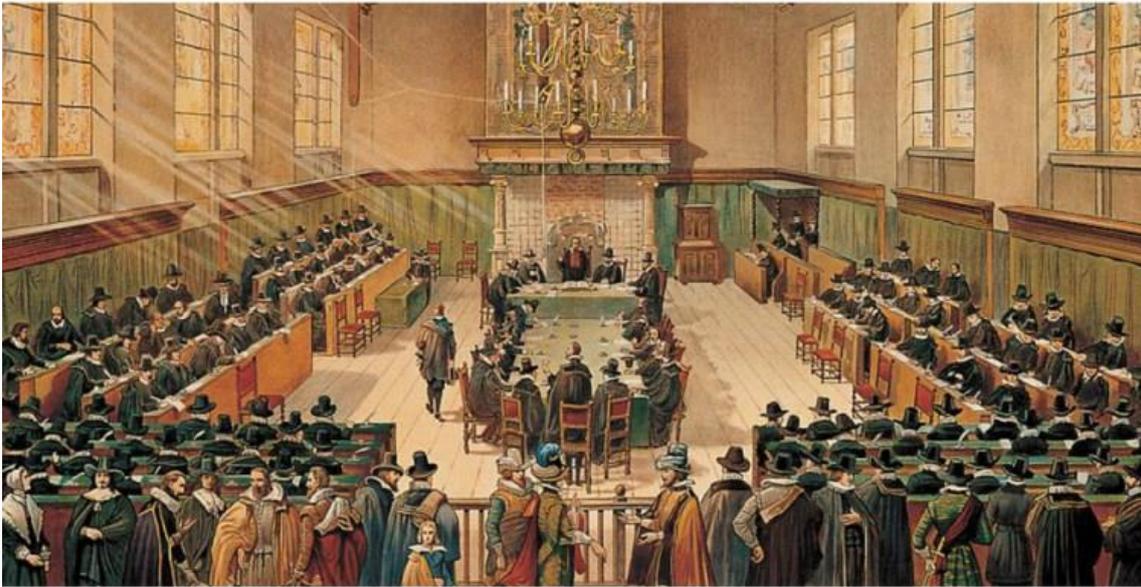


The “*eodem modo*” Rejected in the Conclusion of the Canons of Dordt



Homer C. Hoeksema

The “*eodem modo*” Rejected in the Conclusion of the *Canons of Dordt*

Homer C. Hoeksema

The following originally appeared in the *Standard Bearer*,
vol. 58, nos. 16-20 (May-Sept, 1982)

OUTLINE:

Introduction

What is Meant by this Expression?

The Misuse Made of this Expression

G. C. Berkouwer

Other Dutch Theologians

Theologians in America: Harry Boer and James Daane

What is the Correct Understanding?

APPENDIX A: The “Conclusion” of *Canons of Dordrecht*

APPENDIX B: *Canons*, Head 1, Article 6

APPENDIX C: *Canons*, Head 1, Article 15

APPENDIX D: *Canons*, Head 1, Rejection of Errors, 8

Introduction

This is a subject which has been much discussed in recent Reformed theology in connection with the doctrine of predestination and especially in connection with the doctrine of reprobation. Appeal has been made by some theologians to the fact that this expression, *eodem modo*, is rejected in the Conclusion of the *Canons of Dordrecht* (see APPENDIX A) in order to modify—in fact, to change radically—the doctrine of reprobation as taught and confessed in the first chapter of the *Canons*. It is worthwhile, therefore, to make a study of this subject and to see whether the claims of these theologians are true.

What is Meant by this Expression?

The expression is, of course, Latin. It means “in the same manner.” It is taken from the Latin version of the *Canons*, Latin being the language

in which the *Canons* were first composed at the Synod of Dordrecht. For those of our readers who know Latin, here is the entire statement in which this expression is found: “*eodem modo, quo electio est fons et causa fidei ac bonorum operum, reprobationem esse causam infidelitatis et impietatis.*” The English translation is as follows: “that in the same manner in which the election is the fountain and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety.”

