



The Standard Bearer

**A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine**

**Special
Reformation
Issue**

The Synod of Dordt, 1618-1619

How Beautiful are the Feet <i>Johannes Polyander</i>	26
The Significance of Dordt for Today <i>Prof. David J. Engelsma</i>	29
The Events Leading up to the Great Synod <i>Prof. Russell J. Dykstra</i>	31
The Men At Dordt <i>Prof. Herman C. Hanko</i>	34
The Poisonous Petals of the Arminian LILAC <i>Rev. Charles J. Terpstra</i>	37
Dordt—Set for the Defense of the Gospel <i>Rev. Kenneth Koole</i>	40
Our Debt to Dordt <i>Rev. Ronald L. Cammenga</i>	42
Worthwhile Books and Materials on the Synod of Dordt and Its Canons <i>Prof. David J. Engelsma</i>	44
Report of Classis West—Rev. Steven R. Key	46
Report of Classis East—Mr. Jon J. Huiskens	47
News From Our Churches — <i>Mr. Benjamin Wigger</i>	47

“I promise before God, in whom I believe, and whom I worship, as being present in this place, and as being the Searcher of all hearts, that during the course of the proceedings of this Synod, which will examine and decide, not only the five points, and all the differences resulting from them, but also any other doctrine, I will use no human writing, but only the word of God, which is an infallible rule of faith. And during all these discussions, I will only aim at the glory of God, the peace of the church, and especially the preservation of the purity of doctrine. So help me, my Saviour, Jesus Christ! I beseech him to assist me by His Holy Spirit!”

—Solemn Oath Sworn
by Each Member of the Synod of Dordt

**Vol. 74, No. 2
October 15, 1997**

How Beautiful are the Feet

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!

Isaiah 52:7

As it has pleased the honorable President to impose upon me recently that I, continuing in the footsteps of the honorable men, Doctor Hallus and Doctor Scultetus, should preach a sermon in this place and should produce my meditation from a few texts of the Holy Scriptures; so I will in the beginning employ no other excuse than that I have esteemed it to be my bounden duty to obey the President. I assure myself that you, according to your special favor and friendliness to me, wherewith the good, almighty God has adorned you with so many

[On December 31, 1618, Johannes Polyander preached a sermon on Isaiah 52:7 before the delegates at the Synod of Dordt. Polyander was professor of theology at Leiden. The sermon, originally preached in Latin, appears in Dutch in the "Acts" of the Synod. The sermon as published here is severely abridged. The translator is Marjorie Kamps. —Ed.]

excellent gifts, will approve of this my purpose and public testimony of my obedience. Trusting this before I begin my sermon, I will request the help of the Lord, who has made the heavens and the earth, with this my prayer, earnestly imploring that with the mouth leading in prayer you will be able to follow me with outstretched hearts.

Pay attention with me to God's Word, with proper reverence and humbleness of hearts, as proclaimed and described aforetime by the prophet Isaiah in the 52nd chapter, verse 7, of his prophecy.

That which is generally said of renowned sciences and excellent offices, that is, that things which are beautiful are also heavy, may be especially applied to the service of the churches. Experience itself, as well as the Holy Scriptures, abundantly expresses this.

If we look at the Holy Scriptures, the apostle Paul teaches, "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work (I Tim. 3:1). Preaching is a work because of the difficulty of the service; it is

excellent because of its dignity. If we look at experience, it is proved by various examples from all times that the administration of the divine Word, by which, with a man's tongue, the whole multitude of people are gently attended to and preserved in the common bond of holy religion and in the mutual love of the truth and peace, is no less hard and laborious than it is praiseworthy and honorable. Upon perceiving this, the prophet Isaiah rightly exclaims, "How beautiful," etc., with which exclamation that outstanding prophet gives to understand that no man is serving a more admirable office amongst God's people, that no one deserves more thanks for his holy labor with the people of God than the preachers of the divine Word, who, in the name of God, the most supreme King, preach peace to the disquieted, good to the miserable, salvation to the lost, and liberty to the captives.

The occasion of this outcry everyone will notice with me shortly in the preceding verses. There,

The Standard Bearer (ISSN 0362-4692) is a semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc., 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Standard Bearer, P.O. Box 603, Grandville, MI 49468-0603.

REPRINT POLICY

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for The Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be signed.

EDITORIAL OFFICE
Prof. David J. Engelsma
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418
(e-mail: dje@iserv.net)

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR
Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49426

BUSINESS OFFICE
The Standard Bearer
Don Doezeema
P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI
49468-0603
PH: (616) 531-1490
(616) 538-1778
FAX: (616) 531-3033

NEW ZEALAND OFFICE
The Standard Bearer
c/o B. VanHerik
66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

UNITED KINGDOM OFFICE
c/o Mr. Jonathan McAuley
164 Church Rd., Glenwherry
Ballymena, Co. Antrim
BT42 3EL Northern Ireland

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

\$17.00 per year in the U.S., US\$20.00 elsewhere.

ADVERTISING POLICY

The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business Office and should be accompanied by the \$10.00 fee. Deadline for announcements is at least one month prior to publication date.

16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm and 105mm microfiche, and article copies are available through University Microfilms International.

Isaiah has wished to portray the promise of God of redemption through the coming Messiah and the mission of His forerunners, with the picture of the deliverance of the church of old out of Babylonian servitude.

Isaiah is praising preachers for three things, namely, their dignity, their diligence, and the loveliness of their doctrine. He points out their dignity by a figurative manner of speaking, taken from the sincerity and beauty of the lovely feet. By their feet, he signifies both their distinguished mission and their honorable association among the people, so that they are able to be distinguished from the false prophets, not so much by the appearance and the confession of their mouths, as by their lawful calling and the beauty of their manners.

He describes their diligence, not only from the old manners of the prophets sent of God to the Jews, who in former times used to climb up the mountains of Palestine and preach to the people from there so that they would be louder and more clearly heard by all, but also through a resemblance to either the shepherds, as some think, or of the watchmen on the mountains, as others prefer to think. The former were diligent in leading the sheep to graze on the mountains where they walked. The latter, keeping watch from the only elevated place, warned their neighbors in advance either of the enemies or of the robbers. We are of the opinion that both of the likenesses are able to be applied to the preachers of the gospel.

We continue with the loveliness of their doctrine. Their doctrine is called here a gospel, which is to say, a good, glad, and blessed message from God the Father, reconciled with us in Christ, the Immanuel, born and given to us of the Father, so that He is to us our all in all: wisdom to those who are ignorant; a path to the wandering; truth to the doubting; righteousness to the guilty; sanctifica-

tion to those who are polluted with sin; redemption to those who lie captive under the flesh, the world, and the prince of this world; eternal life to the dying; and the bread of life to those who are hungry.

The fruits of this lovely doctrine are four, as stated here by the prophet. They are peace, goodness, salvation, and the kingdom of God. These fruits are bound to each other with an unbreakable bond. For where through the single blessing of God the seed of the gospel is sown, there peace blooms. Where peace blooms, it is there that goodness, the salvation of souls, and the kingdom of God grow and blossom.

Under the name of this peace the prophet understands blessings of all sorts, as much bodily as spiritual, which all men receiving the gospel with the obedience of faith are promised in the Holy Scriptures. These blessings of God indicated by the name of peace are of utmost importance, as well in the mutual association of God with us in Christ and of us with our neighbor for Christ's sake, as in the quietness of the conscience arising in our hearts out of both of those unions, and increasing more and more. With this peace, kings, princes, and magistrates become attached, as with a tight chain, to their subjects; the shepherds with their churches; the fathers of the family with the whole family; God in heaven with the angels, on earth with men; and man with God through the Holy Spirit. Christ has promised, proclaimed, given, left, and most highly recommended this peace to His church.

The good that springs forth from this peace means blessedness. Philosophers have tried in different ways to find this good, though they have never been able to, because they, being devoid of the light of the gospel and the eyes of faith, have neither been able to recognize in themselves the supreme good of the eternal inheritance obtained through Christ's blood, nor

their original leprosy, nor the guilt of eternal death, two distinct evil diseases in contrast with this supreme good, nor have been able to find the right remedy for both diseases outside of themselves in the atoning offering of Christ for our sins.

Let us turn again to our prophet, Isaiah, who places the supreme good in these three. In the first place, he places it in the peace whereof we have now spoken. Secondly, he places it in the salvation of our souls. Thirdly, he places it in the renewing of the kingdom of God in us.

Salvation is attributed here to the reigning God as the only author, so that we conclude that salvation is only from God, but corruption is from man, and that these all remain there in that corruption, until they, through the preaching of the gospel, which is a power of God unto salvation to all those who believe, are translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light, and are brought of God under the beneficial yoke of obedience.

This salvation, joined to peace and good, becomes allied to the kingdom of God. We know that these three heavenly gifts are flowing, as diverse out-workings from one and the same origin, a perfect, supreme King and Head of the church universal, Jesus Christ, into each and every one of its members. In truth, there really is no lasting peace, no concise and perfect good, no true salvation of souls to be understood outside of the kingdom of God.

Also, it ought not be forgotten that the gospel of the kingdom of God is promised of the prophet exclusively to Zion, that is, to the gathering of those with whom God has made His gracious covenant, as He says that the ministers of God shall proclaim to Zion, "Thy God reigneth." He distinguishes between the status of the allies and the status of the aliens. It is true, God the Lord reigns powerfully

through the common ruling of His providence over both of them, that is, the elect and the reprobate, but amongst the children of Zion, according to the particular decree of His grace, He establishes the realm of salvation and of everlasting blessedness. For that reason it is said in truth by David in Psalm 105:6, 7, "Oh, ye seed of Abraham, his servant, Ye children of Zion, his chosen. He is the Lord our God; his judgments are in all the earth."

Who is there amongst you, honorable brethren, who would not lament with me because of the sad state of our churches today, or rather about this frightening transformation itself, about which the entire Calvinistic Christendom is dismayed; about which heaven and earth are startled; about which the angels descending daily unto us from heaven are extremely sorrowful; about which finally the pulpits and the pews of the churches and academics shudder and become very devastated? Who is there amongst you to be sent to the people of Zion as ministers of this prophecy of Isaiah of peace and salvation, which Paul says must be understood to be the preachers of the New Testament (Rom. 10)? Who, considering this prophecy

with me, does not burst out in this lament: Where, O Isaiah, is your promise of the very glad coming of the shepherds who preach peace, good, salvation, and the kingdom of God? Where are their lovely, sincere, and beautiful feet, radiating before God and His people through the rays of the truth, through clear manifestation of a lawful calling, and through the clarity of a guiltless association.

