CANONS

Ratified in the National Synod of the reformed Church, held at *Dordrecht*, in the Years, 1618 and 1619.

FIRST HEAD OF DOCTRINE.

Of DIVINE PREDESTINATION.

ARTICLE I.

AS all men have ſinned in Adam, lie under the curſe, and are obnoxious to eternal death, God would have done no injuſtice by leaving them all to periſh, and delivering them over to condemnation on account of ſin, according to the words of the apoſtle. Rom. iii, 19, "that every mouth may be ſtopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." And verſe 23. "for all have ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of God." And Rom. vi, 23. "for the wages of ſin is death."

ART. II.

But in this the love of God, was manifeſted, that he ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that whoſoever believeth on him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life. 1 John iv, 9. John iii, 16.

ART. III.

And that men may be brought to believe, God mercifully ſends the meſſengers of theſe moſt joyful tidings, to whom he will and at what time he pleaſeth, by whoſe miniſtry men are called to repentance and faith in Chriſt crucified. Rom. x. 14, 15. "How then ſhall they call on him, in whom they have not believed? And how ſhall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how ſhall they hear without a preacher? And how ſhall they preach, except they be ſent?"

ART. IV.

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

ART. V.

The cauſe or guilt of this unbelief as well as of all other ſins, is no wiſe in God, but in man himſelf: whereas faith in Jeſus Chriſt, and ſalvation through him is the free gift of God, as it is written, "By grace ye are ſaved through faith, and that not of yourſelves, it is the gift of God." Eph. ii, 8. "And unto you it is given in the behalf of Chriſt, not only to believe on him, &c," Phil. i, 29.

ART. VI.

That ſome receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God's eternal decree, "For known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Acts xv, 18. Eph, i, 11. According to which decree, he graciouſly ſoftens the hearts of the elect, however obſtinate, and inclines them to believe; while he leaves the non-elect in his juſt judgment to their own wickedneſs and obduracy. And herein is eſpecially diſplayed the profound, the merciful, and at the ſame time the righteous diſcrimination between men, equally involved in ruin; or that decree of election and reprobation, revealed in the word of God, which tho' men of perverſe, impure and unſtable minds, wreſt to their own deſtruction, yet to holy and pious ſouls affords unſpeakable conſolation.

ART. VII.

Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, he hath, out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of his own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault, from their primitive state of rectitude, into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom he from eternity appointed the Mediator and head of the elect, and the foundation of Salvation.

This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by him, and effectually to call and draw them to his communion by his word and spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of his Son, finally, to glorify them for the demonstration of his mercy, and for the praise of the riches of his glorious grace, as it is written, "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the

beloved." Eph. i, 4, 5, 6. And elſewhere, "Whom he did predeſtinate, them he alſo called, and whom he called, them he alſo juſtified, and whom he juſtified, them he alſo glorified." Rom. viii, 30.

ART. VIII.

There are not various decrees of election, but one and the ſame decree reſpecting all thoſe, who ſhall be ſaved, both under the old and new teſtament: ſince the ſcripture declares the good pleaſure, purpoſe and counſel of the divine will to be one, according to which he hath choſen us from eternity both to grace, and to glory, to ſalvation and the way of ſalvation, which he hath ordained that we ſhould walk therein.

ART. IX.

This election was not founded upon foreſeen faith, and the obedience of faith, holineſs, or any other good quality or diſpoſition in man, as the prerequiſite, cauſe or condition on which it depended; but men are choſen to faith and to the obedience of faith, holineſs &c. therefore election is the fountain of every ſaving good; from which proceed faith, holineſs, and the other gifts of ſalvation, and finally eternal life itſelf, as its fruits and effects, according to that of the apoſtle. "He hath choſen us (not becauſe we were)

but that we ſhould be holy, and without blame before him in love," Epheſ. i, 4.

ART. X.

The good pleaſure of God is the ſole cauſe of this gracious election, which doth not conſiſt herein, that God foreſeeing all poſſible qualities or human actions, elected certain of theſe, as a condition of ſalvation; but that he was pleaſed out of the common maſs of ſinners to adopt ſome certain perſons as a peculiar people to himſelf, as it is written. "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, &c." "It was ſaid (namely to Rebecca) the elder ſhall ſerve the younger; as it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Eſau have I hated." Rom. ix. 11, 12, 13. "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed," Acts xiii. 48.