It is important, however, to understand the setting in which this statement is found. In the first place, the statement is found in a paragraph which contains a long series of slanders, or calumnies, by the Arminian enemies of the truth. These slanders and false charges of the Arminians were used by them in their attempt to discredit the Reformed and to picture them as teaching terrible, God-dishonoring, and immoral doctrines. In the Conclusion of the *Canons* this entire series of slanders is put in quotation marks. In other words, these are things which the Arminians said that the Reformed churches taught, but which they did not really teach. In the second place, this is clearly indicated in the Conclusion when this quotation is introduced by the words: “Whence it clearly appears, that some whom such conduct by no means became, have violated all truth, equity, and charity, in wishing to persuade the public:”—and then follows the paragraph which quotes the Arminian slanders. In the third place, at the end of the series of Arminian slanders the Conclusion states: “... which the Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge, but even detest with their whole soul.” It is in this sense, therefore, that this “*eodem modo*” is *rejected* in the Conclusion; it is rejected as a false charge, a slander. This certainly implies that our fathers denied that they taught what is stated in this slanderous charge of the Arminians. It is important to take note of what I have just stated. By rejecting this “*eodem modo*” the Synod did not reject the *doctrine* against which this slander was brought. But they denied the truth and validity of the *slander*. This important distinction must be kept in mind; we shall return to it later.

Finally, we should keep in mind that the doctrine against which this slander was brought by the Arminians is the doctrine of reprobation as it is taught especially in Articles 6 and 15 of the First Head of Doctrine and Paragraph 8 of the Rejection of Errors of the First Head (see APPENDICES B, C, and D). It would take us too far afield at this point to offer an exposition of these articles. I refer the reader to the articles themselves and to my exposition of them in [*The Voice of Our Fathers: An Exposition of the Canons of Dordrecht*](#).

The Misuse Made of this Expression

When we refer to the “misuse” of this expression in the Conclusion, we mean to point to the fact that the rejection of the “*eodem modo*” in the Conclusion has been played over against the doctrine of reprobation as taught in the First Head in order to water down that doctrine of sovereign reprobation and, eventually, to deny it completely. There has been some variation in the degree to which this has been done, as we shall see. But about the fact that this attempt has been made there can be no question. In other words, some theologians claim that this expression in the Conclusion really contradicts what is taught in the First Head; and they want to maintain what is taught in the Conclusion at the expense of what is really taught in Articles 6 and 15 of the First Head.

G. C. Berkouwer

The leading theologian in this respect has been Dr. G. C. Berkouwer. As early as 1955, when the Dutch original of his *Divine Election* was published, he began to modify the Reformed doctrine of reprobation with an appeal to this “*eodem modo*.” He does this in a lengthy chapter on “Election and Rejection.” There are many facets to his treatment of this subject—among them, in our opinion, a repeated attempt to present Calvin and Bavinck more mildly than they really are—and it is impossible in this space to repeat all that Dr. Berkouwer wrote. But he refers to the “*eodem modo*” as follows (page 175 of the American edition):

This becomes evident from the fact that the Reformed doctrine of election repeatedly discusses this parallel and always rejects it. A serious warning is constantly given here, but critics always neglect this warning and thereby attack a mere caricature. This warning is met not only in dogmatical discussion but also in the Confessions of the Church; it is even explicitly mentioned in the Canons of Dort, that is to say, in the “defense and warning” supplied to the Canons; for there, where the doctrine of election is defended against misunderstanding and caricatures, it is denied “that in the same manner in which the election is the fountain and the cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety” (Conclusion of the Canons). Then it is emphatically stated that the Reformed churches “not only do not

acknowledge, but even detest with their whole soul” such teaching.

And here the direction in which Berkouwer wants to go becomes plain:

Election is the fountain of all saving good, and out of it flow the fruits of faith, holiness, and other gifts, and finally also life eternal (CD, I, 9). This line of thinking is not followed when sin and unbelief are discussed. Rather, man is then indicated as the cause and reason of unbelief (CD, I, 5; cf. also II, 6). [But *Canons* I, 5 speaks of the “*cause of guilt*” of unbelief and sin. HCH]

But there is one passage that seems to contradict this, namely, where the *Canons* say: “That some receive the gift of faith, and others do not receive it, proceeds from God’s eternal decree” (CD, I, 6). The question arises how we must reconcile this “non-granting” with the statement of I, 5, where it is said that God is not the cause of sin and guilt. One’s first impression is that this is a simplistic way of explaining causality. But when we read I, 6, we see that it directs our attention to the acts of God in the life of man. He softens man’s heart and bends it to faith, but other hearts He leaves in their sin and stubbornness. Unless we want to interpret the *Canons* in a supralapsarian manner—which is impossible—we shall have to interpret this as a connection which is laid between sinfulness and stubbornness on the one hand, and the judicial acts of God on the other hand, not in the sense that either belief or unbelief become an independent and autonomous power over against the counsel of God, but in the sense that the non-granting is evidently meant as the judicial act of God toward man in sin. And when all the acts of God are regarded in the light of His counsel and decree, then this does not imply a deterministic explanation but a reference to the sovereignty of God, who in a lost world does not elect on the basis of merit because all men are in the same state of damnation (CD, I, 6). (*Ibid.*, pp. 180-181)

Now a careful comparison of this paragraph with *Canons* I, 6 will show that this is by no means the meaning of Article 6. The reader may check this for himself.