Is it not so on the other hand that very many black, crooked, deformed feet are seen, those which are not sent of God, but have entered into the sheepfold of Christ from somewhere other than through the true door, and, contaminated with evil morals, much rather introduce their good thoughts than Christ's gospel, much prefer their corrupt disputes than the beneficial peace of Christ?

I exhort you that you no longer permit, through more delay, the weeds of errors, strifes, and disagreements to be spread along with the serving of the good seed of the gospel in our Netherlands, through the secret and crafty practices of the devil, but, earnestly paying attention to a capable remedy for the healing of the wounds of our churches, that you labor in every

possible way to that end, that you, with me, satisfy the great expectations, commands, and desires of all pious hearts who confess the same religion with us. We must rescue the healthy doctrine of our old Reformed churches. Let us take away the rising differences amongst us, not according to our own intelligence, but according to the mind of the Holy Spirit, revealed to us in His Holy Word.

The synod must chase away these three armorbearers sent from hell by the prince of darkness, namely, false human tradition, discord, and the freedom of all to teach and to present God's Word as everyone sees fit, by which they have disturbed and almost overthrown the churches up until now. When you will return home from this synod, the whole multitude of these consistories and of the citizens of Dordrecht and your fellow citizens and brothers in Christ will call you together and congratulate you, to have finished so weighty and great a matter. All will say, "How lovely are the feet of those who have now restored again to the Dutch churches peace, salvation, and the wholesome rest of the kingdom of Jesus Christ."

Amen. □

Editorially Speaking

The *Christian Encyclopedia for the People of the Netherlands* begins its article on the Synod of Dordt (1618, 1619), "The Great Synod of Dordt is undoubtedly the most important fact from the history of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands." Its tremendous importance extends to Reformed churches in all lands.

We are delighted to devote our annual special issue in commemoration of the Reformation of the 16th century to this great Synod of Dordt, which continued and solidified the Reformation. Articles tell something of the history; review the controversy; highlight some of the leading figures; examine the doctrines; take note of the wide range of its work; point out its significance for the Reformed churches today; and recommend books on the synod. There is even a sermon preached at the synod by a famed professor of theology.

When we celebrate the Synod of Dordt, we are not building the tombs of the prophets and garnishing the sepulchres of the righteous. We are willingly bound by the Canons of Dordt. We believe the doctrine of the Canons from the heart, preach and teach them with enthusiasm, and defend them with vigor—as becomes evident in this issue.

Publishing this special issue on Dordt, we are well aware that the great synod falls into disfavor and that the Canons are increasingly opposed in Reformed churches worldwide.

—DJE



Correction: The first line of the editorial in the previous (Oct. 1) issue should have read, "...a recent ecumenical conference of Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and *evangelicals*," etc.

The Significance of Dordt for Today

The story is told of the delegate to the Synod of Dordt who, ever afterwards, when the synod was mentioned, doffed his hat and exclaimed, "Oh, most holy synod!"

This is not the attitude toward the synod that prevails in Reformed churches today.

But it should be.

It is ours.

For the Synod of Dordt (1618, 1619) defended the gospel of salvation by (sovereign) grace alone in an hour when the gospel was under attack by the subtlest form of the lie that had ever assailed it. That lie was the teaching that the salvation of the sinner depends upon the sinner's own will. But that false gospel was forced to adopt a deceptive form. For the Reformation that had begun some 100 years earlier had clearly exposed the doctrine of free will as the diseased heart of Roman Catholic heresy. In addition, the Belgic Confession in the 14th article explicitly rejects "all that is taught repugnant to this (doctrine of total depravity) concerning the free will of man." And the false gospelers were bound by the Belgic Confession.

They cast their heresy, therefore, in the form of the teaching that only the grace of God can enable the will of the sinner to believe. This grace, however, is universal, at least, to all who hear the gospel preached. Also, although it imparts the ability to believe in Christ, it does not infallibly bring

about this believing. Grace, taught the Arminians, is resistible. "Grace, grace," they cried, to the deceiving of the undiscerning. But their grace was universal and ineffectual. It did not save. It merely enabled the sinner to save himself—by his own will. For all their talk of grace, salvation in the end was still "of him that willeth," to use the words in which Romans 9:16 repudiates this corruption of the gospel.

Basic to the subtle lie exposed and condemned at Dordt were the twin notions of universal grace and resistible grace.

Dordt's defense of the gospel—the one, true gospel—necessarily took the form of confessing that grace is particular and effectual, or irresistible. Like Jesus Himself, whose saving favor and power it is, grace *saves* His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). It does not merely enable all to save themselves, if they will. The source and foundation, for Dordt, of particular, effectual grace, that is, *real* grace, God's grace, are eternal predestination, election of some and reprobation of the others. Upon the rock of the decreeing God, and only on this rock, the subtle, deadly lie of Arminian self-salvation was dashed to pieces. Not man's will is decisive for salvation, but God's will.

In setting forth the truth of gra-

cious salvation against the subtle error of the Arminians, the Synod of Dordt not only maintained the Reformation's teachings but also developed them. The Canons' treatment of predestination, depravity, conversion, and preservation is full and systematic, as was no prior treatment. The unambiguous declaration that Jesus Christ died for the elect church alone was a real advance. Before Dordt, limited atonement was often more implied than expressed by the theologians. Even the earlier Reformed creeds did not spell out the truth of the extent of the atonement in words that stopped the mouths of the heretics in the churches.

The Synod of Dordt confessed the gospel of salvation by particular, sovereign grace alone, and it confessed this gospel fully, clearly, and systematically.

At the same time, it explicitly condemned the subtlest form of the false gospel of salvation by man himself.

The document in which this is done is a creed of the Reformed churches. It has standing. It has authority. It is binding upon Reformed churches and people. It decides what is truly Reformed.

Because of the presence and participation of the foreign delegates, Dordt had an ecumenical character. The *Christelijke Encyclopaedia voor het Nederlandsche Volk* is right when it says, "In a cer-

*Upon
the rock
of the
decreeing God,
and only
on this rock,
the subtle,
deadly lie
of Arminian
self-salvation
was dashed
to pieces.*

tain sense, one had in Dordt a Reformed ecumenical council" (vol. 1, pp. 634-636). This means that Dordt has authority regarding the Reformed faith worldwide.

Herein lies the significance of the Synod of Dordt for today.

Dordt preserved the Reformation. It was wonderfully used by God the Holy Spirit to pass on to the coming generations, including us, the gospel of grace. It gave us the testimony to the gospel of grace in fully developed form, making plain exactly what the good news of grace in the Bible consists of: double predestination; particular, limited atonement; depravity that is total, not partial; grace that is particular—to and in the elect alone; and the preservation of the elect, regenerated saints. Merely to have said, "Salvation is by grace," would not have helped. The Arminian party gladly said this, as they worked at leading the Reformed churches in the Netherlands back to Rome.

Dordt dared to establish the message of the gospel by confessing reprobation—God's appointment of some specific humans to everlasting damnation as one decree with eternal election. It confessed reprobation in the face of the deliberate, crafty policy of the heretics to destroy the gospel of grace by concentrating their assault on the doctrine of reprobation. They knew, and appealed to, men's natural aversion to reprobation.

Dordt never wavered. Denial of or silence about reprobation means the end of biblical election. And biblical election is the foundation and source of the message of grace. Dordt boldly confessed reprobation and demanded that it be preached, if always in connection with election, and wisely.

The impossibility of maintaining election apart from reprobation is evident today. Those in the Reformed churches who clamor for election without reprobation either proclaim an election that is universal or an election that is temporal.

Both are the death of the gospel of grace.

The Synod of Dordt identified the doctrines that were assailed by the Arminians as the gospel. It exposed the lie of salvation by the will of man as the false gospel condemned by Paul in Romans 9:16 and in the book of Galatians. "Calvinism" is not a mere refinement of the gospel that Rome, Arminians, and Reformed have basically in common. Arminian "free willism" is not a minor, or even major, defect in a message that is otherwise the gospel. The doctrines of the Canons are the gospel by which the Holy Spirit of the risen Christ saves elect sinners. They are the power of God unto salvation to every believer. The system of doctrine controlled by free will is another gospel, which is no gospel. The preachers of this gospel are cursed by the apostle in Galatians 1:6-9. Those who believe and practice this false gospel perish.

If the fathers at Dordt did not have this conviction, they never would have contended for the faith. The result would have been the apostasy of the Dutch churches. If we do not have this conviction, we will not contend for the faith today, as we Reformed officebearers are sworn to do, positively and negatively, by our subscription to the Canons. Then God will take the faith away from us in His just judgment.

By its full, clear exposition of the gospel, accompanied by full exposure and ringing denunciation of the opposite errors, Dordt put Reformed churches in position to withstand the attacks, open and insidious, by the false gospel of salvation by human

worth, works, and will. The churches can ward off the pressures and seductions from Rome and from the Arminian, "free-willist," so-called evangelical churches. The Reformed churches can detect and banish the deadly errors threatening grace that appear within the Reformed churches themselves in the present day.

These are especially three. One is universalism: God loves, elects, redeems, and, somehow in the end, saves every human. A second is the doctrine that God is gracious to every person who hears the gospel. This is the popular theory of the "well-meant offer of the gospel." The third is the teaching that God's grace in Christ is directed in baptism to all children of believing parents, so that God desires their salvation and even makes their salvation possible, if they will only fulfill the condition of believing.

All these doctrines deny the truth that God elects some in love and reprobates others in hatred. All three doctrines deny—obviously, explicitly, and undeniably deny—that the grace of God in Jesus Christ, the grace of the gospel, is particular and irresistible. All three doctrines oppose Dordt, and Dordt condemns all three doctrines.

It is important that Dordt presented the truth of the gospel as logical. All must recognize this who read the Canons, although many criticize Dordt for this. This is the meaning of the criticism of Dordt as "scholastic." Dordt showed its conviction that biblical truth is logical in its confession of reprobation. At a conference with the Arminians at the Hague in 1611, the orthodox Reformed party declared publicly that

*By its full,
clear exposition
of the gospel,
accompanied by
full exposure and
ringing denunciation
of the
opposite errors,
Dordt put
Reformed churches
in position
to withstand
the attacks,
open and insidious,
by the false gospel
of salvation
by human worth,
works, and
will.*

indeed when they state the eternal decree concerning the election of individual persons, they at the same time state the eternal decree concerning the reprobation or rejection of certain individual persons; because it could not be, that there should be election, but moreover there must be, at the same time, a certain reprobation or dereliction (cited in Thomas Scott, *Synod of Dort*, Philadelphia, 1856, p. 117).

One powerful engine to destroy the fortress of Dordt in our day is the insistence that the gospel is il-

logical, paradoxical (that is, contradictory), and irrational. In this case, Reformed people may believe that God loves only some and loves all; that Christ died only for the elect and for all; that grace is irresistible and resistible; and that salvation is 100% by grace and 100% by man's will. A simpleton can see that the result is the teaching that salvation is by man's will, indeed 100% by man's will. Further, the effect of such a view of truth is that we can know nothing. Christianity is absurdity. There can be neither certainty nor comfort. To this nonsense, Dordt said no, as all the ecu-

menical and Reformation creeds said—and say!—no. God's yes is yes, not yes and no. His no is no, not no and yes. So are also the yes and the no of the true church.

Thus, through Dordt the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ guides us to know, preach, and believe the truth that alone comforts sinners and glorifies the triune God.

I sometimes regret that we no longer wear hats. We can no longer doff them when Dordt is mentioned and say, from the heart, "Oh, most holy synod!" □

—DJE

The Events Leading up to the Great Synod

Prof. Russell Dykstra

The history of the events leading up to the Synod of Dordt in 1618-19 is a record of deceit, intrigue, and endurance. By this we refer to the incredible deceit of the Arminians, the political intrigue played out largely by the supporters of the heretics, and the endurance of those committed to the Reformed faith, in the face of arduous struggle and hardship.

The seeds of deception were sown already in the Reformation in the Netherlands in the mid-1500s. When the Protestant Reformation swept through the Netherlands, many who were not truly converted to the Reformed faith joined the Reformed churches. This had a weakening effect on the

church. It was especially disastrous when priests became ministers in the Reformed churches, but still clung to their Romish beliefs. (Significantly, Rome's doctrine was, and is, Semi-Pelagian, at best, and Pelagian at worst.) At various times in the fifty years before the Synod of Dordt, synods had disciplined ministers who manifested their antipathy to the Reformed faith in their preaching and/or godless walk. It was undoubtedly this element that fiercely contested the practice of ministers subscribing to the creeds (the Heidelberg Catechism and the [Belgic] Confession of Faith.)

Jacob Arminius himself was a master of deception. He was born in 1560 into the bosom of the Reformed churches. Any early reservations Arminius had about the Reformed faith he kept to himself. Two Reformed ministers sponsored his training at the Academy at

Leiden, and the merchant guild of Amsterdam financed his further studies in Geneva under Beza. Arminius returned to the Netherlands and became a minister in the church in Amsterdam in 1588.

Arminius was a gifted preacher, though there were suspicions about his soundness in the Reformed faith early on in his ministry. His consistory asked him to refute the works of a certain Dirk Volkertszoon Coornhert (1552-1609), a Roman Catholic writer. Coornhert published powerful attacks on the doctrines of the Reformation, particularly predestination. However, Arminius never did reply to Coornhert. He kept putting off a response with one excuse or another. The real reason was that Arminius found that he agreed with Coornhert! It is generally thought that Arminius' views on the doctrine of salvation crystallized through his reading of

Prof. Dykstra is professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Coornhert. These views became apparent in his series of sermons on Romans. From election to the final perseverance, Arminius placed the real power of salvation in the hand of man.

Up to this point, Arminius was under the supervision of a sound, Reformed consistory, and could do little to promote his views. Under the providential hand of God, this was about to change.

In 1602 the professor of Sacred Theology at Leiden, Dr. Franciscus Junius, died. Uytenbogaert, a personal friend of Arminius with much influence in the political sphere, highly recommended Jacob Arminius for the position. However, deputies of the church objected to his appointment out of concern for his orthodoxy, and the consistory in Amsterdam refused to give Arminius a testimonial of dismissal to take the position. Under continued pressure, the consistory finally granted the testimonial upon two conditions. First, Arminius was required to have a conference with the staunch Dr. Franciscus Gomarus, a professor at Leiden who opposed Arminius. Secondly, he was obligated to express his views before a conference of theologians. This latter conference was held in 1603 by the Curator of the university and the deputies of the synod. At that time Arminius

testified that he expressly rejected the chief points of the doctrine of the Pelagians: Concerning natural grace, concerning the powers of the free will, concerning original sin, concerning the perfection of man in this life, concerning predestination, and others. He testified also that he agreed with all that which Augustine and other Fathers had written against the Pelagians.... Moreover, he promised at the same time that he would teach nothing which conflicted with the adopted doctrine of the church.¹

Arminius was appointed as

professor to the seminary, but he had lied to get the appointment. He soon used his position to teach the opposite of what he had promised. Calling the Reformed doctrines of grace into question, "he recommended the writings of Castalio, Coornhert, Suarez, and such like to his pupils, and spoke deprecatingly of the writings of Calvin, Beza, Martyr, Zanchius, Ursinus, and other outstanding leaders of the Reformed faith."²

The result was predictable. "His students, when they came home from the Academy or departed to other Academies, brazenly took position against the Reformed Churches, disputing, contradicting, and criticizing the doctrine."³

Reformed men in the churches were alarmed. The deputies of the synods of both North and South Holland soon approached Arminius with questions about his views. He refused to discuss anything unless they agreed not to report it to their synods, a condition they rejected.

In 1604 the consistory of Leiden (where Arminius was a member) admonished him to come to a friendly conference of theologians in the presence of the consistory. He balked, making excuses for not coming.

Arminius and his followers



Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609)

used every trick imaginable to avoid being condemned. They resisted all attempts to have a hearing before a synod. They managed to get the condition added, that if a national synod were called, part of the agenda would be the revision of the creeds. If they were called to account by a consistory, they claimed that they were answerable to the States, not the churches.

Later, in 1608, when the High Council of the States-General called Arminius to a conference with Gomarus, Arminius refused to set forth his views. When the synod of the South Holland churches demanded that he express any disagreements he had with the confessions, he promised to submit them in writing. He never did. Arminius died in 1609, having, by means of deception and delay, escaped official condemnation.

Arminius' death did not bring an end to the struggle. His followers were not only active, they were far more bold in advocating his positions. They continued the same pattern of protraction, refusing to submit their views to any church body with the power to condemn them.

By 1610, however, the followers of Arminius, called the Remonstrants, were confident enough of their power that they gathered together at Gouda and drew up a document summarizing their doctrines in five main points.

The second notable feature of this history is the political maneuvering for the cause of the Remonstrants. That political forces could play so prominent a role in this struggle was due to the unusual relation of the church to the state at this time. The church, being virtually the state church, was dominated by the state. At the 1586 synod at the Hague the Reformed churches had adopted a church order which gave the church most of the power to govern herself. The States-General (the legislature of the Netherlands) had rejected this

change and steadfastly refused to allow another national synod for some thirty-two years!

This power of the state over the affairs of the church was pressed into the service of the Remonstrants. This is due primarily to the great influence of the elder statesman, Johan van Oldenbarnevelt. Oldenbarnevelt, an advisor first to Prince William and later to his son Maurice, figured large in the political arena in the five decades that preceded the Synod of Dordt. Though officially he held office in just one of the eleven provinces of the Netherlands, Oldenbarnevelt exercised tremendous influence in all branches of the national government.

The significance of this is that Oldenbarnevelt sided with the Remonstrants. He desired political stability and unity and therefore wanted the Reformed churches to tolerate a broad spectrum—essentially all who rejected the Roman Catholic Church. Therefore he did all in his power to protect the Remonstrants and hinder any effort at church discipline of any minister with errant views.

The result was schism and chaos in the churches. Godless ministers could not be disciplined. When a minister was condemned, be it even for more radical heresies than the Remonstrants, government officials prevented any discipline from being executed, often reinstating ministers. In other places the authorities deposed faithful ministers. Congregations split.

The anti-confessional views were dividing the churches. Faithful consistories were desperate for a national synod to settle the differences and to deal with the doctrinal issues. But Oldenbarnevelt, pressing for tolerance, was determined that the Arminians not be condemned, and his influence carried the day. No amount of pleading from the churches could gain the permission of the States-General to hold a national synod.

Meanwhile, the supposed tolerance of differences evaporated wherever the Remonstrants gained the upper hand. In such places, ministers who courageously defended the Reformed faith were suspended, some deposed. As a result the faithful took to the fields to hear Reformed preaching, even though they suffered persecution for attending these outlawed meetings.

In the face of such opposition, the faithful battled for the truth of sovereign grace. Professor Gomarus is a prime example. Unshakable he was in his commitment to the truth of sovereign grace. Tirelessly he defended the truth at every opportunity. No matter that Arminius and his followers lied, covered up their true beliefs, and refused all demands for accountability. Gomarus and others continued to defend the faith.



Franciscus Gomarus (1563-1641)

However, the Remonstrants were gaining in numbers and influence. By 1617, the Reformed believers must have well nigh despaired of ever rooting out these errors.

Then something remarkable happened. For whatever motive, Prince Maurice publicly aligned himself with the Reformed by attending a worship service of the separated faithful in the Hague.

Oldenbarnevelt and company were alarmed. Within a month they rushed through the States of Holland a resolution that allowed municipalities to muster their own standing armies. The goal of Oldenbarnevelt was to enable these municipalities to defend the Remonstrants, in the event that a national synod were called which condemned them!

Again, God moved the heart of Prince Maurice. At an opportune moment he discharged the regiments of soldiers commissioned by the municipalities, and removed Oldenbarnevelt and others from office.

The way was now open for the provincial synods to purge the ranks of the ministers guilty of godless living and/or heresy. This was done, although those who were accused only of supporting the Remonstrants' doctrines were not tried. This was left for the national synod. For, yes, finally, the States-General agreed that a national synod was necessary to resolve the issues tearing apart the churches and the nation. The synod was set to meet in 1618, in the city of Dordrecht. □

1 *Historical Foreword to the Acts of the Synod of Dordt*, p. 48. At least two translations of this *Historical Foreword Addressed to the Reformed Churches of Christ* are readily available. It is found in Homer C. Hoeksema's excellent and thorough exposition of the Canons of Dordt, *The Voice of Our Fathers*, (Grand Rapids: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1980), pp. 45-102, from which all references in this article have been taken. It is also included in Thomas Scott's translation, *The Articles of the Synod of Dordt*, (Harrison: Sprinkle Publications, 1993), pp. 94-240.

2 *Historical Foreword*, p. 49.

3 *Historical Foreword*, p. 49.

The Men At Dordt

Prof. Herman Hanko

Introduction

The Synod of Dordrecht was the greatest assembly of Reformed churches that ever met. Though some may argue that Dordt was exceeded in greatness by the Westminster Assembly, which met less than 30 years later, Westminster was not, as Dordt was, a gathering of the Reformed churches from all Europe. Nor were the theologians at Dordt in any respect inferior in learning, skill in debate, and genuine orthodoxy than the best of Westminster.

