

D.V. COORNHERT

---

# Synod on the Freedom of Conscience

*A Thorough Examination during the Gathering  
Held in the Year 1582 in the City of Freetown*

---

TRANSLATED, EDITED, ANNOTATED BY  
GERRIT VOOGT



COORNHERT  
STICHTING



BIBLIOTHECA  
DISSIDENTIUM  
NEERLANDICORUM

AMSTERDAM UNIVERSITY PRESS

D.V. COORNHERT

SYNOD ON THE FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE



D.V. Coornhert

# Synod on the Freedom of Conscience

*A Thorough Examination during the Gathering  
Held in the Year 1582 in the City of Freetown*

Translated, edited, annotated by Gerrit Voogt

Amsterdam University Press

In the *Bibliotheca Dissidentium Neerlandicorum* (BDN) publications will appear in the field of the history of Dutch (religious, philosophical and literary) nonconformism from 1350 until the present time. The BDN comprises a series of text editions and a series of studies about important nonconformist authors. The publications of the BDN appear at the Amsterdam University Press as productions of the *Coornhert Stichting*, under editorial responsibility of the *Coornhert Centrum*. For more information see [www.coornhertstichting.nl](http://www.coornhertstichting.nl).

This volume is jointly published with the Amsterdam Center for the Study of the Golden Age (*Amsterdams Centrum voor de Studie van de Gouden Eeuw*) of the University of Amsterdam (UvA). Founded in 2000 this Centre aims to promote the history and culture of the Dutch Republic during the 'long' seventeenth century (c.1560-1720). Its publications provide an insight into the lively diversity, the complexity, and continuing relevance of the Dutch Golden Age. They offer original studies on a wide variety of topics, ranging from Rembrandt to Vondel, from *Beeldenstorm* (iconoclastic fury) to *Ware Vrijheid* (True Freedom) and from Batavia to New Amsterdam. Politics, religion, culture, economics, expansion and warfare all come together in the Centre's interdisciplinary setting. Editorial control is in the hands of international scholars specialised in seventeenth-century history, art and literature. For more information see [www.aup.nl/goudeneeuw](http://www.aup.nl/goudeneeuw) or <http://cf.uba.uva.nl/goudeneeuw>.

*Bibliotheca Dissidentium Neerlandicorum*

Text editions & Studies

Gerlof Verwey: Editor in chief

Jaap Gruppelaar: Editor 16th and 17th century

Cover illustration: D.V. Coornhert (1522-1590)

Cover design: Kok Korpershoek, Amsterdam

Lay out: TAT Zetwerk, Utrecht

ISBN 978 90 8964 082 6

e-ISBN 978 90 4850 799 3

NUR 688

© G. Voogt / Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam, 2008

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this book may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the written permission of both the copyright owner and the author of the book.

# Contents

Introduction · 7

D.V. COORNHERT

*SYNOD ON THE FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE.*  
FIRST BOOK

Preface · 25

First Session. Whether or Not the True Visible Church of Christ  
May Err · 33

Second Session. Proofs based on Antiquity, Customs, and  
Traditions · 45

Third Session. Rules and Ceremonies not Based on Scripture · 51

Fourth Session. The Credibility of the Patristic Writings · 57

Fifth Session. Proofs based on Councils and Consensus · 65

Sixth Session. Proofs Based on Examples from Ecclesiastical  
Histories · 73

Seventh Session. Proofs from Pagans · 81

Eighth Session. Passing Judgment on Everyone, Yet Not Wanting to  
Suffer Anyone's Judgment · 87

Ninth Session. Who is to Judge on Doctrine · 97

*SYNOD ON THE FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE.*  
SECOND BOOK

Tenth Session. Whether Judgment of Heresy Belongs to the Civil or the  
Ecclesiastical Authority · 111

Eleventh Session. Freedom of Conscience in Faith as Well as in  
its Exercise and Whether Only the Exercise of What the Civil  
Magistrate Judges to be the True Religion Shall Be Allowed, and  
None Else · 125

- Twelfth Session. Those Who Criticize Doctrine or Disturb the External Peace of the Church, and how They Ought to Be Punished · 137
- Thirteenth Session. Those Whose Teachings Differ from Those of the Church, and Whether They Ought to be Punished by Death · 151
- Fourteenth Session. Whether or not We Should Dispute with Those Who Teach Differently · 163
- Fifteenth Session. The Writing, Publishing, Printing, Selling, Having and Reading of Tracts and Books · 171
- Sixteenth Session. Condemning Others without Hearing Them · 181
- Seventeenth Session. Whether it is in Accord with Scripture That Religious Leaders Appeal to the Magistrate for Support of their Doctrine · 191
- Eighteenth Session. Denouncing Mercifulness, Praising Severity, and Counseling Bloodshed in Matters of Faith · 209
- Nineteenth Session. Whether it is Right for Religious Leaders to Tell the Civil Magistrate that They Have a Duty towards God to Kill Some People for Matters of Religion · 219
- The Balance · 231
- Glossary · 233

## Introduction

The era of the wars of religion in Europe saw, as a counterpoint to the bloodshed and fanaticism, the formulation of several major pleas for tolerance, starting with Sebastian Castellio's *Concerning Heretics and Whether They Ought to be Persecuted* (1554), written in response to the execution of the heterodox Servetus in Geneva at the behest of John Calvin. In France the culmination of the wars of religion that had torn the nation apart for decades coincided with the creation of the *Colloquium Heptaplomeres* by Jean Bodin, a clandestine work that brings together seven imaginary friends of diverse religious plumage for six wide ranging, erudite, at times intense but mostly courteous, discussions on theological and speculative matters. In England the Italian humanist Jacob Acontius described the religious divisions and persecutions as *Satan's Stratagems* intended to promote the devil's work. In the nascent Dutch Republic, locked in a seemingly endless struggle to ensure its independence from Spain, the early 1580s were a grim and desperate time for the Dutch, during which the Spanish under Parma made advances and the leader of the Revolt, William of Orange, was assassinated (1584). The *Synod on the Freedom of Conscience* was created under these circumstances and presented, under the guise of an exchange between representatives of the main religious factions of the day, a strong plea for the deferment of judgment in matters of conscience.

Its author, Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert (1522–1590), was actively involved in the Dutch Revolt, as secretary of the mayors of Haarlem and important supporter of William of Orange. He was an etcher and engraver, and besides translating many classical texts into Dutch, he was also a prolific author of plays, poetry, and religious tracts. He wrote the first major work on ethics in a vernacular (*Zedekunst*, 1586). He sketched the outline of a non-denominational church where each could speak without restraints, an idea taken up in the 1630s by the Dutch Collegiants, and he was inspired by his own incarceration in The Hague at the time of Alva to write a sort of modest proposal for reform of the penal sys-

tem and the treatment of criminals.<sup>1</sup> But the largest work in his oeuvre concerned a theological topic, predestination, and was written in the last year of his life in order to, as he writes, “eradicate the most harmful root causes of human invention” that the Reformed use to anathematize others and drive people to despair regarding the feasibility of following God’s commandments in this life.<sup>2</sup> This reflects his lifelong concern with religion and freedom, for his writing career started with his refutation of the doctrine of original sin and the reliance on rituals and outward practices. Positively, Coornhert embraced an optimistic theology influenced by the spiritualism of Sebastian Franck and Sebastian Acontius. In stages, built around the pivotal moment of one’s regeneration, humans can attain to a perfect obedience of Christ in this life. Freedom of the will, a disdain for external rituals, and the perfectibility of man are important ingredients of this spiritualist faith, and this implies at the same time a strong rejection of such doctrines as original sin and predestination.

### The case against constraint

The *Synod*, appearing in 1582, was not Coornhert’s first defense of the freedom of conscience. Several years earlier, in 1579, he published a letter written to his friend Nicolaes van der Laen, mayor of Haarlem, wherein he denounces the restrictions and constraints imposed by the increasingly dominant Reformed ministers in the fledgling Dutch Republic.<sup>3</sup> In the previous year the States of Holland had forbidden Coornhert to write against the Reformed ministers, or else he would be prosecuted as a “perturber of the public peace”. Coornhert regarded freedom of religion as a birthright of the Dutch Republic, which had enshrined the “freedom

1 For information on Coornhert and his life, see Henk Bongers, *The Life and Work of Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert*. Trans. and ed. Gerrit Voogt (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi, 2004). For his plays see Anneke Fleurkens, *Stichtelijke lust: de toneelspelen van D. V. Coornhert (1522–1590) als middel tot het geven van morele instructie* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1994). An annotated edition of the *Zedekunst* appeared as *Zedekunst, dat is Wellevenskunste*, ed. B. Becker (Leiden: Brill, 1942), and Coornhert’s proposal for prison reform was republished, together with a translation into modern Dutch, as: *Boeventucht*, ed. Arie-Jan Gelderblom (Muiderberg: Dick Coutinho, 1985).

2 Coornhert, *Vande Predestinatie*, in Coornhert, *Wercken* (Amsterdam: Colom, 1630, 3 vols.), vol. 3, fols. 171<sup>R</sup>–291<sup>D</sup>. The quoted words are on fol. 172<sup>R</sup>.

3 Coornhert, *Vanden aengheheven dwangh inder consciencien binnen Hollandt* [*On the Beginning of the Constraint of Conscience in Holland*], in Coornhert, *Wercken*, vol. 1, fol. 469<sup>A</sup>–472<sup>B</sup>. Part of this dialogue is available in English Translation in E.H. Kossman and A.F. Mellink (eds.), *Texts Concerning the Revolt of the Netherlands*, no. 43, 191–196.

of conscience” in the 1579 Union of Utrecht yet was increasingly walking in step with the Reformed ministers and imposing conformity with Reformed teachings by, for example, introducing the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession as credal instruments. In 1581 he again provoked the ire of the Reformed ministers by vainly pleading on behalf of the Roman Catholics of Haarlem for their freedom of worship in the city, as had been promised them in the *Satisfactie* of 1577. The past four years had demonstrated, Coornhert asserted in the request, “that two religions can indeed live peacefully in one town.” Yet by this time William of Orange’s effort at “religious peace” (*religievrede*) between Reformed and Catholics had already come to an end.

The *Synod* has to be seen against this background of the failure in Haarlem of reconciliation or coexistence and the forcible imposition of a new state church. As an interfaith gathering aimed at reconciliation of differences, this imaginary synod fits in the tradition of the humanist religious colloquies that had been held periodically, such as the colloquy of Poissy (1561) to which reference is made several times in this work. The aim is ostensibly to achieve concord, if only on an agreement to disagree and to apply the Golden Rule in inter-religious relations.

The *Synod* should, in form and content, also be seen as a response to and critique of the Reformed “national synod” held in Middelburg the previous year.<sup>4</sup> In the *Remonstrance*, a separate tract written in the same year as the *Synod* on behalf of the municipal government of Leiden, Coornhert had specifically denounced that synod, which started the procedure that would lead to the excommunication of the liberal minister of Leiden, Caspar Coolhaes.<sup>5</sup> It was the sequel to the conflict between the magistrate of Leiden and the Reformed church over the appointment of ministers, for which Coornhert had earlier written an apologia defending the Erastian position of the city fathers.<sup>6</sup> The *Remonstrance* warned against a repetition of the errors of the Roman Catholic church, reminding the reader that the Revolt started because of the anti-heretical placards. In the third session of the *Synod on the Freedom of Conscience*

4 Indeed, the name of the fictitious town of “Vrijburgh” – “Freetown” – where the *Synod on the Freedom of Conscience* is held could well be an allusion to Middelburg.

5 Coornhert, *Remonstrance of vertooch by die van Leyden*, in *Wercken*, vol. 2, fol. 184<sup>R</sup>–188<sup>B</sup>.

6 Coornhert, *Iustificatie des magistrates tot Leyden in Holland* [*Justification of the Magistrate of Leiden in Holland*] (Leiden, 1579), in *Wercken*, vol. 2, fol. 189<sup>R</sup>–204<sup>P</sup>. The magistrate awarded Coornhert with a medal for his efforts. On the Coolhaes-affair, see e.g. Jean Lecler, *Toleration and the Reformation*, 2 vols. trans. T.L. Westow (New York: Association Press; London: Longmans, 1960), vol. 2, 263–269.

the Catholic delegate uses the acts of the Middelburg synod to demonstrate that the Reformed are also introducing rules that are not based on the Bible, and in the fifteenth session the censorship measures taken at the 1581 synod are cited.

In his writing Coornhert often made use of the dialogue form (and in a way his many plays, which were used for moral instruction, were only another form of dialogue). It is a literary form that lends itself to the discussion of controversial matters and to the obfuscation of the author's own true stance. Coornhert's best-known writings and many of his shorter polemics were cast as dialogues, a medium that was ideally suited to his polemical intent. In the early Dutch Republic he was also renowned as a fierce controversialist who sought out his Reformed opponents and engaged them in debate. The debates were public affairs, carefully prepared by the States.<sup>7</sup> The topic of these disputations seemed mainly theological, but Coornhert's aim in these debates was to undermine the claims of the Reformed church. His expressed wish to include discussion of the persecution of heretics at the debate in Leiden (1578) was denied by the Reformed ministers because they deemed this a political rather than a theological matter. Concern and frustration over this reluctance to discuss what Coornhert saw as an urgent and grave issue were yet another impetus behind the writing of the *Synod*. He often described it as a matter of conscience which obliged him to caution against and to try to ward off what he feared was a new theocracy. In these debates and polemical writings he never manifested the quietism or disdain for involvement in affairs regarding the established churches that seems more typical of spiritualists. Instead, in his writings and public debates, he combatted with gusto and perseverance what he regarded as the new popery of Calvinist constraints. As Koppenol formulates it paradoxically, "Coornhert's position was absolutely intolerant against anyone who thwarted his striving for tolerance."<sup>8</sup> In the Preface to the *Synod*, addressing the Reformed ministers – for the *Synod* is dedicated to "all God-fearing, impartial and wise ministers of the Reformed religion in the Netherlands" – Coornhert asserts that "[i]t is only the urgency of the situation that causes me to speak out, for we are all obliged to combat...

7 For an extensive study of Coornhert's debates, see Marianne Roobol, "Landszaken. De godsdienstgesprekken tussen gereformeerde predikanten en D.V. Coornhert onder leiding van de Staten van Holland (1577–1583)" (dissertation, Universiteit van Amsterdam, 2005).

8 Johan Koppenol, *Leids heelal: Het Loterijspel (1596) van Jan van Hout* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1998), 372.

constraint by all legal means. Only in order to forestall a new, but equally pernicious, constraint of conscience I gladly suffer the many hardships befalling me in this cause, out of love for you, for the common folk, and our dear fatherland.” And at least in this fictitious *Synod*, by the final, nineteenth, session, the Reformed delegate is entirely won over to the side of toleration, now saying that “[h]e who is killed is a follower of Christ, but he who kills follows the Antichrist. Each person therefore should examine and heed his conscience: people who persecute others are children of the flesh, but those who suffer persecution are children of the spirit.” A case, undoubtedly, of wishful thinking on Coornhert’s part.

### The *Synod* as the scales of justice

Coornhert introduces the *Synod* as the “scales on which will be weighed the sins of either side of divided Christendom.” These sins are found to be essentially the same and of equal weight. The original edition of *Synod* shows a rebus on the title page, whose solution reads: “Synod or Balance between the Old and the New Reformed Church on the Freedom of Conscience,” and the original edition ended with a “balance” juxtaposing sixteen Catholic errors with an equal number of analogous Protestant ones.

The dialogue in nineteen sessions takes place in the imaginary town of “Vrijburgh” and brings together – albeit posthumously for all but two – real Reformers and Catholics, ranging from moderate to intransigent, who in fact personify and defend their own writings. These writings are listed at the beginning of the dialogue, and cited faithfully throughout. The Catholics are often called “the Old” and because of their precedence always speak first after the opening words by Jezonias, the chair *pro tempore* who conducts the meetings in lieu of the real Chair, “master Daniel”. Jezonias introduces the topics and ends each session with a summary, and makes sure a record is kept of the proceedings, which will be submitted to master Daniel. The latter, whom no reader will have any trouble recognizing as Jesus, will give his judgment on the issues when he returns.

In most sessions we encounter an anonymous “Catholic” and “Reformed” delegate besides various well-known figures. The “Old” are assisted by the Spanish Dominican, Melchior Cano; by the Polish bishop Stanislas Hosius, a fierce opponent of Protestantism; and by the theologian and Inquisitor-General for the Netherlands, Ruardus Tapper. The case for censorship also finds support in a “Doctor Placard”, who appears

in the fifteenth session. The “Young” or Protestant side finds support, in the Genevan Reformers John Calvin and Theodore Beza. Lutherans are represented by Johannes Brenz, Zwinglians by Heinrich Bullinger, Zwingli’s successor in Zürich, and finally the Huguenots of France are present in the person of the moderate Philippe du Plessis-Mornay.<sup>9</sup>

The argument in each session unfolds in the same manner: first, the Catholics defend the intolerant position on the issue at hand, for which they are then criticized or lambasted by the Reformed. Invariably the Catholics counter by demonstrating from Reformed writings and actions that the latter have no right to be critical, since they act and profess the same. Each session then concludes (before Jezonias’s summary at the very end) with a critique of both the Catholic and Protestant positions and a defense or eulogy of the tolerant alternative. The person presenting this alternative is Gamaliel, who is Coornhert’s alter ego.<sup>10</sup> In Acts we read that, when his fellow council members wanted to have Christ’s apostles killed, Gamaliel urged restraint, cautioning that “if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it – lest you even be found to fight against God.”<sup>11</sup> Taken by themselves, Gamaliel’s often eloquent syntheses that end these nineteen sessions constitute a sustained and persuasive rejection of persecution and an often passionate apologia for tolerance, open discussion, and peaceful co-existence. “Oh,” Gamaliel laments at the end of session eight, “so often do we, damnable ones, condemn those whom God does not wish to condemn, thus speeding up our own damnation! When will we realize that God’s judgment and ways are as different from ours as heaven is different from earth?”

The *Synod* consists of two parts, Jezonias explaining that “the foregoing nine topics [the nine sessions of Book 1] mostly applied to the common people as well as the magistrate, but all the following sessions seem to concern only the civil magistrate.” His reservation (“seem to”) may be due to the contention, made at various times in the second half of the book, that religious choice can never be a matter of magistrate and

9 For all these discussants, see the Glossary.

10 In the fifteenth session Coornhert also appears in one other guise, as the “Remonstrant of Leiden”, where he cites the 1582 *Remonstrance*. Also, once, in the eleventh session, in the list of *dramatis personae* that starts each session, he proudly describes Gamaliel as the “Dutch delegate” (*Magister consistorium Batavorum*).

11 Acts 5: 38–39. This is a regular motif in tolerationist works, as can be seen for example in a later work by John Goodwin titled *Theomachia: or the Grand Imprudence of Men Running the Hazard of Fighting against God* (1644).

ecclesiastical authorities alone. “The magistrate,” says Gamaliel in the sixteenth session, “exists for the sake of the people, but the people do not exist for the sake of the magistrate. Therefore the people, whose salvation is at stake, also have a voice in the matter. If they dare take this away from them, it will greatly displease them. Or do you think that the people do not understand that all the warnings against false prophets and Pharisees that abound throughout Scripture were also addressed to them?”

The structural symmetry – nineteen sessions, split down the middle – seems to bespeak the chief message of the *Synod*, that constraint is practiced on both sides of the religious divide and is for both equally condemnable.

### The *Synod*: The case of the Absent Judge

The first book of the *Synod* undermines the epistemological basis and the proofs that support the absolutist claims and the grounds for intolerance of the church. The opening session is fundamental in trying to establish that the church is not infallible and that it has been shown to err. The Catholic position is that the church cannot err, as the body whose Head, Christ, is unable to err. The logic of the Reformation dictates that the Protestants have to disagree, since it was the errors of the Catholic church that necessitated the Reformation. The analogy they use is with the Jewish church which was the true church at the time that it committed the worst error of all, when it had Jesus crucified. Ostensibly on this point the Catholic and Protestant sides persist in diametrically opposed positions, but it soon becomes clear in the sequel that the Protestants in reality also refuse to acknowledge any blemish or flaw in their church or the right of anyone to question it. The Protestant position in this first session will later be used against them, when Gamaliel remarks in the twelfth session that the offense of the Reformed, in forbidding any criticism of their doctrine, is the greater one, since the Catholics claim “that their church cannot err in any way. If this were indeed true then the Catholics would have no reason to listen to someone’s criticism for their own improvement, considering that one cannot justly nor successfully reproach the irreproachable, to wit those who do not err nor are able to err.” The Protestants have no such excuse.

The following six sessions hammer away at all possible extra-Biblical proofs that the churches use in support of their absolutist claims and as grounds for constraint. In matters of religion, the Reformed attack the

Catholics' reliance on the crutches of custom and age-old traditions to prove their points. They denounce the Catholics' use of ceremonies and imposition of rules that have no basis in Scripture. Neither the writings of the Church Fathers, say the Protestants, nor church counsels and consensus, or pagan authors constitute reliable or valid sources of proofs, unless their statements and exhortations are the same as those found in Scripture – and if that is the case, they are unnecessary and Scripture is still to be preferred. The Reformed – and Gamaliel – also have a field day denouncing the fables and fabrications with which the church histories abound that Catholics use as proofs. In all these cases we seem to hear the Protestant adage of the *Sola Scriptura*. “Why the faint glow of stars,” asks Gamaliel, “if we possess and can produce the testimony of Holy Scripture, that is the bright light of the sun itself?” But in all these cases, the Protestants are in turn shown to be guilty of resorting to the same or similar non-Biblical crutches.

On the face of it the relevance of these sessions on the different kinds of proof for Coornhert's tolerationist agenda may at times seem remote. It is significant, however, that when the tables are turned on the Reformed, the example used often concerns the persecution of heretics. “[I]n his effort to provide plausible proof that it is the magistrate's task to kill heretics,” says Gamaliel in the second session on the use of proofs from antiquity and age-old customs, “[Beza] realized that he was utterly unable to prove this from the testimony of Divine Scripture... so he has recourse to proof based on antiquity and customs, saying at the conclusion of his intended but as yet utterly unproven argument the following: “Therefore, in conclusion of this proof, we say that those who do not want the magistrate to be involved in religious matters, and particularly in the punishment of heretics... reject the authority of all antiquity, that is of the custom that has existed from ancient times on.” And again, in the fourth session, when the authority of proofs based on patristic writings is at stake, the Catholic delegate tells Beza that the shoe is on the other foot, for “in your books on the killing of heretics, you try to prove based on the authority of St. Augustine that it is permissible to force people to follow the truth against their will.” It is the same in session five: the Reformed do not make use of councils, but the Catholic delegate once again makes thankful use of Beza's *De haereticis a civili magistratu puniendis* (*On the Punishment of Heretics by the Civil Magistrate*) to show that, in this case, consensus does play a role in the conviction of heretics. And even when it comes to the much ridiculed and maligned church histories, the Catholic gladly puts the ball in his opponent's court and asks if Beza has forgotten that (in that

same book), “wanting to prove that it is the magistrate’s duty to punish heretics, you brought up from the aforementioned [church] histories the fact that emperor Constantine banished Arius? And that emperor Theodosius banished Nestorius? Thus you further relate from the ecclesiastical histories – since here they seem to testify in your favor – that Constantine ordered Arius’ books to be burned, on pain of death. However, Arius himself was spared, which displeases you. Further, you relate that idolaters (whom you call heretics) were to be beheaded, together with the office holders who had saved them. And further that Valentinian, Gratian, and Theodosius decreed the same or practically the same punishment for idolaters (all of whom you equate with heretics). Similarly, that Marcian decreed the death penalty for those who tried to teach inappropriate [doctrine]. And also that Justinian instituted the death penalty for those who kept the books of a heretic named Severus.” When the issue is the use of proofs from pagan authors, the Catholic delegate in his counter brings up the death at the stake of Servetus, at Calvin’s behest, defended by the latter with references to what was customary among “philosophers”, “heathens” and “unbelievers”. And Beza, once again, resorts to testimony from such men as Numa Pompilius in defense of the killing of heretics.

After examining the testimony that may be used as a basis for judgment, the final two sessions of the first book turn to the right to judge others. First the Golden Rule of reciprocity is at stake, as both sides accuse each other of wanting to sit in judgement but refusing to accept that anyone else judge them: this is true of the pope, whose judgement has to be accepted unquestioningly by the civil magistrate. “[I]f the bishop of Rome were subject to error in deciding on religious controversies,” worries the Dominican Melchior Cano, “then we would immediately have to question the condemnation of many heretics.” This is, of course, Coornhert’s point exactly. The Catholic side lets the Protestants fulminate at the misdeeds of the papacy for awhile, then counters that Calvin, in the case of the maligned Servetus, did not tolerate criticism either. And the Catholic delegate forestalls an anticipated argument that the Protestants – especially Beza – will indeed make, that the essential different between the two sides is that one represents truth and the other falsehood:<sup>12</sup> “It does

12 See the eleventh session about allowing worship other than that of the established church: when the Catholic points at anti-Catholic measures taken in John Knox’s Scotland, the reformed delegate retorts indignantly: “This gentleman speaks of the case of Scotland as if there were no difference whatsoever between the true religion and his false one! His conclusion is nothing less than that, supposedly, it is appropriate to do for the false religion what one is obliged to do for the true one. This would lead to the

not work,” he avers, “to say that our teachings are false and theirs [the Protestants’] are right, and that they therefore are right in punishing us, but we are wrong in punishing them. For the two parties have not yet been heard, much less judged, by a lawful judge.” This theme of the authority to judge doctrine concludes the first book and is essential. The Catholic interlocutor predictably claims that doctrinal matters should be left to priests and councils, not to the flock, for if everyone is allowed to put forth his own interpretation, sects will abound and chaos ensue. Gamaliel, however, in his definitive rejoinder,<sup>13</sup> asserts the impossibility of a fair trial. Normal judicial procedure involves four distinct persons: the judge, the prosecutor, the defendant, and the witnesses. “What other conclusion may be drawn...”, asks Gamaliel, “than that, just as Israel used to be without a king, the Christians now lack a judge, and that all do as they see fit?” Like the Catholic delegate said earlier about the Protestant, each acts as judge in their own cause. Each should judge for themselves: “Is there any valid reason,” he asks, “to deprive laymen – the common people as well as the magistrate – of the right to judge doctrine, against the countless multitude of clear scriptural testimonies, a number of which have already been cited by some of you, gentlemen, warning against false prophets and the like?”

### The *Synod*: Church, State, and Individual

The opening session of the second book continues the theme of judgment, but this time attention is focused on the role of the civil magistrate. The Catholic view is simple: the church judges, the prince executes and does not double-guess. This, the Reformed interlocutor charges, makes of the princes no more than “blind executioners of your false verdicts”. Gamaliel gets involved early on in this session in order to refute Beza’s distinction between the thing itself – to wit doctrine and heresy, to be judged by the church – and the person who has embraced this heresy, to be punished by the magistrate. That “distinction” was also made by the Pharisees who told Pilate that they would not have delivered Jesus to him if he had not been guilty, whereupon Pilate crucified him even though he realized that Jesus

conclusion that because the authorities are obliged to protect the true faith they are also obliged to protect the false one. That makes no sense.”

13 It seems significant that, compared with the other eighteen sessions, this is Gamaliel’s longest concluding statement (c. 2190 words).

was in fact innocent. This policy is too risky – it were better, concludes Gamaliel, to “kill the heresy by means of the truth, thus saving the heretic, rather than to abuse the magistrate’s sword in order to kill some dearly bought members of Christ”.

The six sessions that follow (11–16) address different aspects of freedom of conscience in practice, starting with the question of whether a state should allow the freedom to practice a faith other than what the magistrate espouses as the true one (as well as the implied freedom to refrain from practicing a faith one does not believe)? The Catholic proclaims in word and his church shows in deed that it should not, whereas in practice the Reformed is shown to agree in deed (as, e.g., in the anti-Catholic measures taken in Scotland), albeit not in word. The Catholic delegate quotes at length from earlier Reformed requests addressed to Catholic authorities for toleration, which assured the magistrate that such coexistence would cause no problems. “[N]ow, less than four years later, you have changed your mind, your judgment and your conscience,” scoffs the Catholic, “in such wise that now you claim to be utterly unable to suffer in good conscience our form of worship – which you term idolatry – which at the time caused you no problem.”

Thus, although throughout the *Synod* regarding the uses of religious constraint on both sides, sin is consistently matched for sin, the Protestant side seems the guiltier of the two because of the added charge of hypocrisy and inconsistency, for saying one thing when it suits them and doing another when they can. The Reformed side – especially Beza – is also presented as the most fanatical, the most prone to outbursts and invective, a bias that may reflect Coornhert’s own agenda and animus. After all, the main target of his struggle for toleration were the Reformed who were establishing their control over the religious life of the new state, a state the vast majority of whose inhabitants were Catholics, many of whom had supported the Revolt against Spain. “Wise politicians,” warns Gamaliel at the end of the eleventh session, “call inequality among the inhabitants or citizens of a country a pestilence to the commonwealth, as by the same token equality is the strongest bond of concord and solidarity.” The Dutch Revolt was fought, in Coornhert’s view, “religionis ergo”, but that “religion” did not just apply to the Reformed religion and the non-Reformed would resent it if now their freedom of religion were to be taken away.

Freedom of conscience in religious matters was enshrined in the Union of Utrecht (1579), which forms the basis of the Dutch Republic, for it states in article 13 that religion was to be free and that no one was to be persecuted or harrassed because of his beliefs. Defenders of the of-

ficial religious monopoly of the Reformed church in the Dutch Republic would regularly justify the prohibition on non-Reformed worship by distinguishing between freedom of conscience and the freedom of (public) worship. The former was guaranteed (in the privacy of one's home), the latter was not. Some fifty years after the *Synod*, the Delft minister Henricus Arnoldi still used this argument in his refutation of the Arminian leader Episcopius's defense of the freedom of religion.<sup>14</sup> The *Synod* clearly rejects such a distinction as disingenuous and sees freedom of conscience without the freedom to practice one's faith as meaningless.

In spite of Coornhert's advocacy of a religiously pluralistic state (in the eleventh session), the reality was that the fledgling Republic had espoused the Reformed as the public church. In the next five sessions, however, he systematically undercuts any reliance by that church on the magistrate to give physical support in defense of spiritual matters. The twelfth and thirteenth sessions discuss what the church should do with its critics and deviants, those who "disturb its external peace" or who do not adhere to doctrine. A few years earlier Coornhert himself had been muzzled – though not very effectively – by the authorities and forbidden to criticize the Reformed ministers in writing, on pain of being treated as a "disturber of the public peace". Now the Catholics can point at the ill effects of their failure to silence their critics – the Reformers – even though they honestly tried. Again, the Reformers' position, when they denounce the Catholic church's actions against them, seems to be weakened by the fact that, whereas their *raison d'être* is based on being critics of the Catholic church, yet they now, as evident in the Servetus affair, also refuse to condone criticism or to combat it with only spiritual means. The Catholic side professes gladness that experience has brought the Reformed to the same conviction as they, viz. "that we should hold on to all those who were born and raised in our religion and that we should punish as disturbers of the external peace of the church, as schismatics, and as folks who sin knowingly and deliberately those who speak against the aforesaid religion and strive to destroy it..." Coornhert – alias Gamaliel – concludes that both sides are wrong, and that shutting the door to criticism prevents the church from improving. They should combat criticism with spiritual means, chief among which is the Bible.

14 Henricus Arnoldi, *Vande Conscientie-dwangh, dat is: Klaer ende Grondich Vertoogh, dat de Hoogh-Mogh. Heeren Staten Generael in haer Placcaet den 3 Julii 1619, Tegen de Conventiculen der Remonstranten ghe-emaneert/ gheen Conscientie-dwangh invoeren* (Delft, 1629); Simon Episcopius, *Vrye godesdienst* (1627).

For Coornhert free debate and disputation were the lifeblood of a healthy republic, but the Catholic delegate claims, in the fourteenth session, that they should not engage in disputations at all since that already implies the possibility of doubt. The Protestants are shown to show the same aversion to engage their critics. Their position also implies that they are willing to condemn others without giving them a hearing (the sixteenth session). Gamaliel, however, asks if religious teachers can be any good "...when, while an embattled church is in the field against the heretics, they fear the labor and effort of disputations?" The field for such an open discussion can only be cleared by allowing people to publish their views, and Coornhert devotes a whole session (15) to freedom of the press and freedom from censorship, an exception being made for seditious works.

The final three sessions specifically target the relation between church and state, all in the sense that the latter ought not function as an enforcement mechanism for the former. The magistrate should not be used to punish doctrinal deviance or incited to merciless repression and bloodshed in matters of faith, for this is not their task. Instead, "let he who wants to be a protector of the church take up the sword of Paul and the other apostles and martyrs, not the sword of an Augustus or Nero. For the emperors protect cities and villages with their physical swords, but the apostles protect the church with a spiritual sword, that is to say with the word of the Gospel and with their blood that is their testimony of the word." These words, spoken in the seventeenth session by the Reformed delegate rather than Gamaliel (who agrees with them), indicate that by now this delegate has started to be won over to the side of toleration, a conversion that is complete by the final session. Not so, however, Beza, who maintains that it is the magistrate's duty to punish religious dissidence, for "who fails to see that if the ministers take upon themselves or assume the task of the magistrate, like the Roman Antichrist did before, this is wrong because it confuses the powers that God has separated from each other and it will lead to an utter confusion in all things?"

The sole task of the magistrate with regard to religion, so concludes Gamaliel the final session, is "to protect the pious against the violence of others." Two worlds are mixed that should not be. "Theological doctrine cannot be discussed with the sword. Otherwise, should the theologians succeed in getting you to promote their teachings by the sword, the physician will later dare to request similarly that you protect his opinion against the opinion of other physicians, and the dialectician, the rhetorician and other practicians of the liberal arts will do the same." These words clearly

indicate the pluralistic society that Coornhert has in mind. And he continues: “Now if you are unable to settle these matters with the sword, then how much more is this true in theology, since it concerns the spirit and understanding of what is in the mind of man. And if a physician can adequately prove his doctrine by his science, without the magistrate’s support, then why should a theologian not be able to do the same? Christ can do this, the apostles can do it, and their followers will likewise be able to do it. Protect the bodies of the pious with your physical sword. That sword cannot touch the soul.” With words reminiscent of Castello, he adjures that “evil was never vanquished by evil, and there is no other remedy against killing than to stop the killing.”

We have to be careful not to interpret Coornhert’s defense of toleration Whiggishly, and the contention that Coornhert in the *Synod* and elsewhere defended the separation of church and state has been contested.<sup>15</sup> However, the views espoused in the *Synod*, and certainly in Coornhert’s later *Trial on the Killing of Heretics*, show that by 1582 his stance toward the magistrate had moved away from the Erastian position he had still defended in 1579. Perhaps as a result of what befell him around the same time, as the States of Holland in an injunction forbade him to publish anything on religion without their prior approval, his eyes were opened to the risks of such a position at a time that the authorities were increasingly on the side of the self-same Church that sought to silence him. As stated above, in the *Synod* the only role assigned to the magistrate in the area of religion appears to be the protection of the “pious” against oppression and violence, in a state that is an equal playing field where doctrine is defended by spiritual means and none will be coerced into actions and beliefs that violate their conscience.

### The translation

The *Synod* offers one of the most elaborate, consistent and sustained pleas for toleration produced in early modern Europe, yet it has not received the attention that it merits. This is partially due to Coornhert’s choice to write in the vernacular, which limited his readership to a small area in

15 See Mirjam G.K. van Veen, “‘De aert van Spaensche inquisitie’: Coornherts opvattingen over de verhouding tussen kerk en staat”. In: *Nederlands theologisch tijdschrift*, 58/1 (2004), 61–76. She calls Coornhert’s position “Erastian through and through”, against e.g. Zagorin and the author of this Introduction.

north western Europe.<sup>16</sup> He wanted his work to be accessible to the laity, especially when it discussed a topic that greatly concerned them. After the original publication in 1582, the *Synod* saw only one second edition in 1630, when it was incorporated in the collected works.<sup>17</sup> It was only translated once, into French, by Joseph Lecler and Marius-François Valkhoff.<sup>18</sup>

This translation is based on the 1630 edition. I have opted for a translation into modern English, which attempts to convey some of the dynamic nature of Coornhert's Dutch prose. I aimed for optimal accuracy, but when warranted I broke up overly long sentences, and at times substitute English idiomatic phrases for Dutch ones (e.g. "every Tom, Dick and Harry" for "Jan alleman"). I have mostly translated the many passages that Coornhert cites from other works directly from his Dutch, instead of quoting the (translated) source verbatim. This was done to maintain the liveliness and naturalness of the text. The references enable the reader to check how faithful *Coornhert* was to the original.

I have tried faithfully to render Coornhert's own marginal textual references in bracketed footnotes. His bibliography, with the abbreviations the author employs for his references, is reproduced, as in the original, at the start, right after his Preface. Coornhert's biblical references are also placed between brackets, followed by the corrected or complemented reference – using the New King James Version of the Bible – where necessary. I have also included Coornhert's own marginal summaries of main points. In cases when I use references directly from the translation by Valkhoff and Lecler, I have indicated this by placing them between accolades.

The folio pages in the margin – indicated by page number and column, A, B, C, or D – refer to the Colom edition of the *Synod* (1630).

I owe a debt of gratitude to Valkhoff and Lecler and their translation, as well as to Jaap Gruppelaar, Jan Bedaux and Gerlof Verwey and their

16 His responses in Dutch to Lipsius's Latin added fuel to the fire of the latter's displeasure during his famed clash with Coornhert over the use of religious constraint in a state. See Voogt, "Primacy of Individual Consciousness or Primacy of the State? The Clash between Dirck Volckertsz. Coornhert and Justus Lipsius", *Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. xxviii/4 (1997), pp. 1231–1249. In his work one even finds at times an anti-intellectualist streak (also found in e.g. Sebastian Franck), expressed for example in the slogan *hoe geleerder hoe verkeerder* ("the more learning, the more wrong"): see e.g. Coornhert, *Hemel-werck*, in *Wercken*, vol. 2, fol. 345.

17 The original 1582 edition as well as the *Wercken* are in their entirety available digitally at <http://saraswati.ic.uva.nl:8510/c/coo/>.

18 Thierry Coornhert, *A laurore des libertés modernes: Synode sur la Liberté de Conscience (1582)*. Ed., trans. and introd. Joseph Lecler and Marius-François Valkhoff, pref. Pierre Brachin (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1979).

rendering of the *Synod* into modern Dutch. These works have been of great use to me. I also thank Tom Keene for his useful comments on the translation.

A Glossary is appended for easy reference regarding historic persons and concepts mentioned in the text.

D.V. Coornhert

*Synod on the Freedom  
of Conscience.*

*A Thorough Examination during the Gathering  
Held in the Year 1582 in the City of Freetown...*

in two Small Books, of Which this First Volume...

*Shows the means and the ways so bold  
By which was deviously attained by the Old  
And pursued by the Young with due diligence  
Domination over the people's conscience*

2 Corinthians 1:24

“Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand.”

Isaiah 8:10

“Devise your strategy, but it will be thwarted; propose your plan, but it will not stand, for God is with us.”



## PREFACE

To all God-fearing, impartial and wise ministers of the Reformed religion in the Netherlands, the author wishes in truth and with a faithful and kindly heart [the] true freedom of God the Father through Jesus Christ our Lord, and the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

D.V. Coornhert

Honorable, pious and learned men, I truly believe that among you may be found common folk and ministers who wholeheartedly aim and strive for God's honor and man's salvation. But I also believe that such among  
10 your preachers or your congregation are, as the saying goes, as rare as pure gold. Likewise I think you must be aware that it is not always the best who are in positions of leadership – especially in these dire times. Not only our experience, but also all of history and indeed Scripture itself bear ample witness to this, when – and wherever we find that evil persons  
15 with an appearance of virtue have gained the credence and esteem of the powerful. Under those circumstances all pious lovers of truth must necessarily be subjected to manifold fears, hardships, and dangers. For the sake of those who are misled, these pious folk cannot keep from denouncing the abuses by such hypocrites, from deflating the great esteem in which  
20 the latter are held, and from disturbing their smug tranquillity. What else can be expected to be harvested, with the saints of this world, but the usual fruits that sincere truth reaps from such an evil soil, namely thorny hatred, murderous enmity, and slanderous calumny? I have already, and often, been subjected to many of these evils. All who observe impartially  
25 the reasons for my admonishments and how things turn out will know in due time if such evils befell me because of having spoken a truth that disturbed [the oppressors].

But I know in truth – and by the grace of God who is witness to this feeling in my heart – that personally I bear them little enmity and also  
30 for the sake of their soul I would put myself in harm's way. I likewise

know that I just as gladly grant all others freedom in the exercise and practice of their faith (faith itself can be forced by no one), as I myself would ungladly be constrained in this matter by anyone, either in the commission or omission of acts of faith. But I especially hate to see some assume control over everybody's conscience with regard to the exercise of religion. This I avow frankly, as I have already expressed this in published writings over these past ten years. For this is what mainly drove me first to take up my pen to write against Calvin and Beza. This gave me such a bad reputation with some ill-intentioned men that they exerted themselves constantly to make me hated among high and low alike. Not only do they do this in religious matters by pinning epithets on me – behind my back, not directly to my face – calling me a libertine, a godless and even devilish person. They also make up shameful stories regarding my morals and life. Let the former untruths be believed by all credulous and biased people until they can impartially read my writings that testify to and express my faith. The other made up stories on my morals will only stay alive until they reach a good man's door, as they say, or until they are brought to respectable citizens of Haarlem who have known my morals and life for many years. Thus some of you, representing dross rather than gold, concocted and spread the story that when I was engaged in a dispute somewhere with two men and realized that they had won the argument, I became so angry that I changed the verbal disputation into a physical one, and used my fists on both men. When the honorable mr. Thomas van Tiel apprized me in a friendly but serious manner of this slanderous lie, I offered in writing to donate a considerable sum of money to pay for the cost of such testimony against me, if two credible witnesses could be found. But since the event had never occurred, nobody could in truth attest to it. A similar lie was told over dinner by someone who, although not reformed in any real sense, did belong to the Reformed religion. While he was telling several slanderous lies about me in the presence of many respectable folk, or repeating the lies of others, he noticed the surprise of two honest matrons of Haarlem who knew me better than he. He therefore said to the latter: "Are you surprised? He – meaning me – is even guilty of worse deeds. Indeed, it is widely known that he fornicates with his own daughter!" Upon hearing this, one of these matrons said, laughing: "If the other evil deeds attributed to Coornhert are similar to this accusation, then they bear little truth indeed. For he has never had, nor does he have, as far as anyone knows, any legitimate or illegitimate children."

I could give many other examples of such backbiting by those who call themselves Reformed, if this were as useful and pleasant to do as it is annoying and sad for all good souls to hear. You, dear friends and brothers, should not think that I am at all surprised that the truth is hateful to hypocrites. But I only relate this so that the impartial among you, upon hearing many, in my eyes unfounded, bad things said about me by zealous, possibly well-intentioned but unwise gossipers, will still lend me your other ear. Do not consider me to be as godless and evil a person as those sword-like tongues are making me out to be, without having heard me, for you would all prefer not to be treated this way yourselves. I frankly admit that I criticize the religion of Calvin, Beza, and of the Reformed (as they are called) on certain points where I deem their doctrine to be wrong. By the same token, I take it that each of you would gladly admit that even the best among you, being human, may err on certain matters. Should my criticism be right, then you can benefit from it. And if it is not right, then it cannot harm you, although it will cause me great shame. Since you are all lovers of the truth, you will not be angry with me if I speak the truth to you who are all my neighbors and fellow humans. If I speak untruth, it will easily be destroyed by your truth without virtuous truth standing in need of sinful calumny. Be this as it may, still I desire to be of service to you as much as I can: to everyone, as well as to the Netherlands. And even if I fall short, at least my good intentions are laudable. I will render you a service if I show you a truth that had been hitherto hidden to you. I will be of service to my neighbor if our merciful God, by means of my labor, prevents that the freedom of conscience for which we have been yearning for so long immediately moves from one prison to another. And I would render our country a useful service by the lessening of the incipient factionalism that would result from a lessening of the intended constraint of conscience. I hope that you also hate this constraint. It is only the urgency of the situation that causes me to speak out, for we are all obliged to combat such constraint by all legal means. Only in order to forestall a new, but equally pernicious, constraint of conscience I gladly suffer the many hardships befalling me in this cause, out of love for you, for the common folk, and our dear fatherland.

This book treats impartially and, I hope, not indiscretely, of the different forms of make up that are used to disguise this horrible religious constraint. In light of all I have said so far, I sincerely hope that you, who are after all pious and impartial (I will just have to endure the hatred of those who are not), will read this work attentively, in a spirit of kindness.

May you judge it with an impartial eye, and use it for your own benefit in a goodly, friendly, and Christian spirit. Such is the wish of your humble and friendly servant, who is willing, indeed desirous, to hear from you the inadvertent errors that his work may still contain.

D.V. Coornhert.

ABBREVIATIONS USED FOR THE TITLES OF  
BOOKS IN THE MARGINS OF THIS BOOKLET  
IN ORDER NOT TO ENCUMBER THE TEXT

The first two columns represent Coornhert's original citation – the third column complements or explains the reference.

A.P.	<i>Acta pacificationis, quae coram. Caesarea Maj. Commissarijs, &amp;c. Coloniae habita sunt.</i> Lugduni apud Andream Scuteum 1580.	[Aggaeus van Albada], <i>Acta pacificationis, quae coram sac. caesareae regis maiest. Commissarijs, inter seren. regis Hispaniarum...ordinumque Belgil legatos, Coloniae habita sunt</i> Leiden: A. Schutenus, 1580. <i>To these Acta the jurist Albada (a personal friend of Coornhert's) had made annotations of which Coornhert makes use, especially in the seventeenth Session.</i>
B.d.g.	<i>Bekentnisse of Belijdenisse des gheloofs, int gemeyn, ende eendrachtelijck vanden ghelovighen inde Nederlanden, etc.</i> gedruckt 1566.	<i>Bekentnisse of belijdenisse des gheloofs. Int gemeyn, ende eendrachtelicken vanden gheloovighen, die in de Nederlanden over al verstroyt zijn</i> Delft: [H. Schinkel], 1566. <i>This "Confession of Faith" was addressed by the Reformed to Philip II of Spain.</i>
B.J.C.	<i>Brevis instructio muniendis fidelibus adversus errores secta anabaptistarum. Item adversus fanaticam sectam Libertinorum, &amp;c.</i> autore Joanne Calvino Argentorati per VVendelium Rehelium. Anno 1546.	John Calvin, <i>Brevis instructio muniendis fidelibus adversus errores secta anabaptistarum.</i> 1546.
V.P.O.	<i>V. Partis commentari-orum de Statu Religionis &amp; Reipub., in regno galliae</i> Lugduni Batavorum per Joannem Iucundum Anno 1580	Jean de Serres, <i>Commentarium de statu religionis et rei publicae in regno Franciae</i> , vol. v. Leiden: Johannes Jucundus, 1580.
C.	<i>Commentaires de l'estat de la Religion &amp; Republ, sous les Roys Henry, &amp; Francois seconds, &amp; Charles neuvieme</i> 1575	Pierre de la Place, <i>Commentaires de l'estat de la religion et de la république sous les rois Henri II, François II et Charles IX.</i> Paris, 1565.

- C.C. *Commentarien van Calvijn op Sint Jans Evangelien, ende alle de Epistelen* John Calvin, *Ioannis Calvini in Novum Testamentum commentarii*. Berlin, 1838.
- C.T. *Concilium Tridentinum* See *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent: Original Text with English Translation* trans. H.J. Schroeder. St. Louis, MO/London: B. Herder Book Co., 1941.
- C.B. *Confessio Christianae fidei &c. per Theodorum Bezam ex typographia Ioannis bonifidei 1560* Theodore Beza, *Confessio Christianae fidei, et eiusdem collatio cum Papisticis hæresibus*. Geneva: Jean Bonnefoy, 1560.
- Ep. Beze *Epistolarum Theologicarum Theodore Beze liber unus* Geneva apud Enstathium vignon 1575 Theodore Beza, *Epistolae theologicae*. Geneva, 1575.
- H. *Confutatio Prolegomenon Brentij, quae primum scripsit adversus venerabilem virum Petrum a Soto &c. Autore Stanislao Hosio, &c. Parisijs apud Guilhelmmum des bois, sub sole aureo, &c. 1560* Stanislas Hosius, *Confutatio Prolegomenon Brentii quae primum scripsit adversus...Petrum a Soto*. Antwerp: Johannes Steelsius, [c. 1560]. *This work, directed against the Lutheran Johannes Brenz, is a source of arguments on the Catholic side, based on the Church Fathers.*
- I. *Interim adultero Germanum, &c. per Ioannem Calvinum 1549* John Calvin, *Interim adultero Germanum cui adjecta est, verae christianae pacificationis, & ecclesiae reformandae ratio*. 1549.
- Institut. *Institutio totius Christianae Religionis, &c. Ioanne Calvino Authore Genevae ex officina Joanni Gerardi Typographi 1550* John Calvin, *Institutio totius Christianae Religionis*. Geneva: Jean Gérard, 1550.  
John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Henry Beveridge, trans. Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1845. Available from [http://www.vor.org/rbdisk/calvin/ci\\_html/index.html](http://www.vor.org/rbdisk/calvin/ci_html/index.html)
- M. *Reverendissimi domini Melchioris cani Episcopi, &c. de locis Theologicis libri 12. Louanij excudebat Servatus Sassenus sumptibus Ioannis Stelsy 1564* Melchior Cano, *De locis theologicis libri duodecim*. Louvain: Johannes Steelsius, 1564.  
This work, by the Spanish Dominican bishop Melchior Cano, is available in a recent edition: Melchor Cano, *De locis theologicis*. Juan Belda Plans, ed. Madrid: Biblioteca de autores cristianos, 2006.
- Mus. C.M. *In Evangelistam Matheum commentarij, &c. per wolfgangum Musculum dusanum. Basileae 1548* Wolfgang Musculus, *In Evangelistam Mathaeum commentarii*. Basel: Johann Herwagen, 1548.

- Musc. C.G. *In Mosis Genesim plenissimi commentarij, &c.* Wolfgango Musculo Dusano autore Basileae per Ioannes Hervagios 1554  
Wolfgang Musculus, *In Mosis Genesim plenissimi commentarii, in quibus veterum et recentiorum sententiae diligenter expenduntur...* Basel: Johann Herwagen, 1554.
- P. *Tractaet ofte handelinghe vande kercke, eerst in Francoys ende Latijn ghemaect by P. van Mornay, heer van Plessis, Marlijn etc. ghedruckt t' Hantwerpen by Jasper Troyens, op de Catte Veste, inden tinnen pot 1580*  
Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, *Tractatus de ecclesia*, 1579. Coornhert uses the Dutch translation of this work: *Tractaet ofte handelinghe vande kercke*. Antwerp, 1580.
- B. Res. *Theodori Besi Responsio ad defensionem & Reprehensionem Sebastiani castellionis Anno 1563. Excudebat Henricus Stephanus, &c.*  
Theodore Beza, *Responsio ad defensiones & reprehensiones Sebastiani Castellionis...* Geneva: Henry Estienne, 1563.
- R. *Requete presentee a son alteza, &c. par les habitans du Pais Bas, protestans vouloir vivre selon la reformation de l'Evangile, le 22. jour de Iunij 1578*  
*Requete presentee a son Alteze & Messieurs du Conseil d'Etat par les habitans des pais Bas, protestans vouloir vivre selon la reformation de l'evangile, le xxii. iour de iuin. 1578.* Knuttel 362.
- R. *Explicationis articulorum venerandae facultatis Sacrae Theologiae generalis Studii Lovanium, &c.* Authore eruditissimo viro Sacrae paginae professore D. Ruaro Tapper ab Enchusia, &c. Lovanij apud Martium verhaselt in pingui gallina 1555  
Ruad Tapper, *Explicationis articulorum venerandae Facultatis Sacrae Theologiae Generalis Studii Lovaniensis...* Louvain: Martin Verhaselt, 1555.
- S.C. *Declaration pour maintenir la vraye foy, &c. par Ioan Calvijn, contre les erreurs detestables de Michel Servet Espagnol. Ou il est aussi monstre quil est licite de punir les heretiques, & qu'a bon droit ce mechant a este execute par Iustice en la ville de Geneve, chez Iean Crespin a Geneve 1554*  
John Calvin, *Declaration pour maintenir la vraye foy...* Geneva: Jean Crespin, 1554.  
*In this treatise Calvin defends the execution of Michael Servetus, that same year.*
- S.d.d. *Zent-brief der Dienaren, die Godts Woort in de Ghereformeerde kercken in Nederlant verkondighen aen den ghenen die seker Boeck gemaect hebben, datmen noemt dat Berghsche ofte Concordie-boeck. T' Hantwerpen by Gillis vanden Rade 1580*  
*Zent-brief der Dienaren, die Godts Woort in de Ghereformeerde kercken in Nederlant verkondighen aen den ghenen die seker Boeck gemaect hebben, datmen noemt dat Berghsche ofte Concordie-boeck.* Antwerp, 1580.  
In this missive the Reformed ministers in the Netherlands criticize the new Lutheran confession of faith published in Berg: see the eighth Session, and the Glossary.

- T. *Traite de l'authorite du Magistrat en la punition des heretiques*, fait en Latin par Theodore de Beza, imprime par Conrad Badius 1560
- Theodore Beza, *Traitté de l'authorité du magistrat en la punition des hérétiques, et du moyen d'y procéder*. [Geneva]: Conrad Badius, 1560. French translation of the Latin original: Theodore Beza, *De haereticis a civili magistratu puniendis libellus: adversus Martini Bellii farraginem...* [Geneva]: Robert Estienne, 1554.  
*One of the most often cited sources in the Synod, this is Beza's response to Castellio's denouncement of the execution of Servetus.*
- Cort. *Cort eenvoudigh ende waerachtigh verhael, waeromme Casper Coolhaes by den Synode van Hollant van der kercke Christi is gheex-communiceert ghestelt van weghen der Predicanten ende Ouderlinghen inden voorsz. Synode vergadert, etc.* Gedruckt tot Dordrecht by Jan Canijn Anno 1582.
- Cort eenvoudigh ende waerachtigh verhael, waeromme Caspar Coolhaes: Predikant gheweest zynde binnen Leyden: eyntelick 25 Martii 1582 by den Synode Provinciael van Hollandt van der Kercke Christi is gheex-communiceert: Ghestelt van weghen der Predicanten ende Ouderlinghen inden voorsz. Synode vergadert.* Dordrecht: Jan Canin, 1582. Knuttel 624.

## *Whether or Not the True Visible Church of Christ May Err*

Participants: Jezonias, Vice-President, Catholic Delegate, Reformed Del-  
5 egate, Gamaliel, Theodore Beza

JEZONIAS, the Scales of our Lord. I had hoped, my learned, pious, and honorable gentlemen and brothers, that our president, Master Daniel, would appear in person at this blessed gathering. We all esteem his judgment so highly that each of us would gladly submit his opinions to him  
10 alone, since we unanimously consider his judgment to be purely divine rather than human. Therefore we along with all people could wish for nothing better than for his clear and enlightened judgment to guide our voices and sentiments. But it has pleased the great King to summon and use master Daniel elsewhere, right at the time of our planned gathering.

15 However, because the causes of these gatherings are so grave and urgent that they may not be postponed, our president has deemed it necessary to command all of us to appear here on the appointed day in order to each give our views on the apposite issues as documented at His behest. Those views are to be recorded in writing, so that at his return – may it  
20 come soon – his Honor may find everything perfectly in place, in fulfillment of what will be found necessary for God’s honor, for man’s salvation, and for the peace and well-being of our nation.

Thus it is now time to get started on this endeavor, after having first said a unified, humble, and heart-felt prayer. It is meet that I, as substitute  
25 for the president at this meeting and in accordance with the official rules

4 Jezonias=Jaazaniah (Hebrew): “May Yahweh hear.” 5 Gamaliel (d. c. 52 C.E.) was president of the Sanhedrin, a noted doctor of the Jewish law, and the teacher of Paul (Acts 22:3). In Acts 5:34–39 he advises his fellow-members of the Sanhedrin not to persecute the apostles, “for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it – lest you even be found to fight against God.” (Acts 5: 38–39).

6 *The scales of our Lord* refers to Proverbs 16: 11: “Honest weights and scales are the Lord’s; All the weights in the bag are His work.” 7 Daniel in Hebrew means “God is my judge.”

In the *Synod* Daniel, the absent judge whose return is eagerly awaited, stands for Jesus.

with which you are familiar, will intone this prayer. I therefore call on us to bend our hearts as well as our knees before God, and pray in spirit and in truth as follows:

PRAYER: *Merciful and faithful Father of Jesus Christ, thou knowest on what 1<sup>B</sup>  
hard times thy dear Son's wretched and sad church has fallen. The poor sheep 5  
are being devoured by the wolves, the good wheat is overtaken by the tares,  
and the vineyard that Thou hast planted is being laid waste by the crafty  
foxes. We, thy humble servants who have gathered here in the name of thy  
dear Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, in order to resist the wolves and foxes and  
to promote the growth of thy good wheat, find ourselves deprived in our 10  
own persons of any means sufficient to this cause, and in need of wisdom  
from above. But we also know for certain that Thou, in thy goodness, hast  
promised to bestow this blissful gift on all who ask it of thee in devout prayer.  
We are truly aware of our powerlessness and trust wholly in thy unfailing  
promises, and therefore we ask Thee humbly and sincerely, in our great need, 15  
that thy merciful benevolence may deign to confer upon us the gift of thy  
divine wisdom, as a consolation to thy scattered flock. May we fulfill our  
plan in thine honor and for the salvation of mankind, with thy Holy Spirit  
of truth and by thy beloved Son our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.*

The first topic that the chairman, master Daniel, has proposed for all gen- 20  
tlemen assembled here to discuss freely, is: Whether or not Christ's visible  
church may err in matters of faith.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: The answer to this question has to be no, if one  
wants to avoid the blasphemy of saying that Christ himself may err. For  
the members of the body whose head cannot err, can not err either. Thus | 1<sup>C</sup>  
we must necessarily conclude that the church, which consists of the mem-  
bers of Christ, cannot err in any way.

REFORMED DELEGATE: I cannot agree, because in my eyes your words do  
not accord with the truth. For this comes down to saying the following: as  
the head are, likewise are all the members. Since the head is Jesus Christ 30  
himself, and thus all-knowing, it follows that each and every member is  
also God and thus all-knowing. Because he who is all-knowing cannot  
err, none of the members of Christ, who are likewise all-knowing, can err  
either. Is this in accord with the truth? Can we say in truth that each one of  
those members is Christ, God, and all-knowing? Surely not. Whoever is 35

19 The prayer contains references to Matthew 10:16; Matthew 13:24–30; Song of Solomon 2:15. 27 Cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12–31.

not all-knowing may err in what he does not know, and since none of the members in Christ are all-knowing, it follows that all of Christ's members may err.

THEODORE BEZA: It is beyond all doubt that here, in this world, the members of the church may well err, and do indeed err each day in doctrine as well as in morals, according to what St. Paul says (1 Cor. 13:9): "For we know in part..."; and St. John (1 John 1:8): "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: No, you are misinterpreting my words, for where I say that the entire body of the church cannot err, you instead speak of each member individually. What I meant was that the body, whose head is free of all error, can in no way err. Since the head of the Christian church is free of all error, it follows of necessity that the entire body is also free of all error.

REFORMED DELEGATE: That proof is identical with the first one, as follows: The body whose head is healthy may in no wise be sick. Who can agree with that? Who can accept the following proof, which is in every respect the same as your proof: The body whose head is perfect, entirely pure, and sinless is likewise here, in our time (for we are speaking of this existing church) wholly perfect, pure, and sinless? Is that not the same as what I said before? The body and all the members that constitute it are the same as the head. God being the head, likewise are the body and each of its members God himself. This is not right at all – for we are speaking here of Christ's visible church, are we not, Sir?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Indeed, we are.

REFORMED DELEGATE: Does the visible church consist only of members who are true and regenerate Christians before God? Or does she exist exclusively of members who only appear to be true, but are not so in reality and are therefore hypocrites? Or does the visible church of which we speak consist of both, to wit at the same time of true Christians and of hypocrites?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Of the latter two, that is of tares and wheat, or of hypocrites and true Christians.

The visible church consists of true Christians and hypocrites

REFORMED DELEGATE: Thus those hypocrites are in our (but never in God's) eyes and judgment members of the visible church. Well, it is certain that these hypocrites may err, indeed that they must err as long as they remain hypocrites. If I could now prove that the external church is led by those hypocrites most of the time, then I feel that you must admit to me that Christ's visible church can err. If, on top of that, I prove that true members of Christ and sincere Christians can also err, then no one would be able to contradict me with any semblance of truth when I contend that this proves that all the members that constitute the true and the entire visible church of Christ can err, as well as the entire body of the visible church of which the invisible Christ is the head.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: That would be a strange contention indeed. How can a body err that is controlled by a head that can not err? Or is the lord Christ not the head of his church, the same way that a man is the head of his wife?

REFORMED DELEGATE: What would really be strange is to contend that all wives only do what their head, that is their husband, commands them to do. Is that what you want to say, Sir?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: No, that is not true.

REFORMED DELEGATE: Is it also the case that each visible church of God and of Christ always does what her husband and head Christ commands her to do? Would you, Sir, seek to aver that Israel, the church of God, always did what God, her head, commanded? Did she do so when she worshipped the calf? when she desired to return to Egypt? when she wanted to stone Joshua and Caleb? when God wanted to strike and destroy Israel with pestilence? when Israel, not knowing the righteousness of God, and seeking her own, disobeyed God's righteousness? or most of all when she had that righteousness of God, Jesus Christ, her husband and head, nailed to the cross?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: No, I am not saying that.

REFORMED DELEGATE: Then do not say either that the external church | is always obedient to God or to Christ, her head. And admit that she can err when she does not obey the head and its commands, but follows her own ideas and commands. Or do you mean to say that the Jewish church

The visible church  
does not always  
obey Christ

15 Ephesians 5:22-24. 24 [Exodus 32:6]. Exodus 32:1-6. 25 [Numbers 14: 4-10, Numbers 14: 22] Numbers 14: 6-10. 29 [Romans 9: 3, John 19: 6-7].

obeyed the commands of her head when she had the son of God killed, who was her husband and head? Or do you contend that at that time the Jewish church was not the true visible church of God? Or that she did not have Christ put to death?

- 5 CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Those who did that to Christ were nothing but godless hypocrites, and therefore as much true church members as a devil disguised as an angel is a true angel.

REFORMED DELEGATE: Be this as it may – but is it not also true that such godless hypocrites held a place in God’s external church, and were indeed prominent members of the church? Were they not the ones who steered the ship, that is the church? Do we not speak of a visible church? Since at that time she erred in leading the members of the visible church, who appeared to be saintly but were in reality godless and false, [it is proven that] the hypocritical churches with their visible members can err.

The visible church is at times ruled by hypocrites

- 15 CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Even if I grant you this, it does not follow that the true and sincere members of the body of Christ can err. Or would you dare to say that there are no true members and living stones in the body of Christ or in the church?

REFORMED DELEGATE: Far from it – but you must understand that such true members of Christ can also err. Was not the apostle Peter a true member, indeed, in your tradition the only head of the visible church of Christ here on earth? Was he not endowed with the Holy Spirit of truth?

True members of Christ may err

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Yes, of course. But did he err?

REFORMED DELEGATE: Frankly, yes – unless one wants to say that the apostle Paul erred or even lied when he personally censured Peter and said that he had done wrong. But even if you would indeed say that Paul, who was full of the Holy Spirit, in this case did not speak the truth, then you would logically have to allow that the true and sincere members of Christ can err, unless you mean to say that Paul, in whom Christ himself lived, was not a true member of Christ. Thus, if both parts of the church can err, viz. not just | the multitude of the hypocrites but also the small elect group of the true members of Christ, then who could deny that, both parts being capable of erring, the church as a whole can also err?

4 Coornhert regards the established churches as “external churches” which are all prone to error, as was the Jewish church when she was the true one, at the time of Jesus whom she rejected. 18 Cf. 1 Peter 2:4–5. 25 [Galatians 2:11]. 27 [Acts 13:9].

This happens when she judges according to her own opinions, without Christ's spirit and word whose commands she then ignores – which is not to say that the lord Christ himself can err.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: We find clear promises by Christ that he will always and till the end remain with his church, and that his spirit of truth will also remain with his church. If thus Christ, who is the true shepherd and guide, indeed who is the way itself and the spirit of truth, will always remain with his church, then how can one believe that she can err? Can the true shepherd, the real guide, the way of life, yes the truth itself, lead us to error, temptation, or deceit?

REFORMED DELEGATE: Not at all. The true shepherd, guide and way misleads no one who follows only his commands and always walks his way exclusively. Likewise the truth does not deceive anyone. But must we conclude from this that each true member or sheep always and in everything necessarily follows only the commands of his shepherd and guide? Does he not ever stray from the path, and can he not be deceived in any matter? What need would there be, then, to seek the hundredth sheep? For was that sheep not part of the flock when it wandered off?

We surely see this also in the example of Peter related earlier: he was not only a true member and sheep, but he was himself a shepherd tending Christ's sheep. We may not conclude, from the fact that Peter erred at that time, that the Holy Spirit had left him, as we read about king Saul. The sun's light does not leave someone who in the afternoon mistakenly thinks that someone he sees in the distance is John, whereas it is [in reality] Nicholas. No, it stays with him and will make him, upon coming closer, unmistakably recognize as Nicholas the person whom from afar he mistook for John. Even though Peter – to use this one example – was led (albeit gradually) by the Spirit of truth, that is by the clear light of the one truth, this does not mean that he instantly knew all truth after the Pentecost, as we have seen. To possess something is not the same as to use it also.

Who among us has not stumbled, walking along the road on a clear day? Why? Because when he stumbled he was turning his face elsewhere and did not pay attention to the road. Does this mean that when he stumbled the afternoon light fled from him? Or did he lose his eyes or sight while stumbling? No. His sight and the light stayed with him as before.

5 [Matthew 28:20]. 6 [John 14:17]. 17 Luke 15:3-7. 21 [John 21:18] John 21:15-18.  
22 1 Samuel 16:14-23. 30 [2 Corinthians 3:18; John 16:13]. 36 [James 3:2].

Similarly all Christians still go wrong and err in many things, without Christ or his Holy Spirit leaving their side. Do not get me wrong, I am speaking here of erring, not of sinning.

2<sup>c</sup> CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Granted that each member in particular can err  
 5 individually, then you still can in no wise rightly conclude from that that the whole body or the assemblage of the members of Christ may err. Each church member may err individually

REFORMED DELEGATE: I have already responded to and refuted this [argument] when I showed it to be flawed reasoning when one argues that the entire body and all its members are the same as the head, and that the  
 10 body cannot be ill when the head is healthy. I therefore do not have to repeat what was said, for I take the church and the assemblage to be one and the same thing. I have already responded regarding the church, and not just of each of its members or of its prominent members in particular.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: It is impossible for that assemblage to err in whose  
 15 midst Christ himself is present. Or is Christ no longer the truth? Or can the truth now lie and deceive us with its promises? What does he promise his church? That where two or three are gathered in his name, he will be in the midst of them. Thus Christ himself is always the helmsman of the ship of his church. Would one therefore not be blaspheming Christ by saying  
 20 that this ship can err? Who else but the helmsman could be blamed for such error?

REFORMED DELEGATE: I already proved that people in whom the spirit of truth as well as Christ reside can err – or were not Christ or his spirit of truth in Peter when he erred? I already proved this when I spoke of the  
 25 light and sight, and of someone erroneously taking a person for someone else when he sees him from afar, and also of people stumbling with open eyes on a clear day.

But in order to make the same point a different way, let me say first  
 that you, sirs, know well what it means to gather in the name of Christ,  
 30 and I therefore do not need to dwell on the fact that those who seem to or boast about doing this are not always really doing so. Thus you, my lords, also know that the church assemblies that occupy themselves with matters of faith do not consist of all members of the church, without exception. They only consist of church leaders who have been nominated  
 35 from the majority to attend such gatherings. Now everyone tends to like Not all who say or appear to gather in the name of Christ really do so

The largest group is worst

and honor those whom he agrees with most, as the saying goes, “like seeks like.” Usually the majority of the members are also the worst. They also elect, nominate, and delegate to such meetings those who are like them, to wit the worst. From this can we conclude otherwise than that most gatherings are conducted by persons who are the least sincere? Could such people be gathered in the name of Christ? I cannot believe that. Furthermore we have to distinguish | between being in a ship or a gathering and conducting that ship or gathering. Christ was in the external church and ship of God, where he let himself be circumcised. Did he command or govern that church? If that were the case, the evil regents and helmsmen would not have let him suffer a bitter death. Therefore Christ can be in the church without commanding and steering her, that is to say not as a domineering lord but as a despised and rejected worm, even as a punished evil-doer. This again proves that the gathering or the church herself (we are speaking of the visible one) in which Christ himself dwells and remains, can err.

Being on board of a ship is not the same as steering it

Christ can be in his church without commanding it.

The leaders of the visible church are not always the best.

THEODORE BEZA: The Catholics themselves acknowledge that each member can err individually, as can each particular church, and indeed the provincial councils. In my view no person of sound judgment can doubt that they have often erred, a fact that is amply confirmed by experience. Thus what is left is to consider the church as a whole, in her universality. But in what manner? For if we consider her as represented in a universal council, then we cannot find much evidence to believe that all the power of the Holy Spirit, scattered over the church, is concentrated in certain prelates who are not always the most learned or the best, even though they represent the multitude of those who have sent them. For how often do we not see a simple man who is for a time wiser than the most learned of an entire company?

Furthermore every time a general council has been convened, a great number of not only the most knowledgeable and the saintliest but also of the prelates stayed home. Who can assure us that those who are absent at times do not receive more revelations than those who are present? On top of that you know, dear gentlemen, that the church has been subject to terrible devastation for a long time, principally as regards the highest positions and dignities of prelates. As a result the greatest desolation of the house of God is found with those who should be the most sincere

1 [2 Kings 22:6–8; 3 Kings 18:21]. Unclear references. 17 [C 282-v] La Place, *Commentaires*, 257–258. 31 [C 283] La Place, *Commentaires*, 257.

and honored. We have at least seen those examples for a long time already, and heard those good bishops sigh about it so loudly and openly that we can still hear them. Certainly what Saint Bernard writes about this in his commentaries and in the 33d sermon on the Song of Solomon, as in his sermon on the conversion of St. Paul is not less noteworthy than it is true. “Alas Lord,” says he, “those whom we see enjoying first place in your church and who are in positions of power are the first ones to persecute you. They have taken the Ark of Zion, they have captured the citadel and have after that set the entire city of God on fire.” Let this be said here, gentlemen, | not in order to hurt anyone, but to prove that, since for a long time already the highest appointments in the church have been obscure and without order, it is impossible to conclude fairly that the general councils that have been gathered for so long from such a poorly qualified multitude were directed by the Holy Spirit, and that they cannot err.

15 CATHOLIC DELEGATE: But do we not know that the church of Christ is a bride? Lo, it is written: “I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness...” The faith of the church can not perish. If the church were without faith, is that not the same as the suspension of the marriage between the groom and his bride, whose union is, however, eternal? Does not the groom say: 20 “I will betroth you to Me forever”? What conclusion could thus be more solid than that the church of Christ cannot err?

GAMALIEL: There is one kind of error that separates one from Christ and another that does not separate us from him. Regarding the error that separates from Christ, we find some persons who are linked through faith 25 with Christ and others who are in Christ through love. The first may be lost because they are not yet firmly rooted in Christ, but the others who, by the love of God, are united with God through Christ, cannot be lost for all eternity. Now nobody is united with Christ in God except those in whom is the true love of God, and this love is only in those who have 30 been reborn. Whoever is born from God cannot sin, for he cannot sin against that love until death, and cannot fall away from Christ and God anymore, for evil does not touch him. Thus this rebirth takes place also by the faith that leads us to accept Christ. For all who accept him receive from Him the power to become children of God. Therefore faith in Christ

Error is of two kinds. Those who only have faith can be cut off from Him

Those who love God cannot lose Him

6 \*Bernard of Clairvaux, *Sermones super Cantica Canticorum* 34; *Sermo in conversione sancti Pauli*. 16 [Hosea 2:18; Luke 22:31] Hosea 2:20; Luke 22:31 does not seem to apply. 20 [Hosea 2:18] Hosea 2:19. 28 [John 15:6; Matthew 13:20–21; Luke 1:25–26; 2 Peter 1:21–22; 1 Timothy 1:19; Galatians 5:7; John 2:19]. 34 [John 17: 21–22, 13: 20, 28–29; Romans 8: 38–39; 1 Corinthians 1: 8; 1 John 3: 9; 1 John 5: 18; John 1: 12].

comes before love. Whoever has a faith that is such that he accepts Christ and becomes a child of God, and who receives such assurances through the precious forfeit of love that he is driven by the spirit of God, and that led by the certain testimony of the Holy Spirit (and not by a capricious phantasy) he calls out to God “Abba,” “Father;” such a person can not be cut off from Christ. But this does not hold for all those who have not yet received this seal or forfeit of love and who only have faith, for if they do not persevere they may be lost.

Those reborn  
in God can  
not desert God

In short, those who have not yet been reborn and only have faith without love may lose Christ, but not those who have been reborn through faith and have now received this love, for the latter, not the former, have been united with God in Christ. Such a one was Peter – to apply this to our example – who loved Christ and was wedded to Christ in faith: his faith could not be lost entirely and thus he could not lose Christ – because Peter, whose prayer is answered by the Father because of his venerability, had prayed that his faith might not be lost.

Even though Peter’s faith could not be lost and Peter loved Christ, the husband of his soul, was he therefore free from error? Did he not err when he, together with the other ten apostles, saw the message of the resurrection of Christ as idle talk and refused to believe it? Did he not err when he preferred this temporary life over the life of the soul, that is Jesus Christ, and out of mortal fear said “I do not know the man”? Furthermore, did he not also err – although less seriously – after receiving the Holy Spirit, when Paul, as said earlier, found cause to blame him? We must therefore acknowledge that the true members of Christ can err, although their faith – and thus their faithfulness in truth – remains in place and their marriage with the Groom unbroken.

Christ’s true  
members may  
err, but remain  
Christ’s members

So this is indeed a far cry from the contention by the Catholic delegate that he has solidly concluded or proven that Christ’s church cannot err. For if each of the true members of Christ can err, then the whole assembly of the church can also err, as has been irrefutably proven by the Reformed delegate. Now if the true and sincere part of Christ’s church can err, shall anyone deny that the false and hypocritical part of Christ’s church (we are concerned here with the visible church) can, indeed must err? I don’t think so. Thus, if both chief parts of the visible church can err, then one has to conclude, if I am not mistaken, that the church as a whole can err.

3 [Romans 8:14–16]. 12 The notion that one who is regenerated cannot be cut off from Christ is part of Coornhert’s belief in perfectionism\* (see Glossary). 16 [Luke 22:32; Hebrews 5:7]. 22 [Matthew 26:71]. Matthew 26:74. 24 \*Galatians 2:11.

If this is true, then it is my advice first to desist from this factionalism and quarreling, these condemnations, banishments, and persecutions; second, that we do not agree so lightly with and say yes to all their judgments, whether these proceed from people or from churches (the latter  
 5 consisting, likewise, of people); third, that we give honor to God, thus avoiding the curse menacing him who trusts in people, so that we only trust in Him, blessed be He who cannot lie or deceive, and in his Holy Word. Doing this the strong would carry the weak, the wise would kindly instruct the unwise. Such harmonious love for one another would testify  
 10 before everyone that we are children of Christ.

Now if the Catholic delegate, because of his old tradition, his long possession of power and his strong customs is not yet capable of understanding that the visible church of Christ can err, and if he therefore has a hard time accepting with grace any criticism of his errors, it would  
 15 be good and necessary for the Reformed delegate, who wants to be the better of the two, to prove that he is such indeed by being patient and by tolerating the Catholic position in this debate, as well as by tolerating the criticism he [himself] may receive from others. This would also beseem him for two major reasons: first because he himself does not  
 20 hesitate to utter strong criticism of the Catholic delegate, even though the latter wields or used to wield such great authority. Is it not meet that the lesser be willing to endure from the other what he has himself done to the greater? Second, he himself tries to prove that Christ's  
 3<sup>b</sup> true church can err; this being so, | he will easily understand that his church can err also, even if it were Christ's true church. If this be true,  
 25 he will also easily see that his church needs to be admonished so it will not stubbornly persist in error, as does the other in his view. Thus he will prefer to sustain the wounds inflicted by a friend who admonishes him over the kisses of an enemy who flatters him. This would drive all  
 30 tyranny from the church and increase her sweet concord. May God grant us this.

JEZONIAS: I have heard, dear brethren, that the Catholic delegate denies that the visible church can err, since the head of the church, that is Christ, cannot err. The Reformed delegate affirms that the church can err, because  
 35 both sections or parts of the church, viz. the godly as well as the hypocrites, can err. I have also heard the distinction made by our Gamaliel between the error that makes one be cut off from Christ entirely, and the

10 [John 13:35].

error that does not cut one off from or make one lose Christ. May all this receive the sincere consideration of our honorable president, Daniel. God the Father be praised and honored through our lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

*Proofs based on Antiquity,  
Customs, and Traditions*

Participants: Jezonias, Catholic Delegate, Melchior Cano, Stanislas Ho-  
5 sius, John Calvin, Wolfgang Musculus, Theodore Beza, Gamaliel

JEZONIAS: The Lord be with us all. Esteemed and eminent gentlemen, I am  
pleased with the increased number of delegates at this gathering. We have  
deliberated about the question whether God's true visible church can err.  
Although I take it that the gentlemen who only joined us this afternoon  
10 have already been informed of these deliberations, I will nevertheless see  
to it that you too receive a copy so you can add your views.

Moving on, we will discuss the second issue that needs to be consid-  
ered: If in religious matters antiquity, customs, and traditions need to be  
accepted as certain and credible testimony. It is deemed necessary to dis-  
15 cuss this topic before we move to other points of accusation directed at  
the Catholics by the Reformed. It is expected that a discussion of this mat-  
ter will solve many problems in addressing many mutual reproaches and  
polemical tracts. So please, gentlemen, give your view of this matter.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: My gentlemen, from time immemorial we have  
3<sup>D</sup> used | such traditions as unquestionable testimony. It surprises us there-  
fore that they are now questioned. After all, the cardinal of Lorraine still  
used such testimony in 1561 in the great council of Poissy in France, to  
prove the real presence of the body and the blood of Christ in the Holy  
and Noble Sacrament. The words of the cardinal state, as follows, "that  
25 such is the general consensus of our ancient and holy fathers gathered in  
the general councils, of which their writings, distributed to all churches  
from the early days on, starting at the earliest time, provide testimony."  
And again: "Verily, since it has been accepted for so many hundreds of  
years, those who preach this do not doubt that the body of our Lord is  
30 present in the Eucharist." The custom of keeping the sacrament in the

30 [C fol. 266<sup>v</sup>] La Place, *Commentaires*, 242, 245.

tabernacle is so ancient that it was already known at the Council of Nicea. Likewise, carrying the holy sacrament to the sick is one of the oldest traditions of the Catholic church. Should we abandon such splendid traditions because of some newcomers?

Catholics say that in the struggle against heretics tradition has more force than Scripture

MELCHIOR CANO: Tradition, which after all means what was passed down 5  
from person to person from the earliest times on, is more effective against  
heretics than Scripture, for one should relate almost all disputations with  
heretics to the traditions that have been received from the old. That is  
surely very different from abandoning them or declaring them invalid!

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: It is because of this article of faith that the little 10  
children, who themselves cannot have committed any sins yet, are in truth  
baptized in accord with the tradition of the apostles.

Catholics say that faith and religion can exist without Scripture

MELCHIOR CANO: We know that the church is older than Scripture, and  
that therefore the faith and religion can exist without Scripture.

Catholics say that tradition is the strongest foundation of faith

STANISLAS HOSIUS: I see no basis whatsoever for Brenz's criticism of Pe- 15  
ter a Soto, who said that traditions are the strongest foundation of faith.  
For just as we rightfully call that which, in the construction of a house, is  
first put in place a foundation, it is also apparent that in the construction  
of the house of the living God, that is the church, the traditions or what  
was passed down orally came first, and that the church was founded on 20  
them before any Scriptures existed. This is why I believe that he is right  
when he calls traditions the foundation of faith. Surely we cannot suffi-  
ciently condemn Brenz's tremendous conceit and audacity for not being  
ashamed to treat with such malicious ridicule what has been accepted so  
unanimously by the catholic church – the Greek as well as the Latin, the 25  
Eastern as well as the Western church – for so many years. | This would 4<sup>a</sup>  
imply that if, God forbid, there were anything wrong with regard to bap-  
tism, exorcism of the devil and the consecration of water with salt and  
oil – as has been the church's custom now for many centuries – that all of  
this would have been hidden from many bright luminaries of all of Chris- 30  
tianity, such as Cyprian, Ambrosius, Augustine, Basil, as well as Clement  
and Dionysius himself. It would imply that none of this was revealed to  
any human over all these many years, except now, finally, to these prodi-  
gal sons who, although they pride themselves in being nothing but spirit,  
are nothing but flesh. 35

Catholics say that the Protestants now boast to see what the Fathers of old have never seen

1 [C.T. Sessio xii, c 6] [C.T. sess. v, c 4]. 5 [fol. 168]. 12 [C.T. session 4 Decret 1].  
15 [Hosius, *Confutatio* IV, 533]. 22 [fol. 145].

JOHN CALVIN: We are warned of what the result can be of antiquity unfounded on reason by the example of the Corinthians, who abused the Eucharist. Here we see clearly the “authority” we should give to an old custom that is in no way grounded in God’s Word! They thought their practice was legitimate, because it had become a custom. When Paul encountered this [practice] he took up a position against it.

Antiquity means nothing without reason

Try to imagine what happened after the death of the apostles, and what freedom Satan enjoyed to play his tricks! Nonetheless, this is the papists’ best foundation, for they say: “This tradition is old, and because it was maintained before, we have to keep it as if it were a revelation from heaven.” No matter how many countless times the papists or others like them cry out that the bread was of old offered as a sacrament and that this is not a new custom, just as often are we allowed to disagree by saying that Christ’s command is an inviolable rule that no man-made custom, no appeal to tradition, and no man-made institutions ought to weaken or change. For in religion, whose only foundation is the eternal truth of Christ, the number of years should not count for much. And as for the oral tradition that led to the oppression of the church up to now, it was nothing but deceit.

Catholics rely on tradition

Traditions were nothing but deceit

WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: I agree with master John Calvin on all points. For we see clearly that, when the Lord Christ speaks of the wrath against one’s brother, no error whatsoever, no matter how old, is well-founded because of its antiquity.

Antiquity does not make error into a solid foundation

BEZA: I find that among the supporters of Antichrist in France there are people who are so well-known for their evil that one would do them a great injustice in calling them anything other than hypocrites. For they are such grossly ignorant asses that even the women make fun of them. They will first try for awhile if they can make their prisoner change his mind, invoking to that end the old customs | of the church, or some other hackneyed arguments that have already been refuted a thousand times. Do they call that a winning proof and argument? We want Scripture to be the touchstone for judging anything that happens in the church.

In the church everything should be judged by Scripture

1 [C.C. 1.10.11.21]. 3 \*1 Corinthians 11:17–34. 19 [C.I. 4 verso, C. Institut. Xijj.20] John Calvin, *Commentary on Corinthians* Trans. John Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, n.d.), comments on 1 Corinthians 10 and 11. Accessed at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom39.txt>. 22 Matthew 5:22. 23 [M.C.M. 5.22, T. 201] [W. Musculus, *In Matthaëum*, Basle, 1548, on Matthew 5:22]. 32 [C. 285. v.] La Place, *Commentaires*, 229.

GAMALIEL: It is now finally time that, with your permission, I shall also express my opinion on this matter that is being debated by such distinguished scholars. We hear the old say yes, and the young say no in this matter. Now I find master John Calvin's arguments against [the use of tradition] so effective that I am not too surprised that rev. Beza agrees with the view of his master, especially in cases where he notices that the old are able to prove certain things that he disagrees with by means of antiquity, customs, or tradition. But I am highly surprised when I then notice that rev. Beza himself makes use of the same proof [by means of tradition] when it serves his viewpoint.

BEZA: You may say that, rev. Gamaliel, but I think that you cannot prove it, for in this matter I agree entirely with my master: I [too] believe that nothing can be definitively proven based on antiquity, customs, or traditions. So is it fair that you falsely accuse me?

GAMALIEL: I would certainly not want to do that, rev. Beza, and I am willing, if no one objects, to provide concrete evidence that you also make use of all that as proof, when you feel it supports you. Why should I only mention you, rev. Beza? Rev. Calvin himself does the same when it suits him.

JOHN CALVIN: You speak in riddles!

GAMALIEL: No, gentlemen, my argument is clear and obvious. Rev. Beza, in his effort to provide plausible proof that it is the magistrate's task to kill heretics, realized that he was utterly unable to prove this from the testimony of Divine Scripture, even though he artfully tried to do this. In the end he is not confident that he can provide the intended proof based on scriptural testimony, and so he has recourse to proof based on antiquity and customs, saying at the conclusion of his intended but as yet utterly unproven argument the following: "Therefore, in conclusion of this proof, we say that those who do not want the magistrate to be involved in religious matters, and particularly in the punishment of heretics, despise God's express Word [which he does not produce anywhere] and reject the authority of all antiquity, that is of the custom that has existed from ancient times on." And immediately after this he entitles the next chapter | as follows: "The third argument taken from the perpetual custom maintained also by foreign nations." What else does this mean than that

Beza himself does what he blames the Catholics of doing

4 In the *Synod* "the old" refers to the Roman Catholics, and "the young" to the Protestants.  
33 [T. fol. 312] Beza, *T.A.M.* 312.

he finds proof in antiquity and customs, and even in the old traditions of pagans? And a little earlier in the same book, seeking to prove that heretics ought to be punished, he also says that all Christians, at all times, have done this of one accord. Does Beza perhaps mean to say that this  
 5 was also the practice in the church of the apostles? I don't think so – or does that time not count? So now should you not admit that Beza himself also proves his opinion from antiquity and custom?

JOHN CALVIN: It may be that Beza in some places has tried to prove his thesis from antiquity and custom, although this surprises me – but how  
 10 can you prove that I did the same? You made this accusation against me more brazenly than truthfully.

GAMALIEL: I remember, rev. Calvin, having read in your writings where you try to defend infant baptism the following: "...I answer first that it [infant baptism] is a custom that was not introduced within recent mem-  
 15 ory, nor did it start under the pope's rule. For I say to you that it is a sacred institution that was always maintained in the Christian church. For there is not one doctor even in the most distant past who does not testify that the apostles have always practiced it."

Calvin himself does what he blames the Catholics of doing

JOHN CALVIN: Those are indeed my words – but you do not read what  
 20 follows, for I myself say immediately after that that I do not desire that antiquity helps us prove our point, except inasmuch as it be found to be based on God's word. See if you do not distort my words by citing them like that!

GAMALIEL: Not at all, for truly, rev. Calvin, I was about to continue reading  
 25 the text when you interrupted me. But my answer to that is that I deem you too sensible to have vainly written what one reads there about antiquity. Now if you had been able to provide solid proof of infant baptism from Holy Scripture itself, you would indeed have vainly written that, but Scripture is entirely on the side of the Anabaptists and does not at all sup-  
 30 port antiquity or ancient custom in this. If you were able to provide solid proof of infant baptism from Holy Scripture – in which they [the Anabaptists] believe – then why do you here bring up antiquity, in which they do not believe? If you cannot prove it from Scripture, then what use is your proof from antiquity? Is not proof based on antiquity in all cases, that is  
 4<sup>p</sup> for both sides, entirely invalid? | Thus it is apparent that both sides – rev.

18 \*[Instruct. fol. 8] {Quotation taken from Calvin, *Briève Instruction contre les erreurs de la secte des Anabaptistes*, Geneva, 1545, p. 15}.

Beza as well as the old – base themselves on antiquity and custom where it suits them, to prove their point. In this I disagree with either side, and I would much rather see that, for proof in religious matters, people rely a bit less on antiquity, customs, and traditions, and more on the prophets, gospels, and the writings of the apostles, for the latter do not deceive. 5

JEZONIAS: I see that the Catholics hold antiquity in such high esteem that they regard it as the foundation of religion, and feel that it supports belief in the Holy Scripture. They believe that were it not for the argument of antiquity the opinion of the real presence of the body of Christ in the sacrament, and of infant baptism, appear to have no foundation. I 10  
note that the Reformed, on the other hand, only accept the authority of Holy Scripture, although Gamaliel believes that they do not solely rely on Scripture either, when, failing this Scriptural support, the authority of antiquity is made to serve their purpose. This is the case when they want to prove the validity of the persecution of heretics and of infant baptism. 15

The secretary made a faithful record of all this, to be submitted to my lord the President for his judgment when he shall arrive. Thanks be the Lord who has allowed us to get this far in our debate.

THIRD SESSION

*Rules and Ceremonies not Based on Scripture*

Participants: Jezonias, Stanislas Hosius, John Calvin, Theodore Beza, Catholic Delegate, Gamaliel

5 JEZONIAS: There is, my pious, honorable, and learned gentlemen, some  
difference between the Catholics and the Reformed regarding the multi-  
tude of rules and ceremonies. Since it is the Reformed who criticize the  
Catholics on this point, it behooves the Catholics to account for their  
practice, so they can satisfy the Reformed in this matter, or so the Re-  
10 formed, remaining unsatisfied, may speak against it.

To give an indication of the matter, to get things started I want to  
present to the Catholic gentlemen some of the issues at stake (the other  
issues will be raised automatically during the debate). They are: the mak-  
5<sup>A</sup> ing of the sign of the cross; not singing the “Hallelujah” | during the fast;  
15 the Easter candle, and the singing of *Gloria & Honor Patri*.

STANISLAS HOSIUS: It is not without important and excellent reason,  
gentlemen, that making the sign of the cross on one’s forehead and else-  
where has been instituted, for the blessing of Christ’s cross is the greatest  
blessing God has bestowed on us. This is indeed why our mother, the Holy  
20 Church, in her concern for our salvation, did not want to limit herself to  
showing this to us in the Bible or to preaching this to us in words, or to  
remind us of it by the institution of certain [holy] days. In addition to  
these things she has given this sign, so that we keep this sign of salvation  
daily not just before our eyes, but also in our soul. This is also the reason  
25 that it has been customary, in Tertullian’s words, “to make the sign of the  
cross on our forehead in all our proceedings, in our movements, in our  
comings and goings, when we get dressed, put on our shoes, wash our-  
selves, have dinner, light our lamps, go to sleep, sit down, in short in all

the actions we engage in in our daily lives.” Are these not rightfully seen as important, great, and sacred reasons for making the sign of the cross?

Similarly the reason we refrain from singing the “Hallelujah” during the fast is not trivial, for we ordained that people may not sing the “Hallelujah” during all the days of the fast because this is a time of sadness. 5

With regard to the Easter candle, we have instituted the solemn benediction of that wax candle at Easter as a sacrament of that glorious night, so that we might receive the mystery of Christ’s sacred resurrection (that blissfully happened during that night) by the blessed light of a sanctified candle. What pious person would not embrace with both arms such 10  
divine reasons for blessing the Easter candle? Can we honor Christ’s beneficent resurrection too much?

By the same token, gentlemen, it is not without reason or explicit scriptural grounds that the singing of “Gloria Patri” in one form or the other is prescribed, for we have ordained that at the end of the psalms peo- 15  
ple shall sing “Gloria et Honor Patri,” and not “Gloria Patri,” since David says, “Render the Lord glory and honor,” and because John the Evangelist heard a voice saying, “Honor and glory to our God,” etc. Whoever omits this shall be excommunicated.

Now from this small sample you can clearly see, gentlemen, that we 20  
can easily provide equally important, sufficient, and indeed also scriptural reasons for all other institutions and ceremonies of the Holy Church. We will gladly do this, should you gentlemen request it.

JOHN CALVIN: Gentlemen, do you call that appropriate and Scriptural proof of | such human institutions and useless ceremonies? What else is 5<sup>B</sup>  
such a puppet show of ceremonies but a clever snare with which to catch, miraculously, not only the common people but also those who are most puffed up with worldly wisdom? Hypocrites and foolish women believe that nothing better or more splendid can be devised. But those who pay closer attention and consider more seriously what the multitude of such 30  
ceremonies is worth, understand: first, that they are senseless and futile, and second, that they are like a juggler’s trick that dazzles and fools the eye. It is crystal clear that many ceremonies serve no other purpose than to impress the people rather than to teach them. The same goes for the

1 Tertullian, *De corona militis*, 3.4. Accessed at [http://www.tertullian.org/latin/de\\_corona.htm](http://www.tertullian.org/latin/de_corona.htm). 5 [Concili Toletanum Canon, 10] {Correction: Fourth council of Toledo (633), canon 11. See Labbe, *Concilia* IV, 1709}. 12 [Canon. 8.] {Correction: Toledo, canon 9}. 14 [Canon. 14.] {Correction: Toledo, canon 15}. 17 [Psalm 28] Psalm 29:2. 18 [Ap.5] Revelation 5:13. 19 [Toledo: canon 15]. 24 [Institut. xiii.12] Calvin, *Institutes* IV.10.12 ff.; IV.14.25.

new church rules that undermine rather than maintain discipline. They claim to attach much importance to so-called virtues that, if one looks closely at the matter, are nothing but a shadowy and vain appearance of discipline.

5 THEODORE BEZA: But let us move on to other things: what else do the papists do? Holy water; buildings; churches; a set number of prayers for this or that corpse, or for this or that stone; wax candles; lamps; cowls; and finally, to get to the most typical things: fasting; sleeping on the floor; ashes; alms; pilgrimages; mass, and finally also the sale of indulgences  
10 carrying the seal of the Fisherman.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: May he who is without sin in this cast the first stone.

JOHN CALVIN: We do not make rules or ceremonies at our whim, without, let alone against Holy Scripture. That is what you do. This ought to be condemned, and we condemn it with the truth. What do you have to say  
15 against that?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: It seems to me that, if we err due to the multitude of our rules and ceremonies, you and others like you are imitating us so masterfully that you will surpass us before too long, so that we will have to learn from you! After all, we know for sure that your coreligionists in  
20 their synods have already proposed or decided on, among other things, the following: whether it be permitted to serve the bread that is used for the Eucharist cut or broken into pieces. The answer was that the bread shall be broken in the presence of the congregation. Furthermore, when the question was raised if during the Eucharist the bread should be cut or  
25 broken from whole loaves, the answer was that the common practice of the Dutch churches will be maintained, and that those who do otherwise will be admonished to renounce their opinion. It also surprises me that you, who usually call the Eucharist the “Lord’s Supper,” do not discuss  
5<sup>c</sup> the time and place, | that is whether this supper should be held at night, 30 in the evening, or in the morning, and further whether it should be held in a house or a tavern, or in a church, considering that the Lord held it in the evening or at night in a house. And this is not all. The synod also decides that no one shall get married on fast days, or on days when

If they continue like this, the Reformed will soon surpass the Catholics in the number of ceremonies and laws

5 [C.B. 297]. {Beza, *Confessio christianae fidei*, Geneva, 1560, 297}. 11 John 8:7.

27 [Synod, Article 77, iii, Syn. 76]. These and the following are acts of the synod of Middelburg (1581). See J.P. van Dooren (ed.), *De nationale synode te Middelburg in 1581* (Middelburg: Koninklijk Zeeuws Genootschap der Wetenschappen, 1981) pp. 64–126 for the acts of this synod. 32 [iii. Syno.37].

the Eucharist is held. Further, that the names of those taking part in the Lord's Supper shall be written in the church register. Is that not exactly the same as what we do when we give a token or note to those taking part in our Holy Sacrament? Also, that it is not proper for someone to marry the widow of him to whose sister he had previously been married. And further that it is not decent for a widow to remarry until four and a half months [after her husband's death], and this notwithstanding the fact – as you yourselves note – that God's Word does not prescribe a set time after which widows may remarry. If this is not written in God's word, as your coreligionists admit, then who gives you the power to add this to God's Word, and to forbid what God's Word allows? Do you not usually accuse us of the same in our prohibition of weddings, food, and other things on certain days? Judge now, whether you should be allowed to do what is forbidden to us? And consider if you are not accusing us of that in which you yourselves imitate us.

If it pleased us to relate here all the other points in which you are already imitating us, in the multitude of rules and ceremonies, they would still, even though they be many, seem few in comparison with our decrees and rules. We admit this frankly and must in this honor the truth. But then again, if one takes into consideration the long time our church has existed and the short existence of yours, then you – if you too want to honor the truth – will also have to admit that at this moment in your zeal, your fancy, and your hypocrisy you have already gone beyond, nay surpassed us, and that just like us you do not limit yourself to Holy Scripture, but add things based on your opinion.

THEODORE BEZA: I bet it would be just as easy for you to prove this as it would to prove that your fingers are all the same length. Just listen to the nonsense that this blockhead is spewing!

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: My argument is plausible and easy to prove, my dear Beza, for it is a well-known fact that over five hundred years have passed during which the Roman church has issued her decrees, canons, institutions and ceremonies. Certainly, we have to confess that their number is great. But if we consider the great length of time, as well as the fact that the apostolic church held its first synod only after fifteen years – a synod that only produced four short articles; and if we consider, | on the contrary, your coreligionists in Holland and Zeeland who within their

4 [iii. Syno.89]. 5 [iii. Syno.56]. 30 This should be: 1500 years. 35 Acts 15:28–29.

first seven years have already held three synods and produced over 450 articles – then any person who can count will see that seven years is not even two per cent of 1580 years, and will easily figure out that you will have over 100,000 laws before you have reached 1580 years and therefore

5 will greatly surpass us in the multitude of decrees, canons, institutions and ceremonies! This was also prudently noted by the honorable and wise council of the city of Leiden which, in her remonstrance to the States of Holland explicitly stated the following: “Since the foundation has now been fully established, we may build on it with all certainty, and we should

10 not hold a new synod once every three years. That way, the decrees to which we are bound would end up becoming so many that it would be very hard and arduous to make out heads or tail of these fetters. And, as if they did not have enough to study, our children would again have to grapple with a new *Ius Canonicum*.” That is what the folks in Leiden

15 are saying. It is clear that, like us, you are not satisfied with only Scripture, something you accuse us of. Not only do you produce cartloads of commentaries on Scripture, but your coreligionists in Holland and Zeeland are also planning to create and publish a new body of doctrine and of discipline. Thus they will be adding to Holy Scripture, and this is bla-

20 tantly against Holy Scripture, which forbids us to add anything to it. If this be permitted to you, then why do you accuse us so bitterly when we do the same? If you contend that you write your commentaries in order to explain or illuminate Holy Scripture, then others will ask you again, in your own usual words, what could be more luminous than the light of

25 Divine Scripture itself? Are you not trying to illuminate the full light of the Sun with your obscure lamp? Could I not rightfully say of you, Dr. Beza, that you also send people from the “obscurity” of Scripture to the “clarity” of your commentaries? But you yourself, denying that the Bible is obscure, spoke as follows at the Colloquy of Poissy: “...[I]f now the ob-

30 scurity of Scripture is such that she cannot explain herself by herself, then how come that Jesus does not send us elsewhere when He says: ‘Search the Scriptures’? And how come that when Abraham was asked by the miserable rich man that he send someone from the other world to warn them [his brothers], he answered: ‘They have Moses and the prophets. If they

1 The Synod of Emden (1571), the Synod of Dordrecht (1578), and the Synod of Middelburg (1581). 14 [B iii]. *Remonstrance of vertooch by die van Leyden* ([Leiden], 1582). This remonstrance against the Middelburg synod was written by Coornhert. It is also printed in Coornhert, *Wercken* (Amsterdam: Colom, 1630, three volumes), vol. 2, fol. 184<sup>R</sup>–188<sup>B</sup>. The passage cited is on fol. 187<sup>A</sup>. 19 [iii Synod Quest. 1A]. 20 [Deuteronomy 13:32; Proverbs 30:6; Revelation 22:18]. Deuteronomy 4:2; Deuteronomy 12:32; Proverbs 30:6. 32 John 5:39.

do not believe them, they would not believe either should someone rise from the dead.?’ Furthermore, what would those have done who only had the apostles’ writings before the Fathers had written any commentaries on them?’ These are your own words verbatim, dr. Beza. Now since you yourself maintain that Scripture per se | is clear enough without commen- 64  
 taries or glosses, so that the latter are not needed in order to understand Holy Scripture, then is one not justified in asking you why you waste so much time in needlessly making such a multitude of extensive and broad commentaries and explications?

GAMALIEL: It appears, gentlemen, that in the matter of institutions and 10  
 ceremonies things have gotten too far. But who may change what has happened? We should only discuss the future, not the past. The people are bent on externals and cannot be easily entertained except by external gestures and ceremonies. Still, it would be preferable to have none of these, except for what God himself has instituted. Now things are differ- 15  
 ent, alas. Thus in this regard one either has to tolerate or defeat the other.

Oh, if only we could tolerate each other! For if we do not want to do this, but choose to defeat the other, then we should realize that the lie is defeated by truth, which makes it disappear. If one fight the lie with violence, then the lie will abide, and indeed be strengthened. The first 20  
 [course of action] would be honest and useful, but the latter would be shameful and most harmful. If each of us were diligent in acquiring the thing itself instead of being so bent on using the signs, then we would start to love each other, to suffer each other patiently and to improve one another by giving a good example, instead of embittering each other by 25  
 this partisan bickering.

JEZONIAS: The Reformed accuse the Catholics of not being satisfied with what the Holy Scripture has to offer, and of adding their own to Scripture by creating institutions and ceremonies. The Catholics say that the Reformed are already starting to do the same, also by adding to Scripture, 30  
 and in such wise that soon they will surpass the Catholics in this regard. Seeing all this duly put in writing by the secretary, to be submitted to the President together with the other sessions, we now end this discussion. Praise be the Lord of all.

FOURTH SESSION

*The Credibility of the Patristic Writings*

Participants: Jezonias, Stanislas Hosius, Reformed Delegate, Johannes Brenz, John Calvin, Theodore Beza, Catholic Delegate, Gamaliel

5 JEZONIAS: We see, in daily disputations on all sides, that many problems  
6<sup>B</sup> arise from the citation or rejection | of the writings of the Fathers as proof.  
To be able to put an end to these problems and to reach a certain source  
of proofs in matters of faith, we pose for your consideration the question  
of whether or not the testimony of the Fathers is to be accepted as certain  
10 and indubitable.

STANISLAS HOSIUS: I am greatly surprised, gentlemen, that such matters  
should be placed in doubt. Do we no longer know what Eudoxius says  
about this? He says that those who do not agree with the explanations  
by the Holy Fathers remove themselves from all priestly community and  
15 from the presence of Christ. What can we say that is more true than that?  
For what else do those who turn away from the views of the Fathers prove  
themselves to be but the seed of adulterers and profligates? Of course  
we know that the entire community of believers consists of people. Fur-  
thermore we know that the prophets, apostles, and Evangelists were also  
20 people. But since they had received the spirit of truth they were unable  
to be wrong in matters of faith. Similarly, each individual teacher of the  
church is also no more than a human being, but because they are led by  
the Divine Spirit and are thus brought to impart truthful teachings they  
cannot fail or bring false teachings.

25 REFORMED DELEGATE: We know very well that the prophets, apostles, and  
Evangelists were all humans, just like your teachers or Fathers. But we  
are not at all convinced that all the Fathers as well as the prophets, apos-  
tles, and Evangelists have received the Holy Spirit and that it has guided  
them, conferring on them true teachings. We will believe this if you can  
30 prove it to us to be as credible as what we find proven by the testimony

11 [H. fol. 177]. [Hosius, *Confutatio*, 550]. 17 [Ho. 149].

of the Holy Scripture. But it does not suffice for us simply to hear this asserted by you, you who are people of whom we have had no proof that you have received the Holy Spirit. Who can give credence to such kind of proof? Despite the fact that they were human, the prophets, apostles, and Evangelists were given the Holy Spirit who led them, as the Holy Scripture tells us. Now additionally it is supposed to follow that based on our own testimony we, teachers of the church, are also in possession of the Holy Spirit that guides us, despite the fact that we are human. Is this convincing proof? Is that not your argument? Therefore I deem [the contention] that you, “teachers” of the church (as you call yourselves) are in possession of the Holy Spirit and are guided by it to be just as impossible for you to prove as it is impossible to believe, considering that, although you are spiritual in name, your deeds indeed turn out to be of the flesh.

What you say further, that they may not fall back into error or false opinions, etc. has already been clearly disproved in our first session. I therefore consider it answered there.

JOHANNES BRENZ: It is undeniably true that the Fathers | committed errors and gave interpretations that strayed from Holy Scripture. Origen excelled in piety and learning, and yet he teaches some things that are not in accord with Holy Scripture. If we are to believe history, he was rejected by the church. Tertullian was a Montanist, Cyprian an Anabaptist, Jerome an “Origenist,” and Augustine himself wrote a book titled *Retractationes*, and he furthermore lets the children partake in the Body and Blood of Christ. And these are the most outstanding among the Fathers. Imagine convening Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, Jerome, Augustine and all the other Fathers in a council that produces some decrees or common views: how can one be certain of their truth, since each of them may err individually?

18 [Ho. 166.v]. [Remarks from Hosius, *Confutatio* III, 542–543]. 21 Church father Origen (185–232) – to him were attributed some novel doctrines (called Origenism), such as his allegorism in interpreting Scripture, which were refuted by orthodox writers. 22 Tertullian (160–220) became a Montanist in 213. Montanism rejected the church hierarchy and only recognized the authority of the Holy Spirit. | Cyprian (d. 258) deviated from accepted practice in the Catholic church by re-baptizing heretics who returned to the church. 23 Jerome (c. 347–420), best known for his translation of the Bible into Latin (the Vulgate), was accused by some of being a follower of Origen. 24 Late in life Augustine (354–430) published his *Retractationes* (426–427).

STANISLAS HOSIUS: Do the Lutherans still not realize that the Sacramentarians fight them with their own weapons? The Sacramentarians do not accept that words be added independently, since they are not expressly stated in the Holy Scripture. Meanwhile they themselves add [to Scripture] that He [Christ] is present as an effective symbol, although the Bible  
 5 does not state this either. In such a situation, where else will those who belong to the Augsburg Confession find recourse but in the Holy Fathers, the same [Fathers] that they deem unacceptable whenever *we* refer to their authority? But whenever it suits them, the agreement with the  
 10 Fathers and the whole Church means a great deal to them. Thus we see those of the Confession [Lutherans] wield the authority of the Fathers as a weapon not only against the Sacramentarians but also against the Anabaptists. But when the Catholics use the authority of the Fathers against them, then they believe that they do not have to bear it, and claim that it  
 15 does not apply. I will leave it to those of you who call yourselves Reformed to consider whether you do not do the same in this regard.

JOHN CALVIN: We ought not imagine that Ambrose or anyone else from the multitude of the Ancients has seen more clearly than the apostle himself.

20 THEODORE BEZA: Saint Augustine, Chrysostom and other Fathers have engaged in too much subtlety in their interpretation of the parable of the tares that ought not to be gathered up, explaining this as meaning that heretics ought not to be killed. Likewise, Augustine has followed a bit too closely what was current in his time, when he brings up the allegory of  
 25 the visible sword (of Moses) and the invisible sword (of Christ). In sum, it would be easy for us to collect much testimony to the deficiencies that can be found in the greatest and the very oldest doctors. I am well aware  
 6<sup>p</sup> that Augustine did not believe | that the Donatists ought to be killed. Nevertheless, some still waste their time invoking Augustine's authority  
 30 in order to give themselves liberty to do what they intend to do.

Beza feels that at times the Fathers are too subtle

The oldest scholars are often wrong.

When it comes to not killing heretics, Beza does not accept Augustine's authority

1 [147.v] {Hosius, *Confutatio* I, 429}. 2 Sacramentarians were followers of Zwingli who denied the Roman Catholic belief in transubstantiation as well as the Lutheran belief in sacramental union at the Eucharist. 4 The text in question is Matthew 26:26. 7 Lutherans adhere to the Augsburg Confession, which was presented at the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. It is the principal confession of faith of the "confessional" or Lutheran church. Article x of the Augsburg Confession addresses the Lord's Supper. 17 [C.I. 95]. 20 [T. 227]. 23 Matthew 13:24-30. 25 [T. 364; C. 282]. 28 Augustine, bishop of Hippo (354-430) combated the Donatists as heretics. Donatists believed unworthy priests could not perform the sacraments. | [T. 255].

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: I am surprised, doctor Beza, that you now make light of the authority of the Fathers to us, since to others you have often wanted to hold it up so high.

THEODORE BEZA: When or where have I done that?

Calvin and Beza hold the authority of the church Fathers in high esteem when they are for them, otherwise they minimize or negate it.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: When, in your books on the killing of heretics, you try to prove based on the authority of St. Augustine that it is permissible to force people to follow the truth against their will. And likewise you, doctor Calvin, are guilty of the same, for when the authority of the Fathers is against you, you reject it, but when it appears to be for you, you hold it in high esteem. 5  
10

JOHN CALVIN: You will never be able to prove that.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: I'll do it right away, and irrefutably. For when, in your *Institutes*, you want to prove that even the most saintly people here on earth are still bound to sin, you reject the statement of Saint Jerome who is against your view, and use Augustine's authority against him. But you forget that you yourself, in the chapter immediately preceding, assert exactly the opposite regarding the saints remaining forever sinful, and in writing there against these words of Augustine, you cite [other] words of Augustine that clearly contradict Augustine's and your own aforementioned view, and confirm the view of Jerome. 15  
20

Beza cites the writings of his allies as if they were the Gospel

Thus you yourselves are playing with the writings of the Fathers. And it is not enough that in several places you cite the writings of the old Fathers as indubitable testimony when they appear to support you. For when the Fathers do not serve you or are against you, dr. Beza, you are furthermore so bold as to cite in support of your opinions your allies, the innovators and contemporary writers, as if their words were the pure Gospel. 25

THEODORE BEZA: Do not consider yourself as being so esteemed that people will believe you at your word, without any proof.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: I would not wish that. But does dr. Beza think that I have not read his books? I surely have. And I find that in a place where you try to prove that – as we also believe-magistrates ought to punish heretics by death, you produce as witnesses not the old doctors, but your supporters and contemporaries – or, to speak correctly, your allies against 30

5 [T. 176]. | Theodore Beza, *Traité de l'autorité du Magistrat en la punition des hérétiques* (1560). 11 [Institut. iii.9.4]. 17 [Institut.ii.59]. {Relevant passages in Calvin, *Institutes* II.8.58–59; III.4.28}. 30 [T. 315, 327].

the Roman church. These are Martin Luther and Brenz (although these two generally differ from you in opinion), Melanchthon, Bucer, Capito, 7<sup>A</sup> Musculus, and, | to conclude, this “excellent theologian of great discernment,” as you say, John Calvin, your master. Who would fail to see that 5 Calvin and many of the others who testify for you in this matter are testifying in their own case?

You do not hesitate to do this, Beza – but why should I say “hesitate”? You yourself say in this book of yours on the killing of heretics that in many places you have inserted passages from the aforementioned “excellent and praiseworthy” men. Rather than being ashamed of this, as you 10 state there, it has been a great pleasure for you to follow the authority of people like that. After all, in your book you love the aforementioned learned men of your time so much, that you claim that the arguments you want to use to support the killing of heretics come for the most part 15 from men who are of such learning and authority in the church of God that even Bellius – against whom your book is directed – may not reject them, if he does not want to be seen as a villain and a scoundrel. “I am thinking of Luther, Capito, Rhegius etc.,” you say. If what you say about the great authority of these men be true, then we can draw a necessary 20 conclusion that would not please you at all.

THEODORE BEZA: And what might that be?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: You will hear it. First of all, you would have to accept that your statement necessitates the conclusion that Melanchthon is a villain and a scoundrel.

25 THEODORE BEZA: I notice now that you want to prove that you yourself are a villain and a scoundrel!

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: No, I don’t. Do not Melanchthon’s teachings on free will [*toelatinghe*] and predestination differ clearly from those of his master, Martin Luther? Or do you want me to prove this?

30 THEODORE BEZA: No, that is well known. So what?

7 [T.9]. 12 [T. 286]. 16 “Bellius” is a pseudonym for Sebastian Castellio, whose *De haereticis an sint persequendi* [*On Heretics*] (1554) was directed against Calvin and the execution of Servetus in Geneva the year before. 17 {This invective – a “villain and scoundrel” – is an adaptation of Matthew 18:17: “...if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.”} 28 The permission (*toelatinghe*) by God of the possibility of evil in the world.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: With teachings so different from and indeed in conflict with those of his master Martin Luther, he rejects Luther. So is not Melanchthon, in your own words, a “vilain and a scoundrel”? Why are you silent? And indeed, why should I speak of Melanchthon and not of you yourself? For I think that you, followers of Zwingli, do not deem Zwingli to be of any lesser authority in the church of God than Luther, Capito, Rhegius and the others that you mention. 5

THEODORE BEZA: You are right, we do not consider Zwingli to have less authority than the others.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Thus one must place Zwingli’s authority in your church of God as high | as the authority of Luther and the others? 10 7<sup>B</sup>

THEODORE BEZA: Why not?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: So we can also state the following of Zwingli: that Zwingli’s learning and authority in the church of God are so great that no one – be it Bellius or anyone else – may reject them without proving himself to be a “vilain and a scoundrel”. 15

THEODORE BEZA: Yes, I grant you that this may be said of the learning of Zwingli as well as that of Luther and the others. So what do you wish to conclude from that?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: You will hear: since Beza and Calvin reject the learning and authority of Zwingli, it is apparent that Beza and Calvin are “vilains and scoundrels.” Will you accept that conclusion also, gentlemen? Is that not an irrefutable conclusion? 20

THEODORE BEZA: Nothing is less solid, oh beastly Master: where do you prove that we reject the authority of Zwingli? After all, who among all the people holds him in higher esteem than we do? And you call that an irrefutable conclusion? 25

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: What else does dr. Beza mean when he speaks of “rejecting the authority of Luther and the others”? Does it not mean precisely to have a view that differs from that of Luther and the others mentioned earlier? 30

THEODORE BEZA: That is indeed what is meant. But where does our view differ from that of Zwingli?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: With regard to the salvation of the pious pagans: Zwingli and the entire Zwinglian church openly accept this, but Calvin 35

and you usually openly deny it. Thus you both have a view that differs clearly from that of Zwingli, and thus you both also reject Zwingli. So can we conclude anything else from your own statements and admissions than that you and Calvin are also both “villains and scoundrels”?

Calvin and Beza are, in Beza’s own words, villains and scoundrels

5 GAMALIEL: Stop it, gentlemen! This has gone far enough. Customarily, when fencers are going at each other too ardently, the bystanders will intervene to put a stop to combat. Tempers are flaring a bit too high on this subject, which we now have nearly exhausted. It is also about time that I too give my view of this matter, which you gentlemen may correct if  
10 I am wrong. If any of the Fathers is found to have in any matter taught things that openly contradict what is commonly understood to be in Divine Scripture, then I do not think that any of us would wish or be able to agree or give credence to it or accept and use it as true testimony, even if it came from the most eminent of the Fathers. And likewise, if the Fa-  
7c thers – even the lowliest | among them – teach something that is clearly Scriptural, I take it that each of us would agree with and make use of it – not because it comes from one or another of the Fathers but because it accords with or is taught by Holy Scripture.

Fathers who teach against Scripture should not be believed.

But does it not make sense, in cases of doubt or discord about whether  
20 or not the words of some of the Fathers accord with Divine Scripture, not to accept the testimony of the Fathers as long as it is not apparent that the view of the Fathers in the matter accords with Holy Scripture? I think it does, since we have been explicitly forbidden to believe all spirits, and indeed have been told, under horrible threat, not to trust in humans. If, on  
25 the other hand, the fact is that the Fathers’ statements are in such accord with Holy Scripture that one can prove with the same that the Fathers’ views are true, then why would one still need the testimony of the Fathers in the matter? Why the faint glow of stars, if we possess and can produce the testimony of Holy Scripture, that is the bright light of the sun itself?  
30 And again, if we cannot also prove the words of the Fathers through Holy Scripture, then what credence should be given to the utterance of man without the utterance of God in his Holy Word?

I hold this to be true, that all testimony or proof, be it human as given by the Fathers, or divine as in the writings of the prophets, the apostles  
35 or the Evangelists, only serves as credible proof in matters that are either unnecessary or necessary to our salvation. If the former, then why would

The purpose of all proofs

36 This distinction between *necessaria* and *non-necessaria* in matters of faith is also espoused by Erasmus, Cassander, Arminius, and Grotius.

we bother, why hurt ourselves and fight with each other unnecessarily over speculative matters? Why want to be wiser than we need to be? If the latter, that is if it concerns matters that we need to know for our salvation, then we know that all Scripture inspired by God is appropriate to educate, punish, improve, and to teach the righteous, so that God's creature may be perfect and capable of all good works. It is the Holy Spirit of truth, incapable of lying, that testifies to this through the apostle. 5

So if Holy Scripture suffices, what need is there for us to turn away from the overflowing, pure and wholesome waters and the fountain of life that suffice us? Why [seek] stagnant pools, impure cisterns, and human opinions that may be toxic and lethal draughts? Do not all the Fathers testify of themselves and of their writings that they are human and may err, and also that their writings may contain error, but that only the Holy Spirit speaks truth in the Divine Scripture, without erring in any way? 10

The Fathers may err, but Scripture never errs.

JEZONIAS: We see in this debate that the Catholics accord to the writings and general views of the Fathers the same authority as they do to Holy Scripture, for they say that like the prophets, apostles, and Evangelists, the Fathers were also guided by the Spirit of truth. 15 20

The Reformed say that this has not yet been proven true, and therefore are of the opinion that, as humans, the Fathers can err individually or collectively, and have indeed erred on many points. Therefore, they say, the writings of the Fathers may not be submitted as indubitable testimony, as do the Catholics whom the Reformed therefore denounce. 25

The Reformed are in turn denounced by the Catholics for doing the same, or worse, since the Reformed bring up the testimony of their contemporaries or supporters of their teachings as indubitable and sufficient. They are therefore unjust, it is claimed, since, not seeing the beam in their own eye, they want to remove a mote from the eye of the Catholics. 30

All of this has been duly recorded by our secretary, and I hope to deliver this as well as the other documents to our lord President, Master Daniel upon his arrival, so that he can give his final judgment. And with this, our current session is ended, in honor of God. Amen. 30

## *Proofs taken from Councils and Consensus*

Participants: Jezonias, Catholic Delegate, Melchior Cano, Theodore Beza, Heinrich Bullinger, Wolfgang Musculus, Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, Reformed Delegate, Gamaliel

JEZONIAS: We now move, gentlemen and brethren, from the writings of the Fathers to the authority of the councils and the consensus of the Fathers, to examine whether these can err. Following that [we will examine] whether or not their testimony in religious matters should be believed without doubt. You, gentlemen, each have a copy of the list of issues to be discussed here. Therefore, since you knew yesterday that we would take on this issue today, I hope that you have already deliberated on it and will thus, because of prior attention and consultation, discuss it in a more mature and a more prudent way.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: The authority of the councils, gentlemen, is more than sufficient to prove doctrine. This was understood correctly by that most eminent Father, prince, and lord in God, my lord the cardinal of Lorraine. At Poissy, at the great assembly before the king and the States of France | he proved, on that basis, the true presence of the body and blood of Christ. His eminence's words were as follows: "This was the general consensus among the old and saintly Fathers gathered in the general councils, and their writings of all times, starting with the very oldest, bear testimony to this. They all taught their audience, before they took communion at this holy table, not to doubt in any way the truth of the body and the blood of Jesus Christ."

At that same gathering the advocate of the clergy, Jean Quintin, addressed the king as follows: "Sire, and Most Christian King as you are called by name and also wish to be in deed, I pray thee never to allow it

19 The religious colloquy of Poissy (1561) was convened to attempt a reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in France. For the Protestants, Beza and Peter Martyr Vermigli appeared. Cardinal de Lorraine was one of the prominent Catholic delegates.  
20 [C.266.verso]. La Place, *Commentaires*, 242.

to be said of these good and old Fathers that they were nice dreamers and that the councils that they convened and held were also pretty dreams full of contradiction. This is a blasphemy as horrible as that committed by the heresiarch Montanus in the year 175.”

MELCHIOR CANO: That is very different from the honor bestowed on the councils by Jews and pagans at the time of the apostles, thus showing us how the future councils also ought to be esteemed, to wit that the councils that are confirmed by the authority of Saint Peter and his successors should be believed unconditionally. For, thus say the apostles, they have been approved by the Holy Spirit and by us. Therefore the council’s judgement is the judgement of the Holy Spirit. An additional reason is that the Catholic church has always accepted the decrees of the general councils, and has without reservation considered as heretics those whom the councils designated as such. It is therefore necessary that we keep faith in the councils, if we want to keep faith in the church.

We must remain faithful to the councils if we want to remain faithful to the church.

THEODORE BEZA: Certainly, but if it is true that a general council has received the privilege that it can not err in points of doctrine, nor in the ethical rules it prescribes, then we ask what the date of this privilege might be? For there was never anything but one faith and one church. Now the prophets testify openly that there was error in the old church and under the old law, and the histories illustrate this well. “All watchmen,” says Isaiah, “are blind, they are ignorant and they are all dumb dogs.”

Second, as we come to the new covenant, does not Saint Paul explicitly admonish the entire church in the persons of the Ephesians that wolves will rise among the shepherds and that the child of perdition will sit in the temple of God? And certainly if we compare the councils, we will find so many contradictions between them that one is forced to admit that the Holy Spirit did not always find an audience there. [We will find,] rather, that Satan has for many years disguised himself in the light of general councils in order to mask his falseness. |

Councils contradict each other

HEINRICH BULLINGER: When a general or national council is held, it is entirely governed by the spirit of the pope. The council says and decides whatever pleases the pope.

4 [C. 181]. La Place, *Commentaires*, 137. 5 [P. 302]. {M. Cano, L.T., 285 ff.}

16 [C. 284]. La Place, *Commentaires*, 258–259. 22 Isaiah 56:10. 25 [Acts 20:29].

26 [2 Thessalonians 2:4]. 31 [In Apocontio. 59.f. 181].

WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: In order to give the councils the greatest authority, they invented that the councils can not err and that therefore those whom the councils have condemned must be regarded as the most certain and indubitable of heretics, who must also be punished by the secular  
5 authorities.

PHILIPPE DU PLESSIS-MORNAY: Master Jean Gerson and Panormitanus have dared to say, in the midst of the thunder and lightning provided by the pope, that a simple layman who relates the Scripture of the Old and New Testament ought to be believed above the pope, indeed above a  
10 general council, if pope or council stray from the text of the Word. This should not be seen as any stranger than that somebody says that the Word of God has more weight than any human teachings. The latter, with all their scholarship, are nothing but ignorance and vanity.

A layman who speaks according to Scripture ought to be believed above pope or council without Scripture.

REFORMED DELEGATE: We may not put the writings of humans, no matter  
15 how saintly they were, up against Divine Scripture, nor custom against the truth. For the truth is above all: above greatness in number, above antiquity, tradition, persons, and councils, decrees or decisions. For all people are liars.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: What the others are saying is still somewhat tolerable, but we cannot pass over in silence the fact that Beza accuses us of  
20 that in regard to which he follows completely in our footsteps.

THEODORE BEZA: You, esteemed doctor, would have done better to pass my words over in silence than to calumniate me so blatantly. Did I just learn today that the [Fathers'] consensus as well as the councils can err, or  
25 have I not known this for a long time? Clearly the latter, as my published writings amply demonstrate. So how can we regard it as wise on your part that you deem me so unwise as to want to resort to the consensus of the Fathers as solid proof?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Even the wise are sometimes led astray by immoderate zeal. We will see shortly whether this is the case with you on both  
30 points under discussion. First, [we see] that you refer to the consensus of the church | – and not, mind you, that of the old, Catholic church, but of your new church. For we are told openly that, in the matter of the killing of heretics, you have finally started to feel the need to do what you

1 [In Comment. sup. Math. C. 10]. 6 [P. 55]. {P. du Plessis-Mornay, T.E. iv, 59–60}. | Jean Gerson (1363–1429) and Nicolò de' Tudeschi (from Palermo, 1368–1445) were advocates of the superiority of the general council over the pope.

Beza himself does  
what he blames the  
Catholics for doing

denounced in us. You praise this in your master Calvin, and you yourself say in one passage, where you deem a punishment of heretics that is not bloody to be too mild: "If, in order to tear him (the heretic) away from his error, one brings up the general consensus of the churches, then he will say that it is they who are all in error, not he." These, lord Beza, 5  
are your own words that give irrefutable proof that you also resort to the general consensus against those who contradict you. And this will in turn irrefutably lead to one of two [possible] conclusions: [first] that, because you rightfully use such general consensus as an argument against others who are in your eyes heretics, the Roman church is also right when 10  
she uses this argument against Martin Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, you and against all other individuals like you, regarding you all as heretics. If this be the case, what other conclusion can be drawn than that your own, aforementioned, judgement also applies to you and that you yourselves are likewise heretics, considering that you, who in your eyes possess a 15  
monopoly of wisdom, say that we, the councils, and the general consensus of the churches all err, except for you only. Another corollary is that you are wrong in complaining that we, the Roman church, use force against you.

On the other hand, if you do not want to accept this, then you have 20  
to acknowledge that you also are wrong to use general consensus as an argument against others who disagree with what you deem right, and that they therefore rightfully accuse you of using violence against them.

The Reformed  
claim that their  
church is the true  
one and that all  
others are false.

THEODORE BEZA: Never in all my days have I heard more infantile talk coming from an ignorant peasant, let alone from a doctor of theology. 25  
What in the world do your church and our church have in common? How can your doctrine be compared with ours? What value do your idolatrous ceremonies have in common with our correct use of the sacraments of Christ? Or has everyone now forgotten that your church belongs to the Antichrist, that your doctrines are false and your divine worship is wor- 30  
ship of the devil? Our church, our doctrine and our worship, on the other hand, are Christian and true. Do you not yet see, you moron, that what I apply truthfully to our church would become manifestly false when applied to yours?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: No, dr. Beza, I definitely do not see that yet. Like- 35  
wise, not all sensible people yet see that only your church is the true church of Christ. After all, not only do Roman Catholics not see it that

way yet, but neither do the Schwenckfeldians, the Anabaptists, the Lutherans, whom you execrate as enthusiasts, violators of the sacrament, 8<sup>p</sup> iconoclasts, rebels, | agitators and “brethren of the sword.” No indeed, your cause is not yet that clear, as if it had been chosen by the holy dove. 5 Pray tell me, my dear man, in what lawful, public, and free disputation, let alone a national or general council, has it been proven that all the other churches and teachings are false and that only yours is the true church and true doctrine? You assume this too quickly and you will not be permitted to do so. Furthermore, it has become clear that I was right in saying that 10 you falsely accuse us of what you yourself are guilty of. Could it be that here you, having a beam in your own eye, want to tear the mote from ours? For what else do you do when you use the councils as an argument in cases where you imagine that they are for you? For when you put on what you call “our worn shoes” on which we ran to the magistrate to ask for help 15 against heretics, you mostly base your proof of *your* right to do so not on the Bible but on the Fathers, antiquity, and on councils. If you think this is slander, then listen to and recognize your own words, which are as follows: “Thus it is evident from these proposals by Augustine, which are in complete accord with the decrees of the council of Carthage at- 20 tended by Augustine himself, that you are only taking up a case that for a long time has already been condemned by the church, whose teachings were pure. And that on the other hand we, when we have recourse to the magistrate against hardened and incorrigible heretics, asking him for legitimate and divinely ordained help, only do what was decided back then 25 through the word of God and by the authority of the Holy Fathers.” Are not these, Beza, your own words? Does that not prove I was right? Do you not here zealously do yourself what you condemn in us? For when you want to have command over the faith of others you also have recourse to the authority of the Fathers and the councils. But the latter are never 30 acknowledged as being right when they are against you.

Beza himself does what he blames the Catholics for doing.

GAMALIEL: Were any minister during his sermon to say to the people that all cobblers must get up, one would only see the cobblers stand up. Were he then to tell the tailors to get up, they would rise, not the others. The same goes for bakers, carpenters, and other crafts. But were he then also 35 to ask all Christians to get up, not one person would remain sitting, for anyone, even if he is hardly a good heathen, imagines himself to be a good

All visible churches believe they are the true church and they regard all other churches as false

4 “...dese uwe sake en is noch niet soo claer ofse een duyve hadde ghelesen.”: This may be an allusion to the dove, i.e. the Holy Spirit descending on Jesus in the river Jordan (Matthew 3:16). 11 Matthew 7:3. 25 [T. 178]. {Beza, T.A.M., 198}.

Christian. We see the same with all sects, churches, or people of various persuasions. Each sees their church and doctrine as true and those of others as false.

Many claim that the mark of the true church is true doctrine. Now let us suppose that this is so, although the Catholics will not agree, and let us also suppose that the (right) use of sacraments is found where one knows that true doctrine resides. For when the doctrine is correct in all regards, | then this will also hold for the sacraments. Assuming this, we may rightly infer that any visible church that has true doctrine is the true church of Christ. Neither the Anabaptist, nor the Lutheran, nor the Zwinglian churches will say anything against this. But should the pope begin to make this claim, and to say that “we have the true doctrine, and this proves that we are the true visible church,” my dear, tell me, would Luther, Menno, or Zwingli accept that? Surely not. Luther will cry out: “the pope’s teachings are false, but we have true doctrine!” Menno will say: “The pope, Luther, and the Zwinglians teach false doctrine, but our doctrine is true, and therefore their churches are all false churches, and we have the true church.” Likewise, the Zwinglians refuse to accept that the Catholics, Lutherans, or Anabaptists have true doctrine, but claim that only they teach it and therefore that all the other churches are false and only theirs is the true church.

Now we can see clearly that all regard as true doctrine not Holy Scripture but its interpretation or explanation, in the fact that each of the four aforementioned visible churches accepts the sacred canonical Scripture and holds and believes only the latter to be true in all regards, without exception. Furthermore, each of them rejects, execrates, and condemns as false or even as heretical the others’ interpretation of Scripture on many points. Thus again each of them strives to protect his understanding of Holy Scripture, which is his doctrine, with testimony from Holy Scripture, from councils, from the Fathers, antiquity, tradition and the like. Thus all differences and quarrels among all the churches and sects are about the interpretation of Holy Scripture, not about its truth. Holy Scripture is the truth. Simple truth does not admit a “yes” and “no” on the same matter. This also applies to [the disputes between] these four aforementioned churches and to all sects. Thus we have to acknowledge that they cannot all have the truth in their issues of controversy, and that therefore their interpretations or explanations of Scripture can not all be equally true. I can hear each one cry out: “Our interpretation, exegesis, or doctrine are true and Scriptural!” But I have not yet seen that any of them has legitimately proven all his assertions against his opponents in a free coun-

cil, before impartial judges. And it is even harder to see how prudent folks can determine with any certainty that one of these four aforementioned churches rightfully claims to have true doctrine and thence may conclude to be the true church. For even though we believe absolutely that the true church is where we find true doctrine, how can we be certain when all of these four churches claim that they have true doctrine?

I strongly believe that there are, in each of these four external churches, people who sincerely love God, who fear God, whose love for God and their neighbor is heart-felt and who are therefore true Christians. But this can not lead me to believe that each of these four visible churches preaches and teaches true doctrine in all matters. Therefore I recommend that all of us, in such uncertain times, suspend our judgment of each other for a while. Let us not condemn or execrate one another so hatefully, but let us tolerate and suffer one another with kindness and love: the wise the unwise and the strong the weak. This until the time that the Lord in His mercy will send us an Ezra who can take away from us these “foreign wives,” I mean [clear up] these various opinions, as well as this Babylonian confusion of languages.

It would be good if the various churches would tolerate each other as did the Pharisees, Essenes, and Sadducees at the time of Christ.

JEZONIAS: Many of the issues that these esteemed gentlemen have discussed ought to be considered and examined carefully before one makes a judgment, in order to avoid having to say later with belated regret: “Who could have imagined that?” The Catholic gentlemen regard the general consensus of the Fathers as such certain testimony that they believe it can provide legitimate proof of the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament of the altar.

The Reformed gentlemen counter that not only each Father individually, but that the entire church of God can err, as can be seen in the Israelite and in the apostolic church. [They claim that] after all, entire councils can err, since they often contradict each other. This the Catholics refute in turn with the words of the apostles: “It seemed good to us, and to the Holy Ghost”. They conclude from this that the decisions made by councils are the decisions of the Holy Spirit, who can not err.

The Reformed do not deny that the Holy Spirit can not err and that it governed the council of the apostles and [guided] its decisions. But they deny, indeed reject [the claim] that the Holy Spirit governs the popes’ councils and that the decisions made by the popes’ councils are the decisions of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, they say that it is the pope’s own spirit

(which they regard as an evil spirit) that governs these councils, and that one must believe a layman who speaks Scripture above popes and councils, just as much as one is bound to believe God's Word above that of man.

But the Reformed, say the Catholics, also use the councils and the testimony of consensus when it suits them, particularly in justification of the killing of heretics. Therefore, the Catholics feel that the Reformed, because they use such testimony on their own behalf, may not criticize or reject it when the Catholics use the same against the Reformed. The Reformed, they say, when they do themselves what they blame the Catholics for doing, therefore blame and criticize the Catholics for things of which they themselves are guilty.

The Reformed rebut this by saying that the Catholics abuse such testimony for their evil cause, to wit in support of their church which is false and of the persecution of the true Christians, which is tyranny. | The Reformed however – they continue – make correct use of the testimony of councils and of consensus, as proof in a good cause, to wit as proof that their church is the true church and that therefore their persecution of heretics is also justified. The Catholics in turn by no means cede this point to the Reformed, saying that there has not yet been legitimate proof that the Reformed church is the true church. And this is chiefly what all the arguments revolve around, namely: which of the churches is the only and true church.

Since this is a matter of supreme importance and since it is especially ill-advised to rush to judgment on such an important issue, I want to submit this together with the other issues for his special attention when the lord President, Daniel, comes to pass judgment, so we can reach concord on this matter. And with this we want to leave things for now, sincerely praying to the Lord for his mercy.

SIXTH SESSION

*Proofs Based on Examples  
from Ecclesiastical Histories*

Participants: Jezonias, Catholic Delegate, Reformed Delegate, John Calvin,  
5 vin, Theodore Beza, Gamaliel

JEZONIAS: My gentlemen, every day much trouble is taken in denouncing and refuting the testimonies in support of matters of faith that are based on ecclesiastical histories. Some say that one should accept them as credible testimony, and others that this should not be done. This issue is put  
10 before you for your consideration in order to remove these troubles and to agree to a common standard. May it please each of you, gentlemen, to give your opinion on this matter.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Around the year 350 emperor Constantius – the degenerate son of Constantine the Great – desired of saint Athanasius a  
15 church, to be located somewhere in Alexandria, for the congregation of Arians (whom Constantius favored above all). The saint’s answer teaches us how we ought to respond to such shameless requests. “It is reasonable,” said Athanasius, “to accede to thy wish, but please also accede to mine. I desire that the same people (the Arians) also allow us a place of worship  
20 and congregation in the cities that they have led astray and where they have their churches.” The emperor, even though he was lost and led astray, thought the request by the saintly man was reasonable, but not so the heretical Arians! For they preferred having no churches in Alexandria or  
9<sup>d</sup> in all of Egypt to having to allow Catholics | a church in their Arian cities.  
25 Quintin, orator of the clerics in France at Poissy, relates this to the king and the States there, referring to the ecclesiastical histories of Theodoret of Cyr, book 2, chapter 12, and Sozomen, book 3, chapter 20. Quintin then adds that forty or fifty years later saint Ambrose flatly refused to receive

16 Arians were followers of Arius (c. 260–336), whose ideas on the nature of Christ had been condemned by the church in 318. 27 [C. 150]. {La Place, *Commentaires*, 97 ff.; Quintin did not speak at Poissy, but he addressed the States General at Orléans in January, 1561}.

the Arians and also did not allow them to have a place of congregation in the city of Milan. So here we see two notable examples presenting the king with indubitable proof that the Reformed should not be granted a church or place of assembly, just like the Arians were not allowed to have one.

5

REFORMED DELEGATE: What excellent examples that can serve as solid proof! The first [argument] runs as follows: What the heretical church of the Arians did in allowing or forbidding the churches of the Christians should now serve as an example for what the Catholics should do against the Reformed. The heretical church of the Arians refused to allow Christian churches wherever they were in power – likewise the Catholics should now refuse [to allow] the churches of the Christians. Is this not your proposal? Is that not the inevitable conclusion? Do you want to profess yourself to be imitators of the Arians?

A bad use  
of examples

10

The second [argument] is not much better and goes as follows: Since Ambrose was infallible in anything he did, all Christians must follow his example in everything. Ambrose refused to grant the Arians churches and places of assembly – therefore the king of France, being the Most Christian King, must refuse to grant the Reformed a church. Would anyone dare to present Ambrose to us as an example to be followed in everything, like Jesus, who was completely infallible, wanted to set himself as an example for us? That is an error. Another [argument] is equally obtuse, and goes as follows: Anything that Ambrose refused to [give to] the Arians the king of France must also refuse the Reformed, who are also heretics. Ambrose refused to grant the Arians churches and places of assembly. It follows that now the king must also refuse [to grant] these to the Reformed. Is that solid reasoning? What proof is there that the Reformed are heretics, like the Arians were? First give legitimate proof of this, then you would have better ground for such a conclusion. Would it not be obvious to children how inane and insane is the reasoning of such men, such doctors!

15

20

25

30

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: If you were as truthful as you are crafty in your teachings and reasoning, then you would not have the nerve to cloud such crystal clear examples with your sophistries, | but you would honor God and acknowledge the truth. For us, the credible authors of ecclesiastical histories outweigh your sophistries. Based on these [histories], the aforementioned Quintin cited the example of Theodosius the Younger and

10<sup>A</sup>

35

Valentinian (III) when he requested of the king of France not to tolerate that among them, being Christians, would live those who are not Christians, meaning the Reformed. He further [requested] that they would not be permitted to use the name of “Christians” but would each carry the  
 5 name of the author of their evil opinion, as they named the Arians after Arius, the Macedonians after Macedonius, and the Nestorians after Nestor.

At the same time and in the same place the Catholics also recommended, again after the example of the aforementioned two emperors,  
 10 that he [the king] confiscate the goods of the heretics, banish them and declare them unable to act as witnesses.

REFORMED DELEGATE: This argument is just as “solid” as the two previous ones. It runs as follows: since the two emperors, Theodosius and Valentinian, never did something wrong during their lifetime, anything they  
 15 did should serve Christian princes as an example. Pray tell, my dear lord doctor, is that proposition correct? You will think twice before agreeing to this. And yet you must first not only say, but clearly and convincingly prove this to be true, if you want to draw any valid proof therefrom. Had you proven this, then it would be meet to say, consequently, that because  
 20 the two emperors dealt in such wise with the heretics the king of France, who is also a Christian prince, must deal likewise with heretics. But it will be easier for you to wish for such proof than to present it convincingly. And even if you succeeded, then you would still have to prove that we are heretics. We would deny that we are, and would prove more than your  
 25 match wherever this would be disputed with the truth at our side, rather than the executioner. Please realize your manner of reasoning, and how you do not take the truth into account! Finally, you would also have to come up with proof that the ecclesiastical histories, that provide you with these paltry examples, are generally true and entirely credible. Goodness,  
 30 you would have a hard time proving all this!

JOHN CALVIN: Now we are finally getting to the point that we are to discuss here. Who else but the ecclesiastical history describes the donation of emperor Constantine? Indeed, those who are just a bit familiar with the histories of those times do not have to be told that they are not just  
 35 fantastic, but ridiculous as well. Similarly I do not see why we should give credence to what they relate of Peter being the head of the Roman church.

31 [Institu. V.ii.179]. Calvin, *Institutes* bk. 4 ch. 11.12. 36 [Ibid. 101]. Calvin, *Institutes* bk. 4, ch. 6.14. On the Donation of Constantine, see Glossary.

What Eusebius says, that he [Peter] ruled [the church] for 25 years, can certainly most easily be refuted. | 10<sup>B</sup>

THEODORE BEZA: What faith can we have, as proof of our doctrine, in the examples of which we have no sure testimony as to whether they are good and worthy of imitation or evil and to be avoided? We read that  
5  
Constantine saved the life of Arius, and also that many princes followed his example in this regard. But although nothing here happened without God's will, yet Constantine in doing so was not without error. For it is certain that he should have punished this abomination done to the majesty of  
10  
Christ in such a godless and stubborn manner much more severely than if the deed had been committed against himself as king. In order to keep the peace this good prince also used means that were rather indiscreet, for example not just when he recalled Arius (or allowed him to return to his country), but also in the banishment of that saintly man, Athanasius the Great. 15

I do not deny that we also read [in the ecclesiastical histories] of the decree issued by Gratian – a decree that pleases us greatly – that each was to follow the religion of their choice and that all his subjects could hold church meetings without any fear, with the exception of the Manicheans and those belonging to the sects of Photinus and Eunomius. I likewise  
20  
know full well that we also read that emperor Theodosius did not persecute any heresy, and did not force anyone to take communion. Instead, he allowed each church or sect to hold their own meetings as they saw fit and to have their own view and understanding of Christ. But it is absolutely clear that we see patent lies in what the Greeks tell us of these histories. 25

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Bitter and sweet water do not flow from the same fountain. That these two flow from you, Beza, I can prove as easily as my proof will easily move you to slanderous ire. But should that keep one from speaking the simple truth? For I believe that bitter and sweet  
30  
are no less each other's opposite than are falsehood and the truth. You draw both of these from the fountain of the ecclesiastical histories. For we just heard from your own mouth that you denounce them as false. At the same time we learn, from your own pen, that when they serve your purpose you deem them to be true. After all, we could hardly suspect  
35  
that you would want to prove something with witnesses that you yourself

20 See Glossary for information on these three sects. 24 [T. 280; 281; 414; 415]. Examples are from Beza, *T.A.M.* 414 ff. 27 [James 3:11].

consider to be deceitful! Yet this is what you do, and when it suits you you use the ecclesiastical histories as proof.

Thus you regard these same ecclesiastical histories as being deceitful as well as truthful, thus drawing at the same time bitter and sweet [water] from the same fountain. This is a far cry from the innocence of the dove, and more akin to the cunning of the serpent.

THEODORE BEZA: Where am I guilty of proving something based on the testimony of the ecclesiastical histories? |

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Does mr. Beza have to ask? I am surprised. Or have you forgotten that, wanting to prove that it is the magistrate's duty to punish heretics, you brought up from the aforementioned histories the fact that emperor Constantine banished Arius? And that emperor Theodosius banished Nestorius? Thus you further relate from the ecclesiastical histories – since here they seem to testify in your favor – that Constantine ordered Arius' books to be burned, on pain of death. However, Arius himself was spared, which displeases you. Further, you relate that idolaters (whom you call heretics) were to be beheaded, together with the office holders who had saved them. And further that Valentinian, Gratian, and Theodosius decreed the same or practically the same punishment for idolaters (all of whom you equate with heretics). Similarly, that Marcian decreed the death penalty for those who tried to teach inappropriate [doctrine]. And also that Justinian instituted the death penalty for those who kept the books of a heretic named Severus.

If I did not desire to avoid prolixity, Beza, I could cite many more passages from your books. In order to prove that the magistrate ought to mete out capital punishment to heretics you cite examples from the [same] ecclesiastical histories that you yourself deem deceitful. This leads to the conclusion that if you are serious in citing them, you first consider these histories to be true, and next you denounce them as being deceitful, as you yourself state explicitly. We must conclude from this that you, lacking true witnesses to give a semblance of truth to your false views, insincerely abuse such witnesses who are in your eyes false.

GAMALIEL: It is now my turn to give my view, and I feel that dr. Beza can not justly be faulted for deeming the ecclesiastical histories to be unreliable (I leave it to others to judge the reason why he himself uses them and

6 {Matthew 10:16}. 16 [T. 213; 413; 414]. 23 Severus, patriarch of Antioch (512–518); his works were proscribed by Justinian.

Improbable  
examples from  
ecclesiastical  
histories

whether he is right or wrong in this regard). After all, those who have read them impartially will fully agree with him on this point. [There are] more and similar examples, of which I will give a sampling. To wit, that Mary, the Lord's mother, appeared to Narses [a Byzantine general], giving him orders each time he was to go to battle. [We read] that emperor Theodosius clothed himself in the dirty sackcloth of a deceased bishop, believing that in this way he would partake in the bishop's saintliness. [We read] also that when a Jew was to be baptized the water twice vanished miraculously from the baptismal font, because he had already been baptized before (a fact unknown to anyone). We also read there how Anthony saw that the soul of Ammius [a monk] after his death was taken up by angels. And that this same Ammius had never seen himself naked and also said that it was inappropriate | for a monk's body to be seen naked. This Ammius once had to cross a river, and since he did not want to take off his clothes he prayed God to be able to cross without breaking his vow. So rightaway the angel brought him to the other side of the river...

Such highly improbable tales, I say, can be found in great numbers in these ecclesiastical histories. What semblance of credibility can be given to the example of Simeon who made the pillars dance? And of Constantine's victory under the sign [of the cross]? And that the soldiers would stay alive because of that sign of the cross? Or that Theodosius prayed for help to the head of John the Baptist? And finally – who could relate all examples? – that a bishop [named] Thomas on certain days would present the “life-giving wood” (that is what he called Christ's cross) before the people so that by worshipping and kissing it they could attain salvation? When he carried around that cross, this Thomas – we read further – was followed, wherever he went, by a great and blazing fire that did not consume, etc.

Even if some believe that a few of these examples truly happened – although I will not consider those who do not believe them to be doubting Thomases! – dare anyone say that we are given such examples as laws that are to be followed? I cannot believe that, seeing that none of them conform in any way to or can prove God's Word, but rather flatly contradict it.

10 [Evagrius Lib. 4. Cap. 24; Socrat. Lib. 7, Cap. 21; Socrat. Lib. 9, Cap. 17; Socrat. Lib. 4, Cap. 23]. {Evagrius, H.E. IV, 24, Socrates, H.E. IV, 23 en VII, 17, 22 en 23}. 19 See Glossary, Simeon Stylites. 25 [Evagrius Lib. 4. C. 34., Socrat. lib. 1. Cap. 2., Euseb. lib. 2. Cap. 1, Sozom. lib 7. cap. 24., Evagr. lib. 4. cap. 26] {Evagrius, H.E., IV, 26 en 34, Socrates, H.E. I, 2, Sozomenus, H.E., VII, 24.}.

Therefore, based on what I related I cannot but feel, on the issue at hand, that nothing can be proven with certainty with the examples from these histories against those who do not regard them as true. And further, that they should not be imitated unquestioningly.

5 But why speak of these ecclesiastical histories? Do we not find numerous histories in Holy Scripture? Do we not hold all of these to be true beyond a doubt? Frankly, yes. But are we therefore also bound to imitate all of them? Who is to say? We find examples that are praised and that are denounced in Holy Scripture as well as examples that are neither praised nor denounced. Abraham's faith is praised and we are all  
10 told to imitate it. His submissive willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac is also praised, but in no wise to be imitated, since God gave this command to Abraham and not to us. Imitation of the negative examples in the Bible is by their nature explicitly forbidden to us, because God does  
15 not want us to do deeds he denounces or punishes. And because the third kind [of histories] is neither praised nor denounced, I do not believe that someone can use such scriptural examples to prove that they should be imitated.

Two kinds  
of example  
in Scripture

11<sup>4</sup> Now I do | not assert that the examples from ecclesiastical histories  
20 can be placed at the same level of veracity as the examples from divine Scripture. If we may not use any of the credible [histories in the Bible] that are neither praised nor denounced as examples to be imitated, even though we all regard them as the unquestionable truth, then how much less grounds exist for anyone to use the ecclesiastical histories, whose  
25 veracity we have grave reasons to doubt, as solid proof and examples to be imitated?

JEZONIAS: The Catholics claim to prove that examples from the ecclesiastical histories may be used as proof with examples from contemporary France, where they have done this.

30 The others do not pay heed to what the Catholics have done. They say that it must be proven that the Catholics were right in doing so: that is the issue, and not if someone does something or not. After all, they say that doing it was wrong, especially because Beza and Calvin themselves say that the ecclesiastical histories are untrue.

35 The Catholics consider them to be true and accuse Beza of speaking with two tongues, one of which says that the histories are untrue while the other cites them (when they support him) as true testimony. After which Gamaliel related some examples from these same histories that were improbable, saying that even if these [stories] had truly happened

we are not obliged to imitate them, since we do not have a pertinent law of God as we do regarding the biblical examples.

All of this will be presented sincerely to our lord president when he comes, for him to decide. And thus we now close this session, in honor of God, by our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

SEVENTH SESSION

*Proofs from Pagans*

Participants: Jezonias, Ruardus Tapper, Catholic Delegate, Theodore Beza, John Calvin, Gamaliel

5 JEZONIAS: Moving now from proof based on ecclesiastical histories to the testimonies of the philosophers, we present you, esteemed theologians, with the question whether in proving divine matters any proof may be based on pagans or on natural philosophy. May it please each of you honorable gentlemen to give your view of the matter.

10 RUARDUS TAPPER: No one should doubt such proof, considering that we ourselves have used such proof on the advice of the whole university and  
11<sup>B</sup> the | esteemed department of theology at Louvain. Let me just give one or two examples. In the view of the philosophers and also of the Church  
15 according to Aristotle – that most assiduous scientist of nature and disease, although their causes remained hidden to him – each individual appears to have his own virtues by nature. For we see that some are by nature righteous or strong, or appear to be born for moderation, so that we [may infer that] we also possess the other virtues from the day of our birth. Aristotle also understood that reason sincerely attracts people to the very best things, and that reason harbors something divine. Innate virtues

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: We also see stated at the end of the edict of Chateaubriant in France, promulgated in France in 1551, how the histories testify that among the happy periods of the kings of Rome the reign of Numa  
25 Pompilius was very happy, long, and peaceful, because he was very attentive to matters of religion.

10 Ruard Tapper (1487–1559), Dutch theologian and Inquisitor General of the Netherlands. 12 [Tom. 2 fol. 151]. 21 [Tom. 2 fol. 152]. {R. Tapper, *Explicatio*, II, art. 11, 152–167}. 23 In the Edict of Chateaubriant (1551) Henry II announced strict anti-Protestant measures. 25 Numa Pompilius (c. 715–673 B.C.E.), the legendary second king of Rome. 26 [C. 11. v. en 12] La Place, *Commentaires*, 10–11.

THEODORE BEZA: That is true. But what followed after that? A small printed booklet that bitterly criticized the author [of this view], because he had thus applied pagan examples to our religion and our Christian faith. Furthermore, yours is a puerile argument, to wit: “It is right and appropriate, because we do it.” Can we call that proof? Prove first that what you do is right and appropriate. Then it would follow: We do this, therefore it is right and appropriate. But it became more than sufficiently clear in the first session that what you do is neither right nor appropriate. The same goes for custom, for whatever it is customary for the church to do does not therefore become right. No, treating people unjustly for a long time does not turn the truth into a lie.

Calvin accuses the church Fathers of wanting to reconcile the philosophers with Scripture

JOHN CALVIN: It is well-known that in order not to appear to be teaching anything that would seem to be wrong in the general judgment of the people, the ancients (the Fathers or doctors of the church) did their best to a degree to harmonize Scriptural teachings with the teachings of the philosophers. It is indeed true that the philosophers have said some befitting things about God, but nonetheless these [things] still smack of some confused imaginations. That is why the fact that some cite a number of opinions of people (heathens and unbelievers) to prove that it is not a capital crime to have spoken against the law of God, is so frivolous that it is unnecessary seriously to argue against it. For everyone can see that those poor people have been robbed of the clarity of truth and have argued and caviled against the law of God, so that the latter ends up being despised and slandered.

Beza accuses the pagans of not having lived virtuously

THEODORE BEZA: We on our part do not believe that those people or those devils were possessed of faith or a good life. I think that Socrates, Aristides, Phocion, Fabricius, Cato and Atticus were poor heathens who nonetheless led an irreproachable life in their time.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Here you go again with your usual way of unjustly criticizing us.

JOHN CALVIN: How is that?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: You subject us to laws that you yourself would not suffer from us or from anyone else. Is that fair? Is it fair that you arrogate

4 [C. 12]. {The target of the attack was Pierre Séguier, the source of inspiration for the Edict of Chateaubriant}. 12 [Instit. ii. 22, Instit. ii. 37, S. fol. 39.] {John Calvin, *Institutes*, I,5:11–14}. 25 [T. 92]. 29 Erroneously labeled “Reformed Delegate” in original.

to yourselves the power to impose laws upon us that manifestly conflict with the law of nature? Is it right that you do to us what you would not have others do to you?

JOHN CALVIN: It seems to me, doctor, that you feel you can slander us, 5 something that you would in no wise suffer us to do to you.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: We are not slandering you, but we say truthfully that you freely make use of the testimony of heathens against us and others while you do not suffer us to do the same to you.

JOHN CALVIN: That is a bold contention, doctor.

10 CATHOLIC DELEGATE: I will provide solid proof, master Calvin. Or did you not write that book in which you attempt to argue that the killing for religion's sake, which happened in Geneva on your behalf, was rightly done?

JOHN CALVIN: I did indeed write that book and am not ashamed of it. Everybody knows that.

15 CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Then everybody also knows that, as I said, you do unto others what you will not suffer from them. For in that same book you write: "First of all, the heathens and the unbelievers will be our witness that religion ought to have priority in any well-ordered state, and that she (religion) should be protected by laws. Read all the philosophers who 20 have written on these matters, [you will find that] there is not one of them who does not begin with the service of God, and who does not give religion pride of place, whichever religion they feel to be the right one." Here you base your whole argument on the aforementioned proof derived from pagans. Thus you can also see now that I have solidly proven 11<sup>D</sup> my assertion with your own words. And that | is not all that strikes me [in your words], as you will see.

Calvin proves his point based on the pagans

JOHN CALVIN: What else, dear doctor?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Not only that, as I said, it is clear that you openly act against the law of nature, but also that in this you act unfaithfully or 30 at least imprudently.

JOHN CALVIN: Now what unfaithfulness may this imprudent doctor have detected in my writings?

14 This is a reference to Calvin's *Déclaration pour maintenir la vraie foi*, Geneva 1554, written in defense of the execution of Michael Servetus. 23 [C.S. fol. 41]. {Calvin, *Déclaration*, 41.}. 29 This is the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12).

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Did you not posit in writings that were cited earlier that in matters of faith the pagans only have a confused imagination and that they are bereft of true clarity?

JOHN CALVIN: That is correct.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Was this [statement] true or false? 5

JOHN CALVIN: True.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: No one who has a confused imagination and who lacks the clarity of truth can provide pure and true testimony in divine matters. From this we must conclude, based on your own words, that in matters of faith the pagans do not provide pure or true testimony. 10

JOHN CALVIN: You do not need to tell me this, doctor, I was not born yesterday and know this as well as you do!

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: If you know this as well as I do, then how can you, in good conscience, use such duplicitious and untruthful witnesses (i.e. the heathens) in matters of faith? 15

THEODORE BEZA: These, doctor, are sophistries, and you deal a bit too harshly with my dear master.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: I disagree, Beza, but I do know that even the dearest truth is hateful to those who are guilty. Your master is enough of a man to defend himself if he is not guilty, and thus does not need the defense 20 of someone who, I feel, will have a hard enough time to defend himself against the same thing of which we justly accused your master.

THEODORE BEZA: Me? What on earth are you making up that you think you can pin on me in this regard?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: I am not making anything up, but speak the truth 12<sup>A</sup> and will prove it from the words of no one else but you.

THEODORE BEZA: “The mountains are in labor, and will give birth to a ridiculous mouse.” Let us see how you will prove your point!

27 “parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus” (from: Horace, *Ars poetica*, verse 139). The text only quotes the first two words, in Latin. 28 “Ghy sult den baers gallen”: a Dutch expression, meaning literally: “let us see you remove the gall bladder from the bass” – this was a tricky procedure, hence the meaning: to do something that is difficult and requires skill.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: We will see whether the mountain will give birth to a ridiculous little mouse or to a serious truth. Did you not just say that the pagans – even the best ones that you listed – did not have faith or a good life, so that you – as your book implies – put them in league with the devil?

5 THEODORE BEZA: Yes, I said and wrote that, and it is the truth.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Therefore, with your permission, it must be without truth that you have used the testimony of those whom you yourself say were without faith or a good – at least not a better – life to prove your point. Is it possible that such diabolical unbelievers and evil men possess  
 10 true knowledge of divine matters (for which you use their testimony as proof)? Likewise you write of the pagan princes and lawgivers that they were in thick darkness and indeed without God. Nonetheless, you invoke the testimony and examples of such men, specifically of Numa Pompilius, in support of your view on the killing of heretics. Can those who are in  
 15 darkness and without God, that is without clarity or truth, be truthful and divine witnesses in divine matters? Should we also regard the tyrannical murderer of the pious Socrates as a knower of the truth and her sincere witness? You will certainly not say that. And yet, you invoke such a tyrannical, murderous, and false act as a true testimony and proof in support  
 20 of your killing of heretics or of the power of the magistrate in matters of faith. When one uses testimony based on the acts of such devilish murderers, is that any different from using the murderous and deceitful devil to prove the truth?

GAMALIEL: We find many who, like Zwingli and those of Zurich, maintain  
 25 that the pious heathen also possessed true knowledge of God. And this seems to be in agreement with the view of Paul, [who states] that some of these same heathens had attained salvation, not without but through Christ, who is the truth itself. They had the reality of Christ – as Paul also testifies – even though they did not know his name. People who believe  
 30 that could be somewhat justified in using pagan statements or examples as proof of their case, but still only in such a way that those who disagree  
 12<sup>B</sup> with the pious heathens | on what is good would not be obliged to accept their testimony – in word or in deed.

But regarding those who teach that all human reason is completely  
 35 corrupt, and who maintain that all pagans, even the best and the wisest, are foolish, vain, godless, even diabolical, in blind darkness and far

12 [T. fol. 313]. {Beza, T.A.M., 313}. 26 [Romans 1:19–20]. 29 [Romans 2:10–16].

removed from any divine truth: I do not see at all how it may behoove them to come up with such proofs from pagans. Can someone who is without the truth speak truthfully? Or can one who is without the clarity to see divine matters have correct knowledge? And can someone without knowledge provide dependable evidence? This claim shall not be made 5 by one who knows that the apostle [John] ranks his testimony so high because he testified of the Word of life, which he had heard with his own ears, seen with his eyes, and touched with his hands. That is why he proclaimed and testified to this [Word] as the unquestionable truth.

JEZONIAS: We saw the Catholics maintain that one may use pagan state- 10 ments and examples as proof in divine matters, citing as sufficient reason for this that it is their custom. We also saw the Reformed criticize this, saying that doing something that is wrong for a long or a short time can never turn what is bad into good. They also said that the heathens are bereft of true clarity, that they are without faith, without a good life, and no better 15 than devils. Therefore they could not give true testimony. Nonetheless, said the Catholics to the Reformed, you yourself use them as witnesses in divine matters. If it is good for you to do this, then how can we be wrong when we do the same? If this is so, then you unjustly criticize us. But if 20 we are wrong, then how can you, Reformed, be right in doing the same? Thus your criticism redounds on yourself, and you are acting against the law of nature.

Finally it was said that the Zwinglians and others who, like them, believe in the goodness of pagans would be somewhat justified in citing pagan testimony. This is, however, not at all the case for the Reformed, 25 who condemn all pagans (even the best) as evil, obscure, and even diabolical unbelievers. I seem to recall having read in many of the ancients that they deem the achievements, sayings, and teachings of the pagans to be good in themselves. The allegory they use is that they see them [the pagans] represented in the silver and golden vessels and in the raiment 30 taken by the children of Israel during their exodus from the heathen, at God's command. What the heathen had abused for carnal splendor and pomp, they used for the building of the tabernacle, that is to say: for divine matters. But since I believe that no legitimate proof can be based on allegories, we want to leave it at what has been said. 35

The lord our president will judge in this matter, and we thank our Lord for what He, in his mercy, has seen fit to reveal to us in this discussion. Amen.

8 [1 John 1:1]. 32 [Exodus 12:34-35]. {Also: Exodus 3:21-22}.

EIGHTH SESSION

*Passing Judgment on Everyone, Yet Not  
Wanting to Suffer Anyone's Judgment*

Participants: Jezonias, Stanislas Hosius, Melchior Cano, Ruardus Tapper,  
5 Reformed Delegate, Henry Bullinger, John Calvin, Gamaliel

JEZONIAS: So far, gentlemen, we have occupied ourselves with the kind of  
testimony that we ought to use in order to judge in matters of religion.  
Now we proceed to the judgment itself. We will discuss those who want  
to judge others, yet do not accept that anyone judges them; and also the  
10 question of to whom belongs the right to pass judgment on true doctrine  
as well as on heresy and heretics. But first [we will discuss] the first point,  
that is: to determine if it is right for someone to judge all others and not  
suffer that anyone judges him.

STANISLAS HOSIUS: If a prince has faith in the judges that he himself has  
15 appointed, then will he not have faith in the judges whom God himself has  
appointed? Doing so, he does what the Lord commanded in Deuteronomy:  
“Now the man who acts presumptuously and will not heed the  
priest...that man shall die” by the verdict of that judge. It is also easy to  
prove that from the time when the empire passed to the Christians until  
20 our times, none of the Christian kings and princes has dared arrogate  
to themselves the right to judge in matters of faith. Instead, the power  
to judge freely has always belonged to the bishops alone, but they com-  
manded everyone strictly to maintain the teachings of the faith approved  
by the Fathers when they gathered in council. And if someone dared to  
25 do anything against those [teachings], they had them punished by the  
severity of the laws. We ought to render unto God what belongs to God,  
and unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar. Palaces belong to Caesar, and  
churches to the priests. That is what we desire: that the prince realize that  
he is a duke of dukes but not a bishop, and that he should not transgress

Christian kings  
never judged in  
matters of faith

Princes were to  
be instructed  
by bishops,  
not vice versa

14 [H. 74 v.]. {Hosius *Confutatio*, I, p. 450}. 18 [Deuteronomy 17:12]. 28 {This was a famous statement made by Ambrose, bishop of Milan, to emperor Valerian II (385)}.

the bounds of his office. Let him know that he must be instructed by the bishops, but that he must not instruct the bishops. For none of the laws, be they divine or human, permit him to judge religious doctrine, considering that this is the specific task of the bishop.

MELCHIOR CANO: From the beginning of the church the pope has been known as the master of the faith. For if the bishop of Rome were subject to error in deciding on religious controversies, then we would immediately have to question the condemnation of many heretics. For there are people who have not been condemned by general councils, but by the judgment and decree of the Roman church.

The pope is master of the faith

The pope is infallible in matters of faith

Melanchthon condemns the entire church.

RUARDUS TAPPER: This is why I have often been amazed and horrified by the bold temerity of a Melanchthon, who writes as follows: “We condemn collectively the scholastic doctors who teach that the sacraments, in their administration, confer grace on those who do not oppose them, [even] without a proper spirit within the recipient.” Who on earth has appointed Melanchthon as judge over the whole assembly of scholastic doctors and over the whole papal realm, to condemn them in general of irreligion? Or does he not know that the papal realm is the realm of Christ and of the catholic church, scattered across the world, over which He has established the pope as the only shepherd, whom East and West and all the faithful have honored for over a thousand years? That is why Melanchthon, in condemning the papal realm, is condemning the bride of Christ whom Paul calls the pillar and foundation of truth. Thus, by this token, she is free of all ungodly doctrine, so that whoever does not listen to her must be regarded, as our Savior commands us, as a pagan and a publican. And it is this church that he does not only dare ignore, but also condemn.

REFORMED DELEGATE: Many things have been said here, but without much proof. First, I do not believe you can prove what you first cite from Deuteronomy, namely that in Christ’s spiritual realm we are to follow all the commandments pertaining to the carnal realm of Moses. Similarly [you can’t prove] that the popes are descendants of Levi, of whom this was said. Second, regarding what was said pertaining to proof based on the examples in the ecclesiastical histories, we know that the latter should never be given any credence in matters of faith, since they are for the most part nothing but fantasy, as our side has satisfactorily proven in the sixth ses-

5 [M. 370]. 8 [M. 393]. {M. Cano, L.T., vi, 363 ff.} 11 [R. Tom. 1. fol. 16.] {R. Tapper, *Explicatio*, I, p. 17.} 15 Source unknown. 23 1 Timothy 3:15.

sion. And if, through the pope's craftiness, some credulous and less crafty princes made the mistake of obeying such hypocrites in this, should we then still follow their bad example today? Should those examples serve us as laws? Where is this written?

5 Furthermore, concerning what was also said on the "rendering unto God what belongs to God and to the emperor what belongs to the emperor," this squarely contradicts what the Catholics propose here. For we render to men what belongs to God when we ascribe to the pope, or to any human being, infallible omniscience, since only God and no one else is  
 10 omniscient and therefore infallible. This is why, in the entire Holy Scripture, [God] insists so strongly that we should not believe in the opinions of fallible man, but only in his infallible Holy Word. Now, instead of referring us to the word of God, these folks refer us to | what the pope has  
 13<sup>4</sup> said instead, that is to the word of a man. Is this what they see as "rendering unto God what belongs to God"? Is it not rather rendering to man  
 15 what belongs to God? It is with similar temerity that these men make the pope master of the faith, since we know full well that God is its master. Paul himself, a chosen vessel filled with the Holy Spirit, did not arrogate to himself lordship over the faith of his charges— but now that same lord-  
 20 ship is supposed to belong to the pope? That is again "rendering unto man what belongs to God." So what, if they want to make us believe, based on the untruthful ecclesiastical histories, that unwise emperors have done this? What does such an assertion prove? Nothing whatsoever.

Whoever says that a person cannot err turns man into an idol.

No man is master of the faith.

They deem it very unseemly [to suggest] that the pope may have con-  
 25 demned as heretics some men who were not heretics, precisely as if the pope were less prone to error than a Caiaphas or the entire Jewish church, which condemned the Lord Christ as a rebel and blasphemer! If that church, that was undoubtedly God's church, erred in falsely condemning *the head* [Christ], then what privilege does your church – being an  
 30 Antichristian rather than a divine church – have, that she purportedly cannot err in condemning *the members*? Or did the first session not provide adequate proof that the Roman church can err? I believe it did.

Finally, you claim that the realm of the pope is the realm of Christ. That was said, yet so inadequately proven that we rather see the pope's  
 35 realm as the realm of the Antichrist. If one wants to see proof, then read, if you will, about the behavior, the morals and the teachings of Christ and his apostles, and compare them with the acts and teachings of the popes. Then one would have to say that black and white, hell and heaven, devil

7 Matthew 22:21. 19 [2 Corinthians 1:24].

and God are not more unlike each other than the realm of the pope is unlike that of Christ! In regard to which – as we read in Platina – the monk, in the presence of the pope, cried out: “Fie! Peter! Fie! Paul!” So there goes your wonderful proof.

HENRY BULLINGER: Lo and behold: the pope and ruler of these folks says 5  
openly that he has the right to judge them but that no one has the right to judge him. And his creatures arrogate the same right to themselves!

JOHN CALVIN: But the most intolerable thing of all is that they permit no judgment whatsoever in the world to suppress and tame their wilfulness when they abuse their power so excessively. No one, they say, may annul 10  
the judgment of this See, because of the primacy (or utmost sovereignty) of the Roman church. And likewise [they say] that this judge, to wit the pope, is to be judged by nobody – neither by the emperor, nor by the kings, nor any of the clergy, nor the people. And is this not “master-ful,” 15  
how a human being makes himself into a judge of all people? For he says that he is not bound to obey anybody’s judgment. And what of that? No matter that he exercises tyranny over the people? Or that he scatters and destroys the realm of Christ? Or that he throws into disarray | the entire 13<sup>B</sup>  
church? As if – being [himself] the most wicked – he denies being obliged to account for himself! For such are the words of the pope: “The affairs 20  
of other people God has desired to have decided by people, but the primacy of this See He desired, without a doubt, to keep unto himself.” And further: “We judge the deeds of our subjects, but our deeds are judged by God alone.”

The Reformed refuse to grant the pope authority over their affairs. REFORMED DELEGATE: These are gross and glaring audacities, considering 25  
which it was only right that, in France, we were unwilling to accept such a godless, biased and hateful judge [to preside] over our cause, a cause which was so just yet so hated by the pope and his traditions. That is why we requested of the king that the prelates and other clergy would not [be allowed to] assume the authority of judges over us. 30

The Reformed complain that the Lutherans condemn them. Therefore we are right in complaining about the Lutherans who, aping the papists in this regard, now also condemn all churches that disagree with them on certain articles [of faith]. Can we not, by the same token, ask these same Lutherans: who gave them this power or this right, that they alone among all [churches] may condemn the church in gen- 35

3 {Platina, *Vie du christ et des papes*, 1479}. 5 [In Apoconc. lix. fol. 181]. 8 [Institut. xij. 124]. Calvin, *Institutes* IV ch. 7.19. 30 [C. 237.v., S.d.d. 14].

eral? And unlike Christ, the prophets or the apostles, they do this before they have convinced and persuaded us based on God's word, indeed before they have even heard us! Let these Lutherans consider earnestly whether it is right or reasonable that, based on Luther's unharmonious doctrine, six theologians who were also out of harmony with each other have the power to condemn six thousand other theologians who are in harmony and also agree among each other. Is there not good reason to accuse them of all the same things that the pope in Rome was accused of earlier when he and his cardinals wanted to assume the right to pass judgment on everyone? Let them also consider with what conscience they claim the power to condemn so many churches that have not been heard in their own defense and have not been persuaded. Just as if they were the supreme rulers, empowered with universal command and punishment over all churches. Did they by chance learn this from the pope?

15 STANISLAS HOSIUS: Or perhaps from their own master, Luther? He used to say: "I do not want to be judged, but I demand obedient submission."

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Or, by chance, from the master of the Reformed himself? He denounced Servetus because, as Calvin told him, Servetus was more keen on disputing with than on hearing and | learning from him. He [Calvin] also dared to write piously of his teachings on predestination "that they were not to be condemned except by those who imagined themselves to be wiser than the Holy Spirit."

Calvin wants to judge everyone but does not suffer anyone's judgment over him.

Tell me, friends, are these not also folks who do not accept anyone's judgment about their opinion? Who else but these are the ones who want to judge everyone yet do not accept anyone's judgment? Whether these people are innocent of this can be easily seen by him who pays heed to the distinction they make between civilian and ecclesiastical government. After all, they say explicitly that it is the task of the magistrate to punish, also physically, the outward man who disturbs the outward peace of the church. What kind of "disturbers" do they have in mind, violent or heretical ones? If they have in mind violent ones, then they should consider here whether any of them can cast the first stone. And again, if they have in mind heretical disturbers, that is folks who criticize their teachings in

The Reformed fall into their own trap.

1 [S.d.d. 35 en 16]. {In this passage the Reformed makes use of the Calvinist tract, *Zentbrief der Dienaren die Godts Woort in de Ghereformeerde kercken in Nederlant verkondighen...* (Antwerp, 1580), pp. 14, 35, 16, 19, 82, 91}. 3 [S.d.d. 19]. 7 [S.d.d. 82.]. This refers to the six theologians who edited the *Bergisches Buch* (1577), a Lutheran "formula of concord" that was not generally accepted. 10 [S.d.d. 91]. 15 [H. 172]. 18 [S.C. 113]. 22 [C. pred. 198, Art. x].

their writings or their words (labeled “heretical” by them) – then they have also been rightfully punished physically by us, through the magistrate, as disturbers of the outward peace of our church. Then those who are still disturbing the church also deserve to die.

It does not work to say that our teachings are false and theirs are right, 5 and that they therefore are right in punishing us, but we are wrong in punishing them. For the two parties have not yet been heard, much less judged, by a lawful judge. Is it not evident time and time again that they will not suffer to be criticized by anyone, calling such [criticism] “disturbance of the peace of their church”? Do you want to see this stated 10 explicitly in one of your own publications? Read Beza, where he writes as follows: “Later some followers of Servetus, Schwenckfeld, or Osiander will arise. And summoned (to appear before the consistory), they will come, but only in order to judge the church. And thus the church will be compelled to excommunicate them.” Does this not make it patently clear 15 that Beza does not want his church to be judged by anyone?

Oh, the sheer audacity! Whenever it suits you, you have the brazen temerity not only to judge, but also to condemn the entire Holy Church, the Fathers, the doctors and even the councils. At the same time, you will not suffer that others, like you, judge your church and doctrine. 20

GAMALIEL: This bickering truly saddens me. Each one cries out: “Christ, the temple of the Lord, the true church of God, is here!” Thus each one assumes lordship over all the others. This is clear in the mutual condemnation, recrimination, and execration. Then whoever believes he has sufficient power safely to push through his judgment banishes, catches, 25 and kills the others who are against him. Those who do not have such power and who notice – like Balak – that the others are stronger than they, take into their pay a Balaam to achieve by means of slanderous tongues what they cannot accomplish with murderous hands. Thus, because of these mutual quarrels, the righteous God confuses us through a Mid- 30-ianite perdition, just like those judges who sometimes let a number of petty thieves whip each other. Hateful partisanship | makes us give false 13<sup>D</sup> testimony against each other and makes us often accuse others of shortcomings that we ourselves are guilty of inside. When it comes down to our own sins we are mild judges, but we are unforgiving towards the sins 35 of others. Someone wrote, on this subject, that some people are wont to

12 [T. 194]. {Beza, *T.A.M.*, p. 294}. 29 [Numbers 22: 6]. Numbers 22: 2–6. 32 [Judith. 7:22]. Judges 7: 9–22. 34 [2Kings 11: 4–5].

stain with epithets all who do not agree with them, calling them “godless,” or “Libertines,” or “Anabaptists,” and so on. They learned this from their fathers who also used to fight like this, saying: “You are a Samaritan!” Or: “He is possessed by the devil. Why should you listen to him!”

5 Through such artful slander they deter naïve people from listening to those [slandered in this way], thus achieving victory without the other side having been heard. May someone who is not well-informed pass judgment? Can one be well-informed without listening to the other side? It is hard to transgress by *not* condemning someone, but one who con-  
10 demns may transgress greatly. Thus he who rushes to judgment rushes to his remorse. This is the result of a lack of love. For, as the saying goes, where love is in short supply, recriminations are plentiful.

Against rash  
judgment of others

How different was it with Abraham: he beseeched the Lord many times to save the Sodomites, who were notoriously godless, lowering each time  
15 the number of the just [needed to appease God]. And the Lord was so pleased with this that he acceded each time to the prayer of Abraham, that kindly spokesman of sinners. But my dear, a learned man says at this point, “what kind of righteous people could possibly have been living in Sodom? They must have been uncircumcised, strangers to God’s  
20 covenant and to the chosen people.” Well, Abraham – who was righteous, circumcised, covenanted with God and father of the chosen people – shows such regard for these righteous people that he still believes them to carry enough weight with God that for their sake He would be willing to save the multitude of the godless! Such a righteous person was Cornelius,  
25 concerning whom Peter said: “In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.”

Today you will find Christians who believe that God only cares about the righteous that exist in their church. Similarly the Jews detest the Gen-  
30 tiles who are much more righteous than they, because they do not belong to the church of the circumcised – as if it is not much more important to God that one be righteous and God fearing than [that one be] cir-  
cumcised in the flesh. And when one is fair and looks at the nature of  
35 such righteous people who, living among the Sodomites, maintain a desire to be righteous and pious, then it will be understood that they should be esteemed more than those who are judicious and righteous while living among God’s people. It is Musculus who writes this – and I only

17 Genesis 18: 16–33. 19 [Muscu. Dusa. In Gene. C. 18. pag. 453]. {W. Musculus, *In Gesim*, c. 18, p. 434 = ed. Basel 1600}. 27 [Acts 10]. Acts 10:34–35.

say this for those who give any credence to his writings. It is not that I want to remove all judgment altogether – no, but | let us be rid of all rash, bold, unauthorized and false judgment, so that we, who all bear the name of Christians, may only be mature and sincere in our judgment!

If anything, the careful way in which God himself, being omniscient and infallible, proceeds in his condemnation of Sodom ought to deter us from such rash condemnation. He came down to see for himself whether the evil rumors were true. What else does God mean by that than that we ought not to judge without certain prior knowledge on the matter, and that [our judgment should be] as merciful as possible? For God would have saved five cities full of godless people for the sake of ten righteous ones. We, humans and sinners, on the other hand, often condemn entire congregations and assemblies of the pious because of ten or twelve impious ones. Oh, so often do we, damnable ones, condemn those whom God does not wish to condemn, thus speeding up our own damnation! When will we realize that God's judgment and ways are as different from ours as heaven is different from earth? When will we learn, in this regard, from the deeds of our elders? For they killed as heretics those whose tombs we now venerate as those of saints. If we understood this well, then we would be less eager to judge, more circumspect and more certain in our judgment. Acting in this way we would not be in such violation of Christ's commandment. Thus we would also become a bit more righteous by refraining from judging those who are outside, and by finding blame with ourselves first, as the righteous did. Thus, in judging ourselves we would not be judged.

JEZONIAS: The Catholics' proof that the prelates ought to judge all others without being judged by anyone is that everyone must obey the judges who have been appointed by God himself in matters of faith. They claim that they are [those judges] and that this is the way it has always been. Thus, in doing this, everyone obeys Christ's commandment to render unto God what belongs to God. This is why the princes must seek instruction from the bishops whom God has appointed to this end. Thus, from the very beginning of the faith, the pope has been instituted as master of the faith. For if he were prone to error, we would have to question whether those who were condemned as heretics were really heretics. But

9 [Genesis 18:21]. 13 [Genesis 18:31]. Genesis 18:32 (The passage does not mention five cities). 23 [Matthew 7:1]. 26 [Romans 14:4; Proverbs 18:17].

we ought not to have such doubts, since everything is as it should be in Christ's realm and since the pope's realm is Christ's realm.

The Reformed counter that, indeed, at the time of Moses the priests judged on obscure matters of faith, but they say that Moses does not rule  
 5 in Christ's realm. In the latter's realm this commandment does not apply and it is not apparent that it has been applied except from ecclesiastical histories whose credibility was made entirely suspect in the sixth session. And even if some princes were misled in this way by the pope, [they say] that such examples are not laws to be followed. Less so, even, when we see  
 14<sup>B</sup> that thus we rob God of what belongs to him, to wit | his omniscience, and render and ascribe this unto people – to wit, to the popes, thus making them into idols. Thus, say the Reformed, there is no reason to marvel at the fact that the pope erred and condemned some sincere Christians as heretics. Indeed, Caiaphas and the entire Jewish church condemned the  
 15 Lord Christ as a blasphemer and a rebel. After all, at the time that was undoubtedly the true church of God, and thus it is not strange that this Roman church – of questionable standing to them – erred in doing this to Christians. This is also why in France they absolutely refuse to accept the pope as judge and that in Germany they reject the Lutherans.  
 20 To this, the Roman Catholics responded in turn that they marveled at the harshness with which the Reformed spoke against the judgment of the entire Roman church over others, considering that Calvin himself did not want to allow anyone – including the Reformed consistory itself – to criticize his teachings. Nonetheless they frankly claim the right to judge  
 25 the Roman Catholics, the Anabaptists and all others whose teachings differ from theirs.

All of this was recorded by the secretary and will be submitted by me to our lord, president Daniel, whom the Lord must send to us as soon as possible to resolve these differences. Amen.



NINTH SESSION

*Who is to Judge on Doctrine*

Participants: Jezonias, Catholic Representative, Reformed Representative, Johannes Brenz, John Calvin, Gamaliel

5 JEZONIAS: Yesterday, my honorable gentlemen, we discussed the judgment that each wants to exercise over the other. As was said, from this we now move to the judgment of doctrine, and we need to consider to whom this judgment shall belong: does it belong only to clergy and teachers and not to laymen, be they magistrate or subject – or to both of these?  
10 Please, gentlemen, give your thoughts on this, together with the reasons for them.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: What reason could there be for someone belonging to the sheep to question the shepherd with subtle words and to examine critically those who are above him? Judgment on doctrine belongs  
15 to the shepherd, not to the sheep, so that even if one among the sheep were very saintly and learned, he would still not be allowed to dare take  
14<sup>c</sup> upon himself the judgment of doctrine. Were we | to permit that in matters pertaining to our eternal salvation laymen do not have to rely on the judgment of others, and to rely on it in such wise that they accept it with-  
20 out passing their own judgment, my dear, what could come of that but what we saw happen in Germany? There, everyone has arrogated to himself the right to follow their own judgment rather than the judgment of all of Christendom, and thus we have seen emerge as many faiths and judgments as please the people. Think for a moment if it is not a matter of  
25 the utmost audacity or indeed rather of the utmost foolishness for someone to claim for himself the power to judge whether the decrees of the prelates are correct or incorrect, especially the decrees that were issued by the general councils! That is why a prince who examines the teachings of the true religion and who passes judgment on the differences of opinion  
30 on the Word of God between various sides, is guilty of no less a sin

than if he were to take upon himself the office of the priest. For neither divine nor human laws have ever granted him the right to judge religious doctrine.

Sigismund, king of Poland, understood this [precept] and rightfully complied with it. When it was requested that he permit the pure teachings 5 of the Holy Gospel to be preached in his kingdom, he answered that it was not within his purview to ascertain the purity of the Word, but that this task belonged to the bishops. He would gladly submit to their judgment, he said, and he wanted them to have full jurisdiction in all aspects.

And if this right of judgment does not belong to the princes or the 10 magistrate, then how much less does it belong to their subjects! To say something like that would be a kind of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. When can a religion ever be sufficiently proven? Do we want each individual to throw into doubt again what was decided by a council? Is it not clear to everyone, says Athanasius, that it is unnecessary once again to 15 question what so many good bishops have approved, decided, and clearly instituted? If these things are now again examined and judged, only to be examined again, there would be no end to such curiosity. It should therefore not be permitted at all that every spirit, particularly those who may be deceived or also deceive, have the power to judge the spirit of the 20 councils which cannot deceive nor be deceived. How could we ever expect an end to the disputations? What would be less sure than our faith? What would be more changeable than our regulations? What would be easier to disturb than such kind of church? [Emperor] Marcian realized all this when he issued the edict to the people of Constantinople, wherein 25 he says: “We admonish everyone to refrain from disputations on religion. For it is not allowed that just anyone may seek to understand such secrets whose truth has been discovered by so many honorable priests – after, we must believe, the utmost endeavor and long prayers, and not without the help of God.” | Thus, from the foregoing I conclude that the judgment 14<sup>D</sup> of doctrine belongs to the clergy only and in no wise to laymen, be they magistrates or subjects.

REFORMED DELEGATE: The meaning of what was said seems to be nothing less than that the souls of the princes and subjects who have been seduced 35 by the spiritual bishops will not damned together with their seducers!

1 [H. 44]. 5 [H. 122 v.]. {Hosius dedicated his *Confutatio* (1557) to Sigismund II}.  
 12 [H. 48]. 18 [H. 53]. 24 [H. 50]. 30 {From the edict of emperor Marcian (452), in Mansi, *Concilia*, VII, 475. The council that the Catholic delegate refers to is the council of Chalcedon of 451 C.E.}. 35 [Ezekiel 3:18].

But Holy Scripture testifies differently and tells us that the godless person who was seduced will die in his godlessness, the same as his seducer. After all, belief in a true or false doctrine concerns the eternal salvation or damnation of the souls of mortals. Should therefore these souls not  
 5 judge, each for himself, what doctrine they ought to follow or flee? Or has Christ vainly uttered all his frequent explicit warnings that we must beware of the false prophets? Every person must judge doctrine.

JOHANNES BRENZ: And how will the princes shun and banish godless teachers from their lands without judging and knowing who are the true  
 10 and who the false prophets? Do they have to send them to their prelates to be judged? Do the princes thus have to follow the judgment of the prelates without any judgment of their own?

REFORMED DELEGATE: He [the Catholic delegate] does not only speak of princes, but also of all the people, indeed of every member of the church.  
 15 Does this not concern them? Why is anyone concerned with doctrine? Please note to whom they referred us earlier and to whom they refer us now: from God to men, from Christ to the pope, from the truth of the Holy Spirit and Holy Scripture to the lies, dreams and vanity of human invention. Is that the way to give the people and the princes reliable doc-  
 20 trine?

JOHN CALVIN: When our papists realize that in arguing their case they have lost all support, they resort to their ultimate and miserable crutch, that is to the authority of the councils. And even when they are dull in their hearts and in their counsel, or are evil in intent and will, then still  
 25 God's word remains (they say), which commands us to obey those above us. Is this not so? So what if I deny that men of their sort are put above me? For they should not attribute to themselves a higher stature than that of Joshua, who was a prophet of God and an excellent shepherd. Let us hear with what words he received his position from the Lord: "This book  
 30 of the law," says the Lord, "shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night...do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go...For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." It is  
 15<sup>4</sup> such spiritual | rulers who ought to be above us, who do not turn to the  
 35 right or left from God's law.

The people must judge doctrine.

10 [H. 438]. 14 [H. 43 v]. 21 [Instit. viij. 165]. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, ch. 9.12. 26 Hebrews 13:17. 33 [Joshua 1]. Joshua 1: 7-8.

But if it were true that we should accept the teachings of all sorts of pastors without question, then why was it necessary for the Lord to admonish us so often and so insistently that we ought not to listen to the words of false prophets? “Do not listen,” He says, “to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you. They make you worthless, [and speak] not 5 from the mouth of the Lord” And: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves.” In vain also would John exhort us to “test the spirits, whether they are of God”, from which examination he did not exempt the angels, much less Satan and his lies. And what does the following mean: “...[I]f the blind leads 10 the blind, both will fall into a ditch.”? Does this not show sufficiently that it matters greatly what kind of shepherds one heeds, and that we ought not to follow them indiscriminately? This is why it is in vain that they want to intimidate us with their titles in order to make us share in their blindness, for we see that the Lord has taken great care to make sure that 15 we dare not follow the lead of someone who errs, no matter what mask or name his error wears. For if the Lord’s Word is true, then these blind leaders – let them call themselves prelates, bishops, or popes – only lead their followers to perdition with them. Let us therefore not be hindered by the names, used correctly or incorrectly, of councils, shepherds, bish- 20 ops, so that admonished by the proof of teachings and words rather than by these names we examine each spirit in the light of God’s Word, in order to determine if they are or are not of God.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: I know full well the multitude of sects into which those poor folks who cut themselves off from the unity of the Roman 25 church have divided themselves. I also see clearly how many erstwhile followers have turned against the views of their former teachers. And it is not a secret to me that your disciple, Theodore Beza, disagrees with his master on many issues, including on this very important issue.

JOHN CALVIN: Likewise I know full well your mentality which lets you 30 speak at will against the truth. I do not believe that Beza disagrees with me on this point.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: I am certain of it. For in more than one passage in his book on the killing of heretics | he takes away the right to judge on 15<sup>B</sup> doctrine and heresy from the magistrate and from the people. Let me give 35

6 [Jere. 43]. Jeremiah 23:16. 7 [Matthew 7]. Matthew 7:15. 8 [1 John 4]. 1 John 4:1.  
9 [Galatians 1:8]. 11 Matthew 15:14.

just one or two examples that will, I believe, give sufficient proof of my assertion: “If the point is,” writes Beza, “to know whether a statement is heretical or blasphemous, then the conflict is about the thing itself, that is about some article of religion. And since the religion is contained in the books of the Old and New Testament and since it is the office of the church to explain [the Bible], it is proper for the church to end such conflict based on God’s Word.” And elsewhere he writes: “First of all, princes must be careful not to exceed the bounds and limits of their power. This means that they must not take it upon themselves to judge whether certain teachings are heretical or not. For knowledge on this matter belongs to the church and not to princes.” Such are Beza’s words, and thus I demonstrate that I knew very well what I was saying.

Beza also takes away from the princes the right to judge doctrine and heretics

This shows clearly that, although you often disagree among yourselves, collectively or individually, your teaching on this point is in accord with ours. Nonetheless you are wont to subject us to bitter ridicule, invective, and slander on this matter. Who, seeing this, will not understand that you criticize us for your own faults, that you do what you blame us for doing, and that people ought not to believe you since you pronounce a “yes” and a “no” regarding one and the same point?

The Reformed teach one thing but do another.

GAMALIEL: Gentlemen, I see here difficulties on both sides. For it appears without doubt that a lot of latitude is given to every Tom, Dick, and Harry if one allow the people as well as the prince to judge doctrine. And this is especially the case if one holds that an understanding of the truth in this regard depends more on scholarly knowledge of Holy Scripture than on the exercise of virtue. For this means that the door is thrown wide open to all sorts of sects. But there have been and still are people who are unlearned in Holy Scripture but well-versed in virtues, and whose knowledge in divine matters is inspired by the Holy Ghost. For them the church appears to become once again oppressive if they are forced to believe whatever the learned teach, without permission to judge, like unclean swine forced to swallow everything without rumination.

We know that in the administration of justice there are ordinarily four parties, each being such that none may control one of them, let alone all four. These are: the judge, the prosecutor, the counsel for the defense, and the witnesses. For a judge may not be at the same time judge and prosecutor, or judge and defense lawyer, or judge and witness, and likewise prosecutor, defense counsel and witness may not be judge, etcetera: none

The right way of judging.

7 [T. 200]. {Beza, *T.A.M.*, p. 200 en 422}. 11 [T. 411] {Beza, *T.A.M.*, p. 422}. 31 Leviticus 11:7; Deuteronomy 14:8.

of them may exceed their proper function. Furthermore, no one can be a legitimate judge in someone else's cause, without having the legal authority to judge.

Such authority to judge doctrine – our topic today – | may be received directly from God, as shown in miracles such as the one performed by Paul when, only by means of his word and without help from the magistrate's sword, he struck Elymas [the sorcerer] with blindness. Alternatively one may have the authority by regular means, to be proved by the testimony of divine Scripture. Or one receives the authority because the parties that are in conflict voluntarily offer it based on a mutual compromise. Or, finally, one acquires the authority arbitrarily, by guile or by force.

This last option is an abuse of power and manifest tyranny. None of the current parties [Catholic or Protestant] claims the first option, for who is able to prove his authority to judge by means of miracles? The second option is claimed by the Roman Catholics, based on the [apostolic] succession. The Reformed reject this claim, but they in turn do not provide persuasive proof that this authority belongs to them. The third option is found with none of them, for the Catholics have as little inclination as the Reformed to accept the other as a judge in their disputes. Therefore, alas, the fourth option is most common for all sects. What other conclusion may be drawn from this than that, just as Israel used to be without a king, the Christians now lack a judge, and that all do as they see fit? What can we say about such confusion? Shall we, in order to follow one of the parties that ascribe to themselves the authority to judge doctrine, rob the poor people entirely of the right to judge doctrine, as if this was of no importance to them? In this way, would not each of the parties be judge in their own cause? What reason is there to deprive the people of this right? Is it because the people, should they be misled, are innocent and will not be punished? Of course not. But with which of all these parties shall we agree? Is it with the one whose teachings are followed by the majority? If so, we are deceived like Pilate was, when he considered the voice of the people to be best and when, in order to please the great majority, he used such bad judgment that he shed the blood of the innocent Lamb of God. But the Law expressly forbids that we agree with what the multitude believe, so that we may not stray from the truth. For He wants us to enter at the strait gate and not through the wide gate and the broad way used by many, which leads to destruction.

7 [Acts 18:8]. Acts 13:8–11. 22 [Jud. 17: 6, 21: 25]. Judges 17: 6; 21: 25. 33 [Marc. 15: 15, Luc. 23: 24]. 37 [Exodus 23:2; Matthew 7:13].

Since then the eternal salvation or damnation of secular folks – of the people as well as of the magistrate – depend on whether they follow a true or a false doctrine, the blind who have been seduced as well as the blind seducers must fall into the ditch of perdition. Correct me if I'm wrong, but it seems to me right not to grant the ecclesiastical authorities in each church the exclusive right to judge doctrine, for this is the same as turning the party into the judge. For which of them will judge their own teachings to be false? Laymen – the people as well as the magistrate – ought to judge.

The people must judge doctrine.

15<sup>D</sup> If that causes | most people to fear confusion or disorder, I will say first that each should judge for himself only and not for another what is true doctrine, or at least which doctrine or interpretation of the Holy Writ is the least deficient. For I am speaking here, gentlemen, about points of disputation and not about divine Scripture itself, which all sects except the Libertines regard unanimously as the absolute truth.

15 When I say “everyone” [is to judge], I do not have in mind those who have not heard any other doctrine than the one they were raised in and who therefore do not yet doubt anything, rightly or wrongly. Intended even less are they who are entirely ignorant, even about their own doctrine, for it is impossible to judge well something one does not know. No, with “everyone” I mean each person as far as he knows and understands. For when each person considers carefully all the things that he can understand, then he may know for certain what he does not understand, what he thinks he understands, and what he does indeed understand. Therefore he who knows that he does not yet understand the point that is disputed, should refrain from passing any judgment on the matter, for in so doing he cannot err in judgment, since he does not judge. This is safer for all concerned, and therefore each person ought to defer judgment until he fully understands the things of which he judges.

Without knowledge one cannot pass correct judgment.

Each one knows for themselves what they know and what they don't know, as well as what they imagine.

No one should judge what he does not understand.

Now there are things that we can never know in life but that we believe until death, and that we will only experience in the hereafter. In these things we attain certitude by the testimony of divine Scripture and the anointment of the Holy Spirit. But there are also things that we can know without doubt, by making good use of reason or by experience. Using reason we know indubitably that space is larger than the body that occupies space; that the sum is larger than its parts, and other such principles of science. But it is by experience that we know what is good or bad for us with regard to our mental and physical health. For just as everyone knows for sure that his stomach is empty when he is very hungry and that he is wounded or sick when his body hurts or aches, so everyone who pays attention will also know for sure when his heart is troubled, and that he

On experiential knowledge

is without God or godless because he lacks the food of the soul, that is God's Word or indeed God himself. For he who is without God finds no rest, and everyone can also see that such a one is sinful and tormented by evil when his conscience troubles and damns him, for this worm never dies.

5

People can know all these things for certain and true by experience, by paying heed to their condition. The same goes for when, on the contrary, one is filled with God's kingdom and its justice, for one then feels, within, a blissful peace and heavenly joyfulness. All these things we can know for certain, as well as the true causes of our wretchedness – that is, our own wrongdoing – and of our salvation – that is, God's goodness. | Of necessity, such knowledge then imparts on the knower a hatred of or aversion to evil and a love for or inclination towards the good: not in a dream, or by imagination or imputation, but as sincerely and as powerfully as, *before* the change wrought by our rebirth, we felt, in our hearts, hatred of those who did us wrong and love for those who treated us well. What follows from this is that all those who believe that they truly know evil and sin, but who do not feel within them the aforementioned sincere hatred of the same, deceive themselves, as do those who think that they truly know God without feeling within themselves the strong and sincere passion of the love of God and virtue. For they imagine that they know, without knowing how they ought to know. Such people, who falsely imagine that they see and know, are still blind, and although as long as their false knowledge lasts they will not cease to judge, it is impossible for them in their condition to judge rightly.

25

One cannot know  
sin without  
hating it.

One cannot know  
God without  
loving Him.

People who are  
doubly ignorant

We may not  
deprive the layman  
of his right to  
judge doctrine

These folks are doubly ignorant and can therefore not judge well. But those who do know should pass judgment, each in what he knows that he knows and in nothing further. The latter can in no wise err in their judgment, for whoever does *not* judge cannot judge falsely, and neither can that person err who judges what he does know and understand. These are Christ's sheep who know his voice and follow it, and again, who will not follow but will flee unfamiliar voices, in other words flee what they do not yet understand. They "test all things and hold fast" that which they find and know to be good, letting go all the rest. Is there any valid reason to deprive laymen – the common people as well as the magistrate – of the right to judge doctrine, against the countless multitude of clear scriptural

35

5 [Matthew 4: 4, Isaiah 48: 22, Isaiah 66: 14]. Also Isaiah 57: 21. 14 A reference to "imputed righteousness," a tenet of Reformed theology rejected by Coornhert. 21 [1 Corinthians 8:1]. 22 [John 9:41]. 31 [John 10:4-5]. 34 [1 Thessalonians 4:10.] 1 Tess. 5: 21.

testimonies, a number of which have already been cited by some of you, gentlemen, warning against false prophets and the like? Or does not the wisdom of the sage consist in knowing the path he is on and the folly of the unwise in straying from that path? This is certainly true, for divine  
 5 Scripture explicitly testifies of this. Thus we also find wonderful and clear testimony in the Bible, for example when the king makes a covenant with the people regarding religion. We read also how the leader of the people [Joshua] gives them free choice on whether to worship God or the idols. And that the prophet [Elijah], going beyond the king, gives the people  
 10 at large free choice on true or false religion, telling them: “If the Lord *is* God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.” whereupon the people agreed with the prophet’s proposal, to wit: that He who would answer with fire would be the true God.

Examples of  
 the people  
 judging doctrine

Based on all that I have said I feel that one may rightfully conclude  
 15 that judgment of doctrine should in no way be left to the ministers, no matter to which side or church they belong. For if we do this we would make of them judges and parties in their own cause. If the magistrates in-  
 16<sup>B</sup> stall the Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran or Anabaptist ministers | as judges of doctrine, with these ministers being in a position to command or ex-  
 20 ert power or to be believed, then what other verdict could they reach on their doctrine than that it is the right, pure, and true doctrine? I do not believe we would praise such a flawed procedure in small financial matters, and therefore deem it even much less acceptable in matters of the soul. If one feels that doctrine ought to be judged by someone else, then one  
 25 should leave judgment to the Turks, the pagans, or the Jews, who are indeed the least partial regarding our dispute, but who also may lack proper knowledge of the matter. Or the magistrate in each territory will arbitrarily impose on the people a religion that they do not understand and make them follow and practise, blindly and against their will, a doctrine and religion that they do not know. Or lastly one should leave judgment to all  
 30 thoughtful Christians, as far as their understanding reaches, and no farther. Thus, being well-informed, they will of their own free will agree with that doctrine which they find to be most in harmony with the teachings of Christ and the apostles. And to this end they will read the Holy Scrip-  
 35 ture as a touchstone, to judge by that criterion whether such doctrine is correct and in agreement with Holy Scripture. Unless you convince me otherwise I therefore hold this last solution to be most in agreement with

2 [Proverbs 14:8]. Proverbs 14:7–8. See also Matthew 7:15; 1 John 4:1. 8 [4 Kings 113, Joshua 14: 12–15]. Joshua 24: 15. 13 [3 Kings 18:11]. 1 Kings 18:20–24.

Holy Scripture. I see it as most supportive of God's honor, and it best serves the promotion of man's salvation, the concord among the people, and the stability of our land in general.

JEZONIAS: You, honorable gentlemen, have discussed a matter of great importance, and I see that on this issue again you cannot reach agreement. 5  
Thus one side deems it inappropriate that the sheep should examine their shepherd on matters ordained by the latter. Therefore [they feel that] the people or the prince should no more judge doctrine than they should administer the Eucharist, which the princes usually do not do either. And that, were one to allow the people the right to judge there soon would be 10  
as many religions as there are opinions, or as there are people. It would thus forever be impossible to attain any certain doctrinal standard, if everyone were permitted at any time to again put into question what the councils have decided long ago. For the councils were led by God's spirit and could not be deceived, but all the people can easily be deceived by 15  
their own spirit.

The other side countered that this matter is also of the utmost importance to the sheep, who are greatest in number and for whose sake the shepherds exist. Surely, if the magistrate is to agree with one doctrine and bar another, he also will have to judge for himself which is the true and 20  
which the false doctrine. And if the magistrate must refrain from judging, and only at the word of the teachers must blindly promote one doctrine and exclude another, then if they are misled by these teachers they could just as easily bar true doctrine and promote a false one. That is what happened at the time of the true prophets, of all Christ's martyrs, and indeed 25  
of our Lord Christ himself. | For at that time the magistrates, deceived 16<sup>C</sup>  
by the false teachers of their day, thought they were persecuting heretics when they in fact persecuted Christ himself and his followers. They also claim that it is wrong and questionable to trust in the truth of councils, since, among other things, doubts have been cast on whether the councils 30  
were led by the spirit of truth. And that all warnings uttered so emphatically by Christ and his apostles, against false prophets would have been useless and ridiculous if the people were compelled to believe whatever doctrine and teachers their respective magistrates deem to be true.

However, the Reformed were in turn accused by the Catholics of be- 35  
ginning to imitate what their predecessors had done and what they blame the latter for. Therefore, the third party [Gamaliel] deems it best that the right to judge doctrine rest with the people, that is with the magistrate as well as with the people themselves, as far as their understanding reaches

and no farther. And that therefore no one is to press another to accept a doctrine that he does not yet understand as being the true and pure doctrine.

We will leave the matter for now, until the arrival of our lord and president, master Daniel, when we shall hear his prudent judgment on this and on all the foregoing issues.

*This was, my dear reader, the first part of the acts of the synod of Freetown, which treated of how the people are constrained. The Lord willing, you shall not be deprived of the second part, showing how the civil magistrate is also*  
10 *subjugated with the means used to that end by the old and by the young.*

*This ends the first book.*



D.V. Coornhert |

*Synod on the Freedom  
of Conscience.*

*A Thorough Examination during the Gathering  
Held in the Year 1582 in the City of Freetown...*

*Second Book, Showing*

*The false virtue with which the Old did conspire  
And the Young in their immaturity now bluntly desire  
Constraint of conscience, stirring their witches' brew well  
To subject the magistrate's judgment to their spell.*

Proverbs 21:30

There is no wisdom or understanding or counsel against the Lord.

Acts 5:38–39

...[K]eep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it – lest you even be found to fight against God.



*Whether Judgment of Heresy Belongs to  
the Civil or the Ecclesiastical Authority*

Participants: Jezonias, Catholic Delegate, Protestant Delegate, John Calvin,  
5 vin, Theodore Beza, Gamaliel

JEZONIAS: What you discussed yesterday, honorable gentlemen, is so similar to the following article which, according to the notes from our lord President, must be discussed today, that at first blush many would think that having discussed the one would make the other redundant. But when  
10 one pays closer attention it will be clear that, besides many similarities, there is also a significant difference with the previous topics. One will then understand that it is not without reason that my lord the President has made this a separate article. For the foregoing nine topics mostly applied to the common people as well as the magistrate, but all the following sessions seem to concern only the civil magistrate. Furthermore, what we are  
15 to discuss now is a matter of much greater importance than what we have discussed thus far, to wit: whether the judgment of heresy and heretics belongs to the civil or the ecclesiastical authorities. May it please you, gentlemen, to express your views on this matter, supported by Scripture or at least by reason, or perchance by both.  
20

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: The civil authorities will judge the things that pertain to the civil state, but the ecclesiastical authorities judge what pertains to church matters. It is therefore a prince's role in matters of faith to see to it that no false prophets and godless teachers be admitted to the churches  
25 within their territory. But it is not their task to determine who are the false prophets, for they ought to ask | the priests, as the Lord himself has  
18<sup>b</sup> commanded. Whoever they, that is the priests, declared to be heretics, have been deemed heretics by the princes, and the latter desired that everyone should regard them as such, and they did not want them to dwell  
30 in their land. Thus acted Constantine, Theodosius, Valentinian, Marcian

Judgment about heresy and heretics is not up to the magistrate

and other Roman emperors. But what did they do? Did they investigate matters of faith? Did they judge whether someone was a heretic? Did they defrock priests whom they considered unworthy of their station? Far from it! For they shrank from such temerity and refrained from arrogating to themselves what belonged to the priests, and they feared to receive the punishment that Uzziah and Uzzah suffered for a similar transgression. 5

REFORMED DELEGATE: Thus you make yourselves into judges in your own cause. For whoever disagreed with your views in matters of religion was a plaintiff whom you regarded as a heretic, especially if he criticized your errors and abuses. Is this not what happened with Luther, Zwingli, and others in our times? They denounced your shameless sale of indulgences. You, acting as prosecutors as well as judges, condemned them as heretics and the naïve princes, goaded by you, persecuted them and sadly murdered a great number of their followers. Thus these credulous princes were no more than the blind executioners of your false verdicts. Are we to call this justice? Alas, we understood your doings all too well, and it is for this reason that at the colloquy of Poissy in France, in 1561, our brethren supplicated the princes | of royal blood so earnestly to see to it that we would not be judged by the prelates, since they would be judges in their own cause. For we realize all too well that after the time of the apostles the church has not always been ruled by apostles. After all, directly after the apostles' demise wolves entered the church, who did not spare the flock. And when wolves rule in the sheeps' pen, pray tell, what can the poor sheep expect other than to be torn to pieces and devoured? 15 18<sup>c</sup> 20 25

Princes are blind executioners of the pope's false verdicts

The Reformed in France do not want to be judged by the prelates

When the wolves are shepherds, the innocent sheep suffer

Sometimes wolves rule instead of shepherds

JOHN CALVIN: That from time to time cruel wolves rule instead of the shepherds is nothing new, and neither is the fact that then ordinarily power is in the hands of the godless who are faithless towards God and traitors of the church. And what if the emperors themselves err? Or if – as happens often – they themselves are mortal enemies of pure and sound doctrine? Will they then not make laws against the truth in order to maintain their errors? And will not, because of such laws, the just be tested and martyred because they do not want to do what they are ordered to do by man but forbidden by God? 30

Errors of the princes create many martyrs

1 [H. 75]. 7 2 Chronicles 26:16–21 (King Uzziah was struck with leprosy as punishment for entering the temple and burning incense at the altar); 2 Samuel 6:6–8 (Uzzah died as punishment for having put out his hand to keep the ark from falling). 16 [C. 241 verso]. 25 [De scandalis, 143]. {Beza, at the Colloquy of Poissy (1561): See La Place, *Commentaires*, 178}. 29 [S.C. 21; 28].

THEODORE BEZA: We must acknowledge that nothing in the world is harder to find than good ministers of the Word and that nothing is more commonly seen than false prophets. After all, every day shepherds themselves change into wolves.

Nothing is more rare than good ministers

Shepherds may turn into wolves

5 GAMALIEL: Oh, how terrible this peril threatening the innocent and defenseless little sheep of the true shepherd!

JOHN CALVIN: Therefore the good protectors of the faith ought to be as wise and kindly as possible; and they also should seek to inform themselves, with due diligence and fear of God, about doctrine before they

Before judging the authorities must apprise themselves of doctrine

10 judge, so they may be certain of it.

REFORMED DELEGATE: We prove that the magistrate must inform himself of heresies that, we agree, can disturb the common people, in order to prevent this [struggle against heresy] from being used as a pretext for the oppression of the innocent without having heard and understood them, only because of an indictment by their enemies.

15

GAMALIEL: If the princes or civil authorities are to judge heretics, then I feel that they should also be allowed to apprise themselves of their teachings, as indeed master John Calvin appears to be saying here. For since heresy only makes a heretic of the person embracing it, it seems reasonable | that, before reaching a verdict, the judge understands two things: first, what heresy is, and then (second) also that the accused is guilty of that heresy, since only then can he know for certain that he is a heretic and condemn him as such.

18<sup>D</sup>

Let me explain this in an analogy. A jurist accuses someone of the *crimen peculatus*, knowing what sort of crime this is – but the judge does not know, yet he allows the accuser to get the accused legally to admit that he has stolen money from the state. Can this judge then, with a clear conscience, condemn this thief to undergo the punishment for *crimen peculatus*, as long as he does not know that this means “theft of public funds”? Likewise no judge may legally condemn someone as a heretic, even if that person really is one, as long as that judge does not know himself what heresy is. On top of that he needs to know that the accused is indeed guilty of that heresy, since in such a highly important matter we do not want the judge to be blind. Blindness in a judge is useful and laudable when it comes to not knowing or regarding the person, but it

25

30

35

1 [T. 205]. 3 [T. 296]. 7 [S.C. 26]. 12 [B.v.9].

is positively harmful and reprehensible when it means ignorance in the matter of which he has to judge.

Beza contradicts  
master Calvin

What do you think of this, dr. Beza? Do you also allow the civil magistrate to inform himself of doctrine and heresy? I do not think so. But your master Calvin does indeed allow this, and in this you flatly contradict him. 5

The magistrate  
should not judge  
whether or not a  
doctrine is heretical

THEODORE BEZA: We should not mix swords, bring confusion to the church and remove all order. But above all, the civil authorities must take care not to exceed their limits and bounds, meaning that they should not arrogate the right to judge whether a doctrine is heretical or not, since here knowledge and judgment belong to the church and not to the princes. 10

Beza agrees with  
the Catholics,  
against his  
master Calvin

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Aha! There you go, dr. Beza, you honor the truth when it applies without paying attention to what your master Calvin says! For, as you rightly agree with us, those who want to ascribe to the civil authorities the right to examine doctrine mix up the swords and would bring confusion to the church. Thus we also agree with you and you with us, against your master Calvin, that the knowledge of doctrine and consequently of heresy and heretics belongs to the ecclesiastical authorities and not at all to the civil magistrate. We think, however, that basically your master Calvin also agrees with you and us but that he had another reason for writing this as he did. This is why I think so: immediately after Servetus was burned alive in Geneva, where Calvin was the chief minister, people said and also wrote that Calvin had been Servetus's prosecutor as well as Servetus's judge. After all, they took it for granted that Geneva's magistrate would not have done something like this, which was a great and unprecedented novelty for them, without Calvin's suggestion and advice. | Calvin, bothered by the scandal and trying to efface it, tried to convince the people by writing that the authorities of Geneva, rather than he, Calvin, had examined Servetus's teachings for themselves, condemned the same as heretical and then burned him as a heretic. This is also the reason why he writes in his defense of the death of Servetus that the magistrate ought to inform himself of doctrine. For that he had been in fact the accuser of the aforementioned Servetus was indeed so hard to deny that Calvin often acknowledges this in his own writings. This is why Calvin felt it was not right that he was said to have also been Servetus's 15 20 25 30 35 19<sup>4</sup>

7 [T. 203; T. 422]. 8 The doctrine of the two swords, one belonging to the church, the other to the state, was based on Luke 22:38.

judge. Nevertheless, those who are well-informed know Calvin's great authority in Geneva. It is apparent to them that the knowledge of Geneva's magistrate regarding Servetus's heresy was not derived from their own judgment, for how much do ordinary political rulers know about the incomprehensible distinction between three persons in one God? No, their knowledge came from Calvin's judgment, and thus the latter functioned as both prosecutor and judge of Servetus's death.

Calvin: Servetus's accuser and judge

GAMALIEL: The truth in this matter God only knows, and Calvin himself – but I do know that I am deeply troubled by Beza's policy of allowing only the church to judge doctrine, heresy, and thus also heretics.

THEODORE BEZA: How so?

GAMALIEL: It seems to me that in this way, because of their ignorance in the matter, you may turn the civil authorities into the servants of other people's cruelties rather than protectors of God's truth.

Beza turns the civil authorities into servants of other people's cruelties

THEODORE BEZA: You do not have to tell me that, for those are my own words. They show that I already thought of this and expressed concern about this before you. You are barking up the wrong tree.

GAMALIEL: It is a waste of effort rather than useful advice to think of or worry about some future evil without looking for and finding means to prevent such evil. Thus someone who gives advice that necessarily leads to evil consequences that he cannot prevent is a very questionable counselor indeed, for in doing this one would invite an evil that is much worse than the hypothetical evil that this advice is supposed to banish.

Giving advice that is worse than the disease itself

THEODORE BEZA: There is no reason to fear this about my advice, in any way or shape.

GAMALIEL: From such evil those who follow your counsel cannot possibly escape. Did not you yourself, dr. Beza, just now acknowledge that nothing in the world is harder to find than sincere ministers of the Word and that on the other hand great is the number of false prophets?

THEODORE BEZA: I did indeed acknowledge that and acknowledge it still, and I prove it by giving two notable examples. Besides over four hundred false prophets they could find only one Micaiah, and against over five hundred popes of Ba'al there was just one Elijah.

GAMALIEL: That is right. After all, you also acknowledge that the prophets that are good today can become evil tomorrow, for you say that the shepherds can turn into wolves.

THEODORE BEZA: Those are indeed my own words. I still stand by them, and am willing to prove their truth. 5

GAMALIEL: No need for that. We will accept them, and I say again: you allow only the ecclesiastical authorities, and not the civil authorities, to judge doctrine and thus also heresy and heretics. Thus you also want the civil authorities to follow and execute the judgment of the ecclesiastical authorities in this regard, the latter being the prophets, the shepherds, or 10 ministers of the Word. Is that not your view?

THEODORE BEZA: Yes it is.

Each judges  
in accord with  
what he is

GAMALIEL: And is it not also the case, that each judges in accordance with what he himself is? I mean: that a true prophet, shepherd or minister of the Word will judge well and truthfully, but that those who are false will 15 also judge wrongly and falsely?

THEODORE BEZA: That is correct, and it cannot be otherwise.

False teachers  
falsely condemn  
the true doctrine  
as heresy

GAMALIEL: Now, just as on the one hand the true prophets, shepherds, or servants would teach true doctrine and would judge the true teacher to be right and true, the false prophets, shepherds, or servants on the other 20 hand would hold true doctrine to be heresy and would condemn the true teachers as heretics and seducers. Or do you disagree?

THEODORE BEZA: Not at all, that is doubtlessly true.

Beza's dan-  
gerous advice

GAMALIEL: Likewise the wolves would undoubtedly condemn the true shepherds as wolves and have them destroyed as such by the civil author- 25 ities. Thus these wolves would not be bothered by the sincere shepherds as they tear to pieces and devour the little sheep. Please realize, oh dr. Beza, how dangerous the advice is that you give: you yourself acknowledge that nothing is harder to find | in this world than faithful and good servants 19<sup>c</sup> of the Word, yet it is they who alone can give good counsel in this matter. 30 You also say that, when they kill heretics, the princes and civil authorities ought to follow the advice or judgment of the servants of the Word. Thus without doubt we must conclude from your words that no event the world is more seldom seen than the rightful killing of a heretic, since the latter is only known by the persons who are hardest to find in this world: 35 good and faithful servants of the Word.

On the other hand we also have to conclude that were we to follow your advice nothing would be more common in the world than the killing and murdering of the true shepherds, the innocent sheep and true members of Christ. For such killing would generally be done based on the judgment of these false prophets, false servants and false shepherds – nay, rather wolves, as you say. For you yourself say that the latter are plentiful and many and the former very rare. Holy Scripture itself also attests to this, as you showed just now, as do our sad and irremediable experiences.

Beza's advice would lead to the killing of true shepherds and members of Christ

My dear man, let us be honest: is there any other reason why all of Christ's martyrs, his apostles and prophets, indeed even Christ, the innocent Lamb of God himself, have been killed as heretics and seducers of the people? What other reason can one find for this than that the unwise or godless authorities were all too naïve in believing the hypocrites and the devouring wolves and became their blind executioners and hangmen, persecuting and killing those who were judged by such wolves disguised as sheep to be wolves, disturbers of the exterior peace of the church, and heretics?

This is solid and clear proof that it is dangerous and pernicious to follow Beza's counsel in this, and more intolerable than it is to suffer the "evil" that one erroneously believes to be eradicated by such evil counsel. Or can we deny that in our times such evil was perpetrated because on this same issue the zealous but imprudent princes followed your own advice, given to them by the Roman Catholic prophets, teachers or shepherds? Do you yourself, dr. Calvin, not call these same princes executioners in the service of the cruelty of the Catholics?

Calvin calls the princes hangmen in the service of the Catholics' cruelty

When will we finally reflect quietly on the suffering of others? Do we not want to learn, to the detriment of ourselves and others? If we refrain from persecuting or killing anyone because of their faith, then we can be sure that we neither persecute nor kill Christ in his members (as did the well-intentioned but unwise Saul). But if we do not, then what is more certain than that the wolves will devour Christ's little sheep and persecute and kill Christ in his members, due to the multitude of false prophets, teachers, shepherds, and wolves?

Oh, if only all pious political authorities would understand and heed this! Then they would not persecute or kill anyone on the advice of the wolves disguised as sheep.

Instead, they would ask such bloodthirsty advisers to see the commission and commandment that God has given to the princes in this

matter. In all eternity they would be unable to prove to the princes that God commanded them to do this. Would it therefore not be deliberate foolishness for the political authorities to place themselves in such manifest danger of becoming guilty of shedding the innocent blood of Christ's members, who were bought so dearly by the shedding of Christ's dear blood and whose innocence they [the magistrates] are obliged to protect 5 against such devouring wolves? At the very least they should, in a matter of such great importance, understand what they are doing. They should see with their own eyes and not through the murderous glasses of such bloodthirsty men. For they themselves must first understand what heresy 10 is, who is a heretic, and whether the persons who have been delivered to them by their teachers to be killed are indeed heretics! Thus they avoid succumbing to an eternal and belated repentance through their judgment by Christ, if they do not better their ways. His judgment they will find to be very different from the judgment of these firebrands. 15

THEODORE BEZA: This brute beast and useless driveler has the nerve to criticize me before he has rightly understood me! For when our task is to find out whether some statement is heresy or even blasphemy, then it is a matter of the *thing* itself, that is: some article of faith. And since our faith is comprised in the books of the Old and New Testament, whose exegesis 20 is the domain of the church, it is also within the domain of the church to resolve the dispute by the Word of God, etc. But it is the magistrate's task to know the *person* of the blasphemer or heretic and to mete out a punishment that fits the crime.

GAMALIEL: Please bear with me, dr. Beza, if I am too dumb to understand your immense subtlety as being sufficient to vindicate your words, 25 which I see as wrong and harmful. I may not speak about what I do not understand but neither may I remain silent about what I do understand, since I too was called to appear here, like the others, not to be mute but to speak. And one thing I presume to know for certain, which is that what 30 Beza relates here about the difference between the "thing" and the "person" is exactly the same as what happened with the Pharisees, Pilate, and the Lord Christ. Did not Beza himself say this a while ago in his own words? In that case, the Pharisees and leaders of the Jewish church informed themselves on the *thing*, that is on the religion, and determined 35 that Jesus Christ's teachings were false, blasphemous, seditious and ambitious. Did Pilate know for sure that they were right? No, for he said: "I

Beza wants to abuse the power of the magistrate, exactly as the Pharisees abused Pilate's power against Christ

find no fault (deserving capital punishment) in this man.” And what do these bloodthirsty Pharisees do? They insist, they harass him, and say: “If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you.”

20<sup>A</sup> In other words, they say: “It is up to you to judge the | *person*, but not the  
5 *thing*, for judgment of the latter is our domain. Now we give our judgment, that in this Jesus are these things, to wit: false doctrine, blasphemy, sedition and ambition. You need to have faith in our judgment on this *thing*, that is on this evil. And now you have the right to judge the *person* of this Jesus. For after having been assured by our judgment that in him  
10 are false doctrine, blasphemy, sedition and ambition, how can you object to the condemnation as a slanderer, a rebel and an ambitious person of the *person* who harbors all these things?” After which the ambitious – but not entirely blind – Pilate follows the judgment of the Pharisees and the wolves over the innocent Lamb of God. He shows his own judgment of  
15 the innocence of Christ by washing his hands. Thus he became the executioner of the false, spiteful, and murderous judgment of the hypocritical Pharisees, making the Author of life and Savior of the world (and not a seducer and evil-doer) suffer a painful death. Pray tell if what happened with the Pharisees, Pilate and Christ Jesus was any different from what  
20 necessarily and manifestly follows from your view on the distinction between judgment of the thing and of the person. Did the Pharisees not judge Christ’s doctrine when they accused the Lord of temptation? When Pilate followed their judgment and sentenced him to death as a tempter, did he not judge the person of Christ?

25 Tell me now in all seriousness, dr. Beza, whether this distinction or differentiation between judgment of the thing and of the person that you want to introduce is different in any way from the manner in which the Pharisees and Pilate judged and executed? I believe you will find them to be one and the same. Do you not yet see what happens when the  
30 authorities abuse their power? Does it not mean that the good are punished and the wicked protected? I read your own words, where you state: “But what, you will say, will happen if the magistrate abuse his power? Will we not be subjected to the same danger that you wish to prevent, or an even greater one? Verily, I admit this is true and I confess this is so.” Those are  
35 your own words, dr. Beza, proving that your counsel, worse than being useless, is indeed harmful and comes down to the recommendation of a greater evil in order to avoid a lesser one.

Beza’s advice on the killing of heretics brings along for the magistrate more evil than it avoids.

1 [Luke 13:4]. Luke 23:4. 3 [John 18:30]. 15 Matthew 27:24. 28 [T.207]. 34 {Beza, T.A.M., 297}.

THEODORE BEZA: Those are indeed my words. But we cannot build up the church in this world without subjecting it to some perils.

GAMALIEL: Be that as it may. But the smaller the dangers, the better. We should not risk a greater danger in order to avoid a lesser one, and it is foolishness to exchange an uncertain evil for a certain one. That is the same as jumping from a ship to drown in the sea, out of fear that the ship will sink. Is it not a smaller and lesser danger in the issue at hand to kill the heresy by means of the truth, thus saving the heretic, rather than to abuse | the magistrate's sword in order to kill some dearly bought mem- 20<sup>B</sup>bers of Christ? To turn the authorities into faithful guardians so that the 10 innocent little sheep are not harmed by the wolves, rather than to turn the authorities into devouring wolves among the innocent and defenseless flock of Christ?

Now since this issue is so important and we have come this far, I must take things a little further, as follows. You, teachers on both sides, prelates, 15 ministers or whatever you wish to be called, either have the means to make the political magistrate understand indubitably, based on the testimony of God's Word, that what you regard to be heresy condemnable by death is indeed such heresy; or you do not have the means to make them understand this for a certainty. If you have the means to make this per- 20 fectly clear to all civil magistrates, who are all human, then you also have the means to make it perfectly clear to the people as a whole, who are also human. If you can possibly do this, then do it as soon as possible. For in doing this you will protect your adherents from heresy condemnable by death, you will save the erring from such heresy and you will render com- 25 pletely harmless the heretical unrepentant serpents by tearing out their poisonous fangs and by neutralizing the pernicious venom of the soul that is mixed in with their teachings. After all, nobody errs deliberately and voluntarily and no one who loves life will knowingly swallow a deadly venom. Once the heresiarch is known as such and has been put to shame 30 in this way, he can no longer harm by seducing others. Then what need is there to kill by the magistrate's sword one who, granted a longer life, could still be converted, like Paul, Augustine and others like them?

But if on the other hand you, prelates and ministers, are unable to make the political magistrate understand, formally and beyond any 35 doubt, that what you respectively regard as heresy condemnable by death is indeed such, then how will the magistrate be able to understand beyond any doubt the person and know for certain that he is a heretic, so that he can condemn him as such? For if he does not know the heresy

*in abstracto*, that is to say in itself, then how can he know it *in concreto*, that is in the person? Can someone who does not know or recognize what is wisdom, learning or piety, know which person is wise, learned or pious? Thus, if the magistrate does not know for certain what constitutes heresy, then how will he know for certain which person is a heretic? And if the  
 5 magistrate cannot know this for certain, then how can he, uninformed, legally condemn someone as a heretic and have him put to death?

Is it not a sin for someone who doubts or is uncertain to eat meat? Will it count as virtue if the magistrate, based on your recommendation and  
 10 in such blind ignorance, martyr, crucify and devour the flesh of Christ in his members? How is this different from simply putting the executioner's  
 20 sword into the hands of a blind man, | ordering him to strike when such wolves, be they prelates or ministers, call out to him: "Crucify! Strike and stab!?" Is he not just as likely to strike a sheep as he is to strike a wolf  
 15 or a heretic? No, in fact this is a hundredfold more likely, for there are many wolves disguised as shepherds and one wolf will not bite another, but he *will* bite the defenseless sheep. This brought the Reformed, when they were still under the Cross, to petition the king of Spain [Philip II] as follows: "... [I]t behooves the judge to apprise and assure himself that  
 20 the injustice and heresy have been exposed by the Word of God, before he raises his hand to pounce on the accused."

So I will frankly state my view in this matter, not to hurt anyone but to keep the innocent from harm: I cannot help but be deeply disturbed by the draconian views that you – both prelates and ministers – have  
 25 expressed, for they are extremely worrisome and also in conflict with Scripture. Contrariwise I am pleased by the view of a certain learned and pious man, and see it as a safe counsel that is in harmony with Christ's kindness and with Scripture. That man wrote in the preface to his French translation of the Bible, dedicated to the king of France: "When night falls  
 30 upon the battlefield the combatants wait for the day lest by chance friends be killed instead of enemies, for it is better to spare one's enemies than to kill some of one's friends. Likewise also in the day time, when the hand to hand combat begins the artillery ceases for fear of the aforesaid mischance. I will say to what purpose I utter these words, if you, Sire, will  
 35 deign to listen. The world today is embroiled in great disturbance and confusion principally touching the question of religion. There never were so many calamities and evils, from which we may well perceive that the night of ignorance has fallen. If not all are enveloped by it, at least many

The advice on the killing of heretics is bad and counter-Scriptural

Good advice in these times for how the magistrate should handle heresy.

Ignorance leads to quarrels.

are, for if it were day, there never would be such diverse and even contrary judgments about the same color. Or if it is day, at least the good and the evil in the matter of religion are so intermingled that if one should wish to kill those who deviate from the truth there is danger that the wheat will be rooted out with the tares. That would be an irreparable loss. Hitherto the world has always made this mistake. The prophets, the apostles, so many thousands of martyrs, and even the Son of God were put to death under the color of religion. One day an account must be given of all this blood by those who have been shedding it so frivolously when they struck blindly during the night of ignorance. The proverb is right | that says: ‘He is wise who keeps himself from error by learning from others’ mistakes.’ Believe me, your Majesty, the world today is neither better nor wiser nor more enlightened than formerly. It were better, therefore, as long as things are so confused and in doubt, to wait with firing (or shooting) until the dawn arrives, or until it is easier to distinguish between things, from fear of committing an act in the darkness and confusion of which afterwards we will have to say, “That was not my intention.”

Christ, the apostles and all martyrs were all labeled heretics

One ought not judge important matters without certain knowledge

JEZONIAS: I wish, gentlemen, that in this matter on which Catholics and Protestants at first opposed each other, you had both adduced more and more convincing proof than you did, because this issue is of such great importance. For what the Catholics say comes down to not much more than that under Moses the priests had the right to judge, without proving that this applied to heresy or heretics – words that we do not find with Moses. They often insist on custom and examples, which have both been shown to be questionable arguments.

The Reformed counter by refuting this as a manifest injustice, and claim that it is worrisome. It is injustice, they say, because then the clergy are both judge and party in the same cause. And worrisome because it is often the wolves that rule the churches instead of the shepherds; and also because the emperors are sometimes enemies of the faith, leading us to expect nothing but a multitude of martyrs.

But the Catholics prove that of late the Reformed have come to agree with their view that only the ecclesiastical authorities and not the magistrate ought to judge heresy and heretics. This led to a third view running counter to the other two. It proved, based on the words of the Reformed themselves, that inevitable danger lurks in the view that such judgment

17 Castellio, “Preface to the French Bible”; cf. Sebastian Castellio, *Concerning Heretics: Whether They are to be persecuted and how they are to be treated*, trans. Roland H. Bainton (New York: Octagon Books, 1965), 257–258.

must only depend on the ecclesiastical authorities, since the Reformed themselves acknowledge that faithful teachers are scarce and false teachers plentiful. And that if the civil authorities were to abide by their judgment without informing themselves on heresy and heretics, they would  
5 be persecuting and killing Christ himself in his members, thus serving as no more than executioners of the cruelty of wolves passing as sheep.

All these and related matters will be presented to my lord and our president, master Daniel, whose arrival I desire more than anyone else. But above all I pray that in all these important matters we may work for  
10 God's honor and for the salvation of the people. Amen.



*Freedom of Conscience in Faith as Well as in  
its Exercise and Whether Only the Exercise of  
What the Civil Magistrate Judges to Be the  
5 True Religion Shall Be Allowed, and None Else*

Participants: Jezonias, Catholic Delegate, Reformed Delegate, John Calvin, Theodore Beza, Dutch Delegate, Gamaliel

JEZONIAS: Yesterday's topic mostly touched on the ecclesiastical and secular authorities, and so will all the following topics. For complaints were  
10 heard that through their wiles the Catholic clergy had brought under their command the civil authorities, such as emperors, kings, and princes. Thus, by subjecting the latter to their will they also lorded it over their subjects, and therefore over the entire vulnerable population, be they high or low. This domination consisted in forbidding the authorities to allow  
15 the teaching or practice of any other religion except theirs, which they regard as the only true religion. No other [religions] were to be allowed, since they regard them as heresy. This [means] that it is forbidden to believe differently than they or to disturb the peace of their church with disputations or writings. Those who believe, teach, or live differently are  
20 punished severely through a verdict that is pronounced without having heard the condemned parties.

In discussing these matters we will now first consider the question whether it is right or not for each person to have such freedom of conscience that he may not only believe what he deems necessary for his  
25 salvation, but that he may also live this faith, both in refraining from practicing a religion he deems wrong and in practicing the religion that he sees as right. It is understood that the political laws will always remain in full force against violators. Finally we will discuss whether we ought to allow more religions in country or city than the one seen as the right one by the  
30 authorities.

Gentlemen, please express frankly what each of you deems to be appropriate and right, and what reasons prompt you to feel that way.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: May God save us from such pernicious freedom! This would be pure anarchy. The sacred Roman Catholic Church thinks very differently on this matter, to wit: that those who dare get it into their head to do or say something frivolous against the sacred canons of the Fathers which were inspired by the Holy Ghost, or those who agree with  
 5 such acts or words, | commit such an outrage that it is the same as com- 21<sup>B</sup>  
 mitting blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. They want everyone to be allowed to believe and do whatever they see fit. But the Holy Church has been against this, as were consequently likewise the Christian rulers such as the emperor Charles V, king Philip II, as well as the kings of France, 10 Francis I and his son, Henry II. This can be easily seen not only in their blessed, useful and sacred placards but also in the very severe and Christian executions that followed from them. Proof in this matter is therefore unnecessary, since the whole world knows with what great seriousness 15 they have demonstrated that nothing in the world was less tolerable to them than the exercise of any other religion except the Roman Catholic one.

Religion is a duty  
 not to humans  
 but to God

REFORMED DELEGATE: We do not agree with everything you say, sir, or with all that careless emperors and kings have done under your evil influence. But we accept all that God wants people to do, relying on the 20 irrefutable testimony of Holy Scripture. This topic is the weightiest of all because religion regards God and not humans, and since we must obey God rather than humans. To Him the king is subjected no less than the people. Now both the king and the people have been commanded equally 25 to obey God and they both hope equally for life eternal and fear death according to whether they behave rightly or wrongly in their religion. This is why both the king and the people – and when we say “people” we mean each individual – desire to serve God according to their conscience. Considering all this and taking into account all that we have 30 learned from experience, we feel that force and weapons do not achieve much for the expansion and protection of religion. Furthermore, because you, Catholics, would never wish the constraint of your own conscience, it is therefore also in agreement with God’s law that you should not force anybody else’s conscience.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: We on our part do not take as the Gospel, sir, what 35 was said by your States General of the Netherlands whose words you mostly used in what you said. The Parlement of Paris was of a very differ-

ent opinion when it admonished the king that there was no better way to end the rebellion than to remove its cause and tear out its root, meaning the division of religion. And if it would please the king to confess his faith and to declare that he will live and die in the faith wherein he was baptized  
 5 and by which his forebears lived, and if he declares that he expects all his  
 21<sup>c</sup> subjects to make the same confession and declaration lest they undergo | the punishment that he deems meet, then there would be high hopes that by the grace of God all his subjects in this kingdom would live in great peace and calm. And to avert any occasion for unrest among the peo-  
 10 ple, all those who inform [the authorities] of conventicles and clandestine preaching should be rewarded. This, by the way, has already happened on your side on the part of the Reformed king of Scotland who published a confession of his faith and threatened punishment against all other reli-  
 15 gions or worship. That is your own counsel and such are your own deeds. I do not think that you can fairly denounce us when we do the same.

The Reformed make those who refuse to subscribe to their religion subject to punishment

REFORMED DELEGATE: This gentleman speaks of the case of Scotland as if there were no difference whatsoever between the true religion and his false one! His conclusion is nothing less than that, supposedly, it is appropriate to do for the false religion what one is obliged to do for the true  
 20 one. This would lead to the conclusion that because the authorities are obliged to protect the true faith they are also obliged to protect the false one. That makes no sense. But let us leave Scotland behind and turn to our Dutch cause. Let it be known that although here also in one country and one state no more than one religion is formally maintained, never-  
 25 theless the practice of prudent men has been that by the connivance of the magistrate two other religions are permitted until such time as the hearts of the majority of the people should have been converted. This was done because matters had reached such a point that the religions that were deemed false could not have been rooted out without causing gener-  
 30 eral harm. In the same way, the pagan emperors allowed the Christians to have temples and the latter in their turn allowed the pagans the same. Thus emperor Justinian, for example, at the request of the Roman bishop, allowed the Arians to have a church. It was therefore also fair that we petitioned his Majesty the king of Spain, asking him to demonstrate his  
 35 sympathy and love for these lands by deigning not to disturb the conscience of his subjects who are of a different religion, and to permit them

Where a false religion cannot be eradicated without harm to the commonwealth two different religions ought to be tolerated

3 [C. 192]. 14 This refers to John Knox's Reformed confession (the *Confessio scotica*) and the strong measures against Catholics adopted by the Scottish Parliament in 1560. 23 [O.P.C. 179]. 33 [A.P. 43].

The Reformed request of the king freedom to exercise their religion

The magistrate may not disturb people's conscience

The sword of God's word alone can be successful in religious matters

to exercise their faith publicly, as we stated in the articles of our petition. The majority of the teachers of old were also of the opinion that it is wrong to disturb people's conscience in order to violate it and force it to believe. After all, the material sword was placed in their hand to punish robbers, thieves, murderers and others who disturb this human government. But in religion and things pertaining to the soul the only sword that must and is able to bring the much needed remedy is the spiritual sword of God's Word, provided we distinguish between the zeal and religion that deserve protection and seditiousness and disorder affecting the government.

10

The Reformed do not want to suffer any constraint of conscience from the Catholics. The Catholics want total assent to their teachings

JOHN CALVIN: It is beside all truth that our faith should stand and fall at their (the Catholics') | pleasure, so that whatever they have determined on either side must be firmly seated in our minds; what they approve must [supposedly] be approved by us without any doubt; what they condemn we also must hold to be justly condemned. Meanwhile, at their own caprice, and in contempt of the word of God, they coin doctrines to which they in this way demand our assent, declaring that no man can be a Christian unless he assent to all their dogmas, either by assenting to what they claim or by rejecting what they reject...

21<sup>D</sup>

15

God does not give anyone power to make laws pertaining to conscience

THEODORE BEZA: It is the task of the civil authorities to make civil laws, laws that pertain to the external life, with the exception always that they should not command anything that conflicts with the divine laws that must be obeyed by the church above anything else. For otherwise he (the civil magistrate) is a tyrant and abuses the power given to him by God. But with regard to matters concerning religion and the mutual love of the people, the power of the magistrate, whatever its condition, does not reach that far, for God did not give to anyone power to make laws about conscience and he does not tolerate that anyone but He alone has dominance over the soul. For we say that even if you wanted to force faith, faith cannot be forced.

20

25

30

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Perhaps it is appropriate for someone to say this, dr. Beza, but for you it is not appropriate at all.

THEODORE BEZA: And why is this less appropriate for me than for any other doctor?

19 [Institu. Vijj.146]. John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, book 4, ch. 8:10.

23 [T. 39]. {Beza, *T.A.M.*, 39 ff.}. 30 [Epist. 1. fol. 20].

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: You cannot say this without manifestly contradicting yourself, and I do not think that is appropriate for a man as renowned and learned as you. For now you say that only God wants to have power over people's soul and that even if we wanted to we could not force the soul. But in blatant contradiction you said earlier that we can and should force people to believe and that the political authorities ought not to permit that people believe whatever they wish.

Beza contradicts himself

THEODORE BEZA: Where and how did I say that, sir? Most likely you do what you normally do with my words, misquoting them, misinterpreting them and publicly calumniating them!

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: I do not know what others normally do but I know full well that I am not guilty of this. I render your words | faithfully, as follows: "...You say that it is not permitted (to punish heretics), and this to introduce into the church of God the notion that everyone be allowed to have whatever view they wish of religion. I on my part say that it is still necessary and useful to apply this policy in the church, and affirm that this has always been the practice." And to finally finish my answers to your calumnies and vain nonsense concerning the first point of the controversy, see how I answer you, citing St. Augustine's own words: "Regarding your view," he says, "that one should not force the people to follow the truth against their will: you err, and do not understand Scripture nor the power of God, which while forcing people against their will, gives them the will." These, doctor Beza, are your own words: undistorted, unchanged, but crystal clear, as you yourself wrote them. And this also makes crystal clear that you deem that one can, nay must force the people to believe and that we must not allow them the freedom to believe what they like. My dear man, tell me: how does this differ from what we teach? Why do you contradict us so bitterly? Now you teach the same here as we do, against yourself. Is that appropriate? If it is wrong for us, how can it be right for you? If it is right for us, then why do you denounce us for it? "Because our doctrine is true and yours and all others are false," you will possibly say, but before what judge has our religion been proven false and yours true? And that of the Lutherans false? Thus you claim for yourself the title of the true doctrine and church above all others, before you have legitimately proven it to be such. And thus, no matter which way you turn it, you patently

Beza teaches that we can and should force people to believe

contradict yourself, calling one and the same thing right and possible, and again when it suits you, wrong and impossible. That is, to speak with St. James, “sweet water and bitter” coming from one fountain “at the same place.”

REFORMED DELEGATE: Please do not think that we are like you in binding our faith unanimously to what one man has said and letting him be master over it like the pope is master over your faith. Beza is quite capable of defending what he says or writes, but how can you, doctor, defend having the nerve to bother us with what one person has said? Goodness, you believe that God does not permit one to allow any religion except yours, which you (erroneously) deem to be the true one! Then how can you blame us for agreeing with you on this point [with regard to our religion]? Would you not be denouncing us for something you yourself are guilty of? Would you not be claiming to possess the true doctrine and to be the true church before a legitimate judgment is passed? Who can deny that the magistrate is obliged to maintain God’s honor by destroying all false religions and allowing only the true one? Or should a Christian magistrate | close his eyes, suffer and tolerate that God be blasphemed through public idolatry and that so many thousands of dearly bought souls be misled by seducers to their eternal damnation?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: You speak the truth – a truth that we have known for a long time and have used, also against you. And at the time you could not understand this, denouncing and execrating us for committing a horrific killing of souls, bloodthirsty tyranny and constraint of conscience that went against Scripture. This is why I do not deny the truth of this view. But I do blame not only dr. Beza, but his coreligionists as well, for inappropriately teaching this truth, for I find you either to be inconsistent in your teachings or crafty in your actions.

REFORMED DELEGATE: If just your saying so were the same as proof, doctor, then we ought to be placed with the pigs in the filthy sty of shame, but this is not the case at all.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: I do not wish to be believed without proof, and I will not lack for solid proof that you will be unable to refute. I find my proof in your own words, spoken when you requested free exercise of

4 [James 3:11].

your religion in the Netherlands. Your request is as follows: “With regard to the second point (viz. that two religions cannot live side by side in one country), experience has always shown us differently, whether we look at the old or the recent emperors or observe the neighbor states  
 5 around us. For even those with just a passing knowledge of history know that from the beginning the emperors, when they were still pagan, have at least harbored Christians and pagans together under their dominion so that they even had entire legions made up of Christians who fought together with the pagans under the same generals. Nonetheless, then as  
 10 now there were unwise counselors who inundated their princes with this view that two religions could not live peacefully side by side. This then prompted those emperors to persecute the good party. But soon enough they themselves had to pay the price of their folly and of such counsel. And the same practice prevailed for a long time still at the time of the  
 15 Christian emperors. And not only that, but likewise among those bearing the same name of Christians the churches were kept open for those whose teachings were very different, as we can see in the history of Constantine [the Great], his children, Theodosius and others.

As regards our times there are so many examples that were we to judge  
 20 only by their number it would be easy and far more accurate to say that whoever has attempted to destroy one of the two religions placed his state  
 22<sup>c</sup> in great danger. | However that may be, if we look around us we will see that the two most powerful nations that surround us, Germany and France, both found, after so much carnage, no other way to stop it but to  
 25 allow both religions. We remember all too well the enormous efforts made in Germany by the emperor Charles of blessed memory. We remember that it really looked like he would be successful in the beginning when he had brought the majority under his yoke and controlled the most eminent and powerful chiefs and princes. But the end result was nevertheless  
 30 that after he had been brought to a distress greater than any experienced by a powerful ruler such as he, there was no other way to save him but to allow both religions. The grandfather of Your Highness, the emperor Ferdinand, a prince of exceptional judgment and counsel, saw that there was no other way to save the situation and to remove the bad blood existing in  
 35 Germany, so he established the religious peace (*Religionsfried*). After that time there has not been one mutiny in Germany. The clergy enjoyed their goods, dignities and pre-eminence with more certainty than anywhere else in Christendom. And in many cities, such as Frankfurt, Worms, Ulm,

Tolerating  
 both religions  
 ends sedition

<sup>1</sup> [R].

Two religions  
exercised in one  
church without  
partisanship

Augsburg and others, both religions were exercised. In some of the aforementioned towns this even happened in one and the same church, without any partisanship or turmoil.” There you have it, sir, those are your own words. And with those words you requested that you be allowed to exist beside us and promised to reassure us with proper safeguards that nothing was further from your mind than the desire to root out our religion by force. Now I do not want to look only at the reassurance you gave to these countries, which you said could continue to allow the coexistence of two religions, a policy which you are now starting to understand differently. I want to discuss your conscience instead, or your sincerity as it pertains to this matter. For I cannot believe that you are so godless that at the time you acted in bad faith when you were willing to tolerate us by your side with promises not to destroy us. For this must have been the case if at that time you realized that you could not in good conscience suffer our idolatries (as you call our worship), since they [supposedly] constitute a manifest blasphemy of the honor of God. If this is not the case and if at the time you acted in good faith and thought and understood that our “idolatry” could not harm your conscience, then we observe a very sudden and inconstant shift in your position on this point. For now, less than four years later, you have changed your mind, your judgment and your conscience in such wise that now you claim to be utterly unable to suffer in good conscience our form of worship – which you term idolatry – which at the time caused you no problem. For that would be a sudden and shameless change of position for people who, then | no less than now, claim to possess the pure doctrine. But if you disagree and say that your position on this point has not changed and that at that time, just like today, you regarded it as wrong and blasphemous to tolerate that we should enjoy the free exercise of our religion; and if you say that at the time you only tolerated the situation temporarily until the current state of affairs, that is until you could extirpate our religion: well, then I have no idea how you could deny that you are guilty of deviousness and treachery. For in my eyes it is not an adequate excuse for you to pretend – in flagrant contradiction of all that has been said so far – that we supposedly blaspheme against God’s honor and that you fear sedition as a result of allowing us to practice our faith.

Great change  
in Reformed  
conscience  
within four years

Craftiness and  
deceit by some  
of the Reformed

3 {From a twenty-page request in French titled *Requete présentée à son Altèze et messeigneurs du Conseil d’Etat par les habitants des Pays-Bas protestant vouloir vivre selon la reformation de l’Evangile, le 22e jour de juin 1578*. Printed in E. Gachard, *La Bibliothèque Nationale à Paris: Notes et extraits des manuscrits qui concernent l’histoire de Belgique* (Brussels, 1875), 190–197. The passage is on pp. 194 ff. Coornhert translated the text into Dutch}.

GAMALIEL: Without doubt both sides alike give similar cause for concern. For erstwhile the Reformed themselves, in their request for permission to exercise [their religion] publicly, correctly related that one has more reason to fear mutiny, subversion and rebellion from the clandestine exercise of religion than from its public exercise. At that time they also did not request the eradication of the Catholics but only freedom to exercise their own religion. This indicates that according to their conscience at that time this was not in conflict with the honor of God. That does make it appear in a way as if upon attaining power these folks acquired a conscience that was different from their former conscience.

More harm to be feared from clandestine than from public religious meetings

I do not here want to get into the question of whether the Catholics, who in persecuting showed the Reformed what to do and are imitated by them now – since the Supreme Judge at times will pay back measure for measure – only receive their due (although they were promised differently). But I will say this much: the Reformed still have not done everything to the Catholics that the Catholics have done to them in the way of hanging, beheading, and burning at the stake! But I would be overjoyed to see in this regard that the Reformed prove that they are somewhat better “formed” than the Catholics and that they would not think so much of paying back in kind for the wrongs they have suffered, but rather of doing good in return, thus heaping the coals of love on the heads of the Catholics. For they are fellow human beings who, just like us, prefer to be kindly tolerated rather than violently forced. This is why I was mightily pleased by the words that the Reformed themselves addressed to the king of France through Arenius, in the year 1575, as follows: “Religion everywhere exerts a great power, and especially in the human heart. It should therefore be no surprise that human prohibitions cannot drive religion from the heart, over which God has reserved exclusive power and authority. We find a firm anchor of religion in the Word of God.” | And further: “The prosperity of the kingdom requires solid and sincere concord among all inhabitants. Now we can only have solid concord when all inhabitants enjoy common and equal rights, and this especially in religion. That is why the king should embrace all his subjects with a common and equal love, and this especially in the greatest and weightiest matter of

Human prohibitions cannot drive religion from the hearts of the people

Enjoyment of equal rights makes for concord among the subjects

22 Proverbs 25:21–22; Romans 12:20. 25 {Arenius, not “Aremius” as the text states. Arenius, or Guillaume Dauvet, was member of a delegation sent by Condé in 1575 to Henry III of France in order to ask for freedom of conscience. Coornhert quoted several times from Arenius’ discourse, which he translated from the Latin in Jean de Serres, *De statu religionis et reipublicae in regno Galliae*, vol. VI (Leiden, 1580), pp. 78 ff.}. 29 [O.P.C. 78].

all, religion. It is rooted so deep in people's hearts that one could not find a better or more lasting seal of concord anywhere else."

But wise politicians call inequality among the inhabitants or citizens of a country a pestilence to the commonwealth, as by the same token equality is the strongest bond of concord and solidarity. Thus the freedom of worship was taken from the Reformed in some places where it was granted to the Catholics. Who does not see that by enjoying such an advantage one party will only become more insolent and the other party more suspicious when it realizes that it is under threat from the other party which is the favored religion? Thus we read the following words spoken to the same king of France on behalf of the same Reformed religion: "...[T]he following applies to the religion for which your subjects request free exercise. Conscience is beyond the power of humans and cannot be forced in any way, but is subject only to the will of God. Of this you have also seen the practical examples in Germany and Poland. Thus your subjects would very much like to persuade you that there is a direct correlation between religion and the tranquility of the state, and that diversity of religion will not bring unrest to the kingdom." All of this makes me believe that no constraint of conscience whatsoever, even if only a prohibition to exercise a faith that one or another party deems necessary for its salvation, can be appropriate or in accord with God's will. I believe instead that permitting, or at least unofficially allowing another religion is necessary for the strong concord and a willingness to give generous support to the burdens of war.

If St. Paul did not wish to assume domination over the conscience of his disciples, then who can legitimately assume such domination? Regarding this, Calvin remarks in his *Commentaries* as follows: "When he [St. Paul] says that he has no dominance over their faith, he makes it clear that such dominance is unjust and completely intolerable. Indeed, it represents tyranny in the church. For faith ought to be exempted and free of all subjection to humans. We should note who speaks these words. For if ever there was a person who had the power to assume such dominance, it was most definitely St. Paul who was worthy of such a privilege! We therefore conclude that faith knows of no other subjection but subjection to the word of God, and is in no way subjected to the dominance of man."

Those are all Calvin's own words, and they are sincere and true. I do not believe the Reformed will deny that they themselves used to regard it

Conscience cannot be forced

Diversity of religion does not bring unrest

Faith is not subjected to the domination of humans

12 [O.P.C. 18 2.ii]. 26 [2 Cor, 2:24]. 2 Corinthians 1:24. 35 [Comment.]. {Calvin, *Commentaires sur le Nouveau Testament*, vol. III (Paris, 1855), p. 536}.

as constraint of conscience when the Catholics prohibited their meetings, their preaching, their ceremonies of baptism and the Eucharist as well as the writing and publishing of books. For they believed that God commanded them to do this the same way that He commanded the apostles  
 5 to preach Jesus. That is why the pious among them preferred giving up their lives to giving up these things. At that time they also cited daily the words of the apostle: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.” Thus it is also manifestly against the law which Christ says is contained, with the prophets, in the statement  
 10 that one should not do unto others what one would not have them do to oneself. This law applies to both, indeed to all parties. We are all subjected to this law and I wish fervently that we would all act in accordance with it, until that time when the Lord himself will send his laborers to harvest and to separate the wheat from the tares. For in this I fully agree  
 15 with master John Calvin, since he wrote very aptly about this, based on Augustine, that no one should arrogate to himself what only belongs to the Son, meaning that no one should think himself capable of winnowing the wheat by removing the chaff and all the tares by his own human judgment. That would be proud obstinacy and an arrogance that is harmful  
 20 to the church.

JEZONIAS: I see in this debate two distinct views, one that says no and the other that says yes to the proposition. The Catholic says no to the proposition of freedom of conscience and the permission of the exercise of more than one religion. He calls it blasphemy if someone dare speak against the  
 25 canons and says that no Christian prince has ever agreed to allow everyone to believe what they want, but that this was strictly forbidden instead.

The others who at first said yes to this proposition were the Reformed, who asserted that violence and weapons do not promote the spread of religion. They said that most of the teachers of old were against the constraint of conscience, that the magistrate’s sword is for use against those  
 30 who do wrong, not those who believe wrongly, because God did not grant to any human being the power to make laws over conscience. Finally they said that the admission of several religions is the cause of lasting stability in the land. They illustrated this with many recent examples.

35 The Catholics countered by making the point that indeed the Reformed formerly adhered to this contrary view but that they have now

8 [Acts 4:19]. 11 [Acts 7:12]. Unclear reference. The Golden Rule is found in Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31; Romans 13:9. 14 Matthew 13:30. 16 [Insti. Viii]. Calvin, *Institutes*, IV, ch. 12:8–9. 19 Matthew 3:12; Luke 3:17.

changed and are in full agreement with them on the topic of the constraint of conscience and the prohibition of more than one religion. Furthermore, they agree in that | each regards his own religion as the true one, <sup>23c</sup> and the other's religion as false.

After this agreement on the proposition Gamaliel maintained that <sup>5</sup> conscience and the exercise of religion ought to be left free. He provided proof from the example of the apostle Paul and other Scriptural testimony as well as from reasons given by the Reformed, who stated that the position of the prince is assured by the concord among his subjects and that this concord is the product of the equality among the people, especially <sup>10</sup> with regard to religion, for religion is always the supreme concern of the pious.

All of this has been faithfully recorded and will be handed to our lord and president, master Daniel, when he returns. We hereby end this session. The Lord be praised.

*Those Who Criticize Doctrine or Disturb  
the External Peace of the Church, and  
How They Ought to Be Punished*

5 Participants: Jezonias, Catholic Delegate, Reformed Delegate, John Calvin, Wolfgang Musculus, Theodore Beza, Henry Bullinger, Gamaliel

JEZONIAS: Since sometimes there are doubts about who should be regarded as critics of doctrine or disturbers of the external peace of the church, and how they should be punished, this issue is now put before  
10 you, oh honorable, learned and esteemed gentlemen, so you can each express your views on the matter.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Does anyone have any doubts about people of such ilk? Who does not know the nature and acts of Martin Luther and Zwingli and the unruliness of all their followers? The emperor of the Turks knew  
15 them very well. He always regarded these Evangelicals as a damnable bunch, born for sedition! “How many troubles,” he said, “do they not foment every time? How often do they not rush to arms over small matters? They only obey their own ministers as long as the latter flatter them, for they would get rid of these ministers if they dared criticize the people’s  
20 faults a bit too frankly or held an opinion that was different from theirs.”

The Turks denounce the Protestants as rebels

But in our times the first disturber of the external peace of the church was Martin Luther. When he criticized and denounced the indulgences, he was the first to ignite this fire of controversy in God’s church, and he created a church of his own. Then Luther in his turn encountered his  
25 own “Luther” or firebrand in Karlstadt, who denounced Luther’s doctrine  
23<sup>p</sup> on the Eucharist | and disturbed the external peace of Luther’s church in exactly the same way that you did ours. Philip Melanchthon writes about this agitator as follows: “Karlstadt was the first one to foment these troubles (about the Eucharist). He was a very savage person, lacking in-  
30 telligence and learning and deprived of common judgment, for we have never known him to understand or to prove anything honorable.” That

In our times Martin Luther was the first disturber of the Holy Church

31 [Ho. 6]. {This entire passage is based on Hosius, *Confutatio*, I, 427 ff.}.

shows that nobody could detect any signs of the Holy Spirit in him. His initiation of this controversy over the Eucharist was started by him in a spirit lacking in any piety. This mirrors the way Luther started his controversy against the pope out of hatred. After all, Martin Luther himself testifies about Karlstadt that anything he did was done from ambition, 5 for he had convinced himself that no one on earth was more learned than he. Martin Luther, however, says about himself the following: “But by God’s grace I am now more learned than all the sophists and theologians.” However, Luther’s description of Zwingli is not so honest, for he says that Zwingli was full of impudence, arrogance and ambition, and that 10 he dared despise everyone.

Luther denounces  
Karlstadt

Luther de-  
nounces Zwingli

The Catholics  
denounce Luther,  
Zwingli and the  
others as wolves  
and agitators

Such were the first standard-bearers and predecessors of all critics of doctrine or disturbers of the external peace of the church. When they emerged they disguised themselves as innocent sheep, proclaiming nothing but the Gospel of peace, but in their deeds, alas, they proved to be 15 devouring wolves, sectarians, disturbers of the peace of the church and rebels in their countries and cities. Why, then, should it be difficult after such examples of firebrands and agitators to recognize in their followers the nature and character of such scorners of doctrine and such underminers of the church? 20

REFORMED DELEGATE: If we cannot be sure of a good finish of what started well, then how can we expect any good to come from a bad start? What type of reasoning is this, my doctor? The Turkish emperor, you say, believes this and that of the Evangelicals – does that prove that he is right? Is that a proper conclusion? The Turkish emperor loves Muhammad more 25 than he does Christ – are we then to conclude that Muhammad is above Christ? The same goes for the proof you take from Luther’s lambasting of Zwingli and Karlstadt, for you consider Luther’s judgment of doctrine no less false than you do the judgment of the Turkish emperor. So how can Luther’s immoderate criticism help you? What appearance of truth – 30 that is still less than real truth! – can your words thus have? Our idea of the Turks in the realm of religion is such that in this we would rather be denounced than praised by them. By the same token your own criticism pleases us more than your praise would, for we regard you as folks who will always be enemies to the honest truth. For truth always uncovers the 35 baseness of hypocrites and thus robs them of | an honor that they are not 24<sup>A</sup>

7 [C.L. Luther 266].

worthy of, showing the people their well-deserved shame. Likewise the Lord Jesus himself, the embodiment of truth, had to incur the hatred of the children of darkness whose works he put to shame before the people. This is why he said of himself that he had come not to bring peace – meaning to the godless hypocrites – but a sword. But to his disciples he said: “They hated me, therefore they will also hate you.” We believe that these words also apply to us, being Christ’s true disciples who praise him while following in his path. For we do not hesitate to expose the evil-doings of the Roman Antichrist, who thanks us for this with the usual thanks received by the truth, to wit: slander, hatred, persecution and death.

Truth fosters enmity in the hypocrites

JOHN CALVIN: The enemies of God are so excessive in their promotion of their devilish falsehoods that this might obscure the vision of those who do not look any further. Many good people see how all religion has been maliciously perverted by the papacy which has filled it with countless abuses. They also see that nonetheless such reprehensible delusions are protected by the terror inflicted on any who dare protest against them. Therefore, these people are so disgusted by all this that it makes them hate and detest *all* punishments, without discernment of whether they are justified or not. There is certainly reason to be concerned and saddened when one sees God’s truth oppressed by fire and sword without anyone daring to stand up and defend it, to such extent that all the while the abuses and errors are so strengthened under the guise of justice that there is no freedom whatsoever to censure them.

Calvin complains about the Catholics’ religious persecution

Now all believers share this complaint and verily it makes us sigh, not just in secret: we also cry out aloud that it is insufferable to see the world fallen to such a state of servitude that it is not even permitted that people inform themselves on matters of religion by good and lawful means, because those who call themselves prelates and who rule under that name do not allow people to utter one word that does not agree with what they have decided. To be brief, they do not allow people to doubt or examine [their decisions] in any manner whatsoever. Therefore one is justified in saying that it is exorbitantly cruel to protect by force and without investigating the matter a deluded religious monopoly that is not based on any fairness or reason.

Impossible to criticize Catholic errors

WOLFGANG MUSCULUS: You Catholics exclaim that the unity of the church has been rent, that the unity of the church should not have been divided

and that the people who belong to the church | and who used to be one <sup>24<sup>B</sup></sup>  
 are now torn apart. You also say that the schismatics who brought about  
 the breakup of the unity of the church are damnable, that one should not  
 tolerate them, and so on. What shall I say – you spew forth all this in  
 the manner of ill-advised people. We respond unto you that we do not <sup>5</sup>  
 break the unity of the believers in Christ but of the Babylonians who build  
 [their tower] against the Lord. Neither do we prevent the construction  
 of the true house of God, which is Christ’s church, but [we combat] the  
 towns and towers wherein the whore of Babylon has placed her seat. We  
 do not deny that we are schismatics and that we break up the unity of the <sup>10</sup>  
 Catholics. But it is with a pious and Christian intent that we disturb this  
 Babylonian concord.

Musculus  
 acknowledges  
 that he and his  
 coreligionists  
 are schismatics.

Calvin complains  
 that the Catholics  
 denounce him and  
 his coreligionists  
 as agitators

JOHN CALVIN: Is it not extremely wicked that they throw upon the Word  
 of God the hatefulfulness or the seditiousness that are caused by the evil and  
 the rebels, and with the sectarianism that is caused by deceivers? Yet such <sup>15</sup>  
 an example is not new. Elijah was asked if he was not the one who troubled  
 Israel. Christ was seditious in the eyes of the Jews, and the apostles were  
 charged with the crime of moving the people to sedition. What else do  
 they do who today blame us for all the troubles, riots and controversies  
 that well up against us? <sup>20</sup>

Beza complains  
 that the critics  
 of the Catholic  
 church are arrested

THEODORE BEZA: These days if someone is found to be so bold as to  
 speak – even if just a little – against the blasphemies of the Roman An-  
 tichrist, he will be apprehended immediately.

REFORMED DELEGATE: To them the Gospel is like a toxic fume that  
 searches the depth of people’s hearts and discovers their hypocrisy. That is <sup>25</sup>  
 why they falsely accuse us of being seditious and of disturbing the general  
 well-being, calling their own indulgence in all kinds of sins the “general  
 peace,” a peace from which they cannot stand to be raised.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: If it were the case, gentlemen, that the Roman Cath-  
 olic church with her doctrine and practices were indeed as godless and <sup>30</sup>  
 corrupt as you usually present and claim her to be, and if on the other  
 hand your Reformed church, doctrine and practices were indeed as saint-  
 ly and pure as you claim, as if this were beyond doubt and had already  
 been accepted, as if our church had been certifiably vanquished and

2 [In Gene. Cap. 11. Obser. 5]. {Musculus, *In Genesim*, chapter 11, obs. 5 (Basle, 1600),  
 p. 267}. 15 [Institut. Prefa. 11]. Calvin, *Institutes*, Prefatory Address to the King of France.  
 17 1 Kings 18:17. | Luke 23:5. 18 Acts 24:5. 23 [T. 201].

judged in a legitimate council, having been heard by impartial judges  
 accepted by both sides – if this were the case we would neither regard  
 nor reject your criticism, accusations, slander and denunciations as a dis-  
 turbance of the external peace of the church. However, this truly takes  
 5 the matter further on both sides than you perhaps intend to, for we are  
 not quite as black and filthy and you are in no way as simon pure and  
 24<sup>c</sup> clean as you pretend. This is the basis for master John Calvin's | first con-  
 tention, when he states that all religion has been maliciously perverted  
 by the papacy, that it has been protected by terror and that many peo-  
 10 ple were disgusted by this, so that many good folks hate all punishments  
 without discernment of whether they are justified or not. For in this con-  
 nection Calvin has to justify what he did in his punishment of Servetus,  
 who was burned alive for denouncing many aspects of Calvin's teachings.  
 That is why in Calvin's eyes Servetus was a disturber of the external peace  
 15 of the church. The *pièce de résistance* of his justification, giving the root  
 cause of the matter, went as follows: The papists, whose church and doc-  
 trine are false, unjustly and heinously persecute our church, which they  
 attack as if it were as false as theirs is. But we possess a true doctrine and  
 church and we therefore rightfully persecute all those – including Serve-  
 20 tus – who criticize our church or doctrine, and who thus show themselves  
 to be disturbers of the external peace of the church who deserve to be  
 punished. That this is the meaning of his statement is later clearly proven  
 in Calvin's words, where in his second assertion he complains about our  
 great wickedness because we accuse them of sedition and sectarianism.  
 25 He says that we throw upon the Word of God hatefulness, comparing  
 his deeds and those of his coreligionists in this regard with the deeds of  
 Elijah, Christ and the apostles who were charged with the crime of mov-  
 ing the people to sedition, just as we charge them. How so, dr. Calvin? Is  
 that not going a bit too far? Has your doctrine become the Word of God?  
 30 Are you on the same plane as Elijah, the apostles, indeed as Christ him-  
 self? We do indeed acknowledge and accept the Bible as God's Word, but  
 not your teachings, commentaries and glosses. Do you perhaps imagine  
 that everything you write is the Word of God? If so, then you would in-  
 35 deed be usurping God's sacred station, something of which you are wont  
 to accuse the popes. We also accept Elijah, the apostles and the Lord  
 Christ, but not you. For were this not so, we would not have subjected  
 you to punishment. Now we regard you as slanderers, blasphemers, se-  
 ducers and as people who truly trouble and tear apart the external peace

of the church. And wherever this is in our power we have you and your coreligionists prosecuted and punished. How, in doing this to you, do we commit an injustice? Can you deny that you trouble and upset the holy church? Can you deny that you are schismatics who bring division to the Roman church? Musculus himself frankly acknowledges this to be true, 5 but he says that he and you trouble the unity not of the Christian but of the Babylonian church. Where has this been legitimately proven? Nowhere. By acting this way, do you not place the execution before the trial, and pass a verdict before the parties have been legitimately heard? This you cannot deny. Leaving aside whether we are a false church – for we have 10 never been legally condemned as such-, | how can you deny that you have 24<sup>P</sup> completely disregarded due process and that, by wrongfully starting with the execution instead of the lawful examination of both parties you have no excuse whatsoever for your acts of disturbance and destruction of the external peace and concord of the church? 15

The Reformed start with the execution

These matters are so obvious and self-evident that it is impossible for you, learned men, not to know them. Or do you not know that one must hear a party first before giving a verdict? Or do you not know that one may not be prosecutor and judge in one and the same case? Or do you not know that you execute us before we have been condemned by law? 20 Who could imagine you to be so ignorant? Is this not the same thing of which you usually accuse us? If you suffer and believe that we treat you unjustly, then why do you do the same to us and to others? What else can we conclude from this than that in this you treat us with a bad conscience? If this is not the same as to sin willfully and with foreknowledge, then 25 what is it, for heaven's sake?

Beza's rule for knowing who sins deliberately

At this point I seem to remember that you yourself, dr. Beza, on the topic of the killing of heretics and blasphemers or of people who sin in a deliberate, knowing and premeditated fashion, judge such folks generally to deserve the death penalty. But to alleviate the harshness of your judgment of a person's heart and affection you determine or posit an eternal rule "whereby one may understand" (these are your own words) "when a person must be said to have sinned in a deliberate, knowing and premeditated fashion. Well, this rule serves as a common law for all peoples: because it is likely that each follows the religion in which he is born and 35 raised, therefore whoever says or does anything to destroy that (religion) must be regarded as one who does so in a deliberate, knowing and premeditated fashion." That is the rule that Beza himself establishes in this

matter, and we agree with him on this point, and we have already adhered to it long before him. For this [rule] makes us tolerate the Jews or the Turks who are outside the Roman church, without killing them for their blasphemies, errors or heresies. But by the same token we do kill  
 5 Christians who were born and raised in our faith.

Now let us examine if we deal fairly with you and your coreligionists (wherever we can get our hands on them), when we kill them as disturbers of the external peace of the church, as schismatics and heretics; or if we are unjust in doing this and are rightly denounced for it, especially by you  
 10 who have established this rule in which you agree with us. We must set aside for the moment your prejudice in regarding us as a false church and our doctrine as false while you regard your own church and doctrine as true and pure. For, as I said before, this has not yet been legally determined by any impartial judge. And let us suppose that you grant that we  
 15 are right in regarding ours as the true church and doctrine, the same way as you are right in considering yours as true. Seeing things this way we must proceed, judge and execute in this matter, as must you, seeing things  
 25<sup>4</sup> your way. Let me then ask you: Luther, Zwingli | and Oecolampadius, and also you, Calvin, Musculus, Beza and other Protestant ministers, were you  
 20 or were you not born and raised in our Roman Catholic religion? What will you answer? Would you not be forced to admit this? Assuming this to be true I further ask all of you whether or not you strive by words or by deeds, by writing books and by preaching, to destroy the Roman Catholic religion wherein you yourselves were born and raised? What else can you  
 25 say to this but yes? For each of you even boasts proudly about this. So I ask you if someone like that, someone born and raised in *your* religion, strove to destroy your doctrine, if you would not regard such a person as having sinned deliberately and with full knowledge and deserving to receive capital punishment? Based upon this rule of Beza's and since you  
 30 consider your church and doctrine to be true, you will have to say yes to this.

Therefore, since we hold our church and doctrine to be true and you all constantly try to destroy it despite having been born and raised in it, pray tell, what else can we do according to this rule of Beza himself which is the  
 35 same as our rule? What else but destroy you and your coreligionists who sin knowingly and deliberately in attempting to destroy the church, and cut you off as rotten members and cleanse our church of this contagious pest? If, according to your own rule, we act justly and legitimately when we do this, then you must admit this. Then you must also admit that you  
 40 unjustly and illegitimately accuse us of abominable tyranny. Could we,

According to Beza's teachings the Catholics are right in killing him and his coreligionists where they can get their hands on them

Catholics and also others, not be equally justified in complaining about the tyranny that *you* have started?

THEODORE BEZA: There is still a difference between you and us that you chose not to mention, for unlike us you persecute or kill all who criticize your doctrine, without exception. For the passage of my writings that you cited continues with the following words, left out by you: “For otherwise, if someone is entirely outside the church, that is if he is a foreigner or an unbeliever: for someone like that, although his godlessness and blasphemy will find no excuse before God, we have to leave the punishment up to God.” Those are also my words that you left out, according to your usual slanderous ways.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: I was not planning nor would I be able to cite here your entire book, dr. Beza, so I am in no way calumniating. After all, you know as well as we do (and I just said so myself!) that we do not kill Turks or Jews since they were not born nor raised in our church. And why should I only mention Turks and | Jews? In places ruled by Catholic authorities we do not kill Lutherans, Anglicans, members of the Eastern Orthodox church and others who were not born or raised in our church, since they are protected by the religious peace. So you were wrong in saying that we disagree on this point. But because of what you said every mature and prudent person had better think twice before joining your church, for he would then subject himself to your punishment of heretics and could later be killed by you if he changed his mind or came to his senses and criticized your doctrine or church! Then he would be a disturber of the external peace of your church and a blasphemer, indeed he would be someone who sins knowingly and deliberately and who ought, by your aforesaid rule, to be punished by death.

It is dangerous  
to join the  
Reformed church

HENRY BULLINGER: These are all no more than sophistries. There are many other differences between your cruel tyranny and our just punishments. You take pleasure in your miserable persecution of us. You are inhabitants of the earth who love the world and desire worldly things, and thus you are extremely bothered by the free preaching of the truth which you loathe deeply. For you crave the acquisition of riches and lascivious pursuits, or you strive to hold on to what you possess. Now you stand in fear of having these things reduced or taken away from you by this preaching. That is the reason why you want nothing more than to be rid of these

The Reformed call  
Catholics enemies  
of the truth

10 [T. 338]. 29 [In Apoc. Concio 47, fol. 146]. {Bullinger, *In Apocalypsim, conciones centum*, chapters 47 and 70}.

detractors and why you want to kill them right away, for that way you would be safe in the future and free to wallow in your luxury. It is for the same reason and due to the same advice that at Herodes' meal they did not ask for the kingdom or a lot of gold, but for the head of John the Baptist. Similarly today the popes would much rather have the heads of some ministers than a couple of thousand guilders. They call these ministers a pestilence, agitators, loudmouths and slanderers of God, his saints and all people. In spite of all this these ministers must earnestly preach the revelations of God that pertain to God's honor and the salvation of souls, no matter how much the world forbids and punishes this.

The Reformed complain about the cruelty of the Catholics; Catholic invective against Reformed ministers

Those who believe that through placards, fire and the sword they can prevent those who preach loudly against the Antichrist had better pay attention to this. Those fools will be deceived. They have been struggling for six hundred years or more, but no one, no matter how cruel his rage, has been able to suppress the preaching.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: If slander, vituperations and bitter calumnies could offer solid and clear proof, then I would have to acknowledge that dr. Henry Bullinger has proven his proposition solidly and clearly. | But far be it from that. For speaking sarcastically does not prove a point, but speaking truthfully does. But why should we dispute any longer about this issue? As I see it, you, the Reformed, and we Catholics are undoubtedly in agreement on this: that we should hold on to all those who were born and raised in our religion and that we should punish as disturbers of the external peace of the church, as schismatics, and as folks who sin knowingly and deliberately those who speak against the aforesaid religion and strive to destroy it. It does not matter that you regard your church and we regard our church and doctrine as being true and judge all others to be false: in the meantime each of us must satisfy our respective consciences in taking pains, within our own church, to punish these disturbers of the external peace of the church physically so others will be deterred and the calm of the church maintained. And I deeply appreciate that in the final end necessity and experience have taught you as well as us that without the protection by the magistrate against such disturbers, critics and schismatics in the church the external and visible church of God would inevitably be ruined and disappear.

The Reformed agree with the Catholics that the visible church would disappear if the magistrate did not protect her with his sword.

GAMALIEL: Esteemed gentlemen, I daresay that in your discussion of this topic neither of you is entirely free from misunderstanding. I mean that I cannot regard either side to be entirely free from an unwillingness to allow others humbly to uncover, show and indicate their errors. You both know

best your own reasons for not wanting to hear this criticism, but I hope it is not for fear of losing honor, advantage or pleasure. But although you both may be wrong in not wanting to suffer criticism, I consider the error on the Reformed's part greater than that on the part of the Catholics. For the latter believe – if they are right, only God knows – that their church 5 cannot err in any way. If this were indeed true then the Catholics would have no reason to listen to someone's criticism for their own improvement, considering that one cannot justly nor successfully reproach the irrefragable, to wit those who do not err nor are able to err.

It is a different matter with you, the Reformed. You, the Reformed, vehemently denounce the Catholics' claim that the church cannot err, since you believe that the true church may indeed err, as became amply clear in our first session. This appears to lead to the inevitable conclusion that your church may err, even if she were the true one. If she can err, then in her erring she stands in need of criticism. If this is the case, then it is 15 astounding that you make such an effort to have the magistrate prohibit criticism of your doctrine, for in so doing you take away from your church the means for and shut the door to her improvement, should she commit any error. It is more likely that someone will dare to point out your errors to you if this can be done freely, | than if such critics be regarded as dis- 25<sup>D</sup> turbors of the external peace of your church and you have them punished by the magistrate with fines, incarceration or physical punishment.

It could be that in doing this you harbor another, hidden intention, since you understand that it is in people's nature to be most inclined to do what they have been forbidden, to the extent that it seems as if to prohibit an action is the same as commanding performance of the same. 25 And it could be that you hope that by issuing such a ban on criticism of your doctrine you would be criticized that much harder and sharper for the errors your church may be guilty of than would be case were you to allow free criticism. Such an intent would be laudable, but it does not 30 seem likely that this is the case, especially not for you. For you did not shrink from criticizing the Catholic church, a church of such high authority and renown, with frankness, ridicule, scorn and bitterness. And not only that, but you slandered her; not only did you denounce her, but you condemned her, indeed you execrated her and you damned her as 35 the church of the Antichrist. For anyone can easily see that it is not right that you, who have just emerged and have not gained much respectability anywhere yet, do not wish to tolerate that your own errors be treated the way you treat and have treated the errors of such a church. In any case, we have only one of two choices: either your church is false or true. If she 40

be false, then you commit a gross error in not wanting to submit to true criticism and in wanting to promote a false church by force. But if she be a true church, then according to your own teachings she may err and thus rightfully be subject to criticism.

5 But let us suppose for a moment that [your church] resides here on earth as a pure bride of Christ, without any spot or wrinkle – something which you deem impossible and even contest sharply. In that case your church is either already victorious on earth or she is still fighting. If you assume that your church is already victorious while she is still encamped  
10 against her enemies, and if you already claim victory even before the battle is over and claim that she enjoys such external peace that the ploughs are beaten into plowshares and that the sheep and the wolf feed together, then you err grievously in all your books that usually claim just the opposite. Then you are deceiving yourselves and dream up a false peace.  
15 Is this not so? And if on the other hand your church is still a fighting church, then you must naturally have enemies against whom the church herself will struggle and fight – rather than having the magistrate fight for a wealthy, idle and lazy church. Otherwise you are deceiving yourselves miserably, trying dangerously to put yourselves at ease while you  
20 are besieged by your enemies. You would perhaps dare to do this because you count on using the magistrate – whom you regard as your foster father – as your protector and protagonist who will, with a sword made of steel, destroy your invisible enemies, be they lies, falsity or heresy. But if you are the true church and want to destroy the fortresses, thwart the  
25 attacks and bring down all those who raise themselves up against the knowledge of God, and if you want to make captives of all human ingenuities by the obedience of Christ, what weapons could then be more  
26<sup>4</sup> useful or necessary to you than the power of God? | If in this spiritual battle you rely on the magistrate's worldly weapons, then for what reason,  
30 I ask you, do you still need the Bible, being the written, nay the living Word of God and a two-edged sword, to destroy the aforementioned enemies of God, to wit all ingenuity etc.? And would this not be likely to prepare the way for a false peace and reckless carelessness, and for the abandonment of all studies? [Would it not lead] to Epicurean ease,  
35 comfortable and luxurious, because in relying on the steel sword of the magistrate one no longer has to bother with studying, disputing and writing against the enemies of truth? Do you believe that in doing this you

6 Ephesians 5:27. 12 Isaiah 2:4. | Isaiah 65:25. 28 2 Corinthians 10: 4–5. 31 Hebrews 4:12.

would be regarded as, let alone really be, sincere knights of Christ in the church of Christ, which is his army? Would you thus not be handing over the sheep who were placed in your care to others, and therefore be much more like false mercenaries than like true shepherds? And finally, could pursuing this path lead anywhere else but back to the old corruption that you have lamented so much and are still lamenting today?

It is not from the magistrate's political hands but from the hands of the prophets that God will demand the souls that have fallen into the sword foreseen by the prophet, but of which he has failed to warn them. It is a fight of faith, and a good fight, whose captains are not the councilors or the mayors, not the princes or lords, but the ministers and teachers who received their mandate not from an emperor or a king but from God and Christ. It is from Him that they expect, after striving lawfully, the crown of joy and honor.

JEZONIAS: The matter discussed here is of great importance, as are many of the other points under discussion. And I see little difference – in fact none whatsoever – between the Roman Catholics and the Reformed on the issue at hand. For the Reformed as well as the Catholics are unwilling to tolerate any criticism of their doctrine and church and they both regard all those who do such a thing as disturbers of the external peace of their church. They urge the civil magistrate to punish such [disturbers] by means of fines, imprisonment or even physical punishment. The only point on which they disagree is that each regard their doctrine and church as being true and all other doctrines and churches as false and heretical. That is why both parties hold that only their church, being the true one, and no other church, has the right to punish, corporally or otherwise, all those who criticize and disturb them as schismatics and disturbers of the external peace of the church. The Catholics regard Luther, Zwingli, Karlstadt, Calvin, Beza and all others as such [disturbers]. The latter in their turn regard all their critics as such, although they do acknowledge that they themselves are critics and indeed disturbers of the doctrine and peace of the Roman church – but they see the latter as a false doctrine and church. [They claim] that the Roman Catholics persecute them wrongfully, because like Elijah, the apostles, and indeed Christ they tell the truth and lay bare before the people the shameful errors of the Catholics. They

10 [Ezekiel 3:17–18; Ezekiel 33: 6–8]. 11 [1 Timothy 1:18; 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 4:7]. 14 [2 Corinthians 6: 4–7; 2 Timothy 2:3]. 15 [2 Timothy 2:5].

complain loudly about this [persecution], presenting it as violence and unlawful detention.

The Catholics state that the Reformed do the same things themselves, as can be seen clearly in the latter's own writings. They accuse the Reformed that now that they have attained a position of power they do to others that about which they complained so bitterly before when it was done to them.

But Gamaliel does not agree with either of them, for he feels that both are ill-advised in refusing to tolerate anyone's criticism and in having those who criticize punished as disturbers of the external peace of the church. He especially criticizes the Reformed, since they themselves teach that a true church may err – the Catholics deny this.

And with that we will end this discussion for now. My lord, president Daniel, will be able to review all that we discussed and pass his judgment, once he has returned.



*Those Whose Teachings Differ from the  
Teachings of the Church, and Whether  
They Ought to be Punished by Death*

- 5 Participants: Jezonias, Catholic Delegate, Theodore Beza, Reformed Delegate, John Calvin, Gamaliel

JEZONIAS: Each of you, gentlemen, knows all too well that, unfortunately, many different opinions are spread among the people. Likewise you all know that each of those opinions has its teachers who promote them in  
10 secret, and now also in public. If all or some of you, gentlemen, know how such evil can be successfully eradicated, I would welcome it, for this is what our president has told us to deliberate on: whether the best way to prevent this be that all those who teach differently shall be killed by the magistrate's sword, or not.

- 15 CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Is it necessary to make such a matter into a topic for discussion? Or have people already forgotten what the Council of Trent has decided against this? If we continue like this, we will reach a point where we will even question whether it be permitted to allow murderers to murder innocent people! Or is it deemed less harmful that mortal  
26<sup>c</sup> bodies be murdered temporarily, | than that immortal souls are murdered forever? If you wish to know my view of the matter, read the [acts of the] aforesaid Council of Trent. You will find there that in general all those who teach differently are condemned. Condemned or anathematized are all those who teach differently from the church on original sin, justification, free will, obedience, the seven sacraments and so on. Whoever  
25 teaches other than that by God's grace through Christ the guilt of original sin is forgiven and entirely removed, but says instead that this sin is only curtailed and not imputed, is condemned. Whoever teaches other than

The Catholic church condemns all who teach differently

25 [Sess. 5. Art. 5]. The following articles are taken from the acts of the Council of Trent. See *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent: Original Text with English Translation* trans. H.J. Schroeder (St. Louis, MO/London: B. Herder Book Co., 1941; fourth printing, 1960).

that man himself has to work for his justification; whoever teaches other than that man's free will was not lost after Adam's sin; or other than that a justified person is able to keep God's commandments; or other than that there are no more nor fewer than seven sacraments; or other than that the sacrament of the altar contains truly, essentially and independently 5 the body and blood as well as the soul and divinity of Jesus Christ and therefore the entire Christ; or who teaches other than that it is not necessary that each believer receive the sacrament of the altar in both forms; or who teaches other than that during the mass a true and real sacrifice is made to God, and so on, are all likewise condemned. The church openly 10 condemns all those who teach differently on these matters as heretics.

Now we know that all Christians are only the foster parents and protectors of the church, so that it is really their duty to seek God's honor above all else, even if it imperils countries and people. After all, all princes and authorities are likewise bound to protect the church, promote her 15 tranquility and promote God's honor as well as the salvation of their subjects. Now the holy church cannot err and has already decided that all the things contained in the aforementioned as well as in the other acts of the council are the true doctrine, redounding to God's honor and to man's salvation. What other conclusion can then be drawn from this than that 20 all civil authorities have the duty to promote and protect our aforesaid doctrine? How can they achieve this unless they act against and remove all those who teach differently and who have already been anathematized and condemned as heretics by the holy church? For thus they also remove teaching that deviates from what the holy church teaches. Or is it in vain 25 that we make the laws forbidding anyone to teach differently? Or does the magistrate carry the sword in vain? I do not think so. Neither do I believe that Dr. Beza, who is present in person, will contradict me, since I read his writings and those of his coreligionists which likewise regard all those whose teaching deviate from theirs as heretics. 30

THEODORE BEZA: Name me one that recommends that all heretics should be | killed, or a passage proving that it pleased the author to regard as 26<sup>D</sup> heretics all those whose opinion differed from his. If you cannot do this, then aren't you in truth a devil for thus calumniating, against your conscience, folks who are quite innocent? 35

1 [Ses. 6. can. 9]. 3 [ses. 6. can. 18]. 7 [ses. 7. can. 1; Ses. 21. ca. 1]. 8 [Ses. 22. ca. 1].  
33 [T. 331].

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: The day of judgment will show how innocent you are. Hurling invective is not the same as offering real proof. I did not say that you want all heretics to be killed. But it is well-known how you want those who are, in your judgment, heretics to be treated: they should be  
 5 punished by death. Anyone who has perused the book you wrote on this topic knows this for sure, in passages that include pages 150, 156, 170, 390, 391, 417, etc. Why should I mention others who are not here? You, dr. Beza, are the person who deem all those who stubbornly deviate in their teaching from what your church teaches to be heretics and there-  
 10 fore deserving of death. You cannot deny this without denying your own books.

THEODORE BEZA: And even if this were so, then what do you conclude from that?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Alright. You will hear my conclusion in a moment.  
 15 But first, please tell me whether or not you consider your teachings and those of your master Calvin to be the only healthy and true doctrine?

THEODORE BEZA: Does the doctor doubt this? Or does he imagine that against our conscience we teach as true what we consider to be false?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Many in our church do indeed harbor this sus-  
 20 picion about you. But let us forget about that. Since you consider your doctrine and that of your master to be right, you also consider all those who teach differently from you to be teaching falsely. Does it not follow that all who continue to do this, after having been twice or thrice admon-  
 25 ished by you, are heretics who, in accord with your doctrine, also must be killed?

THEODORE BEZA: Where do we teach that all heretics must be killed?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Do you not teach openly from Moses that today, in the realm of Christ, we should also kill all those who urge or try to persuade others to serve strange gods?

30 THEODORE BEZA: Why not? Does the Holy Scripture not teach this explicitly?

27<sup>A</sup> CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Do you yourself not call such persuasion and enticement rebellion or apostasy?

7 References to Beza, *T.A.M.* 10 [T. 391; 26–28]. 24 Titus 3:10. 31 [Deuteronomy 13; T. 342]. Deuteronomy 13:6–9; 17:2–7.

THEODORE BEZA: Certainly, and it is the truth!

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: You write further that those who interpret Holy Scripture differently lead people away from the true worship of God and incite them to serve strange gods.

THEODORE BEZA: Those are not just my words, they are the words of the apostle himself who expresses this with the words: “teach no other doctrine”

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: And you say further that according to this law (Deuteronomy 13) magistrates today must punish similar capital crimes in their territory.

THEODORE BEZA: Yes, I said so, based on God’s word.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: How do you think such a capital crime – to wit, urging others to serve strange gods, which you say is the same as teaching different doctrine – ought to be punished? Should it be done with the steel sword of Moses, that is the sword of the civil magistrate? Or with the sword of the mouth of Christ and his disciples, that is the sword of truth?

THEODORE BEZA: I will gladly affirm that the princes do not do as they should unless they observe these laws of God and follow them. Even if the type of punishment is not exactly the same, then at least it must be the same level of punishment. This means that, in accord with God’s precepts, they will ordain against the sects who are guilty of apostasy and division a form of capital punishment that fits the ugliness of this crime and blasphemy. For all people should at all times keep the majesty of God in such honor that whoever mocks it and thus mocks the Author of life is deemed to deserve to die a violent death. Lo, that is what I say and I gladly dare to shout it aloud, because it is based on God’s truth and on the testimony of my conscience.

Beza teaches that apostates who create sects ought to be killed.

The consequence of Beza’s teachings is that all heretics who teach differently from him ought to suffer physical death

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Your own words, dr. Beza, clearly show that you regard only your doctrine as true. By the same token you regard all who teach differently from you as folks who urge people | to serve strange gods.

And you further see it as the duty of all princes to punish all such apostates or idolators by death. This again makes it patently clear that your teaching involves the physical killing of all heretics whose teachings deviate from your teachings. Try to refute my conclusion if you can or have the wits.

Distinction between civil and ecclesiastical authorities

5 REFORMED DELEGATE: Does our esteemed doctor think this strange? After all, it is the duty of the magistrate to punish the external man with an external punishment, meaning that those who disturb the external peace of the church should be punished by imprisonment, corporal punishment, or fines.

The Reformed teach that all disturbers of the external peace of the church ought to be imprisoned, killed, or fined.

10 CATHOLIC DELEGATE: No, we do not think that strange, for on this point you agree with us and follow in our footsteps. For you borrowed the idea that all heretics – at least those who disseminate their heresies, create sects and sow discord – ought to be killed from us. Did I not just prove from his own words that this is dr. Beza’s view? You must all be aware of the fact

The Catholics teach the same

15 that this has for a long time been our view as well, as is attested by our actions. For many years we have maintained that if someone’s teachings are different from the teachings of our church or if someone misinterpret the Bible, that person is urging others to follow strange gods. The teachers of old also agree with that view, including Vincent of Lerins who says

Teaching differently is incitement to follow strange gods

20 the following: “The Old Testament used to make allegorical reference to new teachings as ‘strange gods’”. And Augustine writes on the same topic: “There is a worse and more profound form of idolatry with which one serves one’s fantasies and maintains under the guise of religion all that one has proudly and arrogantly imagined in one’s erring heart.” Jerome writes

New teachings are strange gods

25 likewise that not only the things made by the artist’s hand are what is intended when the pagan statues made of gold and silver wrought by human hands are rightfully called idols. Also intended are the false teachings of the heretics that turn anything they can conjure up into an idol and that make people worship the Antichrist instead of Christ. And again Vincent of Lerins says, with regard to the text, “‘Let us go after other gods’ – which

30 you have not known – ‘and let us serve them,’” the following: “What else are these strange gods but strange errors that you did not use to know? What else but new errors never heard before, that we are told to serve, meaning: to believe and follow them?”

4 [Ar. 10]. 21 [H. 65.b]. {Vincent of Lerins, *Commonitorium* I:10; P.L. 50 c. 650. The passage is cited in Hosius, *Confutatio* II, 469}. 24 {Quoted in Hosius, *Confutatio*, 469}. 29 {Jerome, quoted *ibid.*}. 31 Deuteronomy 13:2. 34 {Vincent of Lerins, P.L. 50, 650–651; and Hosius, *Confutatio* 469–470}.

Thus you see that you, the Reformed, wholeheartedly agree with us, Catholics, on this point, for we both hold that to teach differently from what the church teaches is the same as idolatry, and also that the authorities should punish such idolatry by death. So can anyone, including the Protestants, blame us for exhorting the princes to kill the heretics? And by this is meant: kill you, the Reformed, as well as the Zwinglians | whom we regard as some of the worst heretics. For you cannot deny that your teachings deviate from the teachings of the holy church, and not just on one but on many points. Therefore you are leading the people not to just one but to many strange gods, opinions and errors. And we would like you to consider whether it would not be our duty to kill you who are gathered here, had you not come here under safe-conduct or if we were to apply the decree to you that states that one does not have to keep one's word if it is given to heretics.

REFORMED DELEGATE: How would you like it, doctor, if we were to apply a similar decree to you? If we were to break our promises and perjure ourselves? If we were to disregard seals or letters and violate our oaths as we see fit? I do not like anything that you propose. And the theologian Cyprian would not like it either, if he were here. We see this, among other passages, in his preface to the council held in Carthage, where he writes as follows: "Furthermore it is required that each of us state frankly how we feel in this matter, without condemning or excommunicating those who feel differently, for there is no one among us who claims to be a bishop of bishops, or who lords it over his fellows like a tyrant and forces them to obey him."

Saintly forebears  
of the Reformed

What is needed is a Christian colloquy. If that is impossible, then let us follow in the footsteps of our saintly forebears, such as Luther, Zwingli, Oecolampadius, Capito, Bucer, Melancthon, Peter Martyr, Bullinger and Calvin, who considered this manner of proceeding to be based on fairness, and let both sides consult with each other in a peaceful and moderate fashion. And in the meantime let good and wise folks make sure that we manage to suffer and tolerate one another until the time when the Lord will have opened our eyes.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: You addressed these gentle words to the Lutherans in Germany, where they are in power and were planning to expel your coreligionists from the land.

14 This refers to the Catholic precept of *haereticis non servanda fides*, which was used at the Council of Constance (1415) against John Hus. 25 [S.d.d. fol. 17; 19].

JOHN CALVIN: What our brother, the Reformed delegate, said just now has also been my view, quite unlike what the Catholic delegate proposed earlier. If anyone but dare open his mouth to oppose the Catholics, he will be condemned as a heretic, since there is no appeal from the decision of  
 5 the church. No one is at liberty to doubt whether their interpretation is true. But why should I continue about such shamelessness? Just to have pointed it out means to have defeated it.

27<sup>D</sup> | REFORMED DELEGATE: If no one is allowed to teach differently without thereby being a heretic or an idolator punishable by death, then who does  
 10 not see that we would have to be such not only for Catholics, but also for the Lutherans? For we do not regard the Augsburg Confession as the Gospel itself, nor Luther to be the man by whose preferred and prescribed rules our faith should be examined and tested!

THEODORE BEZA: But would this kind of boundless freedom not be su-  
 15 preme wickedness, when everybody is permitted to believe and teach whatever they like and fancy?

Beza considers it unlimited freedom if we allow everyone to teach and learn what they like.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: You are absolutely right, dr. Beza. In this you fully agree with us, although we disagree about whose church is the true one, the one against whose opinion and doctrine no one is allowed to believe  
 20 or teach. For as you say that you have the true doctrine and church, we say that we have them.

The Roman Catholics agree

REFORMED DELEGATE: Just as we disagree on this point with you, we also disagree on the same with the Confessionalists or Lutherans. Surely, un-  
 25 less they have been totally deprived of reason they must realize that this is the intent of our common enemies, some among whom are very powerful. Until now they have persecuted our community and things have gone so far that through the ministrations of the Lutherans no one will be allowed to reside in the Empire except for the papists and those who subscribe to the *Bergisches Buch*. Then, trusting and relying on the armed  
 30 force of the Empire, they will try to banish all those who do not agree with the Lutherans from the Empire. But do I need to tell you how many people there are who are unable to accept Lutheran doctrine, and not only among those who are drawn to Zwingli's teachings, but even among those who subscribe to the Augsburg Confession? Should things reach  
 35 the point that the princes, accepting the counsel of the Lutheran leaders,

The Reformed do not want to be banished by the Lutherans.

7 Calvin, *Institutes*, bk. IV, ch. 9:14. 13 [S.d.d. 65]. 16 [T. 287]. 29 On the *Bergisches Buch* (1580), see the eighth Session, note 196, and the Glossary. 31 [S.d.d. 89].

will be inclined to follow their unfortunate advice and seek to drive out by force all the aforementioned, then a fool can see how all of Germany, their fatherland, would go up in flames in a devastating and horrific civil war. If that happens, should we not regard Jacob Andrea as a second Paris, since he would so cruelly torch the body of his own mother and bring such a fire and perdition to all of Germany? And even if those enemies of the Gospel were able by their actions to attain victory without bloodshed, | of what benefit do they think these attacks by such shameless people would be to them? Who will be able to put to rest their senseless plan? Especially when they realize that it is much easier to attack us when we are divided and scattered than if all of Germany would bundle her forces to avert such a disaster.

GAMALIEL: Oh, if only God would make everyone realize how hurtful it is when we make others suffer what we do not want to suffer ourselves from others! If this were the case, everyone would kindly tolerate his neighbor and not be a cause of sorrow and suffering, especially in religious matters. When the Catholic's doctrine is criticized, he will accept this from nobody and will cause such critics trouble and suffering. Likewise the Lutheran refuses to tolerate anyone from another confession. Again, complaints are heard about this from the Reformed who in their turn do not wish to suffer anyone's criticism. If people persist in this, what else can result from it all but a new conflagration of civil war, of Babylonian confusion and internecine Midianite killing? Where the Catholics have the magistrate on their side and forbid the Lutherans and the Reformed to teach a doctrine that differs from theirs, they turn the latter into their mortal enemies. Have we not seen ample proof of this in our times in Germany and France, and indeed in the Netherlands also? And why, we wonder, should it be any different for the two others? Would not the Lutherans, in forbidding any teaching except their own, make the Reformed be up in arms against them? This is what the Reformed delegate himself said just now. And do the Reformed imagine that when in this country they forbid the Lutherans and Catholics to teach a doctrine different from their own, using the power of the magistrate to keep them from doing so, they can expect anything else from the Catholics and Lutherans but revolt and rebellion? Verily, if they imagine that, they will in the end find themselves deceived, just as the Catholics find themselves deceived today. The people have yearned immensely for freedom of conscience, and most of them

4 Jacob Andrea was one of the chief authors of the *Bergisches Buch*. 23 Judges 7:15-22.

have paid dearly for it with the blood of their father, brother, mother, sister, cousin or friend, not to mention their material losses. Should we therefore not be concerned that they will resent it if that sweet freedom is taken from them? Or is conscience not constrained when someone who  
 5 sees errors creep into the teachings of the church has to keep silent and thus harm his conscience, or in speaking out has to risk his life?

But let us take a closer look at the topic we are discussing here: this teaching of different doctrine and what this entails. Whoever teaches differently from the teachings of the church with which he differs, imagines  
 10 or knows that that church errs grievously. Therefore the law of nature presses him to let others know about this in order to prevent the eternal  
 28<sup>B</sup> destruction of their soul. After all, | for the same reason and belief he may not shirk from warning the magistrate of the same, in writing or otherwise. What does he have to lose? It is the same as when someone who  
 15 knows that the enemy is preparing ambushes to take a city by surprise tells the citizens and magistrates about it. Is it not clear that to remain quiet can also get you into trouble? Is it not the silence for fear of punishment by the authorities that brought down the city of Amicla, as the saying goes? But how can the criticism of doctrine be harmful or pernicious? For the criticism is either based on lies or on the truth. If lies, then  
 20 how hard can it be for the church to put these lies to shame with her truth, and thus to show clearly their falsity? Thus they will no longer be able to deceive anyone except those who want to be deceived, for we consider the omnipotent truth to be stronger than vain and insignificant lies. Is that  
 25 not a stronger, safer and more pious way of preventing such false teaching than if one use the power of the magistrate?

But even if one were to mislead the magistrate in this matter and get him to agree to act this way, then it is still very unlikely that the magistrate will be able to prevent the clandestine teaching of different doctrine. I  
 30 think we in the Netherlands are not very likely to find a ruler who is more powerful and more zealous in this matter than emperor Charles v was, or the kings Francis I and Henry II in France were. Each in their own country endeavored to the utmost of their power and wit, and with inhuman cruelty and bloodshed, to prevent that anyone taught differently

Causes of deviant teaching

To keep silent is at times ruinous to the country; no harm can come from criticizing the church.

Whether the magistrate is able to suppress dissident teaching

19 Amyclae is mentioned in Virgil's *Aeneid* as "mute Amyclae": Virgil, *Aeneid*. Trans. E. Fairfax Taylor (ed. Ernest Rhys; accessed on line <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18466/18466-h/18466-h.htm#book10line685>), bk. 10 LXXVII, 688, note: "'Mute Amyclae' received its name because, due to earlier false alarms, the inhabitants had been forbidden to warn of the approach of the enemy, owing to false alarms, to speak of the approach of an enemy."

from the doctrine of the Catholic church. Did they succeed in preventing this? We all know that dissident teaching did not stop. Then at least did they, by fire, sword, noose, and drowning somewhat lessen that deviant teaching? On the contrary, this resulted in its increase instead, and such fire fighting turned out to be like putting oil on the fire. These princes, who were more powerful and more zealous than we can expect to see again, were utterly unable to prevent this deviant teaching at a time when it was first started by Luther, Zwingli and some others, when the numbers were still small and people had never experienced the freedom and permission to do this. Then who can think, let alone believe, that princes today who are much less powerful and have less authority, can prevent it, considering that the dissidents have grown enormously in number and have already tasted the freedom and public permission to teach differently?

But now let us suppose that we succeed in preventing the public teaching of deviant doctrine without revolt in the streets. Who will be able to keep them from doing it in secret? Public dissidence in doctrine can be confronted publicly, either by publishing books, or by preaching, by admonishments of each dissident and by other means, thus warning the people against seductive lies. But if this deviant teaching occur in secret and in silence, then who can apply any remedy | to it? How will we know who teaches what harmful doctrine? What advice can we give for unknown diseases? None whatsoever.

Thus far what I spoke applied to one scenario, in which the deviant doctrine that is being preached is a lie. But in case the deviant doctrine is true, and the lie is in the church, then what of this prohibition on teaching differently? Aren't those in the Reformed as well as in the Roman church who teach the people humans themselves? Can these humans not err? The Roman Catholics on their part say that they cannot err, but the apostle on the other hand says they can. The apostle must be believed rather than the Roman Catholic claim. After all, experience has shown us this clearly in the Jewish church, which must be considered to have been God's true church at the time when she killed Christ and erred so murderously. Catholics and Reformed alike acknowledge this. Thus when these people who can err and often do err, err grossly on some point, they would be openly teaching their errors in the church. Now if we want to suppress this teaching that differs from that of the church, then all sincere and learned theologians, seeing these errors, would have to remain silent. They would have to teach exactly as the erring church teaches and refrain from crit-

When the church errs in her doctrine, it is necessary and salutary to teach differently.

icizing the erring teachers of the church regarding their errors. My dear, tell me: would this not lead to the persistence, growth and maintenance of error? For if someone spoke up against it, that is if someone taught differently, they would banish or arrest him or give him corporal punishment as a disturber of the external peace of the church. Would that be right? Should such a faithful messenger and one who warns his fellow citizens against fire be rewarded with physical punishment? No, someone will say, we will first order him once or several times to be quiet, and only then, if he does not obey, will we punish him physically as a disturber of the external peace of the church. Oh really? Then you would be doing the same as Jezebel. She acted this way, and so did all the persecutors and murderers of the true prophets of God. They themselves were the disturbers of the church, as Elijah rightfully responded to the disturber Ahab, and it is at the hands of such disturbers that the faithful shepherds of the church found themselves slandered and killed as disturbers.

But how, in good conscience, could a faithful, God-fearing person endowed with the means to discover such harmful errors, when he sees the teachers stray and preach lies to the people, remain silent? Should he not answer the magistrate who issues such a tyrannical prohibition, with the apostles: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge.”? “We cannot refrain from such accurate, useful and frank admonishment and want to be of service to you even if you don’t want us to.” Now let us confront someone like that with you, the Reformed, who, not yet being free of error, have the nerve to forbid the teaching of deviant doctrine. What could he say in answer to such prohibition? First of all, he would be quite justified in saying the following: “When you imagined or knew that the pope and the Catholics erred, did you keep silent? | They made the teaching of different doctrine punishable by death. Did that deter you? No. Instead you denounced them as tyrants for punishing with such a prohibition, worthy of a Nero! Now do you want to do the same to others? Others, I say, who, in spite of your claim that your doctrine is pure, are just as unable to believe this as you erstwhile were unable to believe the Catholics when they said the same?” Something similar could be said to the Catholics who also started out being persecuted rather than persecutors, although they now seem to have forgotten this. But for the other side the memory is still too fresh to now be doing the same to others.

Correct me if I am wrong, but for this and many other reasons related to this issue, I consider this prohibition to teach differently from the doctrine of any church that has the magistrate on her side to be manifest tyranny against the pious. It leads to a harmful hardening in error by the church herself, and is a vain and useless effort that is unable to prevent such deviant teaching. It is a dangerous spark that can ignite the internal fire of revolt and murder, and the only gate through which, should it be opened, the enemy can enter the land and subject us to a worse subjugation and a heavier burden than we have ever had to carry, and make us into the most miserable slaves. May God prevent this. Amen.

JEZONIAS: On this as on all the other issues there is disagreement. For the Catholics say that deviant teaching ought in no wise to be tolerated, and prove their point based on the decrees from their councils, and on the office of a Christian prince which in their view consists of being the foster parents and protectors of the church. The Reformed vehemently denounced this view and therefore complained loudly about the Catholics, the same way that they lately complain about the Lutherans in Germany. But now, in places where they have attained to power, they in their turn do not want to suffer the same from others. This equally displeases Gamaliel who says that if no one is willing to suffer that others teach differently, they will ultimately have to suffer mutual attacks and their common perdition. He says that if one is not allowed to teach differently, this also is constraint of conscience to which the people, who deeply loathe this, will in no way want to once again be subjected. He further asserts that there is no way to prevent that deviant doctrine be taught in secret, which is much more harmful and more incurable than if it happens openly. If those who teach differently are correct, then the truth ought not be resisted, and if they are not, it is easy to resist the lie with the truth.

When he arrives the president will easily be able to understand all this from what the secretary has recorded. He will diligently peruse the notes and weigh the two sides, in order to bring this to an appropriate conclusion.

*Whether or not We Should Dispute  
with Those Who Teach Differently*

Participants: Jezonias, Catholic Delegate, Reformed Delegate, Theodore  
5 Beza, Gamaliel

JEZONIAS: Nowadays we find many different opinions, and everyone tries to prove with Holy Scripture that their opinions are right. This is especially true for those who have not yet gained power. But those who have attained power, considering their cause to have been sufficiently proven,  
10 do not want to risk opening it for debate and subjecting it to someone's judgment. This is why they say that enough time has been spent on disputations and that more disputations ought not be permitted. The others in turn complain about this, saying that this way a judgment is made in a case without all parties having been heard. That is why we here propose  
15 the question whether or not we should allow anyone who teaches differently from what the church teaches to engage the church in disputation.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: When one engages in a disputation, one appears to be in doubt whether one's religion is right. We are one hundred per cent sure that our religion is right. That is why we should not allow this  
20 or that person to say that their religion is right, nor that they compare it with ours, nor that these folks dispute against our religion. For in our religion there is no "yes" and "no," which is the basis of all disputations. There is only a "yes" that is a "yes" and a "no" that is a "no." Those who belong to new religions were condemned a long time ago as heretics with  
25 whom one should not enter into disputation. When will there ever be an end to the arguments over doctrine if we allow every common man once again to question what has already been decided by the councils? For it is a well-known fact that the heretics do not acquiesce in nor are satisfied with the decrees of the lawful councils and that they again want  
30 to debate matters that have been determined by those councils. Not only

do the Lutherans do this in our times, but other heretics already did the same in the old days, especially the Arians. But what do the church histories tell us about them? When those with whom the Nicene synod had already dealt desired that they could again debate the issue, the pious fathers decided that they ought to be satisfied with the decrees of the synod of Nicea and that they should not out of curiosity put the same matter up for debate again. Listen to what the great Athanasius also says about this matter. “No one,” he says, “will deny that it is useless to question again what has been accepted, decided and clearly instituted by so many eminent bishops, so that all the same issues will not again be examined and judged, and then again be examined, and again, with no end to such curiosity.” His contemporary Hilary agreed, saying: “To seek for the things that have already been revealed, to redo the things that are already perfect, and to doubt what has already been decided: what else is this but to be unthankful for the gifts we have received, what else but the evil desires of a lethal cupidity reaching for the fruit of the forbidden tree?” And, so you will not think that only the popes felt this way, listen further to what the emperors of the time thought of this. We have the edict of emperor Valentinian, and also that of his colleague Marcian wherein he ordains that everyone should uphold the decrees of the council of Chalcedon, using these words: “Let therefore the religious quarrels end. For he who, after the decision by so many priests, still clings to a dissenting view that he wants to discuss is truly wicked and brings harm to the church. For it is the utmost folly still to look for artificial light in the middle of a bright day. For everyone who keeps on searching after the truth has been found is looking for lies, for he attacks the judgment of the most holy synod. This also goes for him who dares to stir up and openly dispute once again what has already been judged and decided.” Then he forbids the further disputation of these matters, and threatens punishment.

Now let us suppose that another Servetus or Campanus arises on your side and spreads the word among the community that our doctrine does not accord with Holy Scripture, then should we hold a new council because of that? If so, when will this doubting ever end? What part of our faith will be safe and sound? For all these reasons I conclude that we should absolutely not re-enter into disputations on matters of faith with those whose teachings differ from those of the Holy Church.

28 {The preceding passages are from Hosius, *Confutatio* II, 458, with regard to the councils of Nicea (325) and of Chalcedon (451)}. 30 Like Servetus, the Lutheran John Campanus (d. 1575) was an anti-Trinitarian.

REFORMED DELEGATE: Things based on proof from doubtful, indeed from totally unreliable witnesses who are of evil intent cannot be accepted as certain. Yet that is what the entire speech of the Catholic delegate is based on. For he does not rely on Holy Scripture, which is always right, but  
 5 only on the testimony of some Fathers who were human and unreliable witnesses, and on the testimony of ecclesiastical histories that are mostly untrue, as has been amply proven in earlier sessions regarding each of these histories. The other proof is derived from a false conclusion, to wit the expectation of false tranquility and peace in the church once the dis-  
 10 putations cease. Is the truth in the army of Christ not constantly on the march, in this world, against the lies? Can we expect peace or calm in  
 29<sup>c</sup> this world between the truth | and deceit? Or do we want to dream up a victorious church and a false peace in this world? Can that be right? If the church must always struggle in this world, then she must also always  
 15 fight with God's word against human doctrine and with the truth against the lie. That is what disputation is about. If we want to end it, then we will once again lead the church to a false and condemnable peace. Christ sends us the sword of his Word to disturb that peace. It is easy to see, gentlemen, what kind of certainty, credibility and stability can result from the  
 20 Catholic delegate's words. This is why I cannot agree with his view.

THEODORE BEZA: Yes, how can that view be right? Are the councils and Fathers incapable of error? Should no one be allowed to speak against them with impunity? To what else can this lead but to a return to the days of old? If, in those days, someone said anything against the blasphemies of  
 25 the Roman Antichrist, he was immediately arrested. If he recanted he was shown the mercy of being burnt *after* his death, and not burnt alive. But if he remained steadfast, like a good martyr of God, then these folks, not knowing how to respond to the word of God, would start to cry out, "This has already been decided a long time ago!" and bring up their mother, the  
 30 faculty of the Sorbonne, and refuse to dispute any further except by means of invective, fire, and the stake.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Whoever among you is without sin may cast the first stone.

THEODORE BEZA: We are indeed, and thus we have the right to accuse you  
 35 of being crafty and bloodthirsty men, enemies of the truth, and vicious tyrants.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Then could there perhaps be another Theodore Beza, who wrote a book about the authority of the magistrate regarding the punishment of heretics as well as a book of theological letters?

THEODORE BEZA: I did indeed write those books and stand by them, for they are my words. What do you want to prove from them? 5

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: I can prove from them – and will do so decisively and clearly – that you yourself do to others what you have the nerve of accusing us of doing. Therefore it does not at all beseem you, dr. Beza, to cast this stone at us. For in your writings you vehemently denounce those who accuse you of the killing of heretics – as you denounce us today 10 for the same reason, although you rightfully follow in our footsteps in this regard. You say, among other things: “Now for these reasons, which are | in agreement with the decrees of the council of Carthage in which 29<sup>D</sup> he himself (Augustine) also participated, it is evident that you take up a matter that has since long been condemned by the judgment of the church 15 that is in possession of pure doctrine.” For it seems to me, dr. Beza, that all you wanted to say with that is that the council is on your side: it has already confirmed your position, and therefore it is no longer necessary to dispute the matter. How can you at all deny that this is the view that you expressed? And how can you deny these clear and explicit words from 20 your fifth letter, as follows: “With regard to public disputations: although it is the duty of the faithful pastors to protect God’s truth in general and in particular cases, yet if the entire church had to convene and organize a public disputation each time some stubborn person expresses doubts on this or that matter, then tell me, what else would the church become but 25 a debating society (*kijfwinckel*)?”

Beza will no longer  
allow disputations  
against his doctrine

So there you have it, in your own words, showing that you do against your critics what we do against ours. Then is it fair that you denounce and slander us because of your own faults (if they are faults)? Is it fair that when it comes to knowing your own faults you are blinder than a mole, 30 but when it comes to ours you are more keen-sighted than an Argus? Is it fair that, ignoring your own garden which is full of tares, you have the nerve to weed our garden?

GAMALIEL: Captains who want to take it easy while they are encamped in the midst of their enemies are not worth much. Similarly shepherds who 35 find themselves in the midst of wolves with their sheep are no good if

3 {The last refers to Beza’s *Litterae theologicae* (Geneva, 1575)}. 16 [T. 198]. 26 [Epistol. 5, fol. 48].

they only bring themselves into safety. So can teachers be any good when, while an embattled church is in the field against the heretics, they fear the labor and effort of disputations? Will it make the church into a debating society if the teachers, when they are attacked by the heretics, steadfastly  
5 fight against them with the word of God? If the reverend Beza wants to be left alone by any heretic, then with God's word, not with the executioner's sword let him kill not the heretic but the heresy in him. Once that is done, another will turn up soon and start a new struggle. Thus God trains his captains with constant attacks by heretics, so that they do  
10 not become slow or wallow in luxury, or themselves change into reckless heretics. Thus, each time a heresy arises it must be vanquished with truth, put to shame, and killed. If a heretic believes fully in the ecclesiastical histories or the councils, then it will be easy to make him reject his heresy if he can be shown that it has already been vanquished, condemned and  
15 rejected by some council. If he does not believe in the ecclesiastical histories but only believes in Holy Scripture, then of what use will it be to refer to such councils and ecclesiastical histories? Do you think he can  
30<sup>a</sup> then be silenced | by just saying, "Your heresy has already been rejected by the councils, so we do not need to dispute with you"? Not at all, for  
20 in that way the heresy and the trouble will remain in the church and the unrest will even increase, for these folks will surely notice that they have been wronged. Should they be in error, this will harden them therein: it will make them condemn your doctrine and, due to the injustice done to them, make them more convinced that they are right than before. If the  
25 heresy in question has been condemned by some council, this will have been done either according to the testimony of divine Scripture which is still available, or according to the opinion of the Fathers who were gathered at that council with no basis in Scripture. If the latter is the case, then who can reasonably be forced to accept as right such an unscriptural  
30 judgment? Now if it is the case that this heresy has been condemned by a council based on passages of Holy Scripture that have been interpreted correctly, then it should not be difficult for the teachers of our times to defeat, put to shame and condemn that same heresy again by means of Holy Scripture. This would be credible. It would destroy heresies but save  
35 the heretics. The other way would not. Or are there no longer any God-fearing men who are well-versed in Holy Scripture and theology? I should hope so.

If someone has not yet gathered a following and stands alone in his error, it will not be hard for such skillful theologians to convince him of  
40 his errors with Holy Scripture. If this happened much unrest could be

prevented. Many Catholics themselves think that if this action had been taken in the beginning with Martin Luther, then this great fire could have been extinguished at the start. If there are many in the same error, would then this multitude not deserve being heard, satisfied or convinced, at least to the extent that they are treated in a friendly, sincere, and Christian 5 rather than adversarial manner? For even if they cannot be persuaded to the point that they understand your doctrine to be true and theirs to be untrue, they would at least understand that you dealt with them in a Christian and sincere manner. That way they would pray for you and you would pray for them, and as compassionate friends rather than quarreling 10 parties you would strengthen each other and reduce all conflicts.

But what fruitful results can we hope for when we refuse to dispute? Well, these: persistence in error, increase in bitter quarrels, and the sad loss of the wandering sheep, if the latter's views are damnable! Would they not have to persist in their views when they see that the church refuses to 15 dispute with them based on Sacred Scripture? Will they not have to regard it as constraint when, instead of the ministers, it is the magistrates who do the "disputing" against them, with placards? And when they see how force is used against them, will they not look for ways to resist force with force? Will they, I will add, be able to follow shepherds when they see that these 20 shepherds, rather than attract them with God's word, want to force them with the executioner's sword? | Here gentle persuasion works better than forceful constraint. The Master persuaded, he did not force. When He saw that many left him, he asked his disciples if they did not want to leave him also. That is quite different from the use of force. He also did not refrain 25 from putting the crafty Pharisees to shame in disputations. The disciples followed his example and engaged in disputations and proofs against their opponents. We know that among his disciples Apollos was mighty in the Scriptures and decisively defeated the Jews in his public debates proving that Jesus is the Christ. You, gentlemen, are all familiar with what the 30 apostle Paul says about the power of his word and his preaching, and this Paul did not wish to be the master of the faith of his disciples, let alone over that of other people. He discussed Scripture with everyone. He gently invited everyone rather than being hateful and forceful, and he caught people by his cunning. He made himself equal to everyone in order to 35 win people over to Christ. Do you think for a minute that, if He were here today and saw people who wanted to dispute with him about Scripture,

25 [John 6:66–68].      30 [Acts 18:24–22] Acts 18:24–28.      31 [1 Corinthians 2:4].

32 [2 Corinthians 1:14]. 2 Corinthians 1:24.      35 [2 Corinthians 12:16].

He would not confront them in this as an equal instead of refusing them this Christian combat and fleeing? Do you think He would say that “we are done disputing, and you have to believe us now”? And if He whose teachings and mission were confirmed by miracles did not shun disputes, as we can see in his deeds, then how much less does this beseech others whose doctrine and mission are very questionable?

Should someone, thinking about the apostles, say ‘those were different times,’ I would gladly agree and admit that today we have ten sects or diseases to one in those days! That is why now there is *more*, not less, need for such a type of doctor of sick souls. Or should a bishop not be in need of healthy doctrine in these pestilential times rife with all sorts of diseases of sects, in order to heal the sickness of the souls therewith, rather than with placards? Does he not need the faithful Word to put the deceitful seducers to shame? Or the all-powerful truth in order to admonish those who are barking against it, and to tame the disobedient? To punish the seducers and their lies and to destroy all the haughtiness that raises itself up against the knowledge of God, and to shackle all human ingenuity in obedience to Christ? Is the eternal truth today not just as capable of accomplishing this as it was at the the time of the apostles? Therefore we do not have anything to fear from this combat in the form of disputing based on God’s word. No harm can come of that, but much good will result from it. These are the weapons with which all true teachers perform their service. If this word is used faithfully it is living and powerful and more penetratinig than a double-edged sword. God puts this sharp sword into the mouth of his captains, to defeat his enemies, expand his realm, and destroy the Antichrist. This sword will not return to the Lord unused but accomplishes what the Lord desires. With these spiritual rather than carnal weapons these spiritual captains will have to wage this spiritual battle in Christ’s spiritual realm, against these spiritual | enemies. This is what happens in disputations and in using Holy Scripture against those who attack the mountain of Zion. This is also why God always provides his children so faithfully with these invincible weapons.

JEZONIAS: Dear God, will there be no agreement on any of the issues debated here? Regarding this issue, the Catholics do not want to allow disputations because if we do there will never be an end to such disputa-

10 [Titus 1:19]. Titus 1:9. 15 [1 Corinthians...:4]. Unclear reference. 18 {2 Corinthians 10:4–5}. 24 [Hebrews 4:12]. 25 [Isaiah 49:2]. 26 [2 Thessalonians 2:8]. 27 [Isaiah 55:10–11]. 29 [2 Corinthians 10:4]. | [Ephesians 6:2]. Ephesians 6:11–17.

tions. The Reformed countered initially that disputations are necessary, since the true church is encamped against the false church and must constantly fight with truth against lies. But now they seem to have changed their mind and agree on this point with the Catholics, as the latter claim and prove from the Reformed writings. 5

Gamaliel is of a different opinion, for he regards the refusal to dispute with the enemies of truth, based on God's word, as objectionable and harmful. He contends and proves that divine Scripture really serves the purpose and has been given by God to silence opponents, and is capable of doing this. It was given to put the lie to shame and manifest the truth. 10

All this has been recorded by the secretary. I shall add it to the preceding reports and keep them for when our lord the president appears, so we can hear and follow his judgment.

FIFTEENTH SESSION

*The Writing, Publishing, Printing, Selling,  
Having and Reading of Tracts and Books*

Participants: Jezonias, Catholic Delegate, Doctor Placard, John Calvin,  
5 Theodore Beza, Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, The Remonstrant of Leiden,  
Gamaliel

JEZONIAS: There is a strong link between the issues we just discussed and  
the printing, possessing, and reading of books concerning religion. For  
diverse spirits bring to press not just diverse but also controversial mat-  
10 ters. These writings are then praised by some and denounced by others,  
creating division among the people, aggravating some people and lifting  
up others. This is, therefore, a weighty matter. This is why I hope it may  
please the gentlemen gathered here to express their opinion on whether  
it is appropriate and right to permit or to forbid the writing, printing,  
15 owning, and reading of such books.

30<sup>D</sup> CATHOLIC DELEGATE: We must keep the boisterous spirits in check. It has  
therefore been decided that with regard to matters of faith and ethics that  
pertain to the establishment of Christian teachings no one may rely on  
his own wisdom and bend Sacred Scripture to his own understanding or  
20 against the understanding that the mother Church has and has had of  
it. It is the task of the church to determine the true meaning and inter-  
pretation of Holy Scripture, so that no one would be as bold as to give  
his own interpretation against the unanimous view of the Fathers. Even  
if one were not planning to publish such interpretations at any time, still  
25 those who disobey will be declared in violation by the episcopal ordinary  
and they will be given the appropriate punishment. In this connection  
we also want to place appropriate limits on printers who now believe that  
they are allowed to print anything as they wish, without permission from  
the ecclesiastical authorities, and that they can print indiscriminately the

4 The text erroneously prints "Gamaliel" here. 16 [C.T. Sessio 4, April 8, 1546]. See *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, fourth session, 17–20 (English), 296–299 (Latin).

books of the Holy Scripture with all sorts of glosses and interpretations, doing this often without naming the printer, or giving a fake name, and what is even worse, printing them without giving the name of the author, as well as selling that kind of book printed elsewhere. We have therefore decided and instituted that from now on Holy Scripture, and especially 5 the old and common edition, will be given the best printing possible, and that no one shall be permitted to print or to have printed any books on divine matters without giving the name of the author, nor will anyone be permitted to sell or stock such books unless they have first been examined and approved by the ordinary, on pain of banishment or a fine in 10 accordance with the canon established by the last Lateran Council. Those who disseminate and publish such writings without prior examination and approval will receive the same punishment as the printers. Those who possess or read these writings will be regarded as their authors unless they name the real author. 15

DOCTOR PLACARD OF SEPTEMBER 22, 1540: No one, no matter of what status or position he be, will be permitted to possess, sell, give, carry, read, preach or instruct from, support or defend, relay or discuss in secret or in public the teachings, writings and books produced, now or in the future, by Martin Luther, John Wyclif, John Hus, Marsilius of Padua, Oecolampadius, Ulrich Zwingli, Philip Melanchthon, etc. Punishment is as follows: if someone is found to have transgressed against any of the abovementioned points, that person is to be executed, to wit: men by the sword and women by drowning (*by den putte*) if they do not wish to maintain or defend their errors. And if they do persist in their errors or heresies they shall 25 be executed by fire and in all cases shall have their possessions declared confiscated for our benefit, etc. Further, let no one have the temerity to print or have printed or to publish in any other way | any book discussing “32<sup>A</sup>” or making mention of Holy Scripture or anything concerning our sacred faith and the consistution of our church, unless he has been visited by 30 the local ordinary and has received from us letters of authorization and permission to print the same. Punishment here is the same as above.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: We are well aware, dr. Calvin, that in your first published writings you were very displeased with our view on the prohibition of books. You thought that this was only meant to muzzle the truth, for 35 you fully realized that we included your writings and books with those that people were forbidden to print, have or read, and that therefore the

11 {This is the fifth Lateran Council (1512–1517)}. 28 “32<sup>A</sup>” should be 31<sup>A</sup>.

spread of your doctrine – which you consider to be true and pure – would be greatly hampered. But later you were made wiser by experience – experience is the best teacher of all (for who is not made wise by her?) –, and reaching the fundamental insight that this prohibition is useful, necessary  
 5 and good, you clearly showed that you were not hard-headed in this regard and you declared at last, in connection with the Servetus-affair, that in this you agreed with us.

JOHN CALVIN: Could you please show me the pertinent passage?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Gladly. On the twelfth page of your book against  
 10 the errors of Servetus, where, in imitation of us, you seek to prove that heretics ought to be punished physically, you write these words: “To be very brief, all those who are kept from writing bad things more from the fear they have of punishment than from shame or respect, complain that it is an insufferably cruel tyranny that not everyone is allowed to write freely  
 15 anything that enters their head. And Servetus, of whom we are speaking, belongs in that category.” Those are your own words, and we think they are sincere. In this regard you are in complete agreement with us. Pray God that this would also be so on all other points!

Calvin disapproves of everyone writing what they please

THEODORE BEZA: There is still nothing new in what my master does in this  
 20 regard. He habitually confesses the naked truth regardless of who may be for or against it. And in this he is like the ancients. For although Constantine was so weak that he did not kill Arius, the emperor still, keenly realizing how harmful the reading of heretical books was, prohibited this on the pain of death for those who would be found to have hidden Arius’s books. Then should kings, princes and magistrates, when they hear  
 25 the blasphemies (of the heretics), suffer or tolerate | that those monstrous spirits (who write against the killing of heretics) succeed in publishing books? Why should we not be allowed to declare such freedom wicked, a freedom where everyone is permitted to believe and teach all that they  
 30 fancy and believe is right? And this happens mostly by the publication of books.

Beza calls the emperor Constantine a weakling because he did not kill Arius.

Beza sees it as wrong for princes to allow the publication of what he considers heretical books

Beza considers it wicked if everyone were to be free to believe and teach what they like

REFORMED DELEGATE: That is correct. We also see it that way, and that is the reason why in the second synod we decided as follows: “In order to eradicate false teachings and errors which increase greatly by the reading  
 35 of heretical books, these measures should be employed: First, the min-

11 [S.C. 12]. {Calvin, *Déclaration*, p. 12}. 31 [T. 289; T. 413; T. 287]. {Beza, *T.A.M.*, 280, 413, 287}. 33 [Synodus Dordrecht, ij. Ar. Iij]. {Dordrecht synod (1578), art. 3 s.}.

isters shall admonish the people from the pulpit diligently to read the biblical Scriptures, and warn them to stay away from heretical books, although they should cite the names of such books very sparingly. Second, the booksellers who are devoted to the true faith should be admonished by the ministers not to print or sell such books. Third, when the ministers visit the members of the congregation at home they should carefully inspect whether these homes contain any harmful books, so that they can exhort them to get rid of such books.”

The Reformed synod wants ministers to inspect carefully during their house calls whether there are any harmful books

It is with the same intention that at our third synod in Middelburg [1581] we decided as follows: “No one shall have the temerity to have printed or to publish in any other way any book or tract on religion written or translated by him or someone else, unless the writings have first been examined and approved by the ministers of the Word of the church’s synod or by the professors in theology who belong to our confession.”

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: It is clear that you regard your and we regard our religion as true, and again that we regard each other’s religion as false. By the same token we both, wanting to avoid impiety, must help avert anything that will hinder the religion that we know or believe to be right. Each of us in turn regards the books and writings by all others who contradict our respective religions as heretical, false and as a great obstacle to our religion. That is the very reason why we both, each for himself, strive so hard to forestall the making, printing, distribution and reading of such false and heretical books. Thus, on this point, we agree. For even though you, the Reformed, used to direct shameful denunciations and slander at us on this point, when at our behest the placards of emperor Charles v and also of king Philip II prohibited and punished the printing of forbidden books so severely, we do appreciate that you finally are starting to understand that what we have already practiced for so many years is indeed necessary.

GAMALIEL: I do not like this kind of concord, for it obstructs the dissemination of truth. In that way Herod could have become fast friends with Pilate in the suppression of truth! Should we therefore, because of the abuse, | also forbid the good things? Is it not a good thing when the errors of people who err are rebuked? The ministers are not all angels, and

14 [Art. 38]. Acta of the Synod of Middelburg, article 38, printed in W. van ‘t Spijker, “De acta van de synode van Middelburg (1581)”, in J.P. van Dooren (ed.), *De nationale synode te Middelburg in 1581: Calvinisme in opbouw in de noordelijke en zuidelijke Nederlanden* (Middelburg: Koninklijk Zeeuwsch Genootschap, 1981), p. 87.

it is also possible that those who are good today will be bad tomorrow, for shepherds can turn into wolves. When this happens, they could sow the seed in the church of pernicious weeds which could, sooner than one would expect, give rise to a devastating fire if no one is allowed to say anything against it. If all pious Christians who detect hidden errors and who realize that these errors, if they be allowed to continue, will lead to the thorough destruction of the church, must remain silent, is that right? Is it right if they cannot, to the detriment of their conscience, speak against it for fear of punishment? Or, in case people refuse to listen, if they publish a tract to warn everyone?

PHILIPPE DU PLESSIS-MORNAY: I dislike that view as much as Gamaliel does. When a fire breaks out in a city, or the enemy scales its walls by night, and one of the least citizens or even a stranger raises the alarm because the sentries are asleep, then we do not ask that person by what authority or title he did this, much less do we lay blame on him for this. Instead, the people will rush to the ramparts and moats, wanting to know what is going on, and everyone will be thankful to the person who gave the warning. But on the contrary, when we discover the presence of an Antichrist in the church and we dare shame and persuade him at a council or in his own presence, then, instead of hearing us, weighing our reasons and examining Scripture which gives such a vivid picture of the Antichrist, they ask us what our position is and who gives us the authority to warn against this. Indeed, they shamefully put us to death as if we had betrayed the city! Now if the mayors of the cities did the same when someone gave them a warning, what city would not quickly fall into enemy hands? And what prince would not regard such mayors as traitors and think that they are in collusion with the enemy? What matters is not our condition or qualities, but the qualities and teachings of the Antichrist. What is at stake is the rightful duty of those whom we warn and the salvation of all and of ourselves, in case the warning proves true. The salvation of the church depends on it. Should our warning be false, this will put us in danger. That is why it is imperative to examine the circumstances related to the warning and not the quality of the one giving the warning. With regard to the conspiracy of Catilina the council of Rome gave heed to a common woman against the majority of the city. When the Gauls tried to take Rome's Capitol by force, the sentries did not say a word and the dogs remained silent. But when only the geese cried out, everyone ran thither and paid attention, and | without the crying of the geese the city – which after that subjected the entire world – would

have been lost. Therefore, even if we were the most humble and lowly of all churches, it is useful for people to listen to us, especially because we do not desire to whisper into people's ears like the backbiters and liars. No, we want to speak out before the whole church and directly address the person whom we accuse, not on our but on God's behalf. 5

THE REMONSTRANT OF LEIDEN: The prohibition of books has to do with religion and therefore seems to be religious constraint. I do not think this is acceptable in a small or in a big way, nor do I accept any statutes or decrees issued for that purpose. And it does appear strange to me that these folks want to go so far as to issue a prohibition and do not want to permit books except by their grace and privilege, as used to be the case with the (Roman Catholic) prosecutors of heresy. This is a matter for which the papal government has everywhere been justly denounced. Since we have called for liberty, they ought to know full well from the histories that they have read that freedom has always consisted chiefly in the fact that someone is allowed freely to speak his mind. It has been only the mark of tyranny that one was not allowed to speak his thoughts freely. Therefore it is truly tyrannical to act as Julian the Apostate and forbid good books in order to squelch the truth. 10 15

GAMALIEL: I think it is reasonable, appropriate and necessary that the civil government strongly forbids under threat of severe punishment certain notorious books – and especially books or other writings that incite to sedition. It is reasonable that the police pursues them and punishes those they capture mercilessly. This also promotes the maintenance of law and order. But when it comes to the question of whether we ought to forbid someone, regardless of which status in life he has and if he be learned or unlearned, minister or citizen, humbly to indicate what he sees as useful for the improvement of the church, I am inclined to vote against it, together with dr. du Plessis and the Remonstrant who spoke last, rather than vote with the other gentlemen. For if it were wrong and punishable in itself to reveal the shortcomings of the church in order to warn the people (when we find that the church will not allow this, and will much less improve herself), then who will be able to absolve Luther, Zwingli, Calvin and so many other men of having committed punishable deeds, having 20 25 30

5 No reference is given for this text by Du Plessis. 6 Coornhert here personifies the Leiden Remonstrance of 1582 that he himself had written for the Leiden magistrate in connection with the Coolhaes-affair and the 1582 national synod in Middelburg: Coornhert, *Remonstrance of vertooch by die van Leyden* (1582), in *Wercken*, vol. 2, fol. 184<sup>R</sup>–188<sup>B</sup>. The quoted passage is on fol. 187<sup>D</sup>. 9 [A iii. Vers.; B iiiii. Vers].

caused sedition and being guilty of disturbing the external peace of the church? Indeed, who can absolve the unlearned as well who did this, for as du Plessis says so well, in this matter we must heed *what* is said and not *who* says it. If the criticism by these men, which appeared among the  
32<sup>a</sup> people in print in the form of many tracts and books, | enjoyed impunity and was fruitful, then the criticism expressed by others today or in the future should also remain unpunished and can be equally fruitful, unless they can assure us that no errors or wolves will enter our churches. But if the church of the apostles was not free of them, then who can prove ours  
10 to be safe?

Thus to express my feeling on the issue of what is right or harmful in this matter, I say that what someone publishes in print regarding doctrine is either true or false. If it is true, surely we do not want to be seen as enemies of the truth. Rather we ought to honor that wholesome truth and  
15 gratefully accept it, no matter what its provenance. But if what is written or printed is a lie, then I acknowledge that we must refute it right away in the best possible manner. But what is the best possible manner? That which best agrees with God's word has the best chance of success. It is in accord with the word of God that the lie is defeated by truth in such  
20 wise that Christ who is himself the truth cuts down and destroys the lie of the Antichrist with the sword of his mouth. These are the weapons that protect and support Christ's realm. They destroy and put to shame the lie and drive it out, but the sword of the magistrate and his prohibitions and punishments can in no wise accomplish this. After all, we see that when  
25 they are forbidden the people are all the more eager to buy and read those books. The people will also conclude that the teachers lack confidence in their own teachings and have no truth to defend, and that they abuse the power of the magistrate in a tyrannical way. This is like throwing oil on the fire and helps increase the errors that we try so hard to combat.  
30 We ourselves have witnessed examples of this in the placards of emperor Charles v and king Philip II. Did they achieve their purpose? Were they able to prevent the printing, selling and reading of books against the Roman Catholic church? Frankly, no, but instead they caused a hundred of those books to be read when otherwise perhaps not even one would have  
35 been read.

Thus planning such a prohibition is not just useless, it is harmful. And it will be especially harmful today. Why? The people used to be oppressed with deadly restraints when the endless placards forbade the making, printing, selling, owning and reading of books. They saw this as mani-  
40 fest tyranny in a matter of the utmost essence, that is in their conscience.

Each one yearned above everything else for the sweet freedom to read and test all things and hold fast what is good. That freedom has now been acquired at the cost of much damage to the country and the people, with regard to our goods and our blood. What effect do you think this new prohibition of the long-awaited and so dearly bought freedom will have on the hearts of the people? What else but the undoubted sense that, instead of banishing tyranny, they have merely exchanged one tyranny for another? It will cause bitterness | against the ministers, disgruntlement with the magistrate and broad factional divisions among the citizens. Can anything good be expected from that? Verily, none whatsoever, in my eyes! I have always thought that it may be possible to suppress lies and heresies for a while by means of the placards and the force of the magistrates, out of fear, but that they can never be effectively banished or eradicated, for they flare up higher and more pernicious again like a suppressed and hidden flame. We can be sure that, just as we cannot heal or banish spiritual sicknesses by means of physical prescriptions or bandages, we cannot heal or banish heresies, which are a sickness of the soul, by means of physical force – but we *can* do this with truthful criticism. Therefore this is the task of the teachers through the word of God, not of the magistrate through the sword, for if this were the task of the magistrate, then the apostle would not have charged the bishops or (spiritual) guards with it, as he does with these words: [the spiritual leader ought to be] “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped...” This can be done by means of the truth, be it verbally or in writing. But when, regarding the prohibition of books, the magistrate forbids and executes by means of placards, he opens their mouths and causes them to brag all the more, saying: “If they had truth on their side they would never have abused the help of the magistrate to resist our teachings, but they themselves would confront us with the truth based on books or other proofs, they would put the lie to shame and thus promote the truth.” Or do you think that a few dumb bailiffs have more power to triumph over the lie with placards than does the divine and all-powerful truth herself?

JEZONIAS: Regarding this topic of the freedom or prohibition to write and print books on religious matters I find that things were the same as with

the previous topics that we discussed. For the Catholics relate what they have decreed in this regard and say that the princes understood this well in their decrees, and that this only served to prevent the people from being swayed by false books to a view that is different from that of the  
5 Roman church. We likewise see that for the same reason, that is in order to see to it that people do not read books other than the ones that the Reformed have written or deemed good, the Reformed agree with the prohibition of books. Thus the latter, who formerly denounced this as  
10 tyranny and complained loudly about it, now regard such a prohibition as necessary and useful and do not hesitate to imitate the Roman Catholics in this, since like the Catholics before, the Reformed now also have the magistrate at their disposal.

But Gamaliel is of a different opinion. He considers it fair, necessary and useful that the civil magistrate strictly forbid and severely punish the  
15 production and printing of slanderous and seditious books or tracts. But at the same time he sees it as the task of the ecclesiastical authorities and of all theologians to refute, combat and put to shame all heretical books by means of the truth. He claims that in so doing this freedom is not harmful to anyone, but can be useful to many.

20 All of this has been recorded, and I want to submit it to the President. His Honor will be able to decide wisely and prudently what will be best.



*Condemning Others without Hearing Them*

Participants: Jezonias, Catholic Delegate, Reformed Delegate, Philippe du Plessis-Mornay, Gamaliel

5 JEZONIAS: Previously the Lutherans, the Reformed, the Moravian Brethren and others complained strongly about the Catholics, because the latter condemned them without granting them a proper hearing where they could legitimately defend themselves. Since the Catholics held the position of both council and council's judge, the Protestants regarded  
10 them as suspect and biased, and none of them therefore dared or wished to appear before them.

Now, on the other hand, we hear the Roman Catholics and others complain about the Reformed, claiming that the latter have dared condemn them without a prior legitimate hearing and while being themselves party and judge. Your meeting today, esteemed gentlemen, serves  
15 to examine the truth on this issue and to discuss whether condemnation in such an important matter without first having given the parties a full hearing before an impartial judge is acceptable. I hope that you will not refrain from giving your thoughts frankly as well as modestly.

20 CATHOLIC DELEGATE: I, being the first one up, will certainly do so. And I declare roundly that in this matter my view is the same as that of the Catholic church in France. On behalf of that church the orator Quintin spoke to the king as follows: "These are, Sire, the reasons why we humbly beseech your majesty not to listen to the crafty expositions of these licentious and frivolous Libertines. It would be better to call them 'Licentines,'  
25 that is folks who think they have a licence to do anything, judging by the boundless permissiveness in all things that they preach. | They allow  
32<sup>p</sup> people to do whatever they like, covering and dissimulating their wantonness with the false mask of Christian freedom, contrary to what St.  
30 Peter ordains. All that they strive for is anarchy, no matter what they claim

The Catholics  
request that  
the Reformed  
not be heard

otherwise. They want to be without prince or king, and only seek to be headless.” And at the same meeting at Poissy the doctors of the Sorbonne petitioned the queen not to hear those of the new religion. But they asked that if she had decided to hear them, she would at least not allow the king to be present, because of the possible danger that in his youth he would be contaminated with the wrong doctrine, from which it would then be hard to turn him away later. After all, these people were already condemned of heresy a long time ago, and therefore they should not be heard. 5

REFORMED DELEGATE: How little reason there is for the Roman Catholics to accuse us of striving for anarchy will be clear to those who know that they themselves have trodden emperors and kings under foot and placed themselves above all laws, above all monarchs, indeed even above Christ himself, as if they were the only sovereign of all sovereigns. We are not guilty of this, yet of this we are accused by those who are more guilty of this than anyone else. But those who are informed or have read our published writings will not accuse us of this, for they know that we also fear that the wanton freedom of some, these days, appears to pave the way for this kind of extremely pernicious licentiousness, which gives birth to a suffering so much greater than that caused by anarchy (that is a state without a government), and seen as worse than tyranny by the pagans themselves. 10 15 20

Praiseworthy  
example of not  
condemning  
without hearing  
the party

As concerns the examples you bring up, dear doctor, they are not the same as laws, especially not when we find better ones that do conform with Holy Scripture. I could cite numerous examples, but I will restrict myself to one. This one also hails from a king of France, and it is much more praiseworthy than that which the Catholics at Poissy tried to get the king’s descendant to do. This example is from that king of great lords, Louis XII. The cardinals and bishops pressed him to destroy the inhabitants of Mérimol and Cabrières as incestuous sorcerers and heretics. These people were what was left of the Albigenian Christians who had been much tormented for a long time for the sake of Christ. When they got wind of the threat they sent messengers to the king to protest their innocence. The cardinal warned the king not to grant an audience to these messenger, saying that canonical law forbade communication with heretics. Thereupon the king said: “Even if I were at war against the Turk or the devil, I would still want to hear them first!” That was a truly royal 25 30 35

2 [C. 242]. {Jean Quintin, delegate of the clergy to the States General at Orléans (1560–1561), in La Place, *Commentaires*, 157}. | It was actually a different meeting (Quintin spoke at the States General in Orléans). 28 [A.P. 31].

response. For to condemn someone without listening to him or allowing him to defend himself is an abuse of the scepter (power) and of one's prerogative. | So Louis summoned these messengers, who respectfully declared that they accepted the Gospel, the twelve articles of faith, God's commandments and the sacraments, but that they did not believe in the pope nor his doctrine. If the king was of a different opinion, they would submit to the punishment. The king wanted to find out the truth of the matter, and to this end sent out the magistrate of the tribunal of petitions, Adam Finneus, and his confessor, the Dominican monk Parvus. These two traveled to the place, examined everything and returned to the king, to whom they reported that in said towns people were baptized and were taught the ten commandments, that Sundays were carefully honored as a day of worship, and that they did not find fornication nor sorcery among them. But they also reported that in their churches they did not find any statues or ornaments belonging to the mass. Now when the king heard this, did he hastily condemn them or send the army to attack them? Not at all. But he said, and swore an oath that they were better men than he and his Catholic people were. Now this is what may be called a royal example!

In the same manner the princes ought to protect those who have not been seduced by error against false accusers, and ought to tolerate them patiently. It is easy to see, for those endowed with intelligence, what the value is of a condemnation by princes who do not hear the accused parties before or after the condemnation. The Catholics themselves acknowledge that to be their advice to them. Likewise it is easy to see how unsure they are of their teaching, if they have so little confidence in their defense of the same that they fear contamination of the king, should the latter hear them as well as the other party!

PHILIPPE DU PLESSIS-MORNAY: In the councils they did not dispute based on Scripture, nay Scripture has been rejected. And instead of listening to its living arguments – as had been promised – they went back on their promise and burned him alive at the stake. And so that we should not have any reason to expect a free council and should not dare to go there with any safe-conduct, they decided that one does not have to keep one's word to a heretic. And since nonetheless ever since we kept asking for a free council, they kept condemning us without granting us a hearing.

REFORMED DELEGATE: That is true. So many poor innocent people have thus far been condemned without an examination of their faith and its reasons and basis. They were burned rather than being heard in their innocence and righteousness. Before assaulting us so cruelly, they should have proven that we are heretics who err in our faith and convinced us with the texts of the Bible and the Gospel. But what is worst is | that such prejudice against us occurs today as well, and not only on the part of the papists, but also on the part of the arch-enemies of the papists, to wit the Lutherans or Confessionalists themselves. After all, they are well aware that neither our Lord Jesus Christ, whose life and works are the law and rule by which we ought to live our lives, nor the prophets and the apostles have dared to condemn someone unless they had convinced and defeated them with the word of God. But why should we tell of the examples of the old Fathers? For those who have heard Luther have heard so often from his mouth how sharply and with what vehemence he used to decry the barbaric tyranny of the Roman pope, because he saw how the pope condemned, without hearing them first, our churches which had cast off the Roman yoke from their neck.

Christ's life ought  
to be the law by  
which we live

Luther denounces  
the Catholics  
for condemning  
others without  
hearing them

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Do not be surprised by what the Lutherans did against you, for they also dare do it against us, against the Roman church and all the councils and Fathers who came before us. For Brenz persuaded his prince to condemn us, that is all of Christendom, as idol worshippers without hearing us and without any defense, only on the basis of his denunciations. It is certain that if the prince thought of accepting this accusation, he should have first convened all of Christendom, heard Brenz and his accusations as well as all of Christendom in its defense. Only then could he condemn either the doctrine of Brenz or that of the Catholics. For in this way he would have upheld at least the appearance of a just verdict, in so far as all the world would be willing to accept his prince as a judge in this matter. And since Brenz himself has so unjustly arrogated to himself the judgment, accusing and condemning as the Antichrist all of Christendom without hearing them, he should be able to understand how his own coreligionists, drawn by his example, recently also arrogated such a right to condemn him. Who, among all people, was ever a better Achates [friend] to Martin Luther than Karlstadt? But this friendship did not even last two full years. As Luther condemned all of Christendom, Karlstadt

4 [B.d.g. fol. 22, verso; fol. 35]. 13 [S.d.d. 16]. 24 [H. 44, verso]. {Hosius, *Confutatio*, vol. II, 453}. 27 [H. 244].

accused Luther with the same authority, and likewise condemned him as the Antichrist.

REFORMED DELEGATE: What the Lutherans do does not concern us or our followers.

5 CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Not unless you imitated Luther in this, even against the Lutherans themselves.

REFORMED DELEGATE: Where did we do that?

33<sup>c</sup> CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Do you have to ask? When did your church hear  
and convince the Lutherans regarding the Eucharist, and did so in a free  
10 gathering before an impartial judge? You know very well that this never  
happened. Does that make you hesitate in calling them, in this regard,  
“Capharnaites” and cannibals, yes even to condemn and damn them as  
stupid asses? Furthermore, when did you ever hear, convince and legiti-  
mately defeat us in a national council or synod before an impartial judge?  
15 You know as well as I do that this never happened. But perhaps you do not  
know how nonetheless your followers, acting as prosecutors and judges,  
condemn us, who never have been heard, as Antichrists, how they ex-  
ecrate our teachings as false and as human invention, and prohibit our  
worship as idolatry wherever you are in power? Are you not aware of  
20 this? I do not think so. And if you know this, then it definitely seems that  
you utter shameless words here, for you denounce us for having done to  
you what you yourselves are now doing to us. If it was unjust for us to  
condemn you without hearing you, why then do you imitate us in this  
regard? And if what we do is right, then why do you denounce what is  
25 right?

The Reformed  
condemn  
others without  
hearing them

REFORMED DELEGATE: It is permitted to convince and persuade someone with the spirit of Christ and with Holy Scripture, even if there is no council.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: When and where has a Catholic, mandated and  
30 authorized by the Roman church to defend our teachings, been defeated  
by means of the spirit of Christ and the word of God? Who was the judge  
that was mutually chosen and who passed the verdict of your triumph?

REFORMED DELEGATE: You condemn us without possibly having ever read our writings. You have damned us before you have shown us our errors

12 Cf. John 6:52–59.

from the word of God, and you deliver us to death by the verdict of judges who are on the side of the prosecutors. That is what should be called “condemning a party without hearing it.” When did we or our followers ever do the same?

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Few people are unaware of the kind of judge or prosecutor that was given to Servetus in Geneva. You would need a lot of water to cleanse your master John Calvin of this stain! Who does not know that Geneva’s council was on Calvin’s hand? And Calvin himself does not deny having been Servetus’s accuser. You can fill in the rest – or if you have words to say in your defense, please do so. 5 10

REFORMED DELEGATE: Does your enormous bias have such an effect on you that you now have become a patron and supporter of this Servetus, who was such a horrible, venomous and devilish heresiarch? Please, doctor, tell me the plain truth: had he fallen into your hands, would you have treated him differently from how he was treated? Would you not have burned him alive? 15 33<sup>D</sup>

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: What we would have done to him or what he deserved is not the issue here. The issue is the manner in which it was done, that is: condemning someone without hearing him, and by a judge who is himself partial. You accuse us of this and I demonstrate that you do the same thing yourselves. That is why I said and still say: if what we did was right, then why accuse us? If it was wrong and unjust, then why do you now imitate us in this regard? 20

REFORMED DELEGATE: What was wrong when you did it, is correct when we do the same. 25

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: If condemning someone without hearing him is wrong when we do it, how can it be right for you to do the same?

REFORMED DELEGATE: Because your religion is false and ours is true. That is why when you imagine to be killing heretics when you kill our brethren, you do wrong and are actually murdering true Christians in a tyrannical way. We, on the other hand, rightfully kill only true heretics. 30

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Let us stop singing the same old song, already. For we both agree on the matter for which Calvin had Servetus burned alive, namely the Trinity. Therefore he received justice, and it does not matter who burned him as a heretic, you or we. But let us assume for a moment that you alone are the true Christians and all others (including us) repre- 35

sent false churches, but in such a way that this has not yet become evident beyond reasonable doubt. Let us also assume that Servetus was a horrible heretic and that the Anabaptists also, whom you have executed, were real heretics, and that they therefore all deserved to be killed and burned alive, as we really do believe. What will you thus have accomplished in the way of proof that you do the right thing when you condemn parties that have not been heard? What excuse is there for you, that you may be judges and parties, passing judgment in your own case? The issue here, I repeat, is not who the heretics are and whether heretics ought to be killed. No, the issue is whether, in condemning and killing the heretics, you do not supply both the judges and the prosecutors | or the parties. You claim that this is unjust and you denounce us for this, and this is what you yourself do wherever you are in full power. Do I not therefore have the right to tell you that you wrongfully accuse us in this, or that, when you imitate us in what you condemn as being unjust, you are not a whit less guilty than we are?

Again let us assume for a moment that your doctrine and worship are true in themselves and ours false, but that the people do not know this for certain. How can the people, when they see that you condemn our religion and forbid our worship before we have been heard by any judge (let alone an impartial one), accept that your judgment is right? For why should the people not draw the conclusion that your judgment is biased, false, and tyrannical? The case is that you do not only condemn us without hearing us, but also the other doctrines and churches. For you only regard your faith as being true and condemn all the others as false and ban them wherever you have the power. After all, you have sworn a mutual oath that you will not allow the practice of any religion except yours.

GAMALIEL: The abuse on either side is so obvious that it seems hard to find an excuse for both. This is also true for the common man who is already talking about this every day, especially for those who have personal experience of this having been done to them by one of you, that is those who have been condemned and abused in that manner without being heard. Indeed even the Catholics themselves, who allow this injustice, appear to understand and acknowledge it better now that they have to suffer it than before when they perpetrated it. For it is easy for everyone to see – especially for those to whom it applies – that no fair verdict can be given where there are not three distinct persons, to wit: a judge, a prosecutor, and a defender. The judge hears the parties, the prosecutor indicts his party, and the defender speaks for the defendant. Of parties we find far

The persons needed  
for a fair judgment

too many today. But where will we find an honest judge in this matter of religion? Because for him to be honest he has to be impartial and wise. Who will be accepted as such by all of today's parties? The pope himself against all his parties? None of the others would accept that, for they would regard him as a double agent in this judgment, that is a judge and 5 prosecutor. So who shall it be? Possibly he, one might think, whom the state will choose? But who will be allowed to do the choosing? The Turks? Or the unbelievers? Or people who do not belong to an external church? Or people belonging to one of the religions that are in contention? What do the Turks know, to be able to judge the Christian religion which they 10 despise? How can the unbelievers judge any religion? Which religion will choose as a judge people whom they regard as Libertines or atheists, that is people who do not belong | to any external church? Therefore it will 34<sup>B</sup> have to be someone belonging to the fourth kind, that is to one of the religions that are in contention. So each state will choose judges in this 15 case from one of these religions. Then to what religion will those who are chosen as judges belong? To none other than the one that has a majority among the states or municipal councils with a vote in the matter. Thus it follows that those who at that time control the majority will be chosen as such, be they Reformed, Catholic, Lutheran, Anabaptist or otherwise. 20 There you have your judges in this matter! My dear, pray tell, will any of them, no matter what church they belong to, be able to pass a judgment that does not accord with their opinion? Will they not have to judge that doctrine to be good and true that they in their bias consider to be such, and pass judgment accordingly? Do you consider such judges to be im- 25 partial? Who does not see that here all others have already lost the game before it has started? Could this then be considered to be the right and true religion, that is the one that such commissioners have determined to be right and true? Who can believe such a thing? And yet in this way the observation of each of these religions would be imposed by the au- 30 thority of the magistrate, and all other religions would be forbidden. Can we hope for anything good to come of this? For then the people would once again be subjected to the constraint of conscience and be forced to adopt the faith and worship that it would please the magistrate to impose by such a judgment. Can that be right? That way the majority would be 35 subjected to a minority, and this in a matter of the greatest importance.

Religion is also  
of concern  
to the people

For this is what it is all about. The magistrate exists for the sake of the people, but the people do not exist for the sake of the magistrate. There- 40 fore the people, whose salvation is at stake, also have a voice in the matter. If they dare take this away from them, it will greatly displease them. Or

do you think that the people do not understand that all the warnings against false prophets and Pharisees that abound throughout Scripture were also addressed to them? Surely they do. Likewise they would also have to see that such warnings in Holy Scripture would be entirely in vain if the people were meant and supposed [simply] to avoid or maintain the religion that the lawful magistrate should forbid or enjoin upon them. But who could believe that divine wisdom, which never does anything in vain, would have given so many careful warnings for no reason? This cannot possibly be believed by any God-fearing hearts. When the latter hear the magistrate order or forbid them to do something against or for God, like the apostles they will frankly tell the magistrate, at the risk of their lives: "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge." Thus you immediately get the public disdain for the government's laws in religious matters, in the form of non-compliance, or a bloody and new tyranny over the conscience of all God-fearing Christians.

Could we finally expect better results from this new constraint of conscience than | what we still experience today due to the old constraint, in the form of damage done to countries and people? For that and for many other reasons this manner of judgment displeases me as being manifestly against God, against all justice, and against the common sentiment of all people. And allow me to express as my view of the matter that we cannot come to a sound judgment without prior knowledge and that if we judge falsely in such a weighty matter we risk committing a great transgression. I therefore propose that during this general eclipse of the sun of truth we defer for awhile such rash and false judgment until our president, Master Daniel, will be present so we can hear his definitive judgment on the matter. And that meanwhile we tacitly allow the exercise of various religions, thus rendering unto God what belongs to God, to wit the command of conscience, and also to man what belongs to man, namely the freedom of conscience: freedom for each to believe and practice his religion.

JEZONIAS: All these discussions proceed in a strange manner. Each one usually considers right in themselves what they condemn in the other. No one wants to suffer from another what they themselves will do to the other if they can. The Roman Catholics condemn all others, consisting of several parties, without hearing them, saying that they were already condemned by the councils a long time ago, and that the latter decided

that those whom they determined to be heretics would no longer be spoken to or heard. The Reformed complained bitterly about this, saying that such a judgment without hearing the parties, and then a judgment passed by one of the parties themselves, is unfair and wrong. But as usual the Roman Catholic counter again and denounce them. And after hearing this, Gamaliel blames both sides for this and advises the cessation of such judgment, since all people are suspected of partisanship, because of the darkness that now reigns in the world in divine matters. He recommends that one should tolerate the other until the arrival of Master Daniel, our president.

*Whether it is in Accord with Scripture that  
Religious Leaders Seek the Help of the  
Magistrate for Support of their Doctrine*

5 Participants: Jezonias, Catholic Delegate, Reformed Delegate, Gamaliel,  
Theodore Beza

JEZONIAS: Complaints were heard about the fact that the religious leaders  
appealed to the power of the magistrate in defense of their doctrine, as  
34<sup>D</sup> if | to that end other weapons were needed besides the almighty truth  
10 itself. It was said that this practice resulted from the absence or ignorance  
of the truth. The complainers themselves are also accused by those they  
complained about and by others that they do the same thing and that  
this is inappropriate, tending to diminish truth. Our president, Master  
Daniel put this on the agenda as a point of discussion that is of greater  
15 importance than it may appear at first glance. We will hear your views  
and have them recorded, as we did with the foregoing matters.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: We did this lawfully and they have unjustly ac-  
cused us. What can we, bishops, do other than teach, admonish and  
judge about religious doctrine? What other than condemn the godless  
20 and heretical doctrine when it rears its head, and expel its adherents from  
the gathering of the faithful? What Paul writes is true: that a heretic is  
self-condemned and has already placed himself outside the gathering of  
the faithful. Therefore, when we do not make progress by this means,  
what else can we do but call on the authority of our kings and princes  
25 and admonish and beseech them to do as the pious kings of old and cast  
down your fortress, that is: the fortress of heretics who raise themselves  
up against the knowledge of God? What is to keep the bishop from in-  
voking the authority of the prince, even if the latter has not judged such  
heretics himself? Why not request that the prince banish them from his

18 [H. 68. v]. {This passage based on Hosius, *Confutatio*, vol. II, p. 471, and vol. III, p. 548}.

23 [Titus 3]. Titus 3:10–11. 27 [H. 44]. {2 Corinthians 10:4–5}.

realm? Why not ask him to see that person for what he has made of himself, that is: a heretic who, as Paul says, is self-condemned? This is what the Roman pope Leo x did. Seeing that Martin Luther was straying from the straight path he first tried to call him back, and when he realized that his fatherly admonishments had no success at all, he condemned Martin Luther as a heretic, based on the broad recommendation of the Fathers and expert theologians. Then he requested that, in accordance with the sentence of the apostolic see, