

WRITINGS OF JACOBUS ARMINIUS

by Jacobus Arminius

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by Jacobus Arminius, compiled for study and devotional reading.

10 Chapters

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S. Assurance of Salvation

The Assurance of Salvation By Jacobus Arminius 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 saviour 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.

S. Divinity of the Son of God

The Divinity of the Son of God By Jacobus Arminius

With regard to the Divinity of the Son of God and the word *autotheos* 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 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 favour 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 Trelcatius of blessed memory acquainted with it as it had actually 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. Trelcatius 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 Trelcatius 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 Trelcatius. 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 endeavoured to vindicate me from this calumny; while great exertion was employed to frame excuses for Trelcatius, 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 favour and the fervour of zeal can produce! The milder and qualified interpretation put upon the words of Trelcatius, 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 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 juxta-position:

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 labour is devoted to the purpose of excusing these expressions, by saying, "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.

S. Free-Will of Man

The Free-Will of Man By Jacobus Arminius

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 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.

S. Grace of God

The Grace of God By Jacobus Arminius

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, &c.; 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 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.

S. Justification of Man Before God

The Justification of Man Before God By Jacobus Arminius

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.

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 4:22) 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 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.

S. Nine Questions

Nine Questions By Jacobus Arminius

Exhibited, by the Deputies of the Synod, to Their Lordships the Curators of the University of Leyden, for the Purpose of Obtaining an Answer to each of them from the Professors of Divinity; and the Replies which James Arminius Gave to them, in November, 1605. With Other Nine Opposite Questions THE NINE QUESTIONS...AND NINE OPPOSITE QUESTIONS I. Which is first, Election, or Faith Truly Foreseen, so that God elected his people according to faith foreseen?

I. Is the decree "for bestowing Faith on any one," previous to that by which is appointed "the Necessity of Faith to salvation?"

ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION The equivocation in the word "Election," makes it impossible to answer this question in any other manner, than by distinction. If therefore "Election" denotes "the decree which is according to election concerning the justification and salvation of believers." I say Election is prior to Faith, as being that by which Faith is appointed as the means of obtaining salvation. But if it signifies "the decree by which God determines to bestow salvation on some one," then Faith foreseen is prior to Election. For as believers alone are saved, so only believers are predestinated to salvation. But the Scriptures know no Election, by which God precisely and absolutely has determined to save anyone without having first considered him as a believer. For such an Election would be at variance with the decree by which he hath determined to save none but believers.

QUESTION AND..... QUESTION REVERSED

II. If it be said, "that God, by his eternal decree, has determined and governs all things and every thing, even the depraved wills of men, to appointed good ends," does it follow from this, that God is the author of sin?

II. Is "to determine or direct all things and every thing, even the depraved wills of men, to appointed good ends," the same thing as "to determine that man be made corrupt, by which a way may be opened for executing God's absolute decree concerning damning some men through wrath, and saving others through mercy?"

ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION

Sin is the transgression of the law; therefore, God will be the author of sin, if He cause any man to transgress the law. This is done by denying or taking away what is necessary for fulfilling the law, or by impelling men to sin. But if this "determination" be that of a will which is already depraved, since it does not signify the denying or the removing of grace nor a corrupt impelling to sin, it follows, that the consequence of this cannot be that God is the author of sin. But if this "determination" denote the decree of God by which He resolved that the will should become depraved, and that man should commit sin, then it follows from this that God is the author of sin.

QUESTION AND.....QUESTION REVERSED

III. Does original sin, of itself, render man obnoxious to eternal death, even without the addition of any actual sin? Or is the guilt of original sin taken away from all and every one by the benefits of Christ the Mediator?

III. If some men are condemned solely on account of the sin committed by Adam, and others on account of their rejection of the Gospel, are there not two peremptory decrees concerning the damnation of men, and two judgments, one Legal, the other Evangelical?

ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION

Those things which in this question are placed in opposition to each other, easily agree together. For original sin can render man obnoxious to eternal death, and its guilt can be taken away from all men by Christ. Indeed, in order that guilt may be removed, it is necessary that men be previously rendered guilty. But to reply to each part separately: It is perversely said, that "original sin renders a man obnoxious to death," since that sin is the punishment of Adam's actual sin, which punishment is preceded by guilt, that is, an obligation to the punishment denounced by the law. With regard to the second member of the question, it is very easily answered by the distinction of the soliciting, obtaining, and the application of the benefits of Christ. For as a participation of Christ's benefits consists in faith alone, it follows that, if among these benefits "deliverance from this guilt" be one, believers only are delivered from it, since they are those upon whom the wrath of God does not abide.

QUESTION AND.....QUESTION REVERSED

IV. Are the works of the unregenerate, which proceed from the powers of nature, so pleasing to God, as to induce Him on account of them to confer supernatural and saving grace on those who perform them?