But the synod was necessary, after all, because of heretics present in the church, who were bent on destroying the Reformed faith because they hated the doctrines of sovereign grace. The wonder is that these and the faithful were used by God to give us our treasured Canons of Dordt. The truth of God is never developed in an ivory tower, far from the battlefield on which the great issues of God's truth are decided. The weapons of our spiritual warfare are forged in doctrinal controversy. So it has always been. So it was at Dordt. I have often pondered what we would do today if it had not been for the Synod of Dordt and the Canons it gave us. I shudder to think of it.

Here then are a few of the men, some bad, many good.

Prof. Hanko is professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Jacob Arminius

Although Arminius lived and died before the Synod of Dordt met, he was the most important character in the drama. The controversy and heresy which occasioned Dordt are known by his name, and the synod would not have been called if he had not spread his poison through the churches.

Born in 1560, he was left an orphan when his parents were killed by the Spaniards. A guild in Amsterdam took on the responsibility to support him in his studies, and this enabled him to acquire a good and solidly Reformed education in Leiden, Geneva, and Basel.

It is impossible to tell when Arminius began to entertain thoughts of heresy. It may have been during his studies under Theodore Beza, Calvin's successor in Geneva, who was a no-nonsense teacher of all the truths of sovereign grace. But whenever it was, his sentiments were not revealed until he became minister in the Reformed Church in Amsterdam.

A characteristic of heretics is dishonesty. Arminius was never honest with the church. When he was asked to refute Dirk Coornhert, a theologian who denied the doctrine of sovereign predestination, Arminius never prepared the answer and never revealed that the reason was

his own disagreement with this crucial doctrine.

His duplicity also appeared in his preaching. While preaching on the book of Romans, and particularly on Romans 7, he denied that Paul's description of himself in verses 14-25 was a description of the apostle *after* his regeneration. Paul was, so Arminius claimed, describing himself as unregenerated—an interpretation that opens the door to a denial of total depravity ("The good that I would ..."). And when he came to Romans 9, he flatly denied sovereign reprobation.

I say this was duplicity. The creeds (the Heidelberg Catechism and the Confession of Faith) binding the Reformed churches clearly taught these doctrines, and Arminius knew it. But he always claimed to agree with and be faithful to the creeds.

The synod was necessary because of heretics present in the church, who were bent on destroying the Reformed faith because they hated the doctrines of sovereign grace.

Surprisingly, Arminius was appointed professor of theology at the University of Leiden and was there a colleague of Gomarus, the man who became his implacable foe. Here too, when called to give an account of his teachings, Arminius was less than frank, devious in the extreme, and guilty of hiding his true sentiments as much as possible, all the while continuing to teach his students his erroneous views.

By the time Arminius died in 1609 (one year before the five Articles of the Remonstrants were

drawn up) the poison of his teachings had spread throughout the churches, especially through the preaching of those who had studied under him and had been led astray by his heresies.

Arminius was an extremely intelligent man, very learned, a brilliant thinker, and gifted preacher. He was friendly and a person whom people found it easy to like. Although Arminius used all his extraordinary gifts to bring damnable heresies into the church, God turned almost certain defeat into victory and used the heresy of Arminianism to give us our Canons.

Jan Uytenbogaert

Other than Arminius himself, no one had more influence in the Arminian cause than Uytenbogaert. Born in 1557, three years before Arminius, he was converted from Roman Catholicism when Roman Catholic authorities forbade him to attend the services of a Protestant-inclined pastor.

Uytenbogaert had intended to pursue a career in law, but, upon joining the Reformed churches, he decided to enter the ministry. Under the strange ways of God's providence, he studied in Geneva under Beza at the same time as Arminius. Arminius, not Beza, was the one who influenced Uytenbogaert, and he returned to the Netherlands a firm believer in the heresies of his fellow student.

Nevertheless, he became a preacher in the Reformed churches, and, perhaps because of his reputation for piety, was invited by Prince Maurice to become minister in the Hague. Many government dignitaries attended his church and he became a close friend of Oldenbarnevelt, the effective ruler of the Netherlands.

Always a close friend of Arminius, Uytenbogaert assumed the leadership of the Arminian party when Arminius died and was chiefly responsible for composing the Five Articles of the Remonstrants,

which outline the doctrinal position of the Arminians and against which the five articles of the Canons were written.

When Oldenbarnevelt, just prior to the Synod of Dordt, was arrested and tried for treason, Uytenbogaert thought it best to flee the country. The Synod deposed him *in absentia*, banished him, and ordered his goods confiscated.

It was only after a change of government that he secretly returned from exile and became a pastor of a church where he continued till his death, promoting the cause of Arminianism in the Netherlands.

Simon Episcopius

Episcopius was born in 1583 and studied theology under both Gomarus and Arminius at the University of Leiden. The teachings of Arminius appealed to him rather than those of Gomarus, and he became a follower of his mentor and an eloquent defender of his views.

In 1610, the year the Articles of the Remonstrants were drawn up, he began his work as a pastor, but soon took the place of Gomarus as professor in Leiden when Gomarus resigned. He was so widely known as Arminian in his thinking that he was cited along with twelve other pastors to appear at the Synod of Dordt to give account before the synod of his views.

Episcopius was really the spokesman of the Arminians at the synod and the strategist of their campaign to delay the synod and prevent it from discussing the real problems. When in fury Bogerman dismissed the Arminians from the synod, Episcopius left piously shouting: "With Christ I shall keep silence about all this. God shall judge between me and this synod."

He too was banished, but returned in 1626 when the antipathy towards Arminianism had waned.

He established an Arminian congregation and an Arminian seminary in which he taught, and he wrote an Arminian Dogmatics.

What is of particular interest is the fact that he was living proof that Arminianism is incipient Modernism, for his Arminianism led him in the direction of Socinianism, which denies the Trinity and the divinity of Christ. Would that present-day Arminians would learn this lesson from history.

*Although
Arminius
used all his
extraordinary gifts
to bring
damnable heresies
into the church,
God turned
almost certain
defeat
into victory
and used
the heresy of
Arminianism
to give us our
Canons.*

Pieter Plancius

Pieter Plancius knew persecution. He was born in what is now Belgium, but fled when the Roman Catholic Church persecuted the Reformed.

He had received his education in strongly Calvinistic schools in Germany and England, and became a defender of the Reformed faith until the day of his death. His early ministry was spent in Brabant, Flanders, and Brussels, all of which came under Spaniard domination.

Plancius occupies a notable place among the great men of Dordt because, in addition to being elected a delegate to the synod, he was one of the first to warn the churches against the horrors of the Arminian heresy.

This came about because he was called to be minister of the church of Amsterdam, where Arminius also became a minister. It was in the pulpit of the church in Amsterdam that Arminius first began to militate in his preaching against Reformed doctrine. Plancius was alarmed and, when Arminius' answers proved unsatisfactory, he alerted the churches

to the dangerous doctrines being proclaimed by Arminius. But, sadly, the authorities would not listen, and Arminius and those he influenced were permitted to propound their views for many years before the Synod of Dordt finally condemned them. Plancius' role was a major one, for many were not aware of the grievous dangers hidden behind the subtle and devious teachings of those who would deny the great truth of God's sovereignty.

Plancius also worked in revising the Dutch translation of the Old Testament part of the Staten-Bijbel, which is to the Dutch what the AV is to us. But equally as interesting, the church in Amsterdam was the calling church in sending missionaries along with the Dutch traders to all parts of the world. He was responsible for the development of nautical and geographical knowledge and skills which were given to Dutch sea captains as they made the Netherlands for a short time "Queen of the Oceans."

Francis Gomarus

As suave and friendly as Arminius was, so gruff and blunt was his chief opponent, Francis Gomarus.

Born in Germany in 1563, he was a refugee from the Palatinate. His education was extensive and the best available, for he studied in Strasburg, Oxford, Cambridge, and Heidelberg, enjoying instruction from Ursinus (one of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism) and Jerome Zanchius (who wrote a still popular book on predestination).

Gomarus was first pastor at Frankfurt, but his abilities and learning soon brought him a professorship, first at Frankfurt, then at Leiden. In Leiden Gomarus was the colleague of Arminius, and he fought him as Plancius had done in Amsterdam. When Arminius died and Konrad Vorstius, a greater heretic than Arminius, was appointed to take Arminius' place,

Gomarus resigned in utter disgust and took a pastorate in Middleburg, although at the demand of various schools he continued his career in teaching.

He was a professorial delegate to the Synod of Dordt and made his own deep love for the Reformed faith and his implacable opposition to Arminianism a factor in all the discussions.

Gomarus was a supralapsarian, a profound theologian, and a gifted and influential preacher. His name has almost become synonymous with consistent Calvinism, and he emerged from the conflict at Dordt with the justifiable reputation of one who loved the Lord and the Lord's truth more than anything or anyone else. The Arminians often wished him dead. The Lord used him, with all his bluntness and gruffness, to preserve the glorious truths of sovereign grace.

Johannes Bogerman

Though Johannes Bogerman is one of the lesser known men at Dordt, his name will be remembered, by all who love the Reformed faith, as the fiery president of the synod who finally, totally exasperated, dismissed the Arminians with such fierce words that they were literally driven out.

Bogerman was born in East Friesland in 1576 and served as pastor in the Dutch Reformed churches. He was an ardent defender of the biblical truths of sovereign grace, and he fought from his pulpit the deadly heresies of Arminius which were strangling the churches.

Delegated to the Synod of Dordt, he was chosen as the president because of his commitment to the Reformed faith and his great ability. He was a short man, and he possessed a beard which reached his waist. He was an imposing figure, due chiefly to the fire that flashed from his eyes when he was angry.

And angry he did become—at the Arminians. Patiently and with

as much understanding as he could muster, he led the synod during the



Johannes Bogerman (1576-1637)

many days during which the Arminians used every delaying tactic they could think of to keep the synod from its work; when they vented their hatred and spite against the doctrines of the confessions; and when they attempted with subtlety and guile to win influence and approval among the foreign delegates and the representatives of the state.

But finally he had had enough. He rose in righteous indignation, and, after a short speech, ended with the words: "You have begun with lies, and you end with lies. *Dimittimini, ite, ite!* (You are dismissed! Get out! Get out!)."

So powerful was his voice and so fiery were his flashing eyes that the Arminians almost stumbled over each other in exiting the hall. It was the end of their presence at the synod, and without them the synod could now get on with its work.

The greatest part of that work is the Canons, an incomparable creed in the defense of the doctrines of sovereign and particular grace. □

“The Poisonous Petals of the Arminian LILAC”

Rev. Charles J. Terpstra

In God's creation the lilac, like the tulip, has a beautiful place. It is not a poisonous plant, but a splendid flower of sweet perfume and purple hue. Its color symbolizes royalty and dominion. As such, the lilac would be a fit emblem of the Reformed faith and its key doctrine—the absolute sovereignty of God. But the lilac may be viewed as the emblem of the Arminian heresy, and then it takes on quite a different character. It becomes an ugly, stinking flower. Its color is the pale gray of disease and death. Its petals are poisonous.