ART. XI.

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

ART. XII.

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

ART. XIII.

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

ART. XIV.

As the doctrine of divine election by the moſt wiſe counſel of God, was declared by the prophets, by Chriſt himſelf and by the apoſtles, and is clearly revealed in the ſcriptures both of the old and new teſtament; ſo it is ſtill to be publiſhed in due time and place in the church of God, for which it was peculiarly deſigned, provided it be done with reverence, in the ſpirit of diſcretion and piety, for the glory of God's moſt holy name, and for enlivening and comforting his people, without vainly attempting to inveſtigate the ſecret ways of the moſt high.

ART. XV.

What peculiarly tends to illuſtrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election, is the expreſs teſtimony of ſacred ſcripture, that not all, but ſome only are elected, while others are paſſed by in the eternal decree; whom God, out of his ſovereign, moſt juſt, irreprehenſible and unchangeable good pleaſure, hath decreed to leave in the common miſery into which they have wilfully plunged themſelves, and not to beſtow upon them ſaving faith and the grace of converſion; but permitting them in his juſt judgment to follow their own ways, at laſt for the declaration of his juſtice, to condemn and puniſh them for ever, not only on account of their unbelief,

but alſo for all their other ſins. And this is the decree of reprobation which by no means makes God the author of ſin, (the very thought of which is blaſphemy) but declares him to be an awful, irreprehenſible, and righteous judge and avenger.

ART. XVI.

Thoſe who do not yet experience a lively faith in Chriſt, an aſſured confidence of ſoul, peace of conſcience, an earneſt endeavour after filial obedience, and glorying in God thro' Chriſt efficaciouſly wrought in them, and do nevertheleſs perſiſt in the uſe of the means which God hath appointed for working theſe graces in us, ought not to be alarmed at the mention of reprobation, nor to rank themſelves among the reprobate, but diligently to perſevere in the uſe of means, and with ardent deſires devoutly and humbly to wait for a ſeaſon of richer grace. Much leſs cauſe have they to be terrified by the doctrine of reprobation, who, tho' they ſeriouſly deſire to be turned to God, to pleaſe him only, and to be delivered from the body of death, cannot yet reach that meaſure of holineſs and faith, to which they aſpire; ſince a merciful God has promiſed that he will not quench the ſmoaking flax, nor break the bruiſed reed. But this doctrine is juſtly terrible to thoſe, who regardleſs of God, and of the Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, have wholly given themſelves up to the cares of the world,

and the pleaſures of the fleſh, ſo long as they are not ſeriouſly converted to God.

ART. XVII.

Since we are to judge of the will of God, from his word, which teſtifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they together with the parents are comprehended, godly parents have no reaſon to doubt of the election, and ſalvation of their children whom it pleaſeth God to call out of this life in their infancy.

ART. XVIII.

To thoſe who murmur at the free grace of election, and juſt ſeverity of reprobation, we anſwer with the apoſtle. "Nay, but, O! man, who art thou that replieſt againſt God?" Rom. ix. 20. and quote the language of our Saviour, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own," Matt. xx. 15. And therefore with holy adoration of theſe myſteries, we exclaim in the words of the apoſtle. "O the depth of the riches both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counſellor? or who hath firſt given to him, and it

ſhall be recompenſed unto him again? For of him, and thro' him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

SECOND HEAD OF DOCTRINE.

Of the Death of Chriſt, and the redemption of Men thereby.

ARTICLE I.

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

ART. II.

Since therefore we are unable to make that ſatisfaction in our own perſons, or to deliver ourſelves from the wrath of God, he hath been pleaſed of his

infinite mercy to give his only begotten ſon, for our ſurety, who was made ſin, and became a curſe for us, and in our ſtead, that he might make ſatisfaction to divine juſtice on our behalf.

ART. III.

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

ART. IV.

This death derives its infinite value and dignity from theſe conſiderations; becauſe the perſon who ſubmitted to it was not only really man, and perfectly holy, but alſo the only begotten Son of God, of the ſame eternal and infinite eſſence with the Father, and holy ſpirit, which qualifications were neceſſary to conſtitute him a Saviour for us: and becauſe it was attended with a ſenſe of the wrath and curſe of God due to us for ſin.

ART. V.

Moreover the promiſe of the goſpel is, that whoſoever believeth in Chriſt crucified, ſhould not periſh but have everlaſting life. This promiſe toge-

ther with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and publiſhed to all nations, and to all perſons promiſcuouſly and without diſtinction, to whom God out of his good pleaſure ſends the goſpel.

ART. VI.

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

ART. VII.

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

ART. VIII.

For this was the ſovereign counſel, and moſt gracious will and purpoſe of God the Father, that the quickening and ſaving efficacy of the moſt precious death of his ſon ſhould extend to all the elect, for beſtowing upon them alone the gift of juſtifying faith, thereby to bring them infallibly to ſalvation:

that is, it was the will of God, that Chriſt by the blood of the croſs, whereby he confirmed the new covenant, ſhould effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation and language, all thoſe, and thoſe only, who were from eternity choſen to ſalvation, and given to him, by the Father; that he ſhould confer upon them faith, which together with all the other ſaving gifts of the holy ſpirit, he purchaſed for them by his death; ſhould purge them from all ſin, both original and actual, whether committed before or after believing; and having faithfully preſerved them even to the end, ſhould at laſt bring them free from every ſpot and blemiſh to the enjoyment of glory in his own preſence for ever.

ART. IX.

This purpoſe proceeding from everlaſting love towards the elect has from the beginning of the world to this day been powerfully accompliſhed, and will hence forward ſtill continue to be accompliſhed, notwithſtanding all the ineffectual oppoſition of the gates of hell: ſo that the elect in due time may be gathered together into one, and that there never may be wanting a Church compoſed of believers, the foundation of which is laid in the blood of Chriſt, which may ſtedfaſtly love, and faithfully ſerve him as their Saviour, who as a bride-groom for his bride, laid down his life for them upon the croſs, and

which may celebrate his praiſes here and thro' all eternity.

THE THIRD AND FOURTH HEADS OF DOCTRINE.

Of the Corruption of Man, his Converſion to God, and the Manner thereof.

ARTICLE I.

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

ART. II.

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

ART. III.

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

ART. IV.

There remain however in man ſince the fall, the glimmerings, of natural light, whereby he retains ſome knowledge of God, of natural things, and of the difference between good and evil, and diſcovers ſome regard for virtue, good order in ſociety and for maintaining an orderly external deportment. But ſo far is this light of nature from being ſufficient to bring him to a ſaving knowledge of God, and to

true converſion, that he is incapable of uſing it aright even in things natural and civil. Nay farther, this light ſuch as it is, man in various ways renders wholly polluted, and holds it in unrighteouſneſs; by doing which he becomes inexcuſable before God.

ART. V.

In the ſame light are we to conſider the law of the decalogue, delivered by God to his peculiar people the Jews, by the hands of Moſes. For tho' it diſcovers the greatneſs of ſin, and more and more convinces man thereof, yet as it neither points out a remedy, nor imparts ſtrength to extricate him from miſery, and thus being weak thro' the fleſh, leaves the tranſgreſſor under the curſe, man cannot by this law obtain ſaving grace.

ART. VI.

What therefore neither the light of nature, nor the law would do, that God performs by the operation of his holy ſpirit thro' the word or miniſtry of reconciliation, which is the glad tidings concerning the Meſſiah, by means whereof, it hath pleaſed God to ſave ſuch as believe, as well under the old, as under the new teſtament.

ART. VII.

This myſtery of his will God diſcovered to but a ſmall number under the old teſtament; under the new, he reveals it to many, without any diſtinction of people. The cauſe of this diſpenſation is not to be aſcribed to the ſuperior worth of one nation above another, nor to their making a better uſe of the light of nature, but reſults wholly from the ſovereign good pleaſure, and unmerited love of God. Hence they, to whom ſo great and ſo gracious a bleſſing is communicated, above their deſert, or rather notwithſtanding their demerits, are bound to acknowledge it with humble and grateful hearts, and with the apoſtle to adore, not curiouſly to pry into the ſeverity and juſtice of God's judgments diſplayed in others, to whom this grace is not given.

ART. VIII.

As many as are called by the goſpel, are unfeignedly called. For God hath moſt earneſtly and truly declared in his word, what will be acceptable to him; namely that all who are called ſhould comply, with the invitation. He moreover ſeriouſly promiſes eternal life and reſt to as many as ſhall come to him, and believe on him.

ART. IX.

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

ART. X.

But that others who are called by the goſpel, obey the call, and are converted, is not to be aſcribed to the proper exerciſe of free will, whereby one diſtinguiſhes himſelf above others, equally furniſhed with grace ſufficient for faith and converſion, as the proud hereſy of Pelagius maintains; but it muſt be wholly to God, who as he hath choſen his own from eternity in Chriſt, ſo he confers upon them faith and

repentance, reſcues them from the power of darkneſs, and tranſlates them into the kingdom of his own Son. that they may ſhew forth the praiſes of him, who hath called them out of darkneſs into this marvellous light; and may glory not in themſelves, but in the Lord, according to the teſtimony of the Apoſtles in various places.

ART. XI.

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

ART. XII.

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

ART. XIII.

The manner of this operation cannot be fully comprehended by believers in this life. Notwith-

ſtanding which they reſt ſatisfied with knowing and experiencing that by this grace of God, they are enabled to believe with the heart, and love their Saviour.

ART. XIV.

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

ART. XV.

God is under no obligation to confer this grace upon any; for how can he be indebted to man, who had no previous gift to beſtow, as a foundation for ſuch recompenſe? Nay, who has nothing of his own but ſin and falſhood? He therefore who becomes the ſubject of this grace, owes eternal gratitude to God, and gives him thanks for ever. Whoever is not made partaker thereof, is either altogether re-

gardleſs of theſe ſpiritual gifts, and ſatisfied with his own condition; or, is in no apprehenſion of danger, and vainly boaſts the poſſeſſion of that which he has not. With reſpect to thoſe, who make an external profeſſion of faith, and live regular lives, we are bound after the example of the Apoſtle to judge and ſpeak of them in the moſt favourable manner. For the ſecret receſſes of the heart, are unknown to us. And as to others, who have not yet been called, it is our duty to pray for them to God, who calls the things that are not, as if they were. But we are in no wiſe to conduct ourſelves towards them with haughtineſs, as if we had made ourſelves to differ.

ART. XVI.

But as man by the fall did not ceaſe to be a creature, endowed with underſtanding and will, nor did ſin which pervaded the whole race of mankind, deprive him of the human nature, but brought upon him depravity, and ſpiritual death; ſo alſo this grace of regeneration, does not heat men as ſenſeleſs ſtocks and blocks, nor takes away their will and its properties, neither does violence thereto; but ſpiritually quickens, heals, corrects, and at the ſame time ſweetly and powerfully bends it: that where carnal rebellion and reſiſtance formerly prevailed, a ready and ſincere ſpiritual obedience begins to reign; in

which the true and ſpiritual reſtoration and freedom of our will conſiſt. Wherefore unleſs the admirable author of every good work, wrought in us, man could have no hope of recovering from his fall by his own free will, by the abuſe of which in a ſtate of innocence he plunged himſelf into ruin.

ART. XVII.

As the almighty operation of God, whereby he prolongs and ſupports this our natural life, does not exclude, but requires the uſe of means, by which God of his infinite mercy and goodneſs hath choſen to exert his influence: ſo alſo the beforementioned ſupernatural operation of God, by which we are regenerated, in no wiſe excludes, or ſubverts, the uſe of the goſpel, which the moſt wiſe God has ordained to be the ſeed of regeneration, and food of the ſoul. Wherefore as the apoſtles and teachers who ſucceeded them piouſly inſtructed the people concerning this grace of God, to his glory, and the abaſement of all pride, and in the mean time however neglected not to keep them by the ſacred precepts of the goſpel in the exerciſe of the word, ſacraments and diſcipline: ſo even to this day, be it far from either inſtructors or inſtructed to preſume to tempt God in the Church, by ſeparating what he of his good pleaſure hath moſt intimately joined together. For grace is conferred by means of admonitions,

and the more readily we perform our duty, the more eminent uſually is this bleſſing of God working in us, and the more directly is his work advanced, to whom alone all the glory both of means, and their ſaving fruit and efficacy is for ever due. Amen.

THE FIFTH HEAD OF DOCTRINE.

Of the Perſeverance of the Saints.

ARTICLE I.

WHOM God calls, according to his purpoſe, to the communion of his Son our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and regenerates by the holy ſpirit, he delivers alſo from the dominion and ſlavery of ſin in this life, though not altogether from the body of ſin, and from the infirmities of the fleſh, ſo long as they continue in this world.

ART. II.