But my point in making this quotation is to point out the direction in which Dr. Berkouwer wants to go. Already here he wants to reduce reprobation as taught in Article 6 to an activity of God in time: “the acts of God in the life of man.” Further, he wants to make of reprobation

simply a *judicial* activity, that is, not a matter of God's decree but a matter of God's *judgments*.

In close connection with this stands the fact that in this chapter Dr. Berkouwer clearly is already moving in the direction that reprobation means only that God rejects those who reject Him. This is plain from the following emphasis on page 183:

Most prominent in this connection is the fact that Scripture repeatedly speaks of God's rejection as a divine answer in history, as a reaction to man's sin and disobedience, not as its cause ... The rejection here is obvious; it is not an arbitrary, obscure act of Jehovah; it is clearly His holy reaction against sin. Whenever rejection is mentioned in the relationship between God and His people, not a static but a dynamic relationship is evident. The rejection and the curse are mentioned in connection with the warning "if thou wilt not ..." (cf. Deut. 28:15 ff.). There is a clear connection between sin and curse, sin and rejection. The "therefore!" of divine rejection is an answer to the causality which is at work here, the actual and only cause of sin, which can be denied but is nevertheless real.

All of this becomes more explicit in the later Berkouwer and in his disciples. And we shall make this plain in what follows.

But even now we may point out that if the position spelled out in these questions were correct, that is, if this were actually the teaching of the theologians of Dordrecht, there would never have been any room for (nor any need on the part of the Arminians) the slander that the Reformed taught "that in the same manner in which the election is the fountain and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety." This is a slander which will only be brought against the doctrine of *sovereign reprobation from eternity*, never against a doctrine of judicial rejection in time.

There was no fundamental change in Dr. Berkouwer's position after his book on *Divine Election* in 1955, only an increasing clarity in his repudiation of double predestination and in his reinterpretation of the doctrine of election as a "gracious election." The latter expression has increasingly been substituted for the idea of a sovereign and double predestination. A "gracious election" is, of course, a thoroughly Reformed idea; but in today's theological parlance it has almost become suspect, because it is so frequently used as a cover for the denial of the truth that sovereign election and sovereign rejection are inseparable aspects of sovereign predestination.

Other Dutch Theologians

There have, of course, been other Dutch theologians who, like Berkouwer, repudiated double predestination. Dr. A. D. R. Polman was a Kampen theologian who early repudiated it. Dr. Herman Ridderbos does so in his treatment of Romans 9-11. Berkouwer writes about his consultation of Ridderbos in *A Half Century of Theology*, Chapter 4. In part, he states the following:

In view of this, Ridderbos did not interpret Paul's words about Jacob and Esau as teaching double predestination. Indeed, the notion of double predestination is "an arbitrary and radical distortion of the original intention of the biblical words." The word "radical" is not an exaggeration. Ridderbos sees election connected, not with a definite number of people, but with Christ. This newer exegesis operates in another climate than did the older exegesis, and it implies another kind of pastoral opportunity as well. Ridderbos fails to find anywhere in the development of Paul's thought "the hidden decree" that might function as "the background or explanation of the separation (between people) that comes about by the preaching of the gospel ..." (*Paul, An Outline of His Theology*, E.T. 1975, p. 352). Preaching, for Paul, creates a meaningful open situation; his argument does not move toward "twofold destinies and twofold futures, but to the ... way of faith as the only way of salvation in view of God's liberating grace." Here the motif and pattern of God's action are opposed to arbitrariness. (p. 102)

Berkouwer himself sums up the shift in doctrine in the Netherlands concerning predestination—and all of this stands connected with the misuse of the *eodem modo* in the Conclusion of the *Canons*—as follows:

Thus the reconsideration of election has tended for several years, not in the direction of a double decree that merely waits to be executed, but in the direction of grace as the nature, the character of election. Election is seen precisely as *not* arbitrary; and this tendency is not merely an intuitive protest—however needed—against the notion of "absolute might," but one that moves from a new recognition of the character of election itself. It arises from an awareness that anyone who expects salvation from grace rather than from works is set immediately within the sphere of election; but he need not encounter alongside or over election in grace a decision that was made in a *hidden* decree. I cannot help noting

that this shift within the firm tradition of the election doctrine has gained an encouraging consensus, supporting my own efforts to understand the meaning of the confession of election, and to discover in it anew the possibility for a celebration of the depths and riches of grace. (*Ibid.*)

Two more items must be mentioned in this connection.