It was, I believe, the late Dr. John Gerstner who invented the acronym LILAC to summarize the five points of the Arminians. He did this because the tulip flower has been the symbol of the five points of Calvinism. The two “flowers” look like this:

T - Total Depravity
U - Unconditional Election
L - Limited Atonement
I - Irresistible Grace
P - Perseverance of Saints
 L - Limited Depravity
 I - I Choose Christ
 L - Limitless Atonement
 A - Arrestible Grace
 C - Carnal Security

In this article we want to examine briefly these poisonous petals of the Arminian LILAC. The reader will understand that we

cannot launch into a detailed critique of the Arminian heresy in this one article. For that we refer you to the Canons of Dordt themselves, particularly the second part of each head of doctrine, where the Arminian errors are explicitly mentioned and refuted. We can only point out the main errors. Nevertheless, with the sweet smell of TULIP in our souls we will come to know the stench of the Arminian LILAC.

It was the Arminian party in the Dutch Reformed churches who first summarized their teachings into five points of doctrine. This they did following the death of James Arminius, the man who initially advanced the erroneous doctrines and after whom the Arminian party was named. Arminius had been teaching the errors associated with his name for many years following his ordination into the ministry in 1588. Especially in his preaching on the book of Romans he parted with the historic Reformed teaching concerning the state of the natural man and concerning the way in which the sinner is saved. But it was after Arminius' death in 1609 that his followers put his views together in summary form. In 1610 they set forth in five articles their *Remonstrance* (petition) as a defense of their position (which is why the Canons of Dordt consist of five heads of doctrine and why we speak of the five points of Calvinism). The first of these points expressed the Arminian view of predestination:

That God, by an eternal, unchangeable purpose in Jesus

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

At first glance it may seem as if the Arminians were stating an orthodox doctrine of predestination. The language appears sound and straight. But in reality their view of divine election and reprobation is that they are *conditional* decrees. Notice that the article says that God chooses those who will believe and passes over those who will not believe. That is, God's choice of some persons to be saved is based on (conditioned by) their faith and their perseverance in faith; and His rejection of others for damnation is based on (conditioned by) their unbelief and disobedience. For the Arminians, God's decree of predestination is not sovereign and unconditional; it is not freely made without any regard to man's acts in time. Rather is it conditioned by what man does. In eternity God looks ahead and sees who will believe and who will

Rev. Terpstra is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan

not believe and predestinates accordingly. It was right here in their opening statement that the Arminians revealed the heart of their heresy: God is not sovereign in salvation; *man* is! God's will does not rule in the redemption of mankind; *man's* does! God's grace does not account for salvation; *man's* faith does! The poisonous, putrid petal of the Arminian LILAC is: "I choose God (Christ), and therefore He chooses me!"

How pervasive that poison is in the churches today! O, that the smell of the beautiful, biblical TULIP would prevail as it did in the time of Dordt: "God chose me to believe, sovereignly, unconditionally, entirely of grace!"

This, however, was just the beginning of the Arminian poison. In their second point the Arminians continued their vile errors:

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

In this statement the Arminians boldly set forth *universal atonement*: Christ has died for all men, head for head. His death on the cross covered the sins of all people that ever live. His sacrifice obtained forgiveness and freedom for each and every person in all of time and history. Christ's death, then, is not just for the elect of God; it is not limited to that select people determined by God. It is for all men without exception.

Yet at the same time the Arminians had to reckon with the fact that all men do not enjoy this salvation in the death of Christ. Some men perish in their unbelief and never receive the benefits Christ obtained for them. Which means that Christ has died in vain for some; His death is not sufficient to secure some people's salvation. What is this but a denial of the efficacy and all-sufficiency of Christ's atonement?! The poisonous petal of the Arminian LILAC this time was that Christ's limitless atonement fails!

This is not the sweet fragrance of the gospel, as they claimed; this is the stench of the lie! Besides, in this article the Arminians again grounded salvation in the faith of the sinner, not the sovereign work of God in Christ at the cross. At best Christ's death only makes salvation *possible* for the sinner. The determining factor in salvation is not what Christ did in dying but what the sinner does in believing. Christ has died in vain unless the sinner believes! Also this poisonous petal stands prominent in the churches of our day. O, that the sweet savor of the biblical, Reformed TULIP might prevail today as it did at Dordt: "Christ died only for those elect given Him by the Father, sufficiently, efficaciously, with everlasting security of their salvation!"

In their third point the Arminians returned to their devilish deceptions and subtle subterfuges. They hid the truth of their position behind solid language:

That man has not saving faith of himself, nor of the energy of his free will, in as much as he, in the state of apostasy and sin, can of and by himself neither think, will, nor do anything that is truly good (such as saving faith eminently is); but that it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through his Holy Ghost, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and all his powers, in order that he may

rightly understand, think, will, and effect what is truly good, according to the Word of Christ, John 15:5: "Without me ye can do nothing."

It appears from this statement that the Arminians were upholding the Reformed doctrine of total depravity, that man is thoroughly corrupt in himself and incapable of doing any good apart from the grace of God. It appears that they were defending sovereign grace in the salvation of the sinner, such that only God by His regenerating Spirit causes man to repent and believe. It even seems that they condemn free will.

But this was a grievous deception. In reality, the Arminians taught just the opposite. When you read the "Rejection of Errors" section in the Canons of Dordt, III & IV Heads, you discover their true position on the nature of man's depravity and on the nature of God's saving grace. From this we learn that the Arminians taught that man is only partially depraved and that he has retained his power of free will after the Fall. Therefore the unregenerate sinner is not totally dependent on the grace and Spirit of God for salvation. He is able to prepare himself for salvation and cooperate with God in salvation. According to the Arminians, fallen man can hunger and thirst after righteousness and life by himself; he can offer the sacrifice of a contrite and broken spirit apart from the Spirit. He can use his natural powers to meet God "halfway" on the road of salvation. God gives the sinner a "common grace" to show him Christ and encourage him to conversion, but it is up to him to exercise his free will and decide whether or not he will be saved. In the Arminian scheme, faith is not God's sovereign gift worked in man's heart by the power of the regenerating Spirit but man's act which actually *precedes* regeneration.

So again, the Arminians denied

the sovereignty of God's saving grace, this time by promoting the poisonous petal of "limited depravity." The fathers of Dordt saw this for what it was, nothing but a resurrection of the old Pelagian heresy which denied man's total depravity and advanced man's power of free will. O, that once more this poisonous perfume of the Arminian LILAC might be snuffed out in the churches and the precious scent of the Reformed TULIP be powerfully smelled and savored!

The fourth article of the Arminians must also be viewed in the light of what we have just seen:

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

Again, it seems as if the Arminians are defending sovereign grace, at least in the first part of the article. God's grace, they appear to say, accounts for all the good that man does.

But notice the words that are used to describe God's grace as it comes to the sinner. The article calls it "assisting" grace and "cooperative" grace, implying that God simply needs to help man along in the attainment of salvation and that man works along with God to achieve this. This exposes the Arminians in their real position—that of Pelagianism! In addition, the Arminians plainly stated their rejection of sovereign,

irresistible grace. The grace of God as it comes to the sinner is able to be resisted by the sinner. God tries to save the sinner when He comes to him in the gospel. The Spirit approaches man with the grace of salvation, but man can turn Him away with his sovereign will! The Spirit comes with regenerating grace but cannot give it until man first believes by an act of his free will! And if a man does not want to believe, the Spirit is stopped in His tracks! Such is the stinking flower of the Arminians: arrestible grace!

How powerful is this poisonous petal in the churches! O, that the precious odor of the biblical TULIP might waft through the churches as it did at Dordt: "God's sovereign grace is irresistible and conquers the wicked heart and will of the elect sinner, so that he is infallibly brought to faith and conversion by the Spirit alone!"

In their last article the Arminians expressed their belief concerning the perseverance of the saints:

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

must be more particularly determined out of the Holy Scripture, before we ourselves can teach it with the full persuasion of our minds.

It should be evident that once more the Arminians revealed their true colors, this time by rejecting the absolute perseverance of believers. They are willing to say that God makes it possible for the saved to persevere. He gives them sufficient grace; He assists them in the battle of faith so that they can possibly overcome and reach the goal of eternal salvation. But notice two things concerning the Arminian position as set forth in this article. First, they make this perseverance dependent on the activity of the believer. Christ extends His hand to help the believer and will keep him, but only if he wants the help, makes himself ready for the battle, and works hard on his own. Once more, the position of human sovereignty in salvation is proclaimed! God cannot make the believer persevere unless the believer wills and works first! And second, the Arminians state in so many words that they do not believe the total preservation of believers and therefore the absolute security of the saved. In other words, they posit that a believer can lose his salvation. He can be saved today and perish tomorrow. He can be saved all his life but in the very end go lost and join the wicked in hell. This last petal in the Arminian LILAC is another poisonous one: *carnal security*. It leaves the believer with no real assurance of being saved to the end. It leaves him trusting in his own self for final deliverance. That's carnal security.

Of course, this follows from all that the Arminians teach. If at every point salvation is dependent on the will of man, then salvation is ever on shaky ground; it can never be safe and secure. Salvation can only be so if it is dependent on God's will and God's work from start to finish and at every point in

between. Such is the pure flower of biblical Calvinism: God keeps His own unto the end so that none

are lost. He gives them grace to persevere so that they all arrive in glory. This is the sweet perfume of the Reformed TULIP. The petals of

the Arminian LILAC emit a deadly poison. Which flower are you savoring? □

Dordt—Set for the Defense of the Gospel (an overview of the Canons)

Rev. Kenneth Koole

When the Enemy launched a full frontal assault against the doctrinal walls of the church, the church responded with a 'Canons' blast of confessional truth to ward off the assault, to show that there is plenty of life in the old city yet, and that those "set for the defence of the gospel" (Phil. 1:17) do not intend to yield one precious inch of the heritage of truth once delivered to the saints. This had been the response of the church in the 4th and 5th centuries when the person and natures of Christ suffered direct assault. She responded with the 'Christological' creeds. This was the response of the church in the 16th and 17th centuries as well. What came from Dordt was just such a 'Canons' blast in confessional form. Arminianism was a full frontal assault against the apostolic gospel, aiming at the heart of the gospel, namely, *grace!*—the grace so recently restored by the Reformers to the preaching (Gal. 1:6).

A study of the Canons gives instruction about the strategy the general synod used in its battle

against Arminianism, where it began, and what it emphasized.

Significant, first, is the heavy reliance of the Canons on the Scriptures, quoting the Word of God again and again in its counter blasts. This is especially true of the First Head. The four sections that follow make regular reference to Scripture, but the First Head is especially loaded with biblical quotes and proof-texts. In the first two articles there are five passages referred to (one of which is John 3:16, of all things—reminding us that there are no 'Arminian passages'). And Article 3 basically is a quotation of Romans 10:14, 15. Biblical passages multiply from there. Clearly, the Canons are not interested in abstract doctrinal debate, in matching wits, or in an exercise of logic as has been charged, but in expounding the Word of God. They demonstrate that that is all Calvinism (the Reformed faith) really is, an explanation of the Bible according to its own words.

A confession loaded with God's Word is devastating to the foe of heresy. Of course, you had better believe the Bible is the infallible Word of God, or you have no ammunition for your 'guns.' You have no weapons at all. Today the 'Canons' (with the other creeds) are museum pieces in most churches.

Reformed churches may show them off a few Sunday mornings a year (you have to hit it right). And the pulpiteering tour-guides themselves are Arminians. Is it any wonder that there is not anyone really *living* in those churches anymore? It makes you weep. Reject the Scriptures as the very Word of God, and you have spiked the Canons. They roar no longer. "Oh, Jerusalem, Jerusalem...."

Dordt was a better day.

We associate the Canons with five points (of Calvinism), as well we should. There are five (main) heads of doctrine. Significantly, they are called the "doctrines of grace." Precisely correct. The general synod saw clearly what was at stake, where the main thrust of Arminianism and the Enemy was, namely, at *grace!*—the purity and the power of grace.

Salvation all of *grace!* This is Calvinism. This is the Reformed faith, heart and soul. Grace—God's favor and saving power contrary to all deserving. And anything that diminishes or tarnishes or is inconsistent with that truth, salvation all of God's free grace, is to be refuted and rejected. This was Paul's blast against the Judaizers and their law-works in his day (Rom. 11:6), and so it has ever been for Christ's true and faithful church. This is what the synod was set on defending

Rev. Koole is pastor of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

and also setting forth in clear, unmistakable language. So, early on (I/5), the Canons quote Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves...."

Significantly, in the Canons, the synod began with the doctrine "Of Divine Predestination." We learn the five points by beginning with "T" for TULIP and "Total Depravity." The Canons, however, as do the articles of the Remonstrance, begin with God's sovereign election. Why? In the interests of "grace." There is no doctrine that demonstrates so clearly and powerfully that salvation is all of God, not of man's ability or worth, than does eternal election. "...in love: having *predestinated* us unto the adoption of children ... *to the praise of the glory of his grace*" (Eph. 1:4, 5, 6—quoted in I/7). Why is one man saved, and not another? Why is one able to believe and love the Lord, but another, perhaps one's twin brother, can and will not? Shall I (you) boast superior in wisdom or worth? Of course not. It is election, the distinguishing grace of a merciful God. (Cf. I/6, 7.)

In the third place, note that though the Canons begin with the doctrine of predestination, yet they begin their *treatment* of predestination by referring to the sin of Adam and its universal consequences, bringing all under the wrath of God.

Why? Because the synod was not interested simply in out-arguing and outflanking the Arminians, and hence showing all the logical errors and fallacies in Arminian thinking. The synod had preeminently a pastoral concern. The gospel, with its comfort, was at stake. We hold to divine predestination not simply because it is the only theology logically consistent, but because predestinating grace is so absolutely necessary. Without it, what sinner, dead in trespasses and sins, could possibly be saved? Our lost condition is what makes God's electing will and grace essential.

From the outset the Canons are pastoral in their approach. That pastoral approach is woven throughout the Canons, bringing comfort even to grieving parents who have just lost another little one to the grave (I/17).

A fourth element worth noting is the Canons' extensive treatment of the wonder of regeneration (III, IV/11-16). These articles stand among the most beautiful sections of any of the great Christian creeds you care to name. The phrase that the grace of regeneration "...spiritually quickens, heals, corrects, and at the same time sweetly and powerfully bends [the will]" is one of the most exquisite phrases found anywhere in any creed (Art. 16).

Crucial to being a Calvinist in distinction from an Arminian is one's position on the relationship of regeneration to faith, and that of regeneration to conversion. Which comes first? The Arminian puts one's faith and conversion first. One shows spiritual activity (of a major sort) before one is even born again. The Canons sweetly and powerfully refute such error. First one is born again (whereby the Spirit of God "pervades the inmost recesses of the man ... and infuses new qualities into the will" [III, IV/11]), and then follows faith and conversion. And by this spiritual life bestowed, God renders the will "good, obedient, and pliable" (Art. 11). "And this is the regeneration so highly celebrated in Scripture..." (Art. 12). This is truly Reformed. God must graciously bestow spiritual life before dead man can be spiritually active.

Also in connection with its treatment of regeneration the synod answered the Arminians' recurring accusation that the upshot of promoting a sovereign, electing efficacious grace is practical antinomianism, a Christianity with little emphasis on godliness and spiritual activity in life. After all, it is God who has taken care of everything anyway. The recurring allegation was that high Calvinists

"treat men as senseless stocks and blocks..." (III, IV/16). Many a Reformed man today has backed off from full-fledged Calvinism, evidently persuaded by this allegation.

Nothing is more contrary to the truth. As the Canons make clear, the work of efficacious grace does not ignore the will of man, but powerfully affects it and then uses it. As Article 12 states, "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" (emphasis mine—KK). And any zealot who in the name of his own Calvinism would minimize the call to a godly life and good works, excusing himself on the basis of his own weakness and corruption, must contend with the Canons that declare that God, when He "...infuses new qualities into the will ... actuates and strengthens it, that like a good tree it may bring forth the fruits of good actions" (III, IV/11). Godliness is found, or one's will has not yet been set free, nor one's heart renewed.

Does Calvinism minimize the preaching of the gospel and its urgent call to faith and repentance? Quite the contrary. "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" (V/14).

And, finally, note that each Head has a rejection of errors in addition to its positive development of truth. The synod shut the gates of the city to a variety of errors *and to those who teach such things as well*. Teachings that threaten the gospel and are contrary to it are identified each in turn. The fathers of Dordt were

not interested in ecumenical fellowship with churchmen who promoted errors contrary to the sovereign, free grace of the gospel. They were willing to discuss these things with others to show them the errors involved, but not in inviting them into the city to join in some common defense. Defense of

what? If one does this with Rome or the Arminians, step-children of the fearful error of Pelagianism, he will find the guns turned against his own walls and foundations in short order. Either that or the powder becomes so watered down that it will discharge nothing.

Dordt reminds us, not only

must we stand for the right, but we must speak against error. We are all for unity, but unity in love for the gospel of sovereign, free grace. Those who would embrace those whom the synod rejected, must hear again the 'Canons' roar. It is the roar of Jerusalem's King. □

Our Debt to Dordt

Rev. Ronald Cammenga

When one thinks of the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-19, what comes to mind first of all are the doctrinal pronouncements made by the synod against the Arminians. Undoubtedly the Canons of Dordt are the great work for which this historic Dutch Reformed synod is known. The Canons repudiated the Arminian heresy that threatened the Dutch Reformed churches and defended the faith of the Reformation, in particular the sovereignty of God's grace in the salvation of sinners.

But our debt to Dordt goes beyond its five canons. The work of the synod was far broader than dealing only with the Arminian controversy. Many other matters were treated by the synod. The lasting significance of the Synod of Dordrecht concerns decisions taken and work done in other areas vital to the life of the Reformed churches. As the fruits of these other labors of Dordt were enjoyed by the Dutch Reformed churches of the early 17th century, so also are

those fruits enjoyed by churches today whose ecclesiastical roots derive from Dordt, including our own Protestant Reformed Churches.

It is the purpose of this article to point out our debt to Dordt in four distinct respects: Bible translation, church order, liturgy, and Sabbath observance.

Bible Translation

Discussion of the need for a new translation of the Bible in the Dutch language took place early in Dordt's deliberations.¹ The matter was raised by the president of the synod himself, Johannes Bogerman. Bogerman was convinced of the need for a new and improved Dutch Bible translation and pressed the synod to undertake such a worthwhile project.

Other Dutch Bible versions were in use among the people at this time. There was the Liesveldt Bible, published in 1526 and named after its publisher, Jacob VanLiesveldt of Antwerp. The Liesveldt Bible was a Dutch translation of Luther's German Bible. This was the popular version of the day. There was also the translation prepared by Jan Utenhove and published in 1556, as well as the Deux Aes Bible, published in 1562.

All of these versions had their shortcomings. Either they were translations of translations, or, al-

though translated from the original languages, they were stilted and in need of improvement.

Earlier synods had faced the question of a new Bible translation. The Synods of Embden, 1571, Dordrecht, 1574, and again in 1578 had all been impressed with the need for a new translation but had postponed action on such a huge undertaking. Bogerman however was able to convince the Synod of Dordt to take up this worthwhile project.

The synod adopted the following guidelines for the new translation:

- 1) The original Hebrew and Greek would be the basis for the new translation.
- 2) The new translation would be a literal translation.
- 3) The translators would consult the existing versions, both in the Dutch language and other languages.
- 4) Any additional words or phrases deemed necessary for smooth translation would be included in brackets.
- 5) The Apocrypha would be included, but in different type and pagination, and with a preface explaining that the Apocryphal writings were not to be considered a part of the canon of Holy Scripture.

For various reasons, the translation project was delayed. It was

Rev. Cammenga is pastor of South-west Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

not until September of 1637 that the new translation first appeared in print. Since the translation received the formal approval of the States General of the Netherlands, the new version became known as the *Staten-Bijbel*.

The *Staten-Bijbel* remains to this day a monument of Reformed biblical scholarship. Although more recent versions have to a great extent supplanted the *Staten-Bijbel*, still today there are many Dutch Reformed Christians who continue to use and cherish it. The principle upon which the *Staten-Bijbel* was based—a Bible in the language of the people based on the original biblical languages—is a principle esteemed by faithful Reformed churches down to the present. On the basis of that same principle, the Protestant Reformed Churches continue to make use of the King James Version of the Bible.

Church Order

One of the most significant contributions of the Synod of Dordt was the church order drafted by the synod for the regulation of the affairs of the Dutch Reformed Churches.

More often than not, in church controversies, the church is forced to deal not only with doctrinal issues but also with church political issues. Such was the case also in the Arminian controversy.

The Arminians opposed the principles of Reformed church government. They favored the regulation of the affairs of the church by the civil magistrate. And they were disinclined to give to the broader assemblies of the church real authority in decision-making.

The church order produced by the Synod of Dordt was not an altogether new venture. The synod relied heavily on the work that had been done in this area by former synods. Church orders had been produced by the Synod of Embden, 1571, the Synods of Dordrecht, 1574 and 1578, the Synod of Middelburg, 1591, and the Synod

of The Hague, 1586. The Synod of Dordt, 1618-19, compiled and refined the church orders of the past, producing a new church order that for centuries to come would serve the Dutch Reformed churches, as well as their daughters in other lands, in good stead.

The church order of Dordt enunciated clearly the biblical principles of sound church government. The church order insisted on the right of the church to govern her own affairs, especially in the calling of officebearers and in the exercise of Christian discipline. It defended jealously the autonomy of the local congregation, while at the same time firmly establishing the rightful authority of the broader assemblies, whose decisions were to be considered settled and binding in the churches.

The Protestant Reformed Churches are still governed by the church order of Dordt. Nearly 400 years after Dordt, Dordt's church order, with but few revisions, regulates the life and labor of our churches. What a testimony to the enduring debt that we owe to Dordt!

Liturgy

There is yet another area in which we are indebted to Dordt. That is the area of liturgy. The whole body of liturgical forms in use in our churches derives from the Synod of Dordt.

Over and over again the church order requires the congregations to make use of the adopted liturgical forms: Art. 4, "Form of Ordination of the Ministers of God's Word"; Arts. 22 and 24, "Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons"; Art. 58, "Form for the Administration of Baptism"; Art. 62, "Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper"; Art. 70, "Form for the Confirmation of Marriage Before the Church"; Art. 76, "Form of Excommunication"; and Art. 78, "Form of Readmitting Excommunicated Persons."

Also in the area of liturgy the

Synod of Dordt relied extensively on the work that had been done by past synods. Liturgical forms had been produced and were in use in many of the churches. Dordt compiled and revised these forms and made the use of them mandatory. Whereas in the past not all the churches used the liturgical forms and not all who did used the same ones, Dordt ensured the unity of the churches by prescribing the use of the adopted forms.

The Netherlands Liturgy in which are included the public prayers, and the forms for administering the sacraments, the exercise of ecclesiastical discipline, the ordination of ministers, elders, and deacons, and the solemnization of marriage shall be reviewed by the revisers of the condensed minutes or by the clerk of this synod, and having been reviewed shall be added to the public editions.²

This body of liturgy forms an important part of the "minor confessions" of our churches. These forms contain important instruction regarding church office, the sacraments, and discipline. The neglect and replacement of these forms in the Reformed churches today is one indication of the drift from Dordt of these churches.

1 The interested reader is referred to Marten H. Woudstra's excellent chapter entitled "The Synod and Bible Translation," in *Crisis in the Reformed Churches: Essays in commemoration of the great Synod of Dort, 1618-1619*, Peter Y. DeJong, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformed Fellowship Inc., 1968).

2 *Ecclesiastical Manual Including the Decision of the Netherlands Synods and Other Significant Matters Relating to the Government of the Churches*, by P. Biesterveld and H.H. Kuyper, translated by Richard R. DeRidder (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Theological Seminary, 1982), p. 291.

Sabbath Observance

One last contribution of Dordt worth noting is its pronouncements with respect to the Sabbath.

These pronouncements were occasioned not only by the increasing incidence of Sabbath desecration, but also by the growing influence of those who took the position that observance of the Sabbath was unnecessary in the New Testament. The "Post-acta" of the synod take note of this. In Session 163 notice is taken of this position.

When the formulation concerning the removal of the dishonoring of the Sabbath [was discussed], a question is aired concerning the necessity of observing the Sabbath, which was beginning to be agitated in the churches of Zeeland....³

The result was the adoption by the Synod of Dordt of six pronouncements regarding the Sabbath.

I

There is both a ceremonial and moral element in the fourth com-

mandment of the divine law.

II

The ceremonial [element] is the rest of the seventh day after creation, and the strict observance of the same day was especially enjoined upon the Jewish people.

III

The moral [element] is that a certain and definite day be set aside for worship, and for the purpose that as much rest as is necessary for worship and for pious reflection upon it [be provided].

IV

The Jewish Sabbath having been abolished, Christians must solemnly keep Sunday holy.

V

This day has always been observed from the time of the apostles in the ancient Catholic Church.

VI

This day must be so set aside for worship that on it people may rest from all ordinary labors (excluding those which love and present necessity demand) together with all such recreations that hinder worship.⁴

Dordt defended the enduring principle of the Fourth Command-

ment. Sunday is the New Testament Sabbath and is to be sanctified by the New Testament Christian. Dordt's view of the Sabbath is the view embraced by the Protestant Reformed Churches. Many Reformed churches in our day disdain this view of the Sabbath. There is a sad neglect of the Sabbath and a disturbing abuse of the Sabbath. In recalling its Reformed heritage, the Reformed churches of our day need to return to Dordt's pronouncements concerning the Sabbath.

Conclusion

From all this it is plain how far-reaching was the work of the great Synod of Dordt. How enduring are its contributions to the subsequent history of the Reformed churches. Clearly, the debt that we owe to Dordt is far greater than its doctrinal pronouncements relative to the Arminian controversy.

Thank God for Dordt! □

³ *Ecclesiastical Manual*, p. 267.

⁴ *Ecclesiastical Manual*, p. 268.

Worthwhile Books and Materials on the Synod of Dordt and Its Canons

Prof. David Engelsma

Worthwhile books in English on the Synod of Dordt and its doctrinal decisions, though rare, are avail-

Prof. Engelsma is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

able. All that will be mentioned here are written for the people, and not only for the theologian. Such is the importance of that synod and its doctrinal deliverances (known as "canons") that Reformed men and women should know them well.

Pride of place goes to Homer

C. Hoeksema's *The Voice of Our Fathers*, the only thorough commentary on the Canons in English. The work includes corrections of the English translation of the Canons used by the Protestant Reformed Churches and other Reformed churches, from the original Latin. Examples are the wording of Can-

ons, III, IV/8 and the omission of an important line at the end of Canons, III, IV/2. The book is also valuable for its historical introduction. The author gives an account of the historical occasion of the synod in the Arminian controversy, a brief description of the "great synod" itself, and a reminder concerning the confessional status of the Canons as one of the creeds of Reformed churches. Two important appendixes give the semi-official history of the events leading up to the synod, and the opinions of the Arminian party on the five doctrines that we know as the "Five Points of Calvinism," or the "doctrines of grace." The semi-official history was published on the authority of the States General, the Prince of Orange, and the Synod of Dordt. It demonstrates the unscrupulous, deceptive behavior of Arminius and his party from start to finish. Reading this history, no one will have any difficulty with President Bogerman's righteously angry dismissal finally of the Arminian party, "You are dismissed. You began and ended with lies. Get out!" The only surprising thing is that he had as much patience as he did. This book is published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418.

A helpful syllabus on the teachings of Dordt by Prof. Homer C. Hoeksema is available from the Protestant Reformed Seminary, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., SW, Grandville, MI 49418. This 182-page, neatly-bound work is entitled, "Questions and Answers on the Canons of Dordrecht." As the title indicates, the syllabus treats the content of the Canons in question-and-answer form. This is useful for study classes.

A fine book (were it not for one grievous flaw) on the synod, the Canons, and the significance of Dordt for the Reformed churches today is the commemorative volume published by Reformed Fel-

lowship, Inc., Grand Rapids, MI, in 1968. The title is *Crisis in the Reformed Churches: Essays in Commemoration of the Great Synod of Dordt, 1618-1619*. It is out-of-print, but available (with some effort) used, or in seminary libraries. There are two chapters on the history leading to the synod; a chapter on the leading figures at Dordt; a chapter on the doctrines of Dordt; a chapter on the synod's involvement in translating the Bible; and several chapters on the significance of Dordt for preaching, for pastoral work, and, generally, for today. John Murray compares Calvin, Dordt, and Westminster. The book is valuable for the materials in several appendixes. These include a chronological table; biographical descriptions of all the main men connected with Dordt; the doctrinal position of the Arminians as stated by themselves both in 1610 and in 1618; a list of the delegates to the synod; and more. The grievous flaw is the chapter by Klaas Runia on recent criticisms of the Canons. Runia *concedes* the criticisms by G. C. Berkouwer and others of the decretal theology of the Canons, that is, the doctrine of eternal predestination, especially reprobation. To concede these criticisms, specifically *these* criticisms, is to overthrow the Synod of Dordt and give the victory, in the end, to the Arminians. Why did the Reformed Fellowship publish the book with this antagonistic chapter? If someone will be found to *defend* the Canons against the recent criticisms, the book should be reprinted.

In 1856, Thomas Scott's translation into English of the Canons of Dordt, with some notes, was published in Philadelphia by Presbyterian Board of Publications. This work included the synodically approved "History of Preceding Events" (also included in H. C. Hoeksema's commentary on the Canons, as noted above), as well as a long, incisive introductory essay by the Princeton theologian,

Samuel Miller. The title was simply *Synod of Dort*. Long out-of-print, this book has recently been reprinted by Sprinkle Publications, P. O. Box 1094, Harrisonburg, VA 22801.

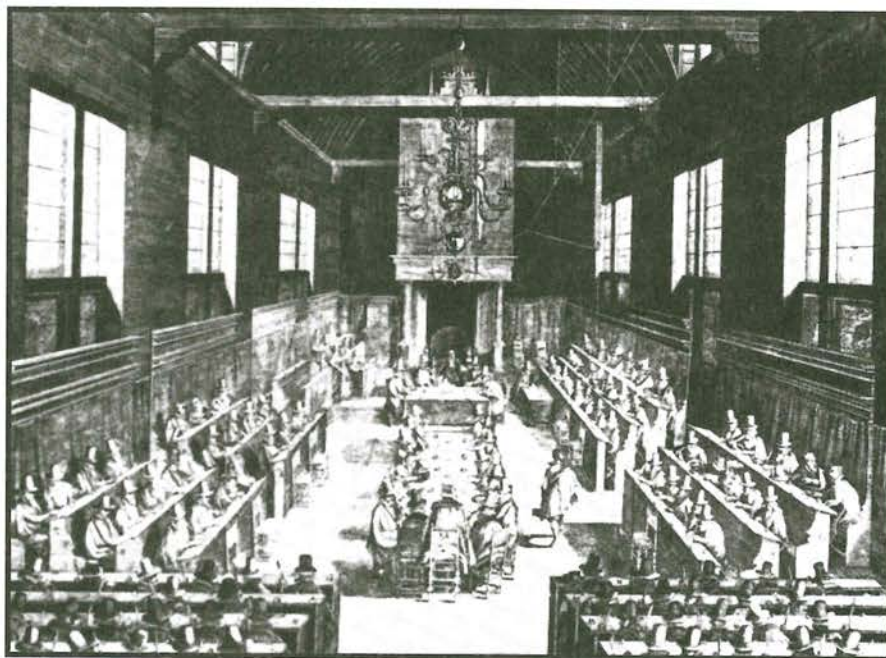
The Deeper Faith: An Exposition of the Canons of the Synod of Dort is Gordon H. Girod's exposition of the content of the Canons in six essays. The first five are on the "Five Points" in the order in which they appear in the Canons. The sixth answers the question (and charge), "Is It a Terrible Faith?" At the end, the book gives the text of the Canons as the Canons are held in the Reformed Church in America (RCA), in which denomination Girod was a pastor. This text makes plain that there is a serious, indeed fatal, weakness in the form of the Canons as maintained in the RCA. The deficiency comes perilously close to vitiating the Canons. The deficiency is that the sections of the Canons consisting of "rejection of errors" are elided. In the end, if a church will not reject the errors, it cannot uphold the truths. Girod's treatment of the Canons is solid. It is the virtue of his book that it makes explicit that the Canons are biblical. Published in 1958 by Reformed Publications in Grand Rapids, MI, this book too must be picked up used, or borrowed from the libraries.

Even though few of our subscribers read Dutch, I cannot refrain from calling attention to, and highly recommending, the splendid volume, *De Synode van Dordrecht in 1618 en 1619*. Five Reformed ministers and professors in the Netherlands are co-authors. W. van't Spijker has two chapters, one on the history preceding the synod and the other on the synod itself. H. Florijn describes the delegates, as well as the Arminians who were required to appear before the synod. C. C. de Bruin has a chapter on the synod's work with translating the Bible. And A. Moerkerken writes a chapter on the synod's debate and decisions re-

garding preaching the Heidelberg Catechism and regarding censorship of books. This book of 206 pages is a veritable gold mine of information about the Synod of Dordt, as well as an art gallery of pictures and illustrations of the synod, its trappings, and its people. Photographs of many of the delegates and of the Arminians accompany the biographical sketches, some in vivid color. The magnificently bearded Bogerman is a majestic Frisian. Sibelius is the one convivial delegate, smiling, waving cheerily to posterity, and sporting a suspiciously bulbous nose. The Arminians are a shifty lot. The cartoon of the Synod of Dordt, evidently by some bitter Arminian at the time, is hilarious. The synod is being held in a barn. Bogerman is a huge rooster vehemently crowing, "*Vervolging* (Persecution)." Van't Spijker's contributions on the history and on the doctrinal controversy are superb. The book is published by Den Hertog of Houten. It was reprinted in 1994.

It is worth learning Dutch for. The introduction is correct: "*Nimmer is een boek over deze synode op een dergelijke wijze verschenen.*" I express my appreciation to Albert

Meijer of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church (whose wood carvings of the synod are masterpieces) for bringing this book to my attention. □



Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619)

Report of Classis West

Rev. Steven Key

The September meeting of Classis West was held in Lansing, Illinois at Peace Protestant Reformed Church, Wednesday, September 3 and Thursday, September 4. The meeting of classis was preceded by an officebearers' conference on Tuesday, September 2. The theme of the conference was *Reformed Worship*. The conference was well-attended, not only by delegates to Classis West, but by professors and students of the Protestant Reformed Seminary, ministers of Classis East, and several visitors. The speeches, discussion, and fellowship at the conference were appreciated by all. Classis West looks

forward to another conference being planned for Houston, Texas, to be held just prior to the March classis meeting in 1998.

Pastor Jai Mahtani chaired the meeting of classis. For the first time in several years the agenda of classis was very lengthy and required two full days of deliberation.

Almost all the business of classis was conducted in closed session, as Classis dealt with discipline matters, as well as appeals brought by two parties.

Among other business, classis also granted classical appointments to South Holland PRC as follows: Rev. W. Bekkering (October 5 and 12); Rev. R. Miersma (November 23

September 3 & 4, 1997 at Peace PRC, Lansing, Illinois and 30); Rev. S. Key (December 7); Rev. S. Houck (December 14); Rev. G. VanBaren (January 11 & 18); Rev. M. DeVries (February 8 & 15); Rev. S. Houck (March 1); Rev. S. Key (March 8).

Evident throughout the classis meeting was the importance of a church federation, with mutual oversight being exercised according to the Reformed Church Order of Dordt. God must be thanked for the unity expressed in these meetings, with the prayer that He will also continue to work His grace in our churches by means of His Word and Spirit.

Rev. Steven Key,
Stated Clerk □

September 10, 1997
Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, September 10, 1997. The churches were all represented by two delegates. Rev. R. Van Overloop chaired this session.

The primary business of this classis was the examination of Pastors-elect James Laning and Martin VanderWal. After preaching full-length sermons, the examinees were subjected to an oral examina-

tion. With thanksgiving to God, the classis approved these examinations and authorized the congregation of Hope PRC to proceed with the ordination and installation of James Laning, and the congregation of Covenant PRC to proceed with the ordination and installation of Martin VanderWal. By the time this is published, both will be into the full work of a pastor.

In other business, classis was

in closed session to deal with a matter of discipline. Classis also granted Covenant PRC some additional time to consider the selling of their church property.

The expenses of classis amounted to \$1,791.70. Classis will meet next on Wednesday, January 14, 1998 at the Southwest PRC.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens,
Stated Clerk □

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Evangelism Activities

This fall, Christianity on Campus, a group which has for its advisors, members of the Evangelism Committee of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI, is again sponsoring a series of ten lecture/discussions which have to do with the fundamentals of Christian faith, and this in light of contemporary issues. These meetings are scheduled for Wednesday evenings at 7:30 in the Cook DeWitt Chapel on the campus of Grand Valley State University. The meetings were also intended to provide application to living and enjoying the Christian life as a young Christian in these latter days.

At the first meeting, on September 17, Rev. M. Dick, pastor at Grace, spoke on the topic "Religious Stew." You might be interested to know that, by using the term "Religious Stew," Rev. Dick meant to call attention to today's practice of the combining of the

best ingredients of various religions into one religion, which as a result is supposed to be digestible and delectable to all. Rev. Dick did go on to point out, however, that Christianity is basically one meal: Jesus Christ.

The next meeting, on September 24, Rev. Dick was scheduled to speak on the topic, "I Went to the Circus the Other Day, and a Worship Service Broke Out!" Some questions to be considered in that meeting were, What ought to characterize true worship? Is there room for different kinds of services to accommodate all kinds of people? And, may I wear jeans?

Mission Activities

As many of our PR readers know, the Foreign Mission Committee of our churches has learned that the Ghanaian government requires that a missionary going to Ghana must be sponsored by a church within Ghana. The FMC had before checked with the Ghanaian Embassy in Washington to determine how to begin the process of immigrating a missionary. Their answer was that we must go to Ghana, become a permanent resident, and then apply for recognition as a church mission. The

new information from Ghana means that the FMC will most likely advise our Hull, IA PRC not to call another missionary until they can sort this all out.

Our missionary to Northern Ireland, Rev. R. Hanco, reports that they continue to plan for and advertise their three trips to Wales in September. The first trip was from August 29 to September 8, the second was from the 12th to the 15th of September, and the third will be, the Lord willing, from the 19th to the 30th. Candidate Kleyn and his wife will also accompany Rev. Hanco on that last trip, from which they were scheduled to return to the States.

School Activities

On Saturday, September 20, there was a time of fellowship and celebration at Adams Christian School in Wyoming, MI, marking the completion of their Phase II addition. The evening concluded with a brief cornerstone ceremony in their new all-purpose room.

We take this opportunity to include also a note concerning the Free Christian School of Edgerton, MN. It is a small school of fourteen students that is in its 46th season. Not only are there few stu-

Mr. Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

dents, but most of them come from families that are struggling financially. So it is increasingly difficult for them to make ends meet. They have requested the prayers and continued financial support of our churches.

Denominational Activities

On September 16 the members of the Mr. & Mrs. Adult and Junior Societies in and around Grand Rapids, MI met at the

Hudsonville, MI PRC to hear Rev. J. Slopsema, pastor at the First PRC in Grand Rapids, speak on the topic, "Christian Living in a Materialistic World."

On Tuesday before the Wednesday, September 3 meeting of Classis West there was an Office Bearers' Conference on the theme, "Reformed Worship." Rev. S. Key gave the keynote address, entitled "Fellowship with the Holy One." Other speakers were Professors H. Hanko, D. Engelsma,

and R. Decker, and Revs. R. VanOverloop and B. Gritters.

Minister Activities

Rev. J. Slopsema has received the call from the South Holland, IL PRC.

Food for Thought

"Calvinism is that sight of the majesty of God that pervades all of life and all of experience."

—B.B. Warfield □

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 4, 1997, our parents and grandparents,

MR. and MRS. BERT VAN MAANEN, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

We are thankful to our covenant Lord for His sovereign care over them and for the years He has given them. We are deeply grateful for their godly example and for the covenant home they provided. We pray that God may continue to bless them and keep them in His care.

"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generation" (Psalm 100:4, 5).

- ❖ Gary and Florence Horstman
 - ❖ Rog and Marjean Buys
 - ❖ Alvin and Brenda Bylsma
 - ❖ Marlyn and Alvina Hofman
 - ❖ Marv and Carol Anema
 - ❖ Evert D. and Kathy VanMaanen
 - ❖ Wayne and Jan VanderMaten
- 36 grandchildren
1 great granddaughter

Hull, Iowa

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thankfulness to God, we celebrated the 25th wedding anniversary of our parents,

JOHN and CAROLYN CLEVELAND, on September 29, 1997. We are grateful to God for parents who have brought us up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and have made their home a spiritual haven from the world.

"Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered" (Psalm 40:5).

- ❖ Aaron
- ❖ Jason and Tami
- ❖ Leah
- ❖ John, Jr.
- ❖ Michael
- ❖ Maria

Grand Rapids, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 26 our parents and grandparents,

MARK and LYNDIA SCHOLTEN, will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

We, their children and grandchildren, thank our heavenly Father for the years He has given them, and we pray that God, in His grace, may continue to bless their marriage in the future.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

- ❖ Jeff and Kim Scholten
Amber
- ❖ Dave and Kari Doezeema
- ❖ Jason Scholten and
special friend Tammi Mingerink
- ❖ Kelly Scholten and
special friend Brendon Looyenga

Jenison, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council and congregation of the Loveland PRC extend their sympathy to Elder Frank VanBaren and his family in the death of

MRS. ALICE ZANDSTRA.

May they be assured of God's promise that "precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. G. VanBaren, President
Robert Brands, Clerk