Hence ſpring daily ſins of infirmity, and hence pots adhere to the beſt works of the ſaints; which

furniſh them with conſtant matter for humiliation before God, and flying for refuge to Chriſt crucified, for mortifying the fleſh more and more by the ſpirit of prayer, and by holy exerciſes of piety, and for preſſing forward to the goal of perfection, till being at length delivered from this body of death, they are brought to reign with the Lamb of God in Heaven.

ART. III.

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

ART. IV.

Although the weakneſs of the fleſh cannot prevail againſt the power of God, who confirms and preſerves true believers in a ſtate of grace, yet converts are not always ſo influenced and actuated by the ſpirit of God, as not in ſome particular inſtances, ſinfully to deviate from the guidance of divine grace, ſo as to be ſeduced by and comply with the luſts of the fleſh; they muſt therefore be conſtant in watching and prayer, that they be not led into temptation.

When these are neglected, they are not only liable to be drawn into great and heinous sins, by Satan, the world and the flesh, but sometimes by the righteous permission of God actually fall into these evils. This, the lamentable fall of David, Peter, and other saints, described in holy scripture, demonstrates.

ART. V.

By such enormous sins, however, they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the holy spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their conscience, and sometimes lose the sense of God's favour, for a time, until on their returning into the right way by serious repentance, the sight of God's fatherly countenance again shines upon them.

ART. VI.

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

ART VII.

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

ART. VIII.

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

ART. IX.

Of this preſervation of the elect to ſalvation, and of their perſeverance in the faith, true believers for themſelves may and do obtain aſſurance according to the meaſure of their faith, whereby they arrive at the certain perſuaſion, that they ever will continue true and living members of the church; and that they experience forgiveneſs of ſins, and will at laſt inherit eternal life.

ART. X.

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

ART. XI.

The ſcripture moreover teſtifies that believers in this life have to ſtruggle with various carnal doubts, and that under grievous temptations they are not always ſenſible of this full aſſurance of faith, and certainty of perſevering. But God, who is the father of all conſolation, does not ſuffer them to be tempted above that they are able, but will with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that they may be able to bear it, 1 Cor. x. 13. and by the holy ſpirit again inſpires them with the comfortable aſſurance of perſevering.

ART. XII.

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

ART. XIII.

Neither does renewed confidence of perſevering produce licenciouſneſs, or a diſregard to piety in thoſe who are recovered from backſliding; but it renders them much more careful and ſolicitous to continue in the ways of the Lord, which he hath ordained, that they who walk therein may maintain an aſſurance of perſevering, leſt by abuſing his fatherly kindneſs, God ſhould turn away his gracious countenance from them, to behold which is to the godly dearer than life; the withdrawing thereof is more bitter than death; and they in conſequence hereof ſhould fall into more grevious torments of conſcience.

ART. XIV.

And as it hath pleaſed God by the preaching of the goſpel, to begin this work of grace in us, ſo he preſerves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of his word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings and promiſes thereof, as well as by the uſe of the ſacraments.

ART. XV.

The carnal mind is unable to comprehend this doctrine of the perſeverance of the ſaints, and the

certainty thereof, which God hath moſt abundantly reveaied in his word, for the glory of his name, and the conſolation of pious ſouls, and which he impreſſes upon the hearts of the faithful; ſatan abhorsit, the world redicules it, the ignorant and hypocrite abuſe, and heretics oppoſe it; but the ſpouſe of Chriſt hath always moſt tenderly loved and conſtantly defended it, as an ineſtimable treaſure: and God, againſt whom neither counſel nor ſtrength can prevail, will diſpoſe her to continue this conduct to the end. Now to this one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be honour and glory for ever. Amen.

CONCLUSION.

AND this is the perſpicuous, ſimple, and ingenious declaration of the orthodox doctrine reſpecting the five articles which have been controverted in the Belgic churches; and the rejection of the errors with which they have for ſome time been troubled. This doctrine, the ſynod judges to be drawn from the word of God, and to be agreeable to the confeſſions of the Reformed churches. Whence it clearly appears, that ſome, whom ſuch conduct by no means became, have violated all