First of all, an official shift in doctrine came about in 1969-70 in the Gereformeerde Kerken. A similar shift had come about already in 1961 in the Hervormde Kerk, when they published, in response to a gravamen, some guidelines for dealing with the doctrine of election. Incidentally, Berkouwer writes about these guidelines: “The publication of the guidelines provoked a renewed consideration of the deepest intentions of the Arminians of the seventeenth century: their fear of the thought that God would be the author of sin and their fear of determinism.” Note the suggestion that the Arminians had legitimate fears and good motivation in their opposition to the Reformed doctrine! But to continue, Dr. Berkouwer describes how the shift came about in the GKN:

The same problems came to expression in the gravamen that B. J. Brouwer, a physician, addressed to the Gereformeerde Synod. Brouwer was concerned about the morality of signing a subscription to the creeds (which he was obliged, as an elder of the church to do) while he objected to certain expressions in the Canons of Dordt, particularly their teaching of reprobation in I/6, 15 and I/8 (Rejection of Errors). The gravity of his objections is clear in the question he asked about the Canons’ statement on the decree of reprobation: he asked whether the authors—unwittingly—were guilty of blasphemy, a question, he said, that he himself could not answer negatively.

The delegates at the Synod were unanimous in their understanding of the central thrust and intentions of the Canons: the unmerited sovereign grace of God. But the question was raised as to whether this fundamental intention had not been forced into the category of the “universal causality” of God. They pointed out that Brouwer’s objections were directed at the doctrine of double predestination and, therewith, against the “eternal decree of reprobation.” Most deeply, then, the gravamen touched on the question of the character of God and on His manner of relating to the human race. A synodical study commission concluded that the disputed sections of the Canons did not rest on the scriptural passages they cited, but were products of another source—namely

the philosophical-theological concept of the all-causative God. “They are rooted in the doctrine of double predestination, of which election and reprobation are aspects of the unchangeable and eternal divine decree, a decree that is realized in time.” But the commission also had to deal with the question of blasphemy that Brouwer raised. It acknowledged the real intention of the Canons—to put all possible emphasis on the sovereignty of God’s love and grace for guilty and lost mankind, with which Brouwer agreed. But then it added that the disputed passages do “not speak in a correct way of the Lord God.” The Synod then concluded that it was justifiable to “entertain and to publicize such objections as Dr. Brouwer brought against the passages in the Canons of Dordt.” (*A Half Century of Theology*, pp. 104-105).

The second item is a statement of Dr. Berkouwer himself in 1974. When he and Dr. Herman Ridderbos appeared at the Synod of the Hervormde Kerk to present the “Unanimous Testimony of Faith” (a kind of condensed new confession) in behalf of the GKN, and when they ran into considerable opposition from various quarters in the Hervormde Kerk, especially from men of the Gereformeerde Bond, Dr. Berkouwer was reported to have said, “We say ‘No’ to double predestination.” After the synodical judgment about the Brouwer Gravamen, of course, Berkouwer was entirely within his rights to say this and to say this of the GKN. But I mention this in order to illustrate concretely where the course begun in the 1950’s ended in the 1970’s.

Moreover, it ought to be clear as the sun in the heavens, first of all, that if Berkouwer’s position in 1955-1982 had been that of the Synod of Dordt in 1618-19, the slander repudiated in the Conclusion of the *Canons* would never have been made by the Arminians, would never have had to be repudiated, and would not now appear in the Conclusion. In the second place, it ought to be plain that there has indeed been a *shift* in thinking since Dordt. Berkouwer himself calls it a shift. The men who take Berkouwer’s position should all admit that they no longer stand where Dordt stood.

Theologians in America

And now we turn to the American scene. When one analyzes what has been produced on this subject by American theologians—and I have

in mind particularly Dr. Harry Boer and Dr. James Daane—he finds little that is new; most of it is repetition of men such as Polman, Ridderbos, and Berkouwer.

As might be expected, in his gravamen which was treated by the Christian Reformed Synod in 1980, Dr. Boer also refers to the matter of that statement in the Conclusion of the *Canons (Acts of Synod 1980, p. 496)*. But he is not satisfied with it and wants *Canons I/6, 15* repudiated. He writes:

We conclude: from the viewpoint of ultimacy, the source of faith is not a mystery. It is a gift of God. From the viewpoint of ultimacy, the origin of unbelief, like that of sin itself, is a mystery. We cannot penetrate into it. The statement in the *Canons*, “That some receive the gift of faith from God and others do not receive it, proceeds from God’s eternal decree (Chap. I, Art. 6)” is in its second part untrue and constitutes a denial of the nondisclosure in the Word of God of any cause of unbelief other than the heart of man. The rejection in the Conclusion of the *Canons* of the charge “that in the same manner (*eodem modo*) in which election is the fountain and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety” is not a credible withdrawing of the clearly contrary teaching of the *Canons* in Chapter I, Arts. 6 and 15. Rather it must be seen as a drawing back at the brink from the enormity of the consequences of a theological rationalism made by men who, on the one hand, did not have the courage to stand by what they had written and, on the other hand, refused to break with the logical premise that led them to it.