IV. Are a serious consciousness of sin, and an initial fear so pleasing to God, that by them He is induced to forgive sins, and to create a filial fear?

ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION

Christ says, "To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." Not, indeed, because such is the worthiness and the excellence of the use of any blessing conferred by God, either according to nature or to grace, that God should be moved by its merits to confer greater benefits; but, because such are the benignity and liberality of God, that, though these works are unworthy, yet He rewards them with a larger blessing. Therefore, as the word "pleasing" admits of two meanings, we can reply to the question proposed in two ways - - either affirmatively, if that word be viewed as signifying "to please," "to find favour in his eyes," and "to obtain complacency for itself;" or negatively if "placeo" be received for that which it also signifies, "to please by its own excellence." Yet it might be said, that good works are rewarded, in a moral view, not so much through the powers of nature, as by some operation in them of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION AND.....QUESTION REVERSED

V. Can God now, in his own right, require faith from fallen man in Christ, which he cannot have of himself? But does God bestow on all and every one, to whom the Gospel is preached, sufficient grace by which they may believe, if they will?

V. Can God require that man to believe in Jesus Christ, for whom He has determined by an absolute decree that Christ should not die, and to whom by the same decree He has determined to refuse the grace necessary for believing?

ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION The parts of this question are not opposed to each other; on the contrary, they are at the most perfect agreement. So that the latter clause may be considered the rendering of a reason, why God may require from fallen man faith in Christ, which he cannot have of himself. For God may require this, since he has determined to bestow on man sufficient grace by which he may believe. Perhaps, therefore, the question may be thus corrected: "Can God, now, in his own right, demand from fallen man faith in Christ, which he cannot have of himself, though God neither bestows on him, nor is ready to bestow, sufficient grace by which he may believe?" This question will be answered by a direct negative. God cannot by any right demand from fallen man faith in Christ, which he cannot have of himself, except God has either bestowed, or is ready to bestow, sufficient grace by which he may believe if he will. Nor do I perceive what is false in that reply, or to what heresy it has affinity. It has no alliance with the Pelagian heresy: for Pelagius maintained, that with the exception of the preaching of the Gospel, no internal grace is required to produce faith in the minds of men. But what is of more consequence, this reply is not opposed to St. Augustine's doctrine of Predestination; "yet this doctrine of his, we do not account it necessary to establish," as Innocent, the Roman Pontiff, has observed.

QUESTION AND.....QUESTION REVERSED

VI. Is justifying faith the effect and the mere gift of God alone, who calls, illuminates, and reforms the will? and is it peculiar to the elect alone from all eternity?

VI. Can that be called a mere gift which, though offered by the pure liberality of Him who makes the offer, is still capable of being rejected by him to whom it is offered? But does a voluntary acceptance render it unworthy of the name of a gift? It may likewise be asked, "Is faith bestowed on these who are to be saved? Or is salvation bestowed on those who have faith?" Or can both these questions be answered affirmatively in a different respect? If they can, how is it then that there is not in those decrees a circle, in which nothing is first and nothing last?

ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION A double question requires a double answer. (1.) To the first I reply, Faith is the effect of God illuminating the mind and sealing the heart, and it is his mere gift. (2.) To the second I answer, by making a distinction in the word Election. If it be understood as signifying Election to salvation; since this, according to the scriptures, is the election of believers, it cannot be said, "Faith is bestowed on the elect, or on those who are to be saved," but that "believers are elected and saved." But if it be received for the decree by which God determines variously to administer the means necessary to salvation; in this sense I say that Faith is the gift of God, which is conferred on those only whom He hath chosen to this, that they may hear the word of God, and be made partakers of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTION AND.....QUESTION REVERSED

VII. May every one who is a true believer be assured in this life of his individual salvation; and is it his duty to have this assurance?

VII. Does justifying faith precede, in the order of nature, remission of sins, or does it not? And can any man be bound to any other faith than that which justifies?

ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION

Since God promises eternal life to all who believe in Christ, it is impossible for him who believes, and who knows that he believes, to doubt of his own salvation, unless he doubts of this willingness of God [to perform his promise.] But God does not require him to be better assured of his individual salvation as a duty which must be performed to himself or to Christ; but it is a consequence of that promise, by which God engages to bestow eternal life on him who believes.

QUESTION AND.....QUESTION REVERSED VIII. May true believers and elect persons entirely lose faith for a season?

