted to some of the provinces, to have been perused by certain ministers and ecclesiastical assemblies, and considered by them as documents which embraced my sentiments on several points of religion. Those points of which they pretended to exhibit a correct delineation, were Predestination, the Fall of Adam, Free-will, Original Sin, and the Eternal Salvation of Infants. When I had read the whole of them, I thought that I plainly perceived, from the style in which they were written, who

181

was the author of them; and as he was then present, (being one of the number summoned on that occasion,) I accosted him on this subject, and embraced that opportunity freely to intimate to him that I had good reasons for believing those articles to have been of his composition. He did not make any attempt to deny the correctness of this supposition, and replied, ,that they had not been distributed precisely as my articles, but as those on which the students at Leyden had held disputations." In answer to this remark, I told him, "of one thing he must be very conscious, that, by the mere act of giving circulation to such a document, he could not avoid creating a grievous and immediate prejudice against my innocence, and that the same articles would soon be ascribed to me, as if they had been my composition: when, in reality," as I then openly affirmed, "they had neither proceeded from me, nor accorded with my sentiments, and, as well as I could form a judgment they appeared to me to be at variance with the word of God."

After he and I had thus discoursed together in the presence of only two other persons, I deemed it advisable to make some mention of this affair in the convention itself, at which certain persons attended who had read those very articles, and who had, according to their own confession, accounted them as mine. This plan I accordingly pursued; and just as the convention was on the point of being dissolved, and after the account of our proceedings had been signed, and some individuals had received instructions to give their high mightinesses the States General a

statement of our transactions, I requested the brethren "not to consider it an inconvenience to remain a short time together, for I had something which I was desirous to communicate." They assented to this proposal, and I told them "that I had received the five articles which I held in my hand and the tenor of which I briefly read to them; that I discovered they had been transmitted by a member of that convention, into different provinces; that I was positive concerning their distribution in Zealand and the diocese of Utrecht; and that they had been read by some ministers in their public meetings, and were considered to be documents which comprehended my sentiments." Yet, notwithstanding, I protested to the whole of that assembly, with a good conscience, and as in the presence of God, "that those articles were not mine, and did not contain my sentiments." Twice I repeated this solemn asseveration, and besought the brethren "not so

182

readily to attach credit to reports that were circulated concerning me, nor so easily to listen to any thing that was represented as proceeding from me or that had been rumored abroad to my manifest injury." To these observations, a member of that convention answered, "that it would be well for me, on this account, to signify to the brethren what portion of those articles obtained my approbation, and what portion I disavowed, that they might thus have an opportunity of becoming acquainted in some degree with my sentiments." Another member urged the same reasons; to which I replied, "that the convention had not been appointed to meet for such a purpose, that we had already been long enough detained together, and that their high mightinesses, the States General were now waiting for our determination," in that manner, we separated from each other, no one attempting any longer to continue the conversation, neither did all the members of the convention express a joint concurrence in that request, nor employ any kind of persuasion with me to prove that such an explanation was in their judgment quite equitable. Besides, according to the most correct intelligence which I have since gained, some of those who were then present, declared afterwards, "that it was a part of the instructions which had been previously given to them, not to enter into any conference concerning doctrine; and that, if a discussion of that kind had arisen, they must have instantly retired from the convention." These several circumstances therefore prove that I was very far from being "solicited by the whole assembly" to engage in the desired explanation.

#### 8. My reasons for refusing a Conference.

Most noble and potent Lords, this is a true narration of those interviews and conferences which the brethren have solicited, and of my continued refusal: from the whole of which, every person may, in my opinion, clearly perceive that there is no cause whatever for preferring an accusation against me on account of my behavior throughout these transactions; especially when he considers their request, with the manner in which it was delivered, and at the same time my refusal with the reasons for it; but this is still more obvious from my counter-proposal.

(1.) Their request, which amounted to a demand upon me for a declaration on matters of faith, was not supported by any reasons, as far as I am

183

enabled to form a judgment. For I never furnished a cause to any man why he should require such a declaration from me rather than from other people, by my having taught any thing contrary to the word of God, or to the Confession and Catechism of the Belgic Churches. At no period have I ceased to make this avowal, and I repeat it on this occasion. I am likewise prepared to consent to an inquiry being instituted into this my profession, either by a Provincial or a National Synod, that the truth of it may by that means, be made yet more apparent — if from such an examination it may be thought possible to derive any advantage.

(2.) The manner in which their request was delivered, proved of itself to be a sufficient obstacle, because it was openly made by a deputation. I was also much injured by the way in which the Synod prejudged my cause; for we may presume that it would not through its deputies invite any man to a conference, unless he had given strong grounds for such an interview. For this reason I did not consider myself at liberty to consent to a conference of this description, lest I should, by that very act, and apparently through a consciousness of guilt, have confessed that I had taught something that was wrong or unlawful.

(3.) The reasons of my refusal were these:

First. Because as I am not subject to the jurisdiction either of the North Holland Synod or that of South Holland, but have other superiors to whom I am bound to render an account of all my concerns, I could not consent to a conference with deputies, except by the advice of those superiors and at their express command: especially since a conference of this kind was not incumbent on me in consequence of the ordinary discharge of my duty. It was also not obscurely hinted by the deputies, that the conference, [in 1605,] would by no means be a private one; but this they discovered in a manner sufficiently intelligible, when they refused to enter into a conference with me, divested of their title of "deputies." I should, therefore, have failed in obedience to my superiors, if I had not rejected a conference which was in this manner proposed. I wish the brethren would remember this fact, that although every one of our ministers is subject as a member to the jurisdiction of the particular Synod to which he belongs, yet not one of them has hitherto dared to engage in a conference, without the advice and permission of the magistrates under

whom he is placed; that no particular magistrates have ever allowed any minister within their jurisdiction to undertake a conference with the deputies of the Churches, unless they had themselves previously granted their consent; and that it was frequently their wish, to be present at such conference, in the persons of their own deputies. Let it be recollected what transpired at Leyden, in the case of Coolhasius [Koolhaes,] at Gouda with Herman Herberts, at Horn in the case of Cornelius Wiggeri, [Wiggerston,] and at Medenblick in the case of Tako, [Sybrants.] The second reason by which I was dissuaded from a conference, is this: I perceived that there would be a great inequality in the conference which was proposed, when, on the contrary, it is necessary that the greatest equality should exist between the parties who are about to confer together on any subject. For (1.) they came to me armed with public authority; while, with respect to myself, everything partook of a private character. And I am not so ignorant in these matters as

not to perceive the powerful support which that man enjoys who transacts any business under the sanction of the public authority.

(2.) They were themselves three in number, and had with them two deputies of the Synod of North Holland. On the other hand, I was alone, and destitute not only of all assistance, but also of persons who might act as witnesses of the proceedings that were then to have commenced, and to whom they as well as myself might have safely entrusted our several causes.

(3.) They were not persons at their own disposal, but compelled to depend on the judgment of their superiors; and they were bound most pertinaciously to contend for those religious sentiments, which their superiors had within their own minds determined to maintain. To such a length was this principle extended, that they were not even left to their own discretion — to admit the validity of the argument which I might have adduced, however cogent and forcible they might have found them to be, and even if they had been altogether unanswerable. From these considerations I could not see by what means both parties could obtain that mutual advantage, which ought properly to accrue from such a conference. I might have gained some beneficial result from it; because I was completely at liberty, and, by employing my own conscience alone in

185

forming a decision, I could, without prejudice to any one, have made those admissions which my conviction of the truth might have dictated to me as correct. Of what great importance this last circumstance might be, your Lordships would have most fully discovered by experience, had any of you been present in the Preparatory Convention, as the representatives of your own august body.

My third reason is, that the account which they would have rendered to their superiors after the conference, could not but have operated in many ways to my injury, whether I had been absent or present at the time when they delivered their report.

(1.) Had I been absent, it might easily have happened either through the omission or the addition of certain words, or through the alteration of others, in regard to their sense or order, that some fact or argument would be repeated in a manner very different from that in which it really occurred. Such an erroneous statement might also have been made, either through the inconsiderateness which arises from a defect in the intellect, through the weakness of an imperfect memory, or through a prejudice of the affections.

(2.) And indeed by my presence, I could with difficulty have avoided or corrected this inconvenience; because a greater degree of credit would have been given to their own deputies, than to me who was only a private individual.

Lastly. By this means I should have conveyed to that assembly, [the Provincial Synod,] a right and some kind of prerogative over me; which, in reference to me, it does not actually possess; and which, consistently with that office whose duties I discharge, it would not be possible for me to transfer to the Synod without manifest injustice towards those persons under whose

jurisdiction it has been the pleasure of the general magistracy of the land to place me. Imperious necessity, therefore, as well as equity, demanded of me to reject the terms on which this conference was offered.

(3.) But however strong my sentiments might be on this subject, I gave these deputies an opportunity of gaining the information which they desired. If it had been their wish to accept the private conference which I proposed, they would have become possessed of my sentiments on every article of

186

the Christian Faith. Besides, this conference would have been much better adapted to promote our mutual edification and instruction, than a public one could be; because it is customary in private conferences, for each person to speak everything with greater familiarity and freedom, than when all the formalities of deputations are observed, if I may so express myself. Neither had they the least reason to manifest any reluctance on this point; because every one of them was at liberty, (if he chose,) to enter into a private conference between him and me alone. But when I made this offer to all and to each of them, I added as one of my most particular stipulations, that, whatever the discussions might be which arose between us, they should remain within our bosoms, and no particle of them should be divulged to any person living. If on these terms they had consented to hold a conference with me, I entertain not the smallest doubt that we should either have given each other complete satisfaction: or we should at least have made it apparent, that, from our mutual controversy, no imminent danger could easily arise, to injure either that truth which is necessary to salvation, piety, or Christian peace and amity.

9. The complaint concerning my refusal to make a declaration of my sentiments, does not agree with the rumors concerning me which are in general circulation.

But omitting all further mention of those transactions, I am not able entirely to satisfy myself by what contrivance these two complaints appear consistent with each other.

(1.) That I refuse to make a profession of my sentiments; and yet

(2.) Invectives are poured forth against me, both in foreign countries and at home, as though I am attempting to introduce into the Church and into the Christian religion, novel, impure and false doctrines. If I do not openly profess my sentiments, from what can their injurious tendency be made evident? If I do not explain myself, by what method can I be introducing false doctrines? If they be mere groundless suspicions that are advanced against me, it is uncharitable to grant them entertainment, or at least to ascribe to them such great importance.

But it is cast upon me as a reproach, "that I do certainly disclose a few of my opinions, but not all of them; and that, from the few which I thus make

187

known, the object at which I aim is no longer obscure, but becomes very evident."

In reference to this censure, the great consideration ought to be, "can any of those sentiments which I am said to have disclosed, be proved to stand in contradiction either to the word of God, or the Confession of the Belgic Churches"

(1.) If it be decided, that they are contrary to the Confession, then I have been engaged in teaching something in opposition to a document, "against which never to propound any doctrine," was the faithful promise which I made, when I signed it with my own hand. If, therefore, I be found thus criminal, I ought to be visited with merited punishment.

(2.) But if it can be proved, that any of those opinions are contrary to the word of God, then I ought to experience a greater degree of blame, and to suffer a severer punishment, and compelled either to utter a recantation or to resign my office, especially if those heads of doctrine which I have uttered, are of such a description as to be notoriously prejudicial to the honor of God and the salvation of mankind.

(3.) But if those few sentiments which I am accused of having advanced, are found neither to be at variance with the word of God nor with the Confession, which I have just mentioned, then those consequences which are elicited from them, or seem dependent on them, cannot possibly be contradictory either to the word of God or to the Belgic Confession. For, according to the rule of the schoolmen, "if the consequentaries or consequences of any doctrine be false, it necessarily follows that the doctrine itself is also false, and vice versa." The one of these two courses, therefore, ought to have been pursued towards me, either to have instituted an action against me, or to have given no credit to those rumors. If I might have my own choice, the latter course is that which I should have desired; but of the former I am not at all afraid. For, how extensively soever and in all directions those Thirty-One Articles which concern me have been dispersed to my great injury and disparagement, and though they have been placed in the hands of several men of great eminence, they afford sufficient internal testimony, from the want of sense and of other requisites visible in their very composition, that they are charged upon me through a total disregard to justice, honor and conscience.

188

#### 10. The principal reasons why I durst not disclose to the deputies my opinions on the subject of Religion.

But some person will perhaps say: "for the sake of avoiding these disturbances, and partly in order by such a measure to give some satisfaction to a great number of ministers, you might undoubtedly have made to your brethren an open and simple declaration of your sentiments on the whole subject of religion, either for the purpose of being yourself maturely instructed in more correct principles, or that they might have been able in an opportune manner to prepare themselves for a mutual conference."

But I was deterred from adopting that method, on account of three inconveniences, of which I was afraid:

First, I was afraid that if I had made a profession of my sentiments, the consequence would have been, that an inquiry would be instituted on the part of others, with regard to the manner in which an action might be framed against me from those premises. Secondly. Another cause of my fear, was, that such a statement of my opinions would have furnished matter for discussion and refutation, in the pulpits of the Churches and the scholastic exercises of the Universities. Thirdly. I was also afraid, that my opinions would have been transmitted to foreign Universities and Churches, in hopes of obtaining from them a sentence of condemnation, and the means of oppressing me." That I had very weighty reasons to fear every one of these consequences together, it would not be difficult for me clearly to demonstrate from the Thirty-One Articles, and from the writings of certain individuals.

With respect to "the personal instruction and edification," which I might have hoped to derive from such a disclosure, it is necessary to consider, that not only I but many others, and even they themselves, have peculiar views which they have formed on religious topics; and, therefore, that such instruction cannot be applied to any useful purpose, except in some place or other where we may all hereafter appear together, and where a definitive sentence, as it is called, both may and must be pronounced. With respect to "the opportune and benefiting preparation which my brethren ought in the mean time to be making for a conference," I declare that it will at that time be most seasonable and proper when all shall have produced their

189

views, and disclosed them before a whole assembly, that thus an account may be taken of them all at once, and they may be considered together. Since none of these objections have any existence in this august assembly, I proceed to the declaration of my sentiments.

Having in this manner refuted all those objections which have been made against me, I will now endeavor to fulfill my promise, and to execute those commands which your Lordships have been pleased to lay upon me. I entertain a confident persuasion, that no prejudice will be created against me or my sentiments from this act, however imperfectly I may perform it, because it has its origin in that obedience which is due from me to this noble assembly, next to God, and according to the Divine pleasure.