In passing we may note that the Study Report does not see this expression in the same light as does the Boer Gravamen. It does not recognize a conflict between the statement in the Conclusion and the doctrine of reprobation as set forth in *Canons I*. This is not due, however, to a basic disagreement with Boer and to an embracing of the teachings of the *Canons*. After all, the Study Report first twists Articles 6 and 15 of *Canons I*, and then in its recommendations reduces reprobation to a kind of limited election. Except for a weak clinging to a notion of “deficient causality,” the Study Report is in agreement with Boer. But the Study Report sees no conflict between the body of the *Canons* and the Conclusion simply because it has first changed the meaning of the *Canons* with respect to reprobation, and therefore finds no need of “drawing back at the brink” when it comes to the Conclusion.

Dr. James Daane, in his *The Freedom of God*, goes beyond all bounds in his misuse of the *Canons'* rejection of this "*eodem modo*." We may note, incidentally, that he is very careless in his reference to this expression. More than once in his book he cites the Latin incorrectly as "*in eodem modo*" rather than "*eodem modo*;" and more than once he writes as though the *Canons* simply say "*non eodem modo* (not in the same manner)"—something which the *Canons* do not say in so many words, though they indeed reject an Arminian slander in the Conclusion. More than this, however, Daane gives to this expression much broader implications with respect to the whole concept of what he calls "decretal theology" than it was ever intended to have by the Synod of Dordrecht. And above all, it must not be forgotten that all of Daane's illegitimate appeal to this expression in the Conclusion is for the purpose of denying the very doctrine which the *Canons* teach: the doctrine of sovereign reprobation. In other words, Dr. Daane lands where Dr. Berkouwer landed. Daane makes this very plain when he writes on page 200: "This means that any doctrine of reprobation is illegitimate by biblical standards *except that which biblical teaching sanctions*: that he (sic) who rejects God, God rejects."

To cite in context and to refute all of Daane's misuses of this expression would probably result in another book as long as his. Permit me, however, to give a few instances.

On pages 31 and 32 he writes:

When Van Til and Hoeksema speak this way, they contend that they are articulating authentic Reformed theology. Their differences come within the context of a much deeper agreement. Both expound a decretal theology in which God's decree is not identified with His freedom, but with His essence, and thus with God Himself. On this position God Himself is—and is in the same manner (*in eodem modo*)—the cause and therefore the explanation and rationale of "whatsoever comes to pass," including election and reprobation—a principle the *Canons* of Dort reject. It is evident that nothing in decretal theology is new, special, unique, specifically gracious, truly gospel, that everything is essentially neutral, of the same nature and accomplished "in the same manner."

Notice how already here the rejection of a calumny in the Conclusion of the *Canons* is elevated by Daane to a "principle" which the *Canons* reject, and that, too, with applications not only to reprobation but

to the whole of God's counsel. The theologians of Dordt would certainly not recognize their own theology in this presentation of Dr. Daane.

In a similar vein he writes on pages 35 and 36:

The Conclusion of the Canons of Dort explicitly rejects—in fact, *detests*—the position that election and reprobation are related “in the same manner” (*in [sic] eodem modo*). God does not elect men in the same manner in which He rejects men. Election and reprobation are not simply two sides of the same coin. By rejecting the “in the same manner,” the Canons destroy the argument that the endorsement of a proper doctrine of election is automatically also an endorsement of a proper doctrine of reprobation. The relationship of election and reprobation is not a simple one, like two sides of the same coin, or the simple affirmation that one logically implies the other.

Again Daane goes far beyond what the Conclusion of the *Canons* actually states. Note carefully what it is that “the Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge, but even detest with their whole soul.” It is this: “that in the same manner in which the election is the fountain and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety.” Daane, however, says that the Conclusion detests “the position that election and reprobation are related ‘in the same manner.’” Daane makes it that “God does not elect men in the same manner in which He rejects men.” He is trying to make the Conclusion state something about which it says absolutely nothing. Furthermore, Dr. Daane's entire argumentation against the idea of a single decree of predestination which includes both election and reprobation is specious, since it is based on the misrepresentation and misinterpretation of the Conclusion just described. Nor does he have a satisfactory answer to the plain fact that the *Canons* themselves hold to such a single decree.

This incorrect appeal to the Conclusion of the *Canons*, moreover, permeates Daane's book. He returns to it in the chapter on “The Election of the Church,” pages 149-150, as follows:

The Conclusion to the Canons of Dort asserts that God does not elect and reprobate in the same manner. Paul makes it clear in Romans that God does not elect Jews and Gentiles in the same manner. And it is equally clear that God does not elect Jesus Christ and the individual Christian in the same manner. But decretal theology cannot honor this rejection of the “in the same manner.” It insists that the simple divine decree is without distinctions, though it appears to finite minds to have them. But if

so, the Canons' insistence that God does not elect and reject "in the same manner" goes out the window. The rejection of the "in the same manner" causes decretal theology no end of trouble.

Notice, by the way, that here Daane expands his application of what he elevates to a controlling principle (not in the same manner) so that it applies not only to election and reprobation but even to different aspects of election (of Jews and Gentiles, of Christ and the individual Christian). It ought to be evident also from this that Daane goes far beyond anything the *Canons* ever intended to say in the Conclusion.

Never tiring of combatting what he calls "decretal theology" (though he frequently misrepresents it, and though he would find himself in conflict with every Reformed theologian from Calvin forward—and not merely with so-called Protestant scholasticism from Beza forward), he returns to the subject once more in the chapter on "The Freedom of God and the Logic of Election." On page 173 he writes:

Given the character of the decree as they see it, decretal theologians have sufficient reason for positing a logical nexus between election and reprobation. This logical nexus, however, requires that God elects and reprobates "in the same manner." If the decree is a logical harmony, everything in it is logically and rationally interrelated in the same manner. Exhaustively rational relationships allow no distinctions. Election then implies reprobation as logically as reprobation implies election (sheer nonsense! HCH). But such a view violates the "in the same manner" rejected by the Canons of Dort and leaves no room for the freedom of God. Election and reprobation both become necessary, and with this necessity theology loses all need for the language of grace. Indeed, we have noted earlier that the concept of grace is distorted in the thought of the thorough-going decretal theologian.

It is small wonder that Daane ends his fulminations against decretal theology by openly denying what has always been the Reformed doctrine of reprobation, as we have already noted that he does on page 200. Or did he perhaps begin with a denial of reprobation and imagine that he found in the *Canons* themselves a stick with which to lick the dog? Really, you know, it is a preposterous idea—if you know anything about the fathers of Dordt—that they should deny in the Conclusion what they so clearly asserted in the First Head of Doctrine!

What is the Correct Understanding?

The correct understanding of this expression in the Conclusion is very simple and can be readily understood. Actually there is hardly any need of explanation, if only this expression is read in the context of the rest of the Conclusion, in the light of the *Canons* themselves, and in the light of the history of the Arminian controversy.

As we said, this expression must be understood in the light of and as being in harmony with what the *Canons* themselves say about the doctrine of reprobation. That this is true and that the Conclusion must not be understood as a kind of modifying appendage to the *Canons* is in harmony with what the Conclusion itself states; and it is also historically accurate. In the first place, it should not be overlooked that in this very Conclusion the Synod of Dordrecht begins by *re-affirming* the doctrine of the *Canons*. The very first statement is this:

And this is the perspicuous, simple, and ingenuous declaration of the orthodox doctrine respecting the five articles which have been controverted in the Belgic churches; and the rejection of the errors, with which they have for some time been troubled.

How strange it would be if in that same Conclusion in the very next paragraph the Synod would nevertheless back off from and modify that “perspicuous, simple, and ingenuous declaration of the orthodox doctrine” respecting one of those five articles. And how illogical that would have been on the part of the very theologians who are sometimes criticized for their stringent logic and even called “scholastic” by some. In the second place, this is confirmed by the fact that the Conclusion of the *Canons* was not adopted in separation from the *Canons* proper and as an after-thought. Not at all. The Acts of the National Synod of Dordrecht tell us that in the one hundred thirty-fifth and one hundred thirty-sixth sessions all five heads of doctrine, along with the Conclusion, were once more read and finally adopted, and that then each chapter was separately subscribed to by all the delegations. How strange it would have been if at the very sessions in which the delegates once more explicitly affirmed the doctrine of reprobation as taught in *Canons* I, they would also deliberately have adopted and affirmed by their signatures a Conclusion which was designed flatly to contradict that doctrine. No, the only explanation is that what is stated in the Conclusion is in perfect harmony with what was first stated in the body of the *Canons*.

Besides, the simple fact is that here in the Conclusion the Synod was not adopting a doctrine, nor even rejecting an error. That part of Synod's work was finished. Here the Synod is merely calling attention to various calumnies, slanders, false charges, which the Arminians brought against the Reformed truth. Concerning these, which the Arminians tried to impute to the Reformed churches, the Conclusion says: The Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge these ideas, but even detest them with their whole soul.

And then we must remember that the particular calumny of the Arminians which we are discussing will never be registered against any other view of reprobation than the Reformed doctrine of *sovereign reprobation*. The moment you change reprobation, as Daane and Berkouwer do, to a so-called judicial response of God to man's sin, no Arminian will ever bring this charge against your doctrine: it would neither be necessary nor would it make sense. It is the same with this doctrine as with the doctrine of justification by faith and the doctrine of sovereign election. Against the doctrine of justification by faith the charge is brought: this doctrine makes men careless and profane. As soon as you would change the doctrine to one of justification by works, no one would bring this charge. Against the doctrine of sovereign election, the same charge is brought: this doctrine makes men careless and profane, or makes men carnally secure (*Canons I, 13 and the Conclusion*). As soon as you change the doctrine to one of election on the basis of foreseen faith (conditional election), no one will register this charge against your doctrine. So also here, the charge is that the doctrine of sovereign reprobation means that reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety *in the same manner* that election is the fountain and cause of faith and good works. As soon as you would change the doctrine to one of conditional reprobation or reprobation as a mere judicial response to sin, this charge will not even be brought against your doctrine. This is so true that the very fact that such a charge is brought against your doctrine is a pretty good indication that you are doctrinally on the right track!

Now let us note carefully the specific point of this slander and its repudiation. It has nothing whatsoever to do with election and reprobation themselves being "in the same manner," as Dr. Daane contends. No, but the Reformed Churches are slandered as teaching that "reprobation is the *cause* of unbelief and impiety *in the same manner* in which election is the *fountain and the cause* of faith and good works." What is the point here? It is as follows:

1) The Arminians acknowledge that the Reformed teach that election is the *cause* in the sense of being the *fountain* of faith and good works. And this is correct, according to *Canons I, 9*.

2) The Arminians accuse the Reformed of teaching that reprobation is the *cause* of unbelief and impiety *in the same manner*, that is, the *cause in the sense of fountain*.

3) In other words, this comes down to the old charge that the Reformed teach that just as God is the Author of faith and good works, so He is the Author of unbelief and impiety. Just as a fountain is known by the water that flows forth from it, so that sweet and good water flows from a sweet and good fountain, while bitter and foul water flows from a foul and bitter fountain, so it is in the spiritual sense of the word. From a good fountain flow forth faith and good works. From a foul fountain flow forth unbelief and impiety. And the Arminians accuse the Reformed of teaching that just as God's election is the good fountain of faith and good works, so God's reprobation is the foul fountain of unbelief and impiety. This is the point of their "in the same manner."

Now what is the Reformed answer to this? It is as follows:

1) In the first place, we certainly acknowledge and believe that God's election is the cause and *fountain* of faith and good works. The electing God is the Author of all our salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. This is the plain teaching, as we said, of *Canons I, 9*.

2) Secondly, we detest with our whole soul that God's reprobation is in the same manner the *fountain* of unbelief and impiety. This was already plainly stated in *Canons I, 15*: the doctrine of reprobation by no means makes God the author of sin. God is the overflowing fountain of all good, never the fountain of evil. No, the foul fountain of unbelief and impiety is sinful man's own wicked and perverse heart.

3) Thirdly, this by no means places unbelief and sin outside of the decree of reprobation. Article 6 plainly states it, that some do not receive the gift of faith proceeds from God's eternal decree. God is not the Author of their unbelief, but it is nevertheless according to His *decree* that they are unbelieving. And Article 15 plainly states that the decree of reprobation by no means makes God the author of sin, but it also insists that the decree of reprobation (both as a decree of preterition, passing by, and as a decree of condemnation) proceeds out of God's sovereign, most just, irreprehensible and unchangeable good pleasure. Reprobation is not *because of sin*. No, the reprobate are sovereignly *appointed to be* vessels of wrath fitted unto destruction. And the damnation to which they are eternally and sovereignly appointed is a damnation *in the way of* their own

sin and unbelief, that is, in the way of the sin and unbelief of which they themselves are the authors and of which their own evil heart is the fountain.

Thus there is perfect harmony between Articles 6 and 15 of the First Head of Doctrine and this rejection of an evil Arminian slander in the Conclusion.

APPENDIX A

The “Conclusion” of the *Canons of Dordrecht*

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

“... that the doctrine of the Reformed churches concerning predestination, and the points annexed to it, by its own genius and necessary tendency, leads off the minds of men from all piety and religion; that it is an opiate administered by the flesh and by the devil, and the stronghold of Satan, where he lies in wait for all; and from which he wounds multitudes, and mortally strikes through many with the darts both of despair and security; that it makes God the author of sin, unjust, tyrannical, hypocritical; that it is nothing more than interpolated Stoicism, Manicheism, Libertinism, Turcism; that it renders men carnally secure, since they are persuaded by it that nothing can hinder the salvation of the elect, let them live as they please; and therefore, that they may safely perpetrate every species of the most atrocious crimes; and that, if the reprobate should even perform truly all the works of the saints, their obedience would not in the least contribute to their salvation; that the same doctrine teaches, that God, by a mere arbitrary act of his will, without the least respect or view to sin, has predestinated the greatest part of the world to eternal damnation; and, has created them for this very purpose; that *in the same manner* [*eodem modo*] in which the election is the fountain and cause of faith and good works, reprobation is the cause of unbelief and impiety; that many children of the faithful are torn, guiltless, from their mothers’ breasts, and tyrannically plunged into hell; so that, neither baptism, nor the prayers of the Church at their baptism, can at all profit by them;” and many other things of the same kind, which the

Reformed Churches not only do not acknowledge, but even detest with their whole soul. Wherefore, this Synod of Dort, in the name of the Lord, conjures as many as piously call upon the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, to judge of the faith of the Reformed Churches, not from the calumnies, which, on every side, are heaped upon it; nor from the private expressions of a few among ancient and modern teachers, often dishonestly quoted, or corrupted, and wrested to a meaning quite foreign to their intention; but from the public confessions of the Churches themselves, and from the declaration of the orthodox doctrine, confirmed by the unanimous consent of all and each of the members of the whole Synod. Moreover, the Synod warns calumniators themselves, to consider the terrible judgment of God which awaits them, for bearing false witness against the confessions of so many Churches, for distressing the consciences of the weak; and for laboring to render suspected the society of the truly faithful. Finally, this Synod exhorts all their brethren in the gospel of Christ, to conduct themselves piously and religiously in handling this doctrine, both in the universities and churches; to direct it, as well in discourse, as in writing, to the glory of the Divine Name, to holiness of life, and to the consolation of afflicted souls; to regulate, by the Scripture, according to the analogy of faith, not only their sentiments, but also their language; and, to abstain from all those phrases which exceed the limits necessary to be observed in ascertaining the genuine sense of the holy Scriptures; and may furnish insolent sophists with a just pretext for violently assailing, or even vilifying, the doctrine of the Reformed Churches.

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

AMEN.

APPENDIX B

Canons, Head 1, Article 6

That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree, "For known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world," Acts 15:18. "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his will," Ephesians 1:11. According to which

decree, he graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however obstinate, and inclines them to believe, while he leaves the non-elect in his just judgment to their own wickedness and obduracy. And herein is especially displayed the profound, and merciful, and at the same time the righteous discrimination between men, equally involved in ruin; or that decree of election and reprobation, revealed in the Word of God, which though men of perverse, impure and unstable minds wrest to their own destruction, yet to holy and pious souls affords unspeakable consolation.

APPENDIX C

Canons, Head 1, Article 15

What peculiarly tends to illustrate and recommend to us the eternal and unmerited grace of election, is the express testimony of sacred Scripture, that not all, but some only are elected, while others are passed by in the eternal election of God; whom God, out of his sovereign, most just, irreprehensible and unchangeable good pleasure, hath decreed to leave in the common misery into which they have willfully plunged themselves, and not to bestow upon them saving faith and the grace of conversion; but leaving them in his just judgment to follow their own ways, at last for the declaration of his justice, to condemn and punish them forever, not only on account of their unbelief, but also for all their other sins. And this is the decree of reprobation which by no means makes God the author of sin (the very thought of which is blasphemy), but declares him to be an awful, irreprehensible, and righteous judge and avenger thereof.

APPENDIX D

Canons, Head 1, Rejection of Errors, 8

[The true doctrine concerning Election and Reprobation having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those] ... who teach: That God, simply by virtue of his righteous will, did not decide either to leave anyone

in the fall of Adam and in the common state of sin and condemnation, or to pass anyone by in the communication of grace which is necessary for faith and conversion. For this is firmly decreed: "He hath mercy on whom he will, and whom he will he hardeneth," Romans 9:18. And also this: "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given," Matthew 13:11. Likewise: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes; yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight," Matthew 11:25,26.