truth, equity, and charity, in wiſhing to perſuade the public,

"That the doctrine of the Reformed churches "concerning predeſtination, and the points annexed "to it, by its own genius and neceſſary tendency, "leads off the minds of men from all piety and reli- "gion—that it is an opiate adminiſtered by the fleſh "and the devil, and the ſtrong hold of ſatan, where "he lies in wait for all; and from which he "wounds multitudes, and mortally ſtrikes through "many with the darts both of deſpair, and ſecurity— "that it makes God the author of ſin, unjuſt, "tyrannical, hypocritical—that it is nothing more "than interpolated Stoiciſm, Manicheiſm, Libertine- "iſm, Turciſm—that it renders men carnally ſecure; "ſince they are perſuaded by it that nothing can "hinder the ſalvation of the elect, let them live "as they pleaſe; and therefore that they may "ſafely perpetrate every ſpecies of the moſt atro- "cious crimes; and that if the reprobate ſhould "even perform truly all the works of the ſaints, "their obedience would not in the leaſt contribute "to their ſalvation—that the ſame doctrine teaches, "that God, by a mere arbitrary act of his will, "without the leaſt reſpect or view to any ſin, has "predeſtinated the greateſt part of the world to "eternal damnation; and, has created them for "this very purpoſe—that in the ſame manner in "which election is the fountain and cauſe of faith

"and good works, reprobation is the cauſe of un-
"belief and impiety—that many children of the faith-
"ful, are torn, guiltleſs, from their mother's breaſts,
"and tyrannically plunged into hell; ſo that, neither
"baptiſm, nor the prayers of the church at their
"baptiſm, can at all profit them."—And many other things of the ſame kind, which the Reformed churches not only do not acknowledge, but even deteſt with their whole ſoul. Wherefore, this Synod of Dort, in the name of the Lord, conjures, as many as piouſly call upon the name of our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, to judge of the faith of the Reformed churches, not from the calumnies which, on every ſide, are heaped upon it; nor from the private expreſſions of a few among ancient and modern teachers, often diſhoneſtly quoted, or corrupted, and wreſted to a meaning quite foreign to their intention; but from the public confeſſions of the churches themſelves, and from this declaration of the orthodox doctrine, confirmed by the unanimous conſent of all and each of the members of the whole ſynod. Moreover, the ſynod warns calumniators themſelves, to conſider the terrible judgment of God which awaits them, for bearing falſe witneſs againſt the confeſſions of ſo many churches; for diſtreſſing the conſciences of the weak; and for labouring to render ſuſpected the ſociety of the truly faithful. Finally, this ſynod exhorts all their brethren in the goſpel of Chriſt, to conduct them-

ſelves piouſly and religiouſly in handling this doctrine, both in the univerſities and churches; to direct it, as well in diſcourſe, as in writing, to the glory of the divine name, to holineſs of life, and to the conſolation of afflicted ſouls; to regulate, by the ſcripture according to the analogy of faith, not only their ſentiments, but alſo their language; and, to abſtain from all thoſe phraſes which exceed the limits neceſſary to be obſerved in aſcertaining the genuine ſenſe of the holy ſcriptures; and may furniſh inſolent ſophiſts with a juſt pretext for violently aſſailing, or even vilifying, the doctrine of the Reformed churches.

May Jeſus Chriſt the Son of God, who, ſeated at the Father's right hand, gives gifts to men, ſanctify us in the truth; bring to the truth thoſe who err; ſhut the mouths of the calumniators of ſound doctrine; and endue the faithful miniſters of his word, with the ſpirit of wiſdom and diſcretion, that all their diſcourſes may tend to the glory of God, and the edification of thoſe who hear them. Amen.

That this is our faith and deciſion, we certify by ſubſcribing our names.

Here follow the names, not only of the PRESIDENT, assistant PRESIDENT, and SECRETARIES, of the Synod, and of the PROFESSORS of Theology in the Dutch Churches; but of all the MEMBERS who were deputed to the Synod, as the Representatives of their Respective Churches; that is, of the delegates from,

GREAT BRITAN,
The ELECTORAL PALATINATE,
HESSIA,
SWITZERLAND,
WETTERAW,
The REPUBLIC and CHURCH of GENEVA,
The REPUBLIC and CHURCH of BREMEN,
The REPUBLIC and CHURCH of EMDEN,
The DUCHY of GELDERLAND and of ZUTPHEN,
SOUTH HOLLAND,
NORTH HOLLAND,
ZEALAND,
The PROVINCE of UTRECHT,
FRIESLAND,
TRANSILVANIA,
The STATE of GRONINGEN and OMLAND,
DRENT,
The FRENCH CHURCHES.