## I. ON PREDESTINATION

The first and most important article in religion on which I have to offer my views, and which for many years past has engaged my attention, is the Predestination of God, that is, the Election of men to salvation, and the Reprobation of them to destruction. Commencing with this article, I will first explain what is taught concerning it, both in discourses and writings, by certain persons in our Churches, and in the University of Leyden. I will afterwards declare my own views and thoughts on the same subject, while I shew my opinion on what they advance.

On this article there is no uniform and simple opinion among the teachers of our Churches; but there is some variation in certain parts of it in which they differ from each other.

1. The first opinion, which I reject, but which is espoused by those [Supralapsarians] who assume the very highest ground of this

Predestination.

The opinion of those who take the highest ground on this point, as it is generally contained in their writings, is to this effect:

"(1). God by an eternal and immutable decree has predestinated, from among men, (whom he did not consider as being then created, much less as being fallen,) certain individuals to everlasting life, and others to eternal destruction, without any regard whatever to righteousness or sin, to

190

obedience or disobedience, but purely of his own good pleasure, to demonstrate the glory of his justice and mercy; or, (as others assert,) to demonstrate his saving grace, wisdom and free uncontrollable power.

"2. In addition to this decree, God has pre-ordained certain determinate means which pertain to its execution, and this by an eternal and immutable decree. These means necessarily follow by virtue of the preceding decree, and necessarily bring him who has been predestinated, to the end which has been fore-ordained for him. Some of these means belong in common both to the decree of election and that of rejection, and others of them are specially restricted to the one decree or to the other.

"3. The means common to both the decrees, are three: the first is, the creation of man in the upright [or erect] state of original righteousness, or after the image and likeness of God in righteousness and true holiness. The second is, the permission of the fall of Adam, or the ordination of God that man should sin, and become corrupt or vitiated. The third is, the loss or the removal of original righteousness and of the image of God, and a being concluded under sin and condemnation.

"4. For unless God had created some men, he would not have had any upon whom he might either bestow eternal life, or superinduce everlasting death. Unless he had created them in righteousness and true holiness, he would himself have been the author of sin, and would by this means have possessed no right either to punish them to the praise of his justice, or to save them to the praise of his mercy. Unless they had themselves sinned, and by the demerit of sin had rendered themselves guilty of death, there would have been no room for the demonstration either of justice or of mercy.

"5. The means pre-ordained for the execution of the decree of election, are also these three. The first is, the pre-ordination, or the giving of Jesus Christ as a Mediator and a Savior, who might by his meet deserve, [or purchase,] for all the elect and for them only, the lost righteousness and life, and might communicate them by his own power [Or virtue]. The second is, the call [or vocation] to faith outwardly by the word, but inwardly by his Spirit, in the mind, affections and

will; by an operation of such efficacy that the elect person of necessity yields assent and obedience to the vocation, in so much that it is not possible for him to do otherwise

191

than believe and be obedient to this vocation. From hence arise justification and sanctification through the blood of Christ and his Spirit, and from them the existence of all good works. And all that, manifestly by means of the same force and necessity. The third is, that which keeps and preserves the elect in faith, holiness, and a zeal for good works; or, it is the gift of perseverance; the virtue of which is such, that believing and elect persons not only do not sin with a full and entire will, or do not fall away totally from faith and grace, but it likewise is neither possible for them to sin with a full and perfect will, nor to fall away totally or finally from faith and grace.

"6. The two last of these means [vocation and perseverance,] belong only to the elect who are of adult age. But God employs a shorter way to salvation, by which he conducts those children of believers and saints who depart out of this life before they arrive at years of maturity; that is, provided they belong to the number of the elect, (who are known to God alone,) for God bestows on them Christ as their Savior, and gives them to Christ, to save them by his blood and Holy Spirit, without actual faith and perseverance in it [faith]; and this he does according to the promise of the covenant of grace, I will be a God unto you, and unto your seed after you.

"7. The means pertaining to the execution of the decree of reprobation to eternal death, are partly such as peculiarly belong to all those who are rejected and reprobate, whether they ever arrive at years of maturity or die before that period; and they are partly such as are proper only to some of them. The mean that is common to all the reprobate, is desertion in sin, by denying to them that saving grace which is sufficient and necessary to the salvation of any one. This negation [or denial,] consists of two parts. For, in the first place, God did not will that Christ should die for them [the reprobate,] or become their Savior, and this neither in reference to the antecedent will of God, (as some persons call it,) nor in reference to his sufficient will, or the value of the price of reconciliation; because this price was not offered for reprobates, either with respect to the decree of God, or its virtue and efficacy.

(1.) But the other part of this negation [or denial] is, that God is unwilling to communicate the Spirit of Christ to reprobates, yet without such

192

communication they can neither be made partakers of Christ nor of his benefits.

"8. The mean which belongs properly only to some of the reprobates, is obduration, [or the act of hardening,] which befalls those of them who have attained to years of maturity, either because they have very frequently and enormously sinned against the law of God, or because they have rejected the grace of the gospel.

(1.) To the execution of the first species of induration, or hardening, belong the illumination of their conscience by means of knowledge, and its conviction of the righteousness of the law. For

it is impossible that this law should not necessarily detain them in unrighteousness, to render them inexcusable.

(2.) For the execution of the second species of induration, God employs a call by the preaching of his gospel, which call is ineffectual and insufficient both in respect to the decree of God, and to its issue or event. This calling is either only an external one, which it is neither in their desire nor in their power to obey. Or it is likewise an internal one, by which some of them may be excited in their understandings to accept and believe the things which they hear; but yet it is only with such a faith as that with which the devils are endowed when they believe and tremble. Others of them are excited and conducted still further, so as to desire in a certain measure to taste the heavenly gift. But the latter are, of all others, the most unhappy, because they are raised up on high, that they may be brought down with a heavier fall. And this fate it is impossible for them to escape, for they must of necessity return to their vomit, and depart or fall away from the faith.

"9. From this decree of Divine election and reprobation, and from this administration of the means which pertain to the execution of both of them, it follows, that the elect are necessarily saved, it being impossible for them to perish — and that the reprobate are necessarily damned, it being impossible for them to be saved; and all this from the absolute purpose [or determination] of God, which is altogether antecedent to all things, and to all those causes which are either in things themselves or can possibly result from them."

193

These opinions concerning predestination are considered, by some of those who advocate them, to be the foundation of Christianity, salvation and of its certainty. On these sentiments they suppose, "is founded the sure and undoubted consolation of all believers, which is capable of rendering their consciences tranquil; and on them also depends the praise of the grace of God, so that if any contradiction be offered to this doctrine, God is necessarily deprived of the glory of his grace, and then the merit of salvation is attributed to the free will of man and to his own powers and strength, which ascription savors of Pelagianism."

These then are the causes which are offered why the advocates of these sentiments labor with a common anxiety to retain the purity of such a doctrine in their churches and why they oppose themselves to all those innovations which are at variance with them.

#### 1. MY SENTIMENTS ON THE PRECEDING SCHEME OF PREDESTINATION.

But, for my own part, to speak my sentiments with freedom, and yet with a salvo in favor of a better judgment, I am of opinion, that this doctrine of theirs contains many things that are both false and impudent, and at an utter disagreement with each other; all the instances of which, the present time will not permit me to recount, but I will subject it to an examination only in those parts which are most prominent and extensive. I shall, therefore, propose to myself four principal heads, which are of the greatest importance in this doctrine; and when I have in the first place explained of what kind they are, I will afterwards declare more fully the judgment and sentiments which I have formed concerning them. They are the following:

"1. That God has absolutely and precisely decreed to save certain particular men by his mercy or grace, but to condemn others by his justice: and to do all this without having any regard in such decree to righteousness or sin, obedience or disobedience, which could possibly exist on the part of one class of men or of the other.

"2. That, for the execution of the preceding decree, God determined to create Adam, and all men in him, in an upright state of original righteousness; besides which he also ordained them to commit sin, that

194

they might thus become guilty of eternal condemnation and be deprived of original righteousness.

"3. That those persons whom God has thus positively willed to save, he has decreed not only to salvation but also to the means which pertain to it; (that is, to conduct and bring them to faith in Christ Jesus, and to perseverance in that faith;) and that He also in reality leads them to these results by a grace and power that are irresistible, so that it is not possible for them to do otherwise than believe, persevere in faith, and be saved.

"4. That to those whom, by his absolute will, God has fore-ordained to perdition, he has also decreed to deny that grace which is necessary and sufficient for salvation, and does not in reality confer it upon them; so that they are neither placed in a possible condition nor in any capacity of believing or of being saved."

After a diligent contemplation and examination of these four heads, in the fear of the Lord, I make the following declaration respecting this doctrine of predestination.

## 2. I REJECT THIS PREDESTINATION FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

I. Because it is not the foundation of Christianity, of Salvation, or of its certainty.

1. It is not the foundation of Christianity:

(1.) For this Predestination is not that decree of God by which Christ is appointed by God to be the Savior, the Head, and the Foundation of those who will be made heirs of salvation. Yet that decree is the only foundation of Christianity.

(2.) For the doctrine of this Predestination is not that doctrine by which, through faith, we as lively stones are built up into Christ, the only corner stone, and are inserted into him as the members of the body are joined to their head.

2. It is not the foundation of Salvation:

195

(1.) For this Predestination is not that decree of the good pleasure of God in Christ Jesus on which alone our salvation rests and depends.

(2.) The doctrine of this Predestination is not the foundation of Salvation: for it is not "the power of God to salvation to every one that believeth :" because through it "the righteousness of God" is not "revealed from faith to faith."

3. Nor is it the foundation of the certainty of salvation: For that is dependent upon this decree, "they who believe, shall be saved :" I believe, therefore, I shall be saved. But the doctrine of this Predestination embraces within itself neither the first nor the second member of the syllogism.

This is likewise confessed by some persons in these words: "we do not wish to state that the knowledge of this [Predestination] is the foundation of Christianity or of salvation, or that it is necessary to salvation in the same manner as the doctrine of the Gospel," etc.

II. This doctrine of Predestination comprises within it neither the whole nor any part of the Gospel. For, according to the tenor of the discourses delivered by John and Christ, as they are described to us by the Evangelist, and according to the doctrine of the Apostles and Christ after his ascension, the Gospel consists partly of an injunction to repent and believe, and partly of a promise to bestow forgiveness of sins, the grace of the Spirit, and life eternal. But this Predestination belongs neither to the injunction to repent and believe, nor to the annexed promise. Nay, this doctrine does not even teach what kind of men in general God has predestinated, which is properly the doctrine of the Gospel; but it embraces within itself a certain mystery, which is known only to God, who is the Predestinater, and in which mystery are comprehended what particular persons and how many he has decreed to save and to condemn. From these premises I draw a further conclusion, that this doctrine of Predestination is not necessary to salvation, either as an object of knowledge, belief, hope, or performance. A Confession to this effect has been made by a certain learned man, in the theses which he has proposed for discussion on this subject, in the following words: "Wherefore the gospel cannot be simply termed the book or the revelation of

196

Predestination, but only in a relative sense. Because it does not absolutely denote either the matter of the number or the form; that is, it neither declares how many persons in particular, nor (with a few exceptions,) who they are, but only the description of them in general, whom God has predestinated."

III. This doctrine was never admitted, decreed, or approved in any Council, either general or particular, for the first six hundred years after Christ.

1. Not in the General Council of Nice, in which sentence was given against Arius and in favor of the Deity and Consubstantiality of the Son of God. Not in the first Council of Constantinople, in which a decree was passed against Macedonius, respecting the Deity of the Holy Spirit. Not in the Council of Ephesus, which determined against Nestorius, and in favor of the Unity of the Person of the Son of God. Not in that of Chalcedon, which condemned Eutyches, and

determined, "that in one and the same person of our Lord Jesus Christ, there were two distinct natures, which differ from each other in their essence." Not in the second Council of Constantinople, in which Peter, Bishop of Antioch, and Anthymus, Bishop of Constantinople, with certain other persons, were condemned for having asserted "that the Father had likewise suffered," as well as the Son. Nor in the third Council of Constantinople, in which the Monothelites were condemned for having asserted "that there was only one will and operation in Jesus Christ."

2. But this doctrine was not discussed or confirmed in particular Councils, such as that of Jerusalem, Orange, or even that of Mela in Africa, which was held against Pelagius and his errors, as is apparent from the articles of doctrine which were then decreed both against his person and his false opinions.

But so far was Augustine's doctrine of Predestination from being received in those councils, that when Celestinus, the Bishop of Rome, who was his contemporary, wrote to the Bishops of France, and condemned the doctrines of the Pelagians, he concluded his epistle in these words: "but as we dare not despise, so neither do we deem it necessary to defend the more profound and difficult parts of the questions which occur in this controversy, and which have been treated to a very great extent by those

197

who opposed the heretics. Because we believe, that whatever the writings according to the forementioned rules of the Apostolic See have taught us, is amply sufficient for confessing the grace of God, from whose work, credit and authority not a little must be subtracted or withdrawn," etc. In reference to the rules which were laid down by Celestinus in that epistle, and which had been decreed in the three preceding particular Councils, we shall experience no difficulty in agreeing together about them, especially in regard to those matters which are necessary to the establishment of grace in opposition to Pelagius and his errors.

IV. None of those Doctors or Divines of the Church who held correct and orthodox sentiments for the first six hundred years after the birth of Christ, ever brought this doctrine forward or gave it their approval. Neither was it professed and approved by a single individual of those who shewed themselves the principal and keenest defenders of grace against Pelagius. Of this description, it is evident, were St. Jerome, Augustine, the author of the treatise entitled, *De Vocatione Gentium*, ["The calling of the Gentiles,"] Prosper of Aquitaine, Hilary, Fulgentius, and Orosius. This is very apparent from their writings.

V. It neither agrees nor corresponds with the Harmony of those confessions which were printed and published together in one volume at Geneva, in the name of the Reformed and Protestant Churches. If that harmony of Confessions be faithfully consulted, it will appear that many of them do not speak in the same manner concerning Predestination; that some of them only incidentally mention it; and that they evidently never once touch upon those heads of the doctrine, which are now in great repute and particularly urged in the preceding scheme of Predestination, and which I have already adduced. Nor does any single Confession deliver this doctrine in the same manner as it has just now been propounded by me. The Confessions of

Bohemia, England and Wirtemburgh, and the first Helvetian [Swiss] Confession, and that of the four cities of Strasburgh, Constance, Memmingen, and Lindau, make no mention of this Predestination. Those of Basle and Saxony, only take a very cursory notice of it in three words. The Augustan Confession speaks of it in such a manner as to induce the Genevan editors to think, that some annotation was necessary on their part, to give us a previous warning. The last of the Helvetian [Swiss] Confessions, to which a great portion of the Reformed

198

Churches have expressed their assent and which they have subscribed, likewise speaks of it in such a strain as makes me very desirous to see what method can possibly be adopted to give it any accordance with that doctrine of Predestination which I have just now advanced. Yet this [Swiss] Confession is that which has obtained the approbation of the Churches of Geneva and Savoy.

VI. Without the least contention or caviling, it may very properly be made a question of doubt, whether this doctrine agrees with the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism; as I shall briefly demonstrate.

1. In the 14th Article of the Dutch Confession, these expression occur: "Man knowingly and willingly subjected himself to sin, and, consequently, to death and cursing, while he lent an ear to the deceiving words and impostures of the devil," etc. From this sentence I conclude, that man did not sin on account of any necessity through a preceding decree of Predestination: which inference is diametrically opposed to that doctrine of Predestination against which I now contend. Then, in the 16th Article, which treats of the eternal election of God, these words are contained: "God shewed himself Merciful, by delivering from damnation, and by saving, those persons whom, in his eternal and immutable counsel and cording to his gratuitous goodness, he chose in Christ Jesus our Lord, without any regard to their works. And he shewed himself just, in leaving others in that their fall and perdition into which they had precipitated themselves." It is not obvious to me, how these words are consistent with this doctrine of Predestination.

2. In the 20th question of the Heidelberg Catechism, we read: "salvation through Christ is not given [restored] to all them who had perished in Adam, but to those only who are engrafted into Christ by the faith, and who embrace his benefits." From this sentence I infer, that God has not absolutely Predestinated any men to salvation; but that he has in his decree considered [or looked upon] them as believers. This deduction is at open conflict with the first and third points of this Predestination. In the 54th question of the same Catechism, it is said: "I believe that, from the beginning to the end of the world, the Son of God out of the entire race of mankind doth by his word and Spirit gather or collect unto himself a company chosen unto eternal life and agreeing together in the true faith." In

199

this sentence "election to eternal life," and "agreement in the faith," stand in mutual juxtaposition; and in such a manner, that the latter is not rendered subordinate to the former, which, according to these sentiments on Predestination ought to have been done. In that case the

words should have been placed in the following order: "the son of God calls and gathers to himself, by his word and Spirit, a company chosen to eternal life, that they may believe and agree together in the true faith."

Since such are the statements of our Confession and Catechism, no reason whatever exists, why those who embrace and defend these sentiments on Predestination, should either violently endeavor to obtrude them on their colleagues and on the Church of Christ; or why they should take it amiss, and put the worst construction upon it, when any thing is taught in the Church or University that is not exactly accordant with their doctrine, or that is opposed to it.

VII. I affirm, that this doctrine is repugnant to the Nature of God, but particularly to those Attributes of his nature by which he performs and manages all things, his wisdom, justice, and goodness.

1. It is repugnant to his wisdom in three ways.

(1.) Because it represents God as decreeing something for a particular end [or purpose] which neither is nor can be good: which is, that God created something for eternal perdition to the praise of his justice.

(2.) Because it states, that the object which God proposed to himself by this Predestination, was, to demonstrate the glory of his mercy and justice: But this glory he cannot demonstrate, except by an act that is contrary at once to his mercy and his justice, of which description is that decree of God in which he determined that man should sin and be rendered miserable.

(3.) Because it changes and inverts the order of the two-fold wisdom of God, as it is displayed to us in the Scriptures. For it asserts, that God has absolutely predetermined to save men by the mercy and wisdom that are comprehended in the doctrine of the cross of Christ, without having foreseen this circumstance, that it was impossible for man (and that, truly, through his own fault,) to be saved by the wisdom which was revealed in the law and which was infused into him at the period of his creation: When

200

the scripture asserts, on the contrary, that "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe;" that is,

"by the doctrine of the cross, after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God." (1 Corinthians 1:21.)

2. It is repugnant to the justice of God, not only in reference to that attribute denoting in God a love of righteousness and a hatred of iniquity, but also in reference to its being a perpetual and constant desire in him to render to every one that which is his due.

(1.) It is at variance with the first of these ideas of justice in the following manner: Because it affirms, that God has absolutely willed to save certain individual men, and has decreed their

salvation without having the least regard to righteousness or obedience: The proper inference from which, is, that God loves such men far more than his own justice [or righteousness.]

(2.) It is opposed to the second idea of his justice: Because it affirms, that God wishes to subject his creature to misery, (which cannot possibly have any existence except as the punishment of sin,) although, at the same time, he does not look upon [or consider] the creature as a sinner, and therefore as not obnoxious either to wrath or to punishment. This is the manner in which it lays down the position, that God has willed to give to the creature not only something which does not belong to it, but which is connected with its greatest injury. Which is another act directly opposed to his justice. In accordance, therefore, with this doctrine, God, in the first place, detracts from himself that which is his own, [or his right,] and then imparts to the creature what does not belong to it, to its great misery and unhappiness.

3. It is also repugnant to the Goodness of God. Goodness is an affection [or disposition] in God to communicate his own good so far as his justice considers and admits to be fitting and proper. But in this doctrine the following act is attributed to God, that, of himself, and induced to it by nothing external, he wills the greatest evil to his creatures; and that from all eternity he has pre-ordained that evil for them, or pre-determined to impart it to them, even before he resolved to bestow upon them any portion of good. For this doctrine states, that God willed to damn; and, that he might be able to do this, be willed to create; although creation is the

201

first egress [or going forth] of God's goodness towards his creatures. How vastly different are such statements as these from that expansive goodness of God by which he confers benefits not only on the unworthy, but also on the evil, the unjust and on those who are deserving of punishment, which trait of Divine beneficence in our Father who is in heaven, we are commanded to imitate. (Matthew 5:45.)

VIII. Such a doctrine of Predestination is contrary to the nature of man, in regard to his having been created after the Divine image in the knowledge of God and in righteousness, in regard to his having been created with freedom of will, and in regard to his having been created with a disposition and aptitude for the enjoyment of life eternal. These three circumstance, respecting him, may be deduced from the following brief expressions: "Do this, and live :" (Romans 10:5 .) "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." (Genesis 2:17.) If man be deprived of any of these qualifications, such admonitions as these cannot possibly be effective in exciting him to obedience.

1. This doctrine is inconsistent with the Divine image, which consists of the knowledge of God and holiness. For according to this knowledge and righteousness man was qualified and empowered, he was also laid under an obligation to know God, to love, worship, and serve him. But by the intervention, or rather by the prevention, of this Predestination, it was pre-ordained that man should be formed vicious and should commit sin, that is, that he should neither know God, love, worship, nor serve him; and that he should not perform that which by the image of God, he was well qualified and empowered to do, and which he was bound to perform. This is tantamount to such a declaration as the following, which any one might make: "God did

undoubtedly create man after his own image, in righteousness and true holiness; but, notwithstanding this, he fore-ordained and decreed, that man should become impure and unrighteous, that is, should be made conformable to the image of Satan."

2. This doctrine is inconsistent with the freedom of the will, in which and with which man was created by God. For it prevents the exercise of this liberty, by binding or determining the will absolutely to one object, that is, to do this thing precisely, or to do that. God, therefore, according to this statement, may be blamed for the one or the other of these two things,

202

(with which let no man charge his Maker!) either for creating man with freedom of will, or for hindering him in the use of his own liberty after he had formed him a free agent. In the former of these two cases, God is chargeable with a want of consideration, in the latter with mutability. And in both, with being injurious to man as well as to himself.

3. This Predestination is prejudicial to man in regard to the inclination and capacity for the eternal fruition of salvation, with which he was endowed at the period of his creation. For, since by this Predestination it has been pre-determined, that the greater part of mankind shall not be made partakers of salvation, but shall fall into everlasting condemnation, and since this predetermination took place even before the decree had passed for creating man, such persons are deprived of something, for the desire of which they have been endowed by God with a natural inclination. This great privation they suffer, not in consequence of any preceding sin or demerit of their own, but simply and solely through this sort of Predestination.

#### IX. This Predestination is diametrically opposed to the Act of Creation.

1. For creation is a communication of good according to the intrinsic property of its nature. But, creation of this description, whose intent or design is, to make a way through itself by which the reprobation that had been previously determined may obtain its object, is not a communication of good. For we ought to form our estimate and judgment of every good, from the mind and intention of Him who is the Donor, and from the end to which or on account of which it is bestowed. In the present instance, the intention of the Donor would have been, to condemn, which is an act that could not possibly affect any one except a creature; and the end or event of creation would have been the eternal perdition of the creature. In that case creation would not have been a communication of any good, but a preparation for the greatest evil both according to the very intention of the Creator and the actual issue of the matter; and according to the words of Christ, "it had been good for that man, if he had never been born!" (Matthew 26:24.)

2. Reprobation is an act of hatred, and from hatred derives its origin. But creation does not proceed from hatred; it is not therefore a way or means, which belongs to the execution of the decree of reprobation.

203

3. Creation is a perfect act of God, by which he has manifested his wisdom, goodness and omnipotence: It is not therefore subordinate to the end of any other preceding work or action of God. But it is rather to be viewed as that act of God, which necessarily precedes and is antecedent to all other acts that he can possibly either decree or undertake. Unless God had formed a previous conception of the work of creation, he could not have decreed actually to undertake any other act; and until he had executed the work of creation, he could by no means have completed any other operation.

4. All the actions of God which tend to the condemnation of his creatures, are strange work or foreign to him; because God consents to them, for some other cause that is quite extraneous. But creation is not an action that is foreign to God, but it is proper to him. It is eminently an action most appropriate to Him, and to which he could be moved by no other external cause, because it is the very first of the Divine acts, and, till it was done, nothing could have any actual existence, except God himself; for every thing else that has a being, came into existence through this action.

5. If creation be the way and means through which God willed the execution of the decree of his reprobation, he was more inclined to will the act of reprobation than that of creation; and he consequently derived greater satisfaction from the act of condemning certain of his innocent creatures, than in the act of their creation.

6. Lastly. Creation cannot be a way or means of reprobation according to the absolute purpose of God: because, after the creation was completed, it was in the power of man still to have remained obedient to the divine commands, and not to commit sin; to render this possible, while God had on one part bestowed on him sufficient strength and power, he had also on the other placed sufficient impediments; a circumstance most diametrically opposed to a Predestination of this description.

X. This doctrine is at open hostility with the Nature of Eternal Life, and the titles by which it is signally distinguished in the Scriptures. For it is called "the inheritance of the sons of God ;" (Titus 3:7,) but those alone are the sons of God, according to the doctrine of the Gospel, "who believe in the name of Jesus Christ." (John 1:12.) It is also called, "the reward of obedience," (Matthew 5:12,) and of "the labor of love;" (Hebrews 6:10,)

204

"the recompence of those who fight the good fight and who run well, a crown of righteousness," etc. (Revelation 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:7, 8.) God therefore has not, from his own absolute decree, without any consideration or regard whatever to faith and obedience, appointed to any man, or determined to appoint to him, life eternal.

XI This Predestination is also opposed to the Nature of Eternal Death, and to those appellations by which it is described in Scripture. For it is called "the wages of sin; (Romans 6:23,) the punishment of everlasting destruction, which shall be recompensed to them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; (2 Thessalonians 1:8, 9,) the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, (Matthew 25:41,) a fire which shall devour the enemies

and adversaries of God." (Hebrews 10:27.) God, therefore, has not, by any absolute decree without respect to sin and disobedience, prepared eternal death for any person.

XII This Predestination is inconsistent with the Nature and Properties of Sin in two ways:

1. Because sin is called "disobedience" and "rebellion," neither of which terms can possibly apply to any person who by a preceding divine decree is placed under an unavoidable necessity of sinning.
2. Because sin is the meritorious cause of damnation. But the meritorious cause which moves the Divine will to reprobate, is according to justice; and it induces God, who holds sin in abhorrence, to will reprobation. Sin, therefore, which is a cause, cannot be placed among the means, by which God executes the decree or will of reprobation.

XIII. This doctrine is likewise repugnant to the Nature of Divine Grace, and as far as its powers permit, it effects its destruction. Under whatever specious pretenses it may be asserted, that "this kind of Predestination is most admirably adapted and quite necessary for the establishment of grace," yet it destroys it in three ways:

1. Because grace is so attempered and commingled with the nature of man, as not to destroy within him the liberty of his will, but to give it a right direction, to correct its depravity, and to allow man to possess his own proper notions. While, on the contrary, this Predestination introduces such a species of grace, as takes away free will and hinders its exercise.

205

2. Because the representations of grace which the scriptures contain, are such as describe it capable of "being resisted, (Acts, 7:51,) and received in vain;" (2 Corinthians 6:1,) and that it is possible for man to avoid yielding his assent to it; and to refuse all co-operation with it. (Hebrews 12:15; Matthew 23:37; Luke 7:30.) While, on the contrary, this Predestination affirms, that grace is a certain irresistible force and operation.

3. Because, according to the primary intention and chief design of God, grace conduces to the good of those persons to whom it is offered and by whom it is received: while, on the contrary, this doctrine drags along with it the assertion, that grace is offered even to certain reprobates, and is so far communicated to them as to illuminate their understandings and to excite within them a taste for the heavenly gifts, only for this end and purpose, that, in proportion to the height to which they are elevated, the abyss into which they are precipitated may be the deeper, and their fall the heavier; and that they may both merit and receive the greater perdition.

XIV. The doctrine of this Predestination is Injurious to the Glory of God, which does not consist of a declaration of liberty or authority, nor of a demonstration of anger and power, except to such an extent as that declaration and demonstration may be consistent with justice, and with a perpetual reservation in behalf of the honor of God's goodness. But, according to this doctrine, it follows that God is the author of sin, which may be proved by four arguments:

1. One of its positions is, that God has absolutely decreed to demonstrate his glory by punitive justice and mercy, in the salvation of some men, and in the damnation of others, which neither was done, nor could have possibly been done, unless sin had entered into the world.
2. This doctrine affirms, that, in order to obtain his object, God ordained that man should commit sin, and be rendered vitiated; and, from this Divine ordination or appointment, the fall of man necessarily followed.
3. It asserts that God has denied to man, or has withdrawn from him, such a portion of grace as is sufficient and necessary to enable him to avoid sin, and that this was done before man had sinned: which is an act that amounts to the same as if God had prescribed a law to man, which it

206

would be utterly impossible for him to fulfill, when the nature in which he had been created was taken into consideration.

4. It ascribes to God certain operations with regard to man, both external and internal, both mediate (by means of the intervention of other creatures) and immediate — which Divine operations being once admitted, man must necessarily commit sin, by that necessity which the schoolmen call "a consequential necessity antecedent to the thing itself," and which totally destroys the freedom of the will. Such an act does this doctrine attribute to God, and represents it to proceed from his primary and chief intention, without any foreknowledge of an inclination, will, or action on the part of man.

From these premises, we deduce, as a further conclusion, that God really sins. Because, according to this doctrine, he moves to sin by an act that is unavoidable, and according to his own purpose and primary intention, without having received any previous inducement to such an act from any preceding sin or demerit in man.

From the same position we might also infer, that God is the only sinner. For man, who is impelled by an irresistible force to commit sin, (that is, to perpetrate some deed that has been prohibited,) cannot be said to sin himself.

As a legitimate consequence it also follows, that sin is not sin, since whatever that be which God does, it neither can be sin, nor ought any of his acts to receive that appellation.

Besides the instances which I have already recounted, there is another method by which this doctrine inflicts a deep wound on the honor of God — but these, it is probable, will be considered at present to be amply sufficient.

XV. This doctrine is highly dishonorable to Jesus Christ our Savior. For,

1. It entirely excludes him from that decree of Predestination which predestinates the end: and it affirms, that men were predestinated to be saved, before Christ was predestinated to save them; and thus it argues, that he is not the foundation of election. 207

2. It denies, that Christ is the meritorious cause, that again obtained for us the salvation which we had lost, by placing him as only a subordinate cause of that salvation which had been already foreordained, and thus only a minister and instrument to apply that salvation unto us. This indeed is in evident congruity with the opinion which states "that God has absolutely willed the salvation of certain men, by the first and supreme decree which he passed, and on which all his other decrees depend and are consequent." If this be true, it was therefore impossible for the salvation of such men to have been lost, and therefore unnecessary for it to be repaired and in some sort regained afresh, and discovered, by the merit of Christ, who was fore-ordained a Savior for them alone.

XVI. This doctrine is also hurtful to the salvation of men.

1. Because it prevents that saving and godly sorrow for sins that have been committed, which cannot exist in those who have no consciousness of sin. But it is obvious, that the man who has committed sin through the unavoidable necessity of the decree of God, cannot possibly have this kind of consciousness of sin. (2 Corinthians 7:10.)

2. Because it removes all pious solicitude about being converted from sin unto God. For he can feel no such concern who is entirely passive and conducts himself like a dead man, with respect not only to his discernment and perception of the grace of God that is exciting and assisting, but also to his assent and obedience to it; and who is converted by such an irresistible impulse, that he not only cannot avoid being sensible of the grace of God which knocks within him, but he must likewise of necessity yield his assent to it, and thus convert himself, or rather be converted. Such a person it is evident, cannot produce within his heart or conceive in his mind this solicitude, except he have previously felt the same irresistible motion. And if he should produce within his heart any such concern, it would be in vain and without the least advantage. For that cannot be a true solicitude, which is not produced in the heart by any other means except by an irresistible force according to the absolute purpose and intention of God to effect his salvation. (Revelation 2:3; 3:2.)

3. Because it restrains, in persons that are converted, all zeal and studious regard for good works, since it declares "that the regenerate cannot perform either more or less good than they do." For he that is actuated or impelled

208

by saving grace, must work, and cannot discontinue his labor; but he that is not actuated by the same grace, can do nothing, and finds it necessary to cease from all attempts. (Titus 3:14.)

4. Because it extinguishes the zeal for prayer, which yet is an efficacious means instituted by God for asking and obtaining all kinds of blessings from him, but principally the great one of salvation. (Luke 11:1-13.) But from the circumstance of it having been before determined by an immutable and inevitable decree, that this description of men [the elect] should obtain salvation, prayer cannot on any account be a means for asking and obtaining that salvation. It can only be a mode of worshipping God; because according to the absolute decree of his Predestination he has determined that such men shall be saved.

5. It takes away all that most salutary fear and trembling with which we are commanded to work out our own salvation. (Philippians 2:12) for it states "that he who is elected and believes, cannot sin with that full and entire willingness with which sin is committed by the ungodly; and that they cannot either totally or finally fall away from faith or grace."

6. Because it produces within men a despair both of performing that which their duty requires and of obtaining that towards which their desires are directed. For when they are taught that the grace of God (which is really necessary to the performance of the least portion of good) is denied to the majority of mankind, according to an absolute and peremptory decree of God — — and that such grace is denied because, by a preceding decree equally absolute, God has determined not to confer salvation on them but damnation; when they are thus taught, it is scarcely possible for any other result to ensue, than that the individual who cannot even with great difficulty work a persuasion within himself of his being elected, should soon consider himself included in the number of the reprobate. From such an apprehension as this, must arise a certain despair of performing righteousness and obtaining salvation.

XVII. This doctrine inverts the order of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For in the Gospel God requires repentance and faith on the part of man, by promising to him life everlasting, if he consent to become a convert and a believer. (Mark 1:15; 16:16.) But it is stated in this [Supralapsarian] decree of Predestination, that it is God's absolute will, to bestow salvation on

209

certain particular men, and that he willed at the same time absolutely to give those very individuals repentance and faith, by means of an irresistible force, because it was his will and pleasure to save them. In the Gospel, God denounces eternal death on the impenitent and unbelieving. (John 3:36.) And those threats contribute to the purpose which he has in view, that he may by such means deter them from unbelief and thus may save them. But by this decree of Predestination it is taught, that God wills not to confer on certain individual men that grace which is necessary for conversion and faith because he has absolutely decreed their condemnation.

The Gospel says,

"God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should have everlasting life." (John 3:16.) But this doctrine declares; "that God so loved those whom he had absolutely elected to eternal life, as to give his son to them alone, and by an irresistible force to produce within them faith on him." To embrace the whole in few words, the Gospel says, "fulfill the command, and thou shalt obtain the promise; believe, and thou shalt live." But this [supralapsarian] doctrine says, "since it is my will to give thee life, it is therefore my will to give thee faith:" which is a real and most manifest inversion of the Gospel.

XVIII. This Predestination is in open hostility to the ministry of the Gospel.

1. For if God by an irresistible power quicken him who is dead in trespasses and sins, no man can be a minister and "a laborer together with God," (1 Corinthians 3:9,) nor can the word

preached by man be the instrument of grace and of the Spirit, any more than a creature could have been an instrument of grace in the first creation, or a dispenser of that grace in the resurrection of the body from the dead.

2. Because by this Predestination the ministry of the gospel is made "the savor of death unto death" in the case of the majority of those who hear it, (2 Corinthians 2:14-16,) as well as an instrument of condemnation, according to the primary design and absolute intention of God, without any consideration of previous rebellion.

3. Because, according to this doctrine, baptism, when administered to many reprobate children, (who yet are the offspring of parents that believe and are God's covenant people,) is evidently a seal [or ratification] of

210

nothing, and thus becomes entirely useless, in accordance with the primary and absolute intention of God, without any fault [or culpability] on the part of the infants themselves, to whom it is administered in obedience to the Divine command.

4. Because it hinders public prayers from being offered to God in a becoming and suitable manner, that is, with faith, and in confidence that they will be profitable to all the hearers of the word; when there are many among them, whom God is not only unwilling to save, but whom by his absolute, eternal, and immutable will, (which is antecedent to all things and causes whatever,) it is his will and pleasure to damn: In the mean time, when the apostle commands prayers and supplications to be made for all men, he adds this reason,

"for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior; who will have all men to be saved,  
and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2:1-4.)

5. The constitution of this doctrine is such, as very easily to render pastors and teachers slothful and negligent in the exercise of their ministry: Because, from this doctrine it appears to them as though it were impossible for all their diligence to be useful to any persons, except to those only whom God absolutely and precisely wills to save, and who cannot possibly perish; and as though all their negligence could be hurtful to none, except to those alone whom God absolutely wills to destroy, who must of necessity perish, and to whom a contrary fate is impossible.

XIX. This doctrine completely subverts the foundation of religion in general, and of the Christian Religion in particular.

1. The foundation of religion considered in general, is a two-fold love of God; without which there neither is nor can be any religion: The first of them is a love for righteousness [or justice] which gives existence to his hatred of sin. The second is a love for the creature who is endowed with reason, and (in the matter now before us,) it is a love for man, according to the expression of the Apostle to the Hebrews. "for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a

rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (11:6.) God's love of righteousness is manifested by this circumstance, that it is not his will and pleasure to bestow eternal life on

211

any except on "those who seek him." God's love of man consists in his being willing to give him eternal life, if he seek Him.

A mutual relation subsists between these two kinds of love, which is this. The latter species of love, which extends itself to the creatures, cannot come into exercise, except so far as it is permitted by the former, [the love of righteousness]: The former love, therefore, is by far the most excellent species; but in every direction there is abundant scope for the emanations of the latter, [the love of the creature,] except where the former [the love of righteousness] has placed some impediment in the range of its exercise. The first of these consequences is most evidently proved from the circumstance of God's condemning man on account of sin, although he loves him in the relation in which he stands as his creature; which would by no means have been done, had he loved man more than righteousness, [or justice,] and had he evinced a stronger aversion to the eternal misery of man than to his disobedience. But the second consequence is proved by this argument, that God condemns no person, except on account of sin; and that he saves such a multitude of men who turn themselves away [or are converted] from sin; which he could not do, unless it was his will to allow as abundant scope to his love for the creatures, as is permitted by righteousness [or justice] under the regulation of the Divine judgment.

But this [Supralapsarian] doctrine inverts this order and mutual relation in two ways:

(1.) The one is when it states, that God wills absolutely to save certain particular men, without having had in that his intention the least reference or regard to their obedience. This is the manner in which it places the love of God to man before his love of righteousness, and lays down the position — that God loves men (as such) more than righteousness, and evinces a stronger aversion to their misery than to their sin and disobedience.

(2.) The other is when it asserts, on the contrary, that God wills absolutely to damn certain particular men without manifesting in his decree any consideration of their disobedience. In this manner it detracts from his love to the creature that which belongs to it; while it teaches, that God hates the creature, without any cause or necessity derived from his love of

212

righteousness and his hatred of iniquity. In which case, it is not true, "that sin is the primary object of God's hatred, and its only meritorious cause." The great influence and potency which this consideration possesses in subverting the foundation of religion, may be appropriately described by the following simile: Suppose a son to say, "My father is such a great lover of righteousness and equity, that, notwithstanding I am his beloved son, he would disinherit me if I were found disobedient to him. Obedience, therefore, is a duty which I must sedulously cultivate, and which is highly incumbent upon me, if I wish to be his heir." Suppose another son to say: "My father's love for me is so great, that he is absolutely resolved to make me his heir. There is,

therefore, no necessity for my earnestly striving to yield him obedience; for, according to his unchangeable will, I shall become his heir. Nay, he will by an irresistible force draw me to obey him, rather than not suffer me to be made his heir." But such reasoning as the latter is diametrically opposed to the doctrine contained in the following words of John the Baptist:

"And think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father: For I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." (Matthew 3:9.)

2. But the Christian religion also has its superstructure built upon this two-fold love as a foundation. This love, however, is to be considered in a manner somewhat different, in consequence of the change in the condition of man, who, when he had been created after the image of God and in his favor, became by his own fault a sinner and an enemy to God.

(1.) God's love of righteousness [or justice] on which the Christian religion rests, is, first, that righteousness which he declared only once, which was in Christ; because it was his will that sin should not be expiated in any other way than by the blood and death of his Son, and that Christ should not be admitted before him as an Advocate, Deprecator and Intercessor, except when sprinkled by his own blood. But this love of righteousness is, secondly, that which he daily manifests in the preaching of the gospel, in which he declares it to be his will to grant a communication of Christ and his benefits to no man, except to him who becomes converted and believes in Christ.

213

(2.) God's love of miserable sinners, on which likewise the Christian religion is founded, is, first, that love by which he gave his Son for them, and constituted him a Savior of those who obey him. But this love of sinners is, secondly, that by which he hath required obedience, not according to the rigor and severity to which he was entitled by his own supreme right, but according to his grace and clemency, and with the addition of a promise of the remission of sins, provided fallen man repent. The [supralapsarian] doctrine of Predestination is, in two ways, opposed to this two-fold foundation: first, by stating, "that God has such a great love for certain sinners, that it was his will absolutely to save them before he had given satisfaction, through Christ Jesus, to his love of righteousness, [or justice,] and that he thus willed their salvation even in his own fore-knowledge and according to his determinate purpose."

Besides, it totally and most completely overturns this foundation, by teaching it to be "God's pleasure, that satisfaction should be paid to his justice, [or righteousness,] because he willed absolutely to save such persons;" which is nothing less, than to make his love for justice, manifested in Christ, subordinate to his love for sinful man whom it is his will absolutely to save. Secondly. It opposes itself to this foundation, by teaching, "that it is the will of God absolutely to damn certain sinners without any consideration of their impenitency;" when at the same time a most plenary and complete satisfaction had been rendered, in Christ Jesus, to God's love of righteousness [or justice] and to his hatred of sin. So that nothing now can hinder the possibility of his extending mercy to the sinner, whosoever he may be, except the condition of repentance. Unless some person should choose to assert, what is stated in this doctrine, "that it has been God's will to act towards the greater part of mankind with the same severity as he exercised

towards the devil and his angels, or even with greater, since it was his pleasure that neither Christ nor his gospel should be productive of greater blessings to them than to the devils, and since, according to the first offense, the door of grace is as much closed against them as it is against the evil angels." Yet each of those angels sinned, by himself in his own proper person, through his individual maliciousness, and by his voluntary act; while men sinned, only in Adam their parent, before they had been brought into existence.

214

But, that we may more clearly understand the fact of this two-fold love being the foundation of all religion and the manner in which it is so, with the mutual correspondence that subsists between each other, as we have already described them, it will be profitable for us to contemplate with greater attention the following words of the Apostle to the Hebrews: "He that cometh to God, must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." In these words two things are laid down as foundations to religion, in opposition to two fiery darts of Satan, which are the most pernicious pests to it, and each of which is able by itself to overturn and extirpate all religion. One of them is security, the other despair. Security operates, when a man permits himself, that, how inattentive soever he may be to the worship of God, he will not be damned, but will obtain salvation. Despair is in operation, when a person entertains a persuasion, that, whatever degree of reverence he may evince towards God, he will not receive any remuneration. In what human mind soever either of these pests is fostered, it is impossible that any true and proper worship of God can there reside. Now both of them are overturned by the words of the Apostle: For if a man firmly believes, "that God will bestow eternal life on those alone who seek Him, but that He will inflict on the rest death eternal," he can on no account indulge himself in security. And if he likewise believes, that "God is truly a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him," by applying himself to the search he will not be in danger of falling into despair. The foundation of the former kind of faith by which a man firmly believes, "that God will bestow eternal life on none except on those who seek Him," is that love which God bears to his own righteousness, [or justice,] and which is greater than that which he entertains for man. And, by this alone, all cause of security is removed. But the foundation of the latter kind of faith, "that God will undoubtedly be a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him," is that great love for man which neither will nor can prevent God from effecting salvation for him, except he be hindered by his still greater love for righteousness or justice. Yet the latter kind of love is so far from operating as a hindrance to God from becoming a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him, that on the contrary, it promotes in every possible way the bestowment of that reward. Those persons, therefore, who seek God, can by no means indulge in a single doubt concerning his readiness to remunerate. And it is this which acts as a preservative against despair or distrust. Since this is the

215

actual state of the case, this two-fold love, and the mutual relation which each part of it bears to the other and which we have just unfolded, are the foundations of religion, without which no religion can possibly exist. That doctrine, therefore, which is in open hostility to this mutual love and to the relation that mutually subsists between them, is, at the same time, subversive of the foundation of all religion.

XX. Lastly. This doctrine of Predestination has been rejected both in former times and in our own days, by the greater part of the professors of Christianity.

1. But, omitting all mention of the periods that occurred in former ages, facts themselves declare, that the Lutheran and Anabaptist Churches, as well as that of Rome, account this to be an erroneous doctrine.

2. However highly Luther and Melancthon might at the very commencement of the reformation, have approved of this doctrine, they afterwards deserted it. This change in Melancthon is quite apparent from his latter writings: And those who style themselves "Luther's disciples," make the same statement respecting their master, while they contend that on this subject he made a more distinct and copious declaration of his sentiments, instead of entirely abandoning those which he formerly entertained. But Philip Melancthon believed that this doctrine did not differ greatly from the fate of the Stoicks: This appears from many of his writings, but more particularly in a certain letter which he addressed to Gasper Peucer, and in which, among other things, he states: "Laelius writes to me and says, that the controversy respecting the Stoical Fate is agitated with such uncommon fervor at Geneva, that one individual is cast into prison because he happened to differ from Zeno. O unhappy times! When the doctrine of salvation is thus obscured by certain strange disputes!"

3. All the Danish Churches embrace a doctrine quite opposed to this, as is obvious from the writings of Nicholas Hemmingius in his treatise on Universal Grace, in which he declares that the contest between him and his adversaries consisted in the determination of these two points: "do the Elect believe , or, "are believers the true elect?" He considers "those persons who maintain the former position, to hold sentiments agreeable to the doctrine of the Manichees and Stoicks; and those who maintain the

216

latter point, are in obvious agreement with Moses and the Prophets, with Christ and his Apostles."

4. Besides, by many of the inhabitants of these our own provinces, this doctrine is accounted a grievance of such a nature, as to cause several of them to affirm, that on account of it, they neither can nor will have any communion with our Church. Others of them have united themselves with our Churches, but not without entering a protest, "that they cannot possibly give their consent to this doctrine." But, on account of this kind of Predestination, our Churches have been deserted by not a few individuals, who formerly held the same opinions as ourselves: Others, also, have threatened to depart from us, unless they be fully assured that the Church holds no opinion of this description.

5. There is likewise no point of doctrine which the Papists, Anabaptists, and Lutherans oppose with greater vehemence than this, and through whose sides they create a worse opinion of our Churches or procure for them a greater portion of hatred, and thus bring into disrepute all the doctrines which we profess. They likewise affirm "that of all the blasphemies against God which

the mind of man can conceive or his tongue can express, there is none so foul as not to be deduced by fair consequence from this opinion of our doctors."

6. Lastly. Of all the difficulties and controversies which have arisen in these our Churches since the time of the Reformation, there is none that has not had its origin in this doctrine, or that has not, at least, been mixed with it. What I have here said will be found true, if we bring to our recollection the controversies which existed at Leyden in the affair of Koolhaes, at Gouda in that of Herman Herberts, at Horn with respect to Cornelius Wiggerston, and at Mendenblich in the affair of Tako Sybrants. This consideration was not among the last of those motives which induced me to give my most diligent attention to this head of doctrine, and endeavor to prevent our Churches from suffering any detriment from it; because, from it, the Papists have derived much of their increase. While all pious teachers ought most heartily to desire the destruction of Popery, as they would that of the kingdom of Antichrist, they ought with the greatest zeal, to engage in the attempt, and as far as it is within their power, to make the most efficient preparations for its overthrow.

217

The preceding views are, in brief, those which I hold respecting this novel doctrine of Predestination. I have propounded it with all good faith from the very expressions of the authors themselves, that I might not seem to invent and attribute to them any thing which I was not able clearly to prove from their writings.

### 3. A SECOND KIND OF PREDESTINATION.

But some other of our doctors state the subject of God's Predestination in a manner somewhat different. We will cursorily touch upon the two modes which they employ.

Among some of them the following opinion is prevalent:

1. God determined within himself, by an eternal and immutable decree, to make (according to his own good pleasure,) the smaller portion out of the general mass of mankind partakers of his grace and glory, to the praise of his own glorious grace. But according to his pleasure he also passed by the greater portion of men, and left them in their own nature, which is incapable of every thing supernatural, [or beyond itself,] and did not communicate to them that saving and supernatural grace by which their nature, (if it still retained its integrity,) might be strengthened, or by which, if it were corrupted, it might be restored — for a demonstration of his own liberty. Yet after God had made these men sinners and guilty of death, he punished them with death eternal — for a demonstration of his own justice.

2. Predestination is to be considered in respect to its end and to the means which tend to it. But these persons employ the word "Predestination" in its special acceptation for election and oppose it to reprobation.

(1.) In respect to its end, (which is salvation, and an illustration of the glorious grace of God,) man is considered in common and absolutely, such as he is in his own nature.

(2.) But in respect to the means, man is considered as perishing from himself and in himself, and as guilty in Adam.

3. In the decree concerning the end, the following gradations are to be regarded.

218

(1.) The prescience of God, by which he foreknew those whom he had predestinated. Then

(2.) The Divine predefinition, [or predetermination,] by which he foreordained the salvation of those persons by whom he had foreknown.

First, by electing them from all eternity: and secondly, by preparing for them grace in this life, and glory in the world to come.

4. The means which belong to the execution of this Predestination, are

(1.) Christ himself:

(2.) An efficacious call to faith in Christ, from which justification takes its origin:

(3.) The gift of perseverance unto the end.

5. As far as we are capable of comprehending their scheme of reprobation it consists of two acts, that of preterition and that of predamnation. It is antecedent to all things, and to all causes which are either in the things themselves or which arise out of them; that is, it has no regard whatever to any sin, and only views man in an absolute and general aspect.

6. Two means are fore-ordained for the execution of the act of preterition:

(1.) Dereliction [or abandoning] in a state of nature, which by itself is incapable of every thing supernatural: and

(2.) Non-communication [or a negation] of supernatural grace, by which their nature (if in a state of integrity,) might be strengthened, and (if in a state of corruption,) might be restored.

7. Predamnation is antecedent to all things, yet it does by no means exist without a fore-knowledge of the causes of damnation. It views man as a sinner, obnoxious to damnation in Adam, and as on this account perishing through the necessity of Divine justice.

8. The means ordained for the execution of this predamnation, are

(1.) Just desertion, which is either that of exploration, [or examination,] in which God does not confer his grace, or that of punishment when God

219

takes away from a man all his saving gifts, and delivers him over to the power of Satan.

(2.) The second means are induration or hardening, and those consequences which usually follow even to the real damnation of the person reprobated.

#### 4. A THIRD KIND OF PREDESTINATION.

But others among our doctors state their sentiments on this subject in the following manner:

1. Because God willed within himself from all eternity to make a decree by which he might elect certain men and reprobate the rest, he viewed and considered the human race not only as created but likewise as fallen or corrupt, and on that account obnoxious to cursing and malediction. Out of this lapsed and accursed state God determined to liberate certain individuals and freely to save them by his grace, for a declaration of his mercy; but he resolved in his own just judgment to leave the rest under the curse [or malediction] for a declaration of his justice. In both these cases God acts without the least consideration of repentance and faith in those whom he elects, or of impenitence and unbelief in those whom he reprobates.

2. The special means which relate particularly to the execution both of election and reprobation, are the very same as those which we have already expounded in the first of these kinds of Predestination, with the exception of those means which are common both to election and reprobation; because this [third] opinion places the fall of man, not as a means fore-ordained for the execution of the preceding decree of Predestination, but as something that might furnish a fixed purpose or occasion for making this decree of Predestination.

#### 5. MY JUDGMENT RESPECTING THE TWO LAST DESCRIBED SCHEMES OF PREDESTINATION.

Both these opinions, as they outwardly pretend, differ from the first in this point — that neither of them lays down the creation or the fall as a mediate cause fore-ordained by God for the execution of the preceding decree of Predestination. Yet, with regard to the fall, some diversity may

220

be perceived in the two latter opinions. For the second kind of Predestination places election, with regard to the end, before the fall; it also places before that event preterition, [or passing by,] which is the first part of reprobation. While the third kind does not allow any part of election and reprobation to commence till after the fall of man. But, among the causes which seem to have induced the inventors of the two latter schemes to deliver the doctrine of Predestination in this manner, and not to ascend to such a great height as the inventors of the first scheme have done, this is not the least — that they have been desirous of using the greatest precaution, lest it might be concluded from their doctrine that God is the author of sin, with as much show of probability as, (according to the intimation of some of those who yield their assent to both the latter kinds,) it is deducible from the first description of Predestination.

Yet if we be willing to inspect these two latter opinions a little more closely, and in particular if we accurately examine the second and third kind and compare them with other sentiments of the same author concerning some subjects of our religion, we shall discover, that the fall of Adam cannot possibly, according to their views, be considered in any other manner than as a necessary means for the execution of the preceding decree of Predestination.

1. In reference to the second of the three, this is apparent from two reasons comprised in it:

The first of these reasons is that which states God to have determined by the decree of reprobation to deny to man that grace which was necessary for the confirmation and strengthening of his nature, that it might not be corrupted by sin; which amounts to this, that God decreed not to bestow that grace which was necessary to avoid sin; and from this must necessarily follow the transgression of man, as proceeding from a law imposed on him. The fall of man is therefore a means ordained for the execution of the decree of reprobation.

The second of these reasons is that which states the two parts of reprobation to be preterition and predamnation. These two parts, according to that decree, are connected together by a necessary and mutual bond, and are equally extensive. For, all those whom God passed by in conferring Divine grace, are likewise damned. Indeed no others are damned,

221

except those who are the subjects of this act of preterition. From this therefore it may be concluded, that "sin must necessarily follow from the decree of reprobation or preterition, because, if it were otherwise, it might possibly happen, that a person who had been passed by, might not commit sin, and from that circumstance might not become liable to damnation; since sin is the sole meritorious cause of damnation: and thus certain of those individuals who had been passed by, might neither be saved nor damned — which is great absurdity."

This second opinion on Predestination, therefore, falls into the same inconvenience as the first. For it not only does not avoid that [conclusion of making God the author of sin,] but while those who profess it make the attempt, they fall into a palpable and absurd self-contradiction — while, in reference to this point, the first of these opinions is alike throughout and consistent with itself.

2. The third of these schemes of Predestination would escape this rock to much better effect, did not the patrons of it, while declaring their sentiments on Predestination and providence, employ certain expressions, from which the necessity of the fall might be deduced. Yet this necessity cannot possibly have any other origin than some degree of Predestination.

(1.) One of these explanatory expressions is their description of the Divine permission, by which God permits sin. Some of them describe it thus: "permission is the withdrawing of that Divine grace, by which, when God executes the decrees of his will through rational creatures, he either does not reveal to the creature that divine will of his own by which he wills that action to be performed, or does not bend the will of the creature to yield obedience in that act to the Divine will." To these expressions, the following are immediately subjoined: "if this be a correct statement, the creature commits sin through necessity, yet voluntarily and without restraint." If it

be objected that "this description does not comport with that permission by which God permitted the sin of Adam:" We also entertain the same opinion about it. Yet it follows, as a consequence, from this very description, that "other sins are committed through necessity."

(2.) Of a similar tendency are the expressions which some of them use, when they contend, that the declaration of the glory of God, which must necessarily be illustrated, is placed in "the demonstration of mercy and of

222

punitive justice." But such a demonstration could not have been made, unless sin, and misery through sin, had entered into the world, to form at least some degree of misery for the least sin. And in this manner is sin also necessarily introduced, through the necessity of such a demonstration of the Divine glory. Since the fall of Adam is already laid down to be necessary, and, on that account, to be a means for executing the preceding decree of Predestination; creation itself is likewise at the same time laid down as a means subservient to the execution of the same decree. For the fall cannot be necessarily consequent upon the creation, except through the decree of Predestination, which cannot be placed between the creation and the fall, but is prefixed to both of them, as having the precedence, and ordaining creation for the fall, and both of them for executing one and the same decree — to demonstrate the justice of God in the punishment of sin, and his mercy in its remission. Because, if this were not the case, that which must necessarily ensue from the act of creation had not been intended by God when he created, which is to suppose an impossibility. But let it be granted, that the necessity of the fall of Adam cannot be deduced from either of the two latter opinions, yet all the preceding arguments which have been produced against the first opinion, are, after a trifling modification to suit the varied purpose, equally valid against the two latter. This would be very apparent, if, to demonstrate it, a conference were to be instituted.

## 6. MY OWN SENTIMENTS ON PREDESTINATION.

I have hitherto been stating those opinions concerning the article of Predestination which are inculcated in our Churches and in the University of Leyden, and of which I disapprove. I have at the same time produced my own reasons, why I form such an unfavorable judgment concerning them; and I will now declare my own opinions on this subject, which are of such a description as, according to my views, appear most conformable to the word of God.

1. The first absolute decree of God concerning the salvation of sinful man, is that by which he decreed to appoint his Son, Jesus Christ, for a Mediator, Redeemer, Savior, Priest and King, who might destroy sin by

223

his own death, might by his obedience obtain the salvation which had been lost, and might communicate it by his own virtue.

2. The second precise and absolute decree of God, is that in which he decreed to receive into favor those who repent and believe, and, in Christ, for his sake and through Him, to effect the salvation of such penitents and believers as persevered to the end; but to leave in sin, and under wrath, all impenitent persons and unbelievers, and to damn them as aliens from Christ.

3. The third Divine decree is that by which God decreed to administer in a sufficient and efficacious manner the means which were necessary for repentance and faith; and to have such administration instituted

(1.) according to the Divine Wisdom, by which God knows what is proper and becoming both to his mercy and his severity, and

(2.) according to Divine Justice, by which He is prepared to adopt whatever his wisdom may prescribe and put it in execution.

4. To these succeeds the fourth decree, by which God decreed to save and damn certain particular persons. This decree has its foundation in the foreknowledge of God, by which he knew from all eternity those individuals who would, through his preventing grace, believe, and, through his subsequent grace would persevere, according to the before described administration of those means which are suitable and proper for conversion and faith; and, by which foreknowledge, he likewise knew those who would not believe and persevere.

Predestination, when thus explained, is

1. The foundation of Christianity, and of salvation and its certainty.

2. It is the sum and the matter of the gospel; nay, it is the gospel itself, and on that account necessary to be believed in order to salvation, as far as the two first articles are concerned.

3. It has had no need of being examined or determined by any council, either general or particular, since it is contained in the scriptures clearly and expressly in so many words; and no contradiction has ever yet been offered to it by any orthodox Divine.

224

4. It has constantly been acknowledged and taught by all Christian teachers who held correct and orthodox sentiments.

5. It agrees with that harmony of all confessions, which has been published by the protestant Churches.

6. It likewise agrees most excellently with the Dutch Confession and Catechism. This concord is such, that if in the Sixteenth article these two expressions "those persons whom" and "others," be explained by the words "believers" and "unbelievers" these opinions of mine on Predestination will be comprehended in that article with the greatest clearness. This is the reason why I directed the thesis to be composed in the very words of the Confession, when, on one occasion, I had to

hold a public disputation before my private class in the University. This kind of Predestination also agrees with the reasoning contained in the twentieth and the fifty-fourth question of the Catechism.

7. It is also in excellent accordance with the nature of God — with his wisdom, goodness, and righteousness; because it contains the principal matter of all of them, and is the clearest demonstration of the Divine wisdom, goodness, and righteousness [or justice]

8. It is agreeable in every point with the nature of man — in what form soever that nature may be contemplated, whether in the primitive state of creation, in that of the fall, or in that of restoration.

9. It is in complete concert with the act of creation, by affirming that the creation itself is a real communication of good, both from the intention of God, and with regard to the very end or event; that it had its origin in the goodness of God; that whatever has a reference to its continuance and preservation, proceeds from Divine love; and that this act of creation is a perfect and appropriate work of God, in which he is at complaisance with himself, and by which he obtained all things necessary for an unsinning state.

10. It agrees with the nature of life eternal, and with the honorable titles by which that life is designated in the scriptures.

11. It also agrees with the nature of death eternal, and with the names by which that death is distinguished in scripture.

225

12. It states sin to be a real disobedience, and the meritorious cause of condemnation; and on this account, it is in the most perfect agreement with the fall and with sin.

13. In every particular, it harmonizes with the nature of grace, by ascribing to it all those things which agree with it, [or adapted to it,] and by reconciling it most completely to the righteousness of God and to the nature and liberty of the human will.

14. It conduces most conspicuously to declare the glory of God, his justice and his mercy. It also represents God as the cause of all good and of our salvation, and man as the cause of sin and of his own damnation.

15. It contributes to the honor of Jesus Christ, by placing him for the foundation of Predestination and the meritorious as well as communicative cause of salvation.

16. It greatly promotes the salvation of men: It is also the power, and the very means which lead to salvation — by exciting and creating within the mind of man sorrow on account of sin, a solicitude about his conversion, faith in Jesus Christ, a studious desire to perform good works, and zeal in prayer — and by causing men to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. It likewise prevents despair, as far as such prevention is necessary.

17. It confirms and establishes that order according to which the gospel ought to be preached,

(1.) By requiring repentance and faith —

(2.) And then by promising remission of sins, the grace of the spirit, and life eternal.

18. It strengthens the ministry of the gospel, and renders it profitable with respect to preaching, the administration of the sacraments and public prayers.

19. It is the foundation of the Christian religion; because in it, the two-fold love of God may be united together — God's love of righteousness [or justice], and his love of men, may, with the greatest consistency, be reconciled to each other.

226

20. Lastly. This doctrine of Predestination, has always been approved by the great majority of professing Christians, and even now, in these days, it enjoys the same extensive patronage. It cannot afford any person just cause for expressing his aversion to it; nor can it give any pretext for contention in the Christian Church.

It is therefore much to be desired, that men would proceed no further in this matter, and would not attempt to investigate the unsearchable judgments of God — at least that they would not proceed beyond the point at which those judgments have been clearly revealed in the scriptures.

This, my most potent Lords, is all that I intend now to declare to your mightinesses, respecting the doctrine of Predestination, about which there exists such a great controversy in the Church of Christ. If it would not prove too tedious to your Lordships, I have some other propositions which I could wish to state, because they contribute to a full declaration of my sentiments, and tend to the same purpose as that for which I have been ordered to attend in this place by your mightinesses.

There are certain other articles of the Christian religion, which possess a close affinity to the doctrine of Predestination, and which are in a great measure dependent on it: Of this description are the providence of God, the free-will of man, the perseverance of saints, and the certainty of salvation. On these topics, if not disagreeable to your mightinesses, I will in a brief manner relate my opinion.

## II. THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

I consider Divine Providence to be "that solicitous, continued, and universally present inspection and oversight of God, according to which he exercises a general care over the whole world, but evinces a particular concern for all his [intelligent] creatures without any exception, with the design of preserving and governing them in their own essence, qualities, actions, and passions, in a manner that is at once worthy of himself and suitable to them, to the praise of his name and the salvation of believers. In this definition of Divine Providence, I by no means deprive it of any

particle of those properties which agree with it or belong to it; but I declare that it preserves, regulates, governs and directs all things and that nothing

227

in the world happens fortuitously or by chance. Beside this, I place in subjection to Divine Providence both the free-will and even the actions of a rational creature, so that nothing can be done without the will of God, not even any of those things which are done in opposition to it; only we must observe a distinction between good actions and evil ones, by saying, that "God both wills and performs good acts," but that "He only freely permits those which are evil." Still farther than this, I very readily grant, that even all actions whatever, concerning evil, that can possibly be devised or invented, may be attributed to Divine Providence Employing solely one caution, "not to conclude from this concession that God is the cause of sin." This I have testified with sufficient clearness, in a certain disputation concerning the Righteousness and Efficacy of Divine Providence concerning things that are evil, which was discussed at Leyden on two different occasions, as a divinity-act, at which I presided. In that disputation, I endeavored to ascribe to God whatever actions concerning sin I could possibly conclude from the scriptures to belong to him; and I proceeded to such a length in my attempt, that some persons thought proper on that account to charge me with having made God the author of sin. The same serious allegation has likewise been often produced against me, from the pulpit, in the city of Amsterdam, on account of those very theses; but with what show of justice such a charge was made, may be evident to any one, from the contents of my written answer to those Thirty-one Articles formerly mentioned, which have been falsely imputed to me, and of which this was one.

### III. THE FREE-WILL OF MAN

This is my opinion concerning the free-will of man: In his primitive condition as he came out of the hands of his creator, man was endowed with such a portion of knowledge, holiness and power, as enabled him to understand, esteem, consider, will, and to perform the true good, according to the commandment delivered to him. Yet none of these acts could he do, except through the assistance of Divine Grace. But in his lapsed and sinful state, man is not capable, of and by himself, either to think, to will, or to do that which is really good; but it is necessary for him to be regenerated and renewed in his intellect, affections or will, and in all his powers, by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit, that he may be qualified rightly to

228

understand, esteem, consider, will, and perform whatever is truly good. When he is made a partaker of this regeneration or renovation, I consider that, since he is delivered from sin, he is capable of thinking, willing and doing that which is good, but yet not without the continued aids of Divine Grace.

### IV. THE GRACE OF GOD

In reference to Divine Grace, I believe,

1. It is a gratuitous affection by which God is kindly affected towards a miserable sinner, and according to which he, in the first place, gives his Son, "that whosoever believes in him might have eternal life," and, afterwards, he justifies him in Christ Jesus and for his sake, and adopts him into the right of sons, unto salvation.
2. It is an infusion (both into the human understanding and into the will and affections,) of all those gifts of the Holy Spirit which appertain to the regeneration and renewing of man — such as faith, hope, charity, etc.; for, without these gracious gifts, man is not sufficient to think, will, or do any thing that is good.
3. It is that perpetual assistance and continued aid of the Holy Spirit, according to which He acts upon and excites to good the man who has been already renewed, by infusing into him salutary cogitations, and by inspiring him with good desires, that he may thus actually will whatever is good; and according to which God may then will and work together with man, that man may perform whatever he wills.

In this manner, I ascribe to grace the commencement, the continuance and the consummation of all good, and to such an extent do I carry its influence, that a man, though already regenerate, can neither conceive, will, nor do any good at all, nor resist any evil temptation, without this preventing and exciting, this following and co-operating grace. From this statement it will clearly appear, that I by no means do injustice to grace, by attributing, as it is reported of me, too much to man's free-will. For the whole controversy reduces itself to the solution of this question, "is the grace of God a certain irresistible force?" That is, the controversy does not relate to those actions or operations which may be ascribed to grace, (for I

229

acknowledge and inculcate as many of these actions or operations as any man ever did,) but it relates solely to the mode of operation, whether it be irresistible or not. With respect to which, I believe, according to the scriptures, that many persons resist the Holy Spirit and reject the grace that is offered.

## V. THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

My sentiments respecting the perseverance of the saints are, that those persons who have been grafted into Christ by true faith, and have thus been made partakers of his life-giving Spirit, possess sufficient powers [or strength] to fight against Satan, sin, the world and their own flesh, and to gain the victory over these enemies — yet not without the assistance of the grace of the same Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ also by his Spirit assists them in all their temptations, and affords them the ready aid of his hand; and, provided they stand prepared for the battle, implore his help, and be not wanting to themselves, Christ preserves them from falling. So that it is not possible for them, by any of the cunning craftiness or power of Satan, to be either seduced or dragged out of the hands of Christ. But I think it is useful and will be quite necessary in our first convention, [or Synod] to institute a diligent inquiry from the Scriptures, whether it is not possible for some individuals through negligence to desert the commencement of their existence in Christ, to cleave again to the present evil world, to decline from the sound doctrine which was once

delivered to them, to lose a good conscience, and to cause Divine grace to be ineffectual. Though I here openly and ingenuously affirm, I never taught that a true believer can, either totally or finally fall away from the faith, and perish; yet I will not conceal, that there are passages of scripture which seem to me to wear this aspect; and those answers to them which I have been permitted to see, are not of such a kind as to approve themselves on all points to my understanding. On the other hand, certain passages are produced for the contrary doctrine [of unconditional perseverance] which are worthy of much consideration.

230

## VI. THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

With regard to the certainty [or assurance] of salvation, my opinion is, that it is possible for him who believes in Jesus Christ to be certain and persuaded, and, if his heart condemn him not, he is now in reality assured, that he is a son of God, and stands in the grace of Jesus Christ. Such a certainty is wrought in the mind, as well by the action of the Holy Spirit inwardly actuating the believer and by the fruits of faith, as from his own conscience, and the testimony of God's Spirit witnessing together with his conscience. I also believe, that it is possible for such a person, with an assured confidence in the grace of God and his mercy in Christ, to depart out of this life, and to appear before the throne of grace, without any anxious fear or terrific dread: and yet this person should constantly pray,

"O lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant!"

But, since "God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things," and since a man judges not his own self — yea, though a man know nothing by himself, yet is he not thereby justified, but he who judgeth him is the Lord, (1 John 3:19; 1 Corinthians 4:3,) I dare not [on this account] place this assurance [or certainty] on an equality with that by which we know there is a God, and that Christ is the Savior of the world. Yet it will be proper to make the extent of the boundaries of this assurance, a subject of inquiry in our convention.

## VII. THE PERFECTION OF BELIEVERS IN THIS LIFE

Beside those doctrines on which I have treated, there is now much discussion among us respecting the perfection of believers, or regenerated persons, in this life; and it is reported, that I entertain sentiments on this subject, which are very improper, and nearly allied to those of the Pelagians, viz: "that it is possible for the regenerate in this life perfectly to keep God's precepts." To this I reply, though these might have been my sentiments yet I ought not on this account to be considered a Pelagian, either partly or entirely, provided I had only added that "they could do this by the grace of Christ, and by no means without it." But while I never asserted, that a believer could perfectly keep the precepts of Christ in this life, I never denied it, but always left it as a matter which has still to be decided. For I have contented myself with those sentiments which St.

231

Augustine has expressed on this subject, whose words have frequently quoted in the University, and have usually subjoined, that I had no addition to make to them.

Augustine says, "four questions may claim our attention on this topic. The first is, was there ever yet a man without sin, one who from the beginning of life to its termination never committed sin? The second, has there ever been, is there now, or can there possibly be, an individual who does not sin, that is, who has attained to such a state of perfection in this life as not to commit sin, but perfectly to fulfill the law of God? The third, is it possible for a man in this life to exist without sin? The fourth, if it be possible for a man to be without sin, why has such an individual never yet been found?" St. Augustine says, that such a person as is described in the first question never yet lived, or will hereafter be brought into existence, with the exception of Jesus Christ. He does not think, that any man has attained to such perfection in this life as is portrayed in the second question. With regard to the third, he thinks it possible for a man to be without sin, by means of the grace of Christ and free-will. In answer to the fourth, man does not do what it is possible for him by the grace of Christ to perform, either because that which is good escapes his observation, or because in it he places no part of his delight." From this quotation it is apparent, that St. Augustine, one of the most strenuous adversaries of the Pelagian doctrine, retained this sentiment, that "it is possible for a man to live in this world without sin."

Beside this, the same Christian father says, "let Pelagius confess, that it is possible for man to be without sin, in no other way than by the grace of Christ, and we will be at peace with each other." The opinion of Pelagius appeared to St. Augustine to be this — "that man could fulfill the law of God by his own proffer strength and ability; but with still "greater facility by means of the grace of Christ." I have already most abundantly stated the great distance at which I stand from such a sentiment; in addition to which I now declare, that I account this sentiment of Pelagius to be heretical, and diametrically opposed to these words of Christ, "Without me ye can do nothing:" (John 15:5.) It is likewise very destructive, and inflicts a most grievous wound on the glory of Christ.

232

I cannot see that anything is contained in all I have hitherto produced respecting my sentiments, on account of which any person ought to be "afraid of appearing in the presence of God," and from which it might be feared that any mischievous consequences can possibly arise. Yet because every day brings me fresh information about reports concerning me, "that I carry in my breast destructive sentiments and heresies," I cannot possibly conceive to what points those charges can relate, except perhaps they draw some such pretext from my opinion concerning the Divinity of the Son of God, and the justification of man before God. Indeed, I have lately learnt, that there has been much public conversation, and many rumors have been circulated, respecting my opinion on both these points of doctrine, particularly since the last conference [between Gomarus and myself] before the Counselors of the Supreme Court. This is one reason why I think, that I shall not be acting unadvisedly if I disclose to your mightinesses the real state of the whole matter.

### VIII. THE DIVINITY OF THE SON OF GOD

With regard to the Divinity of the Son of God and the word *autoqeov* both of which have been discussed in our University in the regular form of scholastic disputations, I cannot sufficiently wonder what the motive can be, which has created a wish in some persons to render me suspected to other men, or to make me an object of suspicion to themselves. This is still more wonderful, since this suspicion has not the least ground of probability on which to rest, and is at such an immense distance from all reason and truth, that, whatever reports have been spread abroad respecting this affair to the prejudice of my character, they can be called nothing better than "notorious calumnies." At a disputation held one afternoon in the University, when the thesis that had been proposed for disputation was the Divinity of the Son of God, one of the students happened to object, "that the Son of God was autotheos, and that he therefore had his essence from himself and not from the Father." In reply to this I observed, "that the word autotheos was capable of two different acceptations, since it might signify either "one who is truly God," or "one who is God of himself;" and that it was with great propriety and correctness attributed to the Son of God according to the former signification, but not according to the latter." The student, in prosecution

233

of his argument, violently contended, that the word was justly applicable to the Son of God, principally according to the second of these significations: and that the essence of the Father could not be said to be communicated to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, in any other than in an improper sense; but that it was in perfect correctness and strict propriety common alike to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." He added "that he asserted this with the greater confidence because he had the younger Trelcatius of pious memory, [but who was then living,] as an authority in his favor on this point; for that learned Professor had written to the same purport in his Common Places." To these observations I answered, "that this opinion was at variance with the word of God, and with the whole of the ancient Church, both Greek and Latin, which had always taught, that the Son had His Deity from the Father by eternal generation." To these remarks I subjoined, "that from such an opinion as this, necessarily followed the two mutually conflicting errors, Tri-theism and Sabellianism; that is,

1. It would ensue as a necessary consequence, from these premises, that there are three Gods, who have together and collaterally the Divine essence, independently of this circumstance — that one of them (being only personally distinguished from the rest) has that essence from another of the persons. Yet the proceeding of the origin of one person from another, (that is, of the Son from the Father,) is the only foundation that has ever been used for defending the Unity of the Divine Essence in the Trinity of Persons.
2. It would likewise follow as another consequence, that the Son would himself be the Father, because he would differ from the Father in nothing but in regard to name, which was the opinion of Sabellius. For, since it is peculiar to the Father to derive his Deity from himself, or (to speak more correctly,) to derive it from no one, if, in the sense of being "God of himself," the Son be called autotheos, it follows that he is the Father." Some account of this disputation was dispersed abroad in all directions, and it reached Amsterdam. A minister of that city, who now rests in the Lord, having interrogated me respecting the real state of this affair, I related the whole of it to

him plainly, as I have now done: and I requested him to make Trelocatius of blessed memory acquainted with it as it had actually

234

occurred, and to advise him in a friendly manner to amend his opinion, and to correct those inappropriate words in his Common Places: this request the minister from Amsterdam engaged to fulfill in his own way. In all this proceeding I am far from being liable to any blame; for I have defended the truth and the sentiments of the Catholic and Orthodox Church. Trelocatius undoubtedly was the person most open to animadversion; for he adopted a mode of speaking which detracted somewhat from the truth of the matter. But such has always been either my own infelicity or the zeal of certain individuals that, as soon as any disagreement arises, all the blame is instantly cast upon me, as if it was impossible for me to display as much veracity [or orthodoxy] as any other person. Yet on this subject I have Gomarus himself consenting with me; for, soon after Trelocatius had published his common places, a disputation on the Trinity having been proposed in the University, Gomarus did in three several parts of his theses express himself in such terms as were diametrically opposed to those of Trelocatius. The very obvious difference in opinion between those two Professors I pointed out to the Amsterdam minister, who acknowledged its existence. Yet, notwithstanding all these things, no one endeavored to vindicate me from this calumny; while great exertion was employed to frame excuses for Trelocatius, by means of a qualified interpretation of his words, though it was utterly impossible to reconcile their palliative explanations with the plain signification of his unperverted expressions. Such are the effects which the partiality of favor and the fervor of zeal can produce!

The milder and qualified interpretation put upon the words of Trelocatius, was the following: "the Son of God may be styled autotheos, or may be said to have his Deity from himself, in reference to his being God, although he has his Deity from the Father, in reference to his being the Son." For the sake of a larger explanation, it is said, "God, or the Divine Essence, may be considered both absolutely and relatively. When regarded absolutely, the Son has his Divine essence from himself; but, when viewed relatively, he derives it from the Father." But these are new modes of speaking and novel opinions, and such as can by no means consist together. For the Son, both in regard to his being the Son, and to his being God, derives his Deity from the Father. When he is called God, it is then only not expressed that he is from the Father; which derivation is particularly noted when the word Son

235

is employed. Indeed, the essence of God can in no manner come under our consideration, except it be said, "that the Divine Essence is communicated to the Son by the Father." Nor can it possibly in any different respect whatever be said, that this essence is both "communicated to him" and "not communicated;" because these expressions are contradictory, and can in no diverse respect be reconciled to each other. If the Son have the Divine Essence from himself in reference to its being absolutely considered, it cannot be communicated to him. If it be communicated to him in reference to its being relatively considered, he cannot have it from himself in reference to its being absolutely considered.

I shall probably be asked, "do you not acknowledge, that, to be the Son of God, and to be God, are two things entirely distinct from each other?" I reply, undoubtedly I subscribe to such distinction. But when those who make it proceed still further, and say, "since to be the Son of God signifies that he derives his essence from the Father, to be God in like manner signifies nothing less than that he has his essence from himself or from no one;" I deny this assertion, and declare, at the same time, that it is a great and manifest error, not only in sacred theology, but likewise in natural philosophy. For, these two things, to be the Son and to be God, are at perfect agreement with each other; but to derive his essence from the Father, and, at the same time, to derive it from no one, are evidently contradictor, and mutually destructive the one of the other.

But, to make this fallacy still more apparent, it must be observed, how equal in force and import are certain double ternary and parallel propositions, when standing in the following juxtaposition:

God is from eternity, possessing the Divine Essence from eternity. The Father is from no one, having the Divine Essence from no one. The Son is from the Father, having the Divine Essence from the Father. The word "God" therefore signifies, that He has the true Divine Essence; but the word "Son" signifies, that he has the Divine Essence from the Father. On this account, he is correctly denominated both God and the Son of God. But since he cannot be styled the Father, he cannot possibly be said to have the Divine Essence from himself or from no one. Yet much labor is devoted to the purpose of excusing these expressions, by saying,

236

"that when the son of God in reference to his being God is said to have his essence from that form of speech signifies nothing more, than that the Divine essence is not derived from any one."  
But if this be thought to be the most proper mode of action which should be adopted, there will be no depraved or erroneous sentiment which can be uttered that may not thus find a ready excuse. For though God and the divine Essence do not differ substantially, yet whatever may be predicated of the Divine Essence can by no means be equally predicated of God; because they are distinguished from each other in our mode of framing conceptions, according to which mode all forms of speech ought to be examined, since they are employed only with a design that through them we should receive correct impressions. This is very obvious from the following examples, in which we speak with perfect correctness when we say, "Deum mortuum esse," and "the Essence of God is communicated;" but very incorrectly when we say, "God is communicated." That man who understands the difference existing between concrete and abstract, about which there were such frequent disputes between us and the Lutherans will easily perceive what a number of absurdities will ensue, if explanations of this description be once tolerated in the Church of God. Therefore, in no way whatever can this phrase, "the Son of God is autotheos," ["God of himself," or "in his own right,"] be excused as a correct one, or as having been happily expressed. Nor can that be called a proper form of speech which says, "the Essence of God is common to three persons;" but it is improper, since the Divine Essence is declared to be communicated by one of them to another. The observations which I now make, I wish to be particularly regarded, because it may appear from them how much we are capable of tolerating in a man whom we do not suspect of heresy; and, on the contrary, with what avidity we seize upon

any trivial circumstance by which we may inculpate another man whom we hold under the ban of suspicion. Of such partiality, this incident affords two manifest examples.

## IX. THE JUSTIFICATION OF MAN BEFORE GOD

I am not conscious to myself, of having taught or entertained any other sentiments concerning the justification of man before God, than those which are held unanimously by the Reformed and Protestant Churches, and which are in complete agreement with their expressed opinions.

237

There was lately a short controversy in relation to this subject, between John Piscator, Professor of Divinity in the University of Herborn in Nassau, and the French Churches. It consisted in the determination of these two questions:

1. "is the obedience or righteousness of Christ, which is imputed to believers and in which consists their righteousness before God, is this only the passive obedience of Christ?" which was Piscator's opinion. Or

2. "is it not, in addition to this, that active righteousness of Christ which he exhibited to the law of God in the whole course of his life, and that holiness in which he was conceived?" Which was the opinion of the French Churches. But I never durst mingle myself with the dispute, or undertake to decide it; for I thought it possible for the Professors of the same religion to hold different opinions on this point from others of their brethren, without any breach of Christian peace or the unity of faith. Similar peaceful thoughts appear to have been indulged by both the adverse parties in this dispute; for they exercised a friendly toleration towards each other, and did not make that a reason for mutually renouncing their fraternal concord. But concerning such an amicable plan of adjusting differences, certain individuals in our own country are of a different judgment.

A question has been raised from these words of the Apostle Paul: "Faith is imputed for righteousness." (Romans 4) The inquiry was,

1. Whether those expressions ought to be properly understood, "so that faith itself, as an act performed according to the command of the gospel, is imputed before God for or unto righteousness — and that of grace; since it is not the righteousness of the law."

2. Whether they ought to be figuratively and improperly understood, "that the righteousness of Christ, being apprehended by faith, is imputed to us for righteousness." Or

3. Whether it is to be understood "that the righteousness, for which, or unto which, faith is imputed, is the instrumental operation of faith;" which is asserted by some persons. In the theses on justification, which were disputed under me when I was moderator, I have adopted the former of these opinions not in a rigid manner, but simply, as I have likewise done in

238

another passage which I wrote in a particular letter. It is on this ground that I am accounted to hold and to teach unsound opinions concerning the justification of man before God. But how unfounded such a supposition is, will be very evident at a proper season, and in a mutual conference. For the present, I will only briefly say, "I believe that sinners are accounted righteous solely by the obedience of Christ; and that the righteousness of Christ is the only meritorious cause on account of which God pardons the sins of believers and reckons them as righteous as if they had perfectly fulfilled the law. But since God imputes the righteousness of Christ to none except believers, I conclude that, in this sense, it may be well and properly said, to a man who believes, faith is imputed for righteousness through grace, because God hath set forth his Son, Jesus Christ, to be a propitiation, a throne of grace, [or mercy seat] through faith in his blood." Whatever interpretation may be put upon these expressions, none of our Divines blames Calvin or considers him to be heterodox on this point; yet my opinion is not so widely different from his as to prevent me from employing the signature of my own hand in subscribing to those things which he has delivered on this subject, in the third book of his Institutes; this I am prepared to do at any time, and to give them my full approval. Most noble and potent Lords, these are the principal articles, respecting which I have judged it necessary to declare my opinion before this august meeting, in obedience to your commands.

#### X. THE REVISION OF THE DUTCH CONFESION, AND THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM

But, besides these things, I had some annotations to make on the Confession of the Dutch Churches and on the Heidelberg Catechism; but they will be discussed most appropriately in our Synod, which at the first opportunity we hope to obtain through your consent, or rather by means of your summons. This is the sole request which I prefer to your mightinesses, that I may be permitted to offer a few brief remarks on a certain clause, subject to which their high mightinesses, the States General, gave their consent to the convening of a National Synod in this province, (Holland,) and the substance of which was, that in such Synod the Confession and Catechism of the Dutch Churches should be subjected to examination.

239

This clause has given great umbrage to many persons, not only because they account it unnecessary, but likewise unjust, to subject the Confession and Catechism to examination. They also suppose, that I and a certain individual of great reputation, are the persons who prevailed with the States General to have such a clause inserted. But it is by no means true that the revision of the Confession and Catechism is unnecessary and unjust, or that we were the instigators of their high mightinesses in this affair. With regard to the last of these two suppositions, so far were we from having any concern with the origin of that clause, that, eleven or twelve years ago, at the pressing importunity of the Churches that prayed for a National Synod, the States of South Holland and West Friesland at last judged it proper to consent to it by their decree, on no other condition than that in such Synod the Confession of the Dutch Churches should be subjected to examination. Yet we, at that time, neither endeavored by our advice, nor by our influence, to promote any such measure. But if we had with all our might made the attempt, we should have been doing nothing but what was compatible with our official duties; because it is obviously

agreeable to reason as well as to equity, and quite necessary in the present posture of affairs, that such a measure should be adopted.

First. That it may openly appear to all the world that we render to the word of God alone such due and suitable honor, as to determine it to be beyond (or rather above) all disputes, too great to be the subject of any exception, and worthy of all acceptation.

Secondly. Because these pamphlets are writings that proceed from men, and may, on that account, contain within them some portion of error, it is, therefore, proper to institute a lawful inquiry, that is, in a National Synod, whether or not there be any thing in those productions which requires amendment.