VIII. May any man who has faith and retains it, arrive at such a moment, as, if he were then to die, he would be damned?

ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION

Since Election to salvation comprehends within its limits not only Faith, but likewise perseverance in Faith; and since St. Augustine says, "God has chosen to salvation those who he sees will afterwards believe by the aid of his preventing or preceding grace, and who will persevere by the aid of his subsequent or following grace; "believers and the elect are not correctly taken for the same persons. Omitting, therefore, all notice of the word "Election," I reply, believers are sometimes so circumstanced, as not to produce, for a season, any effect of true faith, not even the actual apprehension of grace and the promises of God, nor confidence or trust in God and Christ; yet this is the very thing which is necessary to obtain salvation. But the apostle says, concerning faith, in reference to its being a quality and a capability of believing, "some, having cast away a good conscience concerning faith, have made shipwreck."

QUESTION AND.....QUESTION REVERSED IX. Can believers under the grace of the New Covenant, perfectly observe the law of God in this life?

IX. May God, or may He not, require of those who are partakers of the New Covenant, that the flesh do not lust against the Spirit, as a duty corresponding with the grace of that covenant?

Twenty-Five Public Disputations: Dedication The performance of the law is to be estimated according to the mind of Him who requires it to be observed. The answer will be two-fold, since He either wills it to be rigidly observed in the highest degree of perfection, or only according to epieikeian clemency; that is, if he require this according to clemency, and if the strength or powers which he confers be proportionate to the demand. (1.) Man cannot perfectly perform such a law of God, if it be considered as to be performed according to rigor. (2.) But if he require it according to clemency, and if the powers conferred be proportionate, (which must be acknowledged, since He requires it according to the evangelical covenant,) the answer is, it can be perfectly observed. But the question about capability is not of such great importance, "provided a man confesses that it is possible to be done by the grace of Christ," as St. Augustine justly observes.

REMARKS ON THE PRECEDING QUESTIONS, AND ON THOSE OPPOSED TO THEM In reply to some queries which Uytenbogard had addressed to Arminius, concerning these nine questions and their opposites, the latter gave his friend the following explanation, in a letter dated the 31st of January, 160vi,

"I. In answer to the First Question, this is the order of the decrees. (1.) It is my will to save believers. (2.) On this man I will bestow faith and preserve him in it. (3.) I will save this man. For thus does the first of these decrees prescribe, which must necessarily be placed foremost; because, without this, faith is not necessary to salvation, and therefore no necessity exists to administer the means for faith. But to this is directly opposed the opinion which asserts, that faith is bestowed on him on whom God had previously willed to bestow salvation. For, in this case, it would be his will to save one who did not believe. All that has been said about the difference of the decree and its execution, is futile; as if, in fact, God willed salvation to any one prior to faith, and yet not to bestow salvation on any others than believers. For, beside the consistent agreement of these, [the decree and its execution,] it is certain that God cannot will to bestow that which, on account of his previous decree, He cannot bestow. As therefore faith is, in a general manner, placed before salvation by the first decree; so it must, specially and particularly, be placed before the salvation of this and that man, even in the special decree which has the subsequent execution.

"III. To the Third Question I shall in preference oppose the following: Has God determined peremptorily to act with some men according to the strict rigor of the law, as He did with the fallen angels, and to act with others according to the grace of the Gospel? If they deny this, I have what I wish. But if they affirm it, such a sentiment must be overwhelmed with absurdities; because in such a case God would have acted towards many men with greater severity, than towards the fallen angels, who, as being creatures purely spiritual, each sinned of himself, through his own wickedness without persuasion from any one.

"IV. They will not be able to deny my Fourth opposite Question. For remission is promised to those who confess their sins; and the fear is called initial in reference to the filial fear which follows. If they acknowledge it, but say, 'Yet God is not induced by them;' I will then command them to erase the same word out of their interrogatory, and in a better form to enunciate their own opinion.

"V. They will not consider it their duty entirely to deny my Fifth opposing Question. If they affirm it, they will declare a falsehood, and will incur the ill opinion of all prudent persons, even of those who are weak. Let them therefore search out what they may place as an intermediate postulate between theirs and mine, and I will then show that it co-incides either with their postulate or with mine.

"VI. I have placed two questions in opposition to the Sixth, because their question is also a double one. On the First of them you require no observation. About the Second I have said, for the sake of explanation, that it is a circle, in which nothing is first and nothing last,' but in every part of it a beginning and an end are found--which cannot, without absurdity, have place in the decrees of God. I ask, has God determined to bestow salvation on those who believe, or to bestow faith on those who are to be saved? If both of these be asserted, I ask, which of them is the first, and which the last? They will reply, neither; and it is then a circle. If they affirm the latter, that God has determined to bestow faith on those who are to be saved; I will prove, that He has determined to bestow salvation on those who believe, and shall then have formed a circle, notwithstanding their

unwillingness. If they adduce the different respect, I will endeavour to confute it; which cannot be a work of much difficulty in so very plain a matter.