1. The first inquiry may be, whether these human writings are accordant, in every part, with the word of God, with regard to the words themselves, the construction of the sentences and the correct meaning.

2. Whether they contain whatever is necessary to be believed unto salvation, so that salvation is, according to this rule, not denied to those things to which it appertains.

240

3. Whether it [the rule of these formularies] does not contain far too many particulars, and embrace several that are not necessary to be believed unto salvation, so that salvation is consequently attributed to those things to which it does not belong.

4. Whether certain words and forms of speech are not employed in them, which are capable of being understood in different ways and furnishing occasion for disputes. Thus, for example, in the Fourteenth article of the Confession, we read the following words, "nothing is done without God's ordination," [or appointment]: if by the word "ordination" is signified, "that God appoints things of any kind to be done," this mode of enunciation is erroneous, and it follows as a consequence from it, that God is the author of sin. But if it signify, that "whatever it be that is done, God ordains it to a good end," the terms in which it is conceived are in that case correct.

5. Whether things utterly repugnant to each other may not be discovered in them. For instance, a certain individual who is highly honored in the Church, addressed a letter to John Piscator, Professor of Divinity in the University of Herborn in Nassau, and in it he exhorted him to confine himself within the opinion of the Heidelberg Catechism on the doctrine of Justification. For this purpose he cited three passage, which he considered to be at variance with Piscator's sentiments. But the learned Professor replied, that he confined himself completely within the doctrinal boundaries of the Catechism; and then quoted out of that formulary ten or eleven passages as proofs of his sentiments. But I solemnly declare, I do not perceive by what method these several passages can possibly be reconciled with each other.

6. Whether every thing in these writings is digested in that due order in which the Scripture requires them to be placed.

7. Whether all things are disposed in a manner the most suitable and convenient for preserving peace and unity with the rest of the reformed Churches.

Thirdly. The third reason is, because a National Synod is held for the purpose of discovering whether all things in the Church are in a proper state or right condition. One of the chief duties which appertains to such

241

an assembly, is, the examination of doctrine, whether it be that which is admitted by unanimous consent, or that for which particular Divines contend.

Fourthly. The fourth reason is, because an examination of this description will obtain for these writings a greater degree of authority, when after a mature and rigid examination they shall be found to agree with the word of God, or shall be made conformable to it in a still greater measure. Such an examination will also excite within the minds of men a greater value for Christian ministers, when they perceive that these sacred functionaries hold in the highest estimation that truth which is revealed in Scripture, and that their attachment to it is so great as to induce them to spare no labor in order to render their own doctrine more and more conformable to that revealed truth.

Fifthly. The fifth reason why at this, if at any period, it is necessary to adopt the suggestion which we have mentioned, is,

1. Because there are several individuals in the ministry who have certain views and considerations respecting some points contained in these writings, which they reserve in secret and reveal to no one, because they hope that such points will become subjects of discussion in a National Synod. Because such a convention has been promised, some of them have suffered themselves to be persuaded not to give the least publicity to any of the views or considerations which they have formed on these subjects.

2. Besides, this will be the design of a National Synod — That their high mightinesses the States General may be pleased to establish and arm with public authority certain ecclesiastical sanctions, according to which every one may be bound to conduct himself in the Church of God. That this favor may be obtained from their high mightinesses and that they may execute such a measure with a good conscience, it is necessary that they be convinced in their own understandings, that the doctrine contained in the formulary of union is agreeable to the word of God. This is a reason which ought to induce us spontaneously to propose an examination of our Confession before their high mightinesses, and to offer either to shew that it is in accordance with the word of God, or to render it conformable to that Divine standard.

242

Sixthly. The sixth reason is drawn from the example of those who are associated together under the Augustan Confession, and from the conduct of the Swiss and the French Churches, that have within two or three years enriched their Confessions with one entirely new article. And the Dutch

Confession has itself been subjected to examination since it was first published: some things having been taken away from it and others added, while some of the rest have undergone various alterations.

Numerous other reasons might be produced, but I omit them; because I consider those already mentioned to be quite sufficient for proving, that the clause concerning examination and revision, as it is termed, was with the greatest justice and propriety inserted in the instrument of consent of which we have made previous mention.

I am not ignorant, that other reasons are adduced, in opposition to these; and one in particular, which is made a principal subject of public conversation, and is accounted of all others the most solid. To it, therefore I consider it necessary to offer a brief reply. It is thus stated: "by such an examination as this, the doctrine of the Church will be called in question; which is neither an act of propriety nor of duty.

"1. Because this doctrine has obtained the approbation and suffrages of many respectable and learned men; and has been strenuously defended against all those who have offered it any opposition.

"2. Because it has been sealed with the blood of many thousand martyrs.

"3. Because from such an examination will arise, within the Church, confusion, scandal, offenses, and the destruction of consciences; and, out of the Church, ridicule, calumnies and accusations."

To all these I answer:

1. It would be much better, not to employ such odious forms of speech, as to call in question, and others of that class, when the conversation is only respecting some human composition, which is liable to have error intermixed with its contents. For with what right can any writing he said to be called in question or in doubt, which was never of itself unquestionable, or ought to be considered as indubitable?

243

2. The approbation of Divines, the defense of a composition against its adversaries, and the sealing of it with the blood of martyrs, do not render any doctrine authentic or place it beyond the limits of doubt: because it is possible both for Divines and martyrs to err — a circumstance which can admit of no denial in this argument.

3. A distinction ought to be made between the different matters contained in the Confession. For while some of them make a near approach to the foundation of salvation and are fundamental articles of the Christian religion, others of them are built up as a superstructure on the foundation, and of themselves are not absolutely necessary to salvation. The doctrines of this former class are approved by the unanimous consent of all the Reformed, and are effectually defended against all gainsaying adversaries. But those of the latter class become subjects of

controversy between different parties: and some of these are attacked by enemies not without some semblance of truth and justice.

The blood of martyrs has sealed those of the former class but by no means those of the latter. In reference to this affair, it ought to be diligently observed, what was proposed by the martyrs of our days, and on what account they shed their blood. If this be done, it will be found, that no man among them was even interrogated on that subject which I consider it equitable to make a prominent part in the deliberations of a Synod, and, therefore, that no martyr ever sealed it with his blood. I will produce an example: when a question was raised about the meaning of the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans, one individual said, "that the passage was quoted in the margin of the Confession exactly in the same sense as he had embraced it, and that the martyrs had with their own blood sealed this Confession." But, in reply to this, it was stated, "that if the strictest search be instituted throughout the entire large history of the martyrs, as it is published by the French, it will be discovered, that no martyr has at any period been examined on that passage, or has shed his blood on that account."

To sum up the whole: the blood of the martyrs tends to confirm this truth, that they have made profession of their faith "in simplicity and sincerity of conscience." But it is by no means conclusive, that the Confession which they produced is free from every degree of reprehension or superior

244

to all exception; unless they had been led by Christ into all truth and therefore rendered incapable of erring.

4. If the Church be properly instructed in that difference which really does and always ought to exist between the word of God and all human writings, and if the Church be also rightly informed concerning that liberty which she and all Christians possess, and which they will always enjoy, to measure all human compositions by the standard rule of God's word, she will neither distress herself on that account, nor will she be offended on perceiving all human writings brought to be proved at the touch-stone of God's word. On the contrary, she will rather feel far more abundant delight, when she sees, that God has bestowed on her in this country such pastors and teachers, as try at the chief touch-stone their own doctrine, in a manner at once suitable, proper, just, and worthy of perpetual observance; and that they do this, to be able exactly and by every possible means to express their agreement with the word of God, and their consent to it even in the most minute particulars.

5. But it is no less proper, that the doctrine once received in the Church should be subjected to examination, however great the fear may be "lest disturbances should ensue, and lest evil disposed persons should make such revision an object of ridicule, calumny or accusation," or should even turn it to their own great advantage, [by representing the matter so as to induce a persuasion,] "that those who propose this examination are not sufficiently confirmed in their own religion ;" when, on the contrary, this is one of God's commands, "search and try the spirits whether they be of God." (1 John 4:1.) If cogitations of that description had operated as hindrances on the minds of Luther, Zuinglius, and others, they would never have pried into the

doctrine of the Papists, or have subjected it to a scrutinizing examination. Nor would those who adhere to the Augustan Confession have considered it proper to submit that formulary again to a new and complete revision, and to alter it in some particulars. This deed of theirs is an object of our praise and approval. And we conclude, that, when Luther towards the close of his life was advised by Philip Melancthon to bring the eucharistic controversy on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to some better state of concord, (as it is related in the writings of our own countrymen,) he acted very improperly in rejecting that counsel, and in casting it back as a reproach on Philip, for this reason, as they state his

245

declaration, "lest by such an attempt to effect an amicable conclusion, the whole doctrine should be called in question." Besides, if reasons of this kind ought to be admitted, the Papists with the best right and the greatest propriety formerly endeavored to prevent the doctrine, which had for many preceding centuries been received in the Church, from being called in question or subjected again to examination.

But it has been suggested, in opposition to these reasons, "that if the doctrine of the Churches be submitted to an entirely new revision as often as a National Synod shall be held, the Church would never have any thing to which it might adhere or on which it might fully depend, and it will be possible to declare with great justice, concerning Churches thus circumstanced, that, they have an anniversary faith: are tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. (Ephesians 4:14.)

1. My first answer to these remarks, is, the Church always has Moses and the Prophets, the Evangelists and the Apostles, that is, the Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament; and these Scriptures fully and clearly comprehend whatever is necessary to salvation. Upon them the Church will lay the foundation of her faith, and will rest upon them as on an immovable basis, principally because, how highly soever we may esteem Confessions and Catechisms every decision on matters of faith and religion must obtain its final resolution in the Scriptures.

2. Some points in the Confession are certain and do not admit of a doubt: these will never be called in question by any one, except by heretics. Yet there are other parts of its contents which are of such a kind, as may with the most obvious utility become frequent subjects of conference and discussion between men of learning who fear God, for the purpose of reconciling them with those indubitable articles as nearly as is practicable. 3. Let it be attempted to make the Confession contain as few articles as possible; and let it propose them in a very brief form, conceived entirely in the expressions of Scripture. Let all the more ample explanations, proofs, digressions, redundancies, amplifications and exclamations, be omitted; and let nothing be delivered in it, except those truths which are necessary to salvation. The consequences of this brevity will be, that the Confession will be less liable to be filled with errors, not so obnoxious to obloquy, and less subject to examination. Let the practice of the ancient Church be

246

produced as an example, that comprehended, in as brief a form of words as was practicable, those articles which she judged necessary to be believed. Some individuals form a distinction between the Confession and the Catechism with respect to revision; and, since the Confession is the peculiar property of the Dutch Churches, and is on that account found in the hands of comparatively few people, they conclude, "that it is possible without any difficulty to revise it in a Synod and subject it to examination., But since the Catechism belongs not only to us, but likewise and principally to the Churches of the Palatinate, and is therefore to be found in the hands of all men, the same persons consider the examination of it "to be connected with great peril." But to this I reply, if we be desirous of constituting the Heidelberg Catechism a formulary of concord among the teachers of the Churches, and if they be obliged to subscribe it, it is still necessary to subject it to examination. For no Churches whatever ought to hold such a high station in our esteem, as to induce us to receive any writing of their composition without, at the same time, reserving to ourselves the liberty of submitting it to a nice scrutiny. And I account this to be the principal cause, why the Churches of different provinces, although at perfect agreement with each other on the fundamental points of Christian doctrine, have each composed for themselves their own Confessions. But if the Heidelberg Catechism be not allowed, to become a formulary of this kind, and if a suitable liberty be conceded in the explanation of it, it will not then be necessary either to revise it or subject it to examination; provided, I repeat, that the obligatory burden of subscription be removed, and a moderate liberty be conceded in its explanation.

This is all that I had to propose to your mightinesses, as to my most noble, potent, wise and prudent masters. While I own myself bound to render an account of all my actions, to the members of this most noble and potent assembly, (next after God,) I at the same time present to them my humble and grateful acknowledgments, because they have not disdained to grant me a courteous and patient audience. I embrace this opportunity solemnly to declare, that I am sincerely prepared to institute an amicable and fraternal conference with my reverend brethren, (at whatever time or place and on whatever occasion this honorable assembly may judge proper to appoint,) on all the topics which I have now mentioned, and on any

247

other concerning which it will be possible for a controversy to exist, or at some future period to arise. I also make this additional promise, that I will in every conference conduct myself with equanimity, moderation and docility, and will shew myself not less actuated by the desire of being taught, than by that of communicating to others some portion of instruction. And, since in the discussion of every topic on which it will be possible to institute a conference, two points will become objects of attention. First. "Whether that be true which is the subject of the controversy," and, secondly, "Whether it be necessary to be believed unto salvation," and since both these points ought to be discussed and proved out of the Scriptures, I here tender my sacred affirmation, and solemnly bind myself hereafter to observe it, that, however cogently I may have proved by the most solid [human] arguments any article to be agreeable to the word of God, I will not obtrude it for an article of belief on those of my brethren who may entertain a different opinion respecting it, unless I have plainly proved it from the word of God and have with equal clearness established its truth, and the necessity unto salvation that every Christian should entertain the same belief.

If my brethren will be prepared to act in this manner, as far as I know the complexion of my own opinions, there will not easily arise among us any schism or controversy. But, that I may on my part remove every cause of fear that can possibly invade this most noble assembly, occupied and engaged as its honorable members now are with important concerns on which in a great measure depends the safety of our native country and of the Reformed Churches, I subjoin this remark, "that to hinder my toleration of any matters in my brethren, they must be very numerous and very important. For I am not of the congregation of those who wish to have dominion over the faith of another man, but am only a minister to believers, with the design of promoting in them an increase of knowledge, truth, piety, peace and joy in Jesus Christ our Lord."

But if my brethren cannot perceive how they can possibly tolerate me, or allow me a place among them, in reference to myself I indulge in no hope that a schism will on this account be formed. May God avert any such catastrophe, since far too many schisms have already arisen and spread themselves abroad among Christians. It ought rather to be the earnest endeavor of every one, to diminish their number and destroy their

248

influence. Yet, even under such circumstances, [when I shall be rejected from the communion of my brethren,] in patience will I possess my soul; and though in that case I shall resign my office, yet I will continue to live for the benefit of our common Christianity as long as it may please God to lengthen out my days and prolong my existence. Never forgetting this sentiment, Sat Ecclesae, sat Patriae daturm, Enough has been done to satisfy the Church of Christ and my country!