"VII. In the Seventh opposite Question, I had regard to the expression, is it his duty? for about its possibility there is no contention. But justifying faith is not that by which I believe that my sins are remitted; for thus the same thing will be the object and the effect of justifying faith. By this [justifying faith] I obtain remission of sins, therefore it precedes the other object; [the remission of sins;] and no one can believe that his sins are remitted, unless he knows that he believes by a justifying faith. For this reason, also, no one can believe that his future sins will likewise be remitted, unless he knows that he will believe to the end. For sins are forgiven to him who believes, and only after they have been committed; wherefore the promise of forgiveness, which is that of the New Testament, must be considered as depending on a condition stipulated by God, that is FAITH, without which there is no covenant.

"VIII. With respect to the Eighth Question, let a distinction be made between Faith as it is a quality or habit, and between the same as it is an art. Actual believing justifies, or the act of believing is imputed for righteousness. Because God requires actual faith; for our capability to perform which, He infuses that which is habitual. Therefore, as actual faith does not consist with moral sin, he who falls into mortal sin may be damned. But it is possible for a believer to fall into mortal sin, of which David is seen as an instance Therefore, he may fall at such a moment as, if he were then to die, he would be damned. If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.' Therefore, if it does condemn us, we have no confidence, we cannot have any; because God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.' What is said about the impossibility of this event, because, God has determined not to take such persons out of the world at that moment, conduces nothing in favour of their hypothesis. For this is opposed to final destruction, not to temporary, and to their total destruction for a season, which is the subject of their Eighth Question.

"IX. If it be replied to my Ninth opposing Question, that, in the covenant of grace, God requires a duty which is impossible to man; they will be forced to confess, that, in addition to this covenant, another is necessary, according to which God pardons a duty not performed according to that covenant of grace; as it was necessary that there should be another covenant, by which God might pardon a duty not performed according to the legal covenant. And thus shall we proceed on ad infinitum. At length we must arrive at the point from which we can say, God save sinners, of his infinite mercy, which is limited by no conditions prescribed by his equity. This seems to be an expression which will be entirely conformable to the whole doctrine of those who urge absolute predestination, For, since wrath and mercy are opposed to each other, as wrath is infinite, may not mercy too, be infinite? According to their doctrine, whatever they oppose to the contrary, wrath makes men sinners, that it may have those whom it can punish. But they expressly say, mercy makes men believers by an omnipotent force, and preserves them from the possibility of falling, that it may have those whom it can save. But, as Nicasius Van der Schuer says, if God could make a sinner, that He might have one whom He could punish; He could also punish without sin; therefore He could likewise mercifully save without faith. And as Wrath willed to have a just title for damnation, through the intervention of sin, so it became Mercy to save, without the intervention of any duty, that it might be manifest that the whole is of mercy without the semblance of justice. I say, without the semblance of justice; because it begets faith by an irresistible force, and by an irresistible force it causes man to continue in faith to the end, and thus necessarily to be saved,

according to the decree, he that believes and perseveres, shall be saved This being laid down, all equity is excluded, as well from the decree of predestination to salvation, as from that of predestination to death. These objections, I am conscientiously of opinion, may, without calumny, be made to their sentiments; and I am prepared to maintain this very thing against any patron whatsoever of those sentiments. For they do not extricate themselves when they say, that man spontaneously sins, and believes by a spontaneous motion. For that which is spontaneous, and that which is natural, are not in opposition. And that which is spontaneous coincides with that which is absolutely necessary; as, a stone is moved downwards; a beast eats, and propagates its species; man loves that which is good for himself. But all excuses terminate in this spontaneous matter." The passage immediately subsequent to this, is the one which I have quoted in pages 179, 180 of the First Volume of these Works, respecting the two sick persons who were desirous of obtaining an assurance of the Divine Favour, and respecting the very important distinction to be observed between a faith which is merely historical, and that by which a sinner is justified, a distinction, the neglect of which has, in every age of the Church, been a prolific source of error among the professors of our common Christianity.

S. Perfection of Believers in This Life

Perfection of Believers in This Life By Jacobus Arminius

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. 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.

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.

S. Perseverance of the Saints

The Perseverance of the Saints By Jacobus Arminius

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.

S. Providence Of God

The Providence Of God By Jacobus Arminius

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 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 endeavoured 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.

S. Revision of the Dutch Confession & Heidelberg

The Revision of the Dutch Confession & Heidelberg Catechism By Jacobus Arminius

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. 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 endeavoured 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 honour, 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.

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 honoured 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 passages, 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 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 labour 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 favour 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.

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.

"I. 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.

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

"III. 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 be said to be called in question or in doubt, which was never of itself unquestionable, or ought to be considered as indubitable?

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 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 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 endeavoured 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 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 honourable assembly may judge proper to appoint,) on all the topics which I have now mentioned, and on any 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 honourable 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 endeavour of every one, to diminish their number and destroy their 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 EcclesE, sat PatriE datum, Enough has been done to satisfy the Church of Christ and my country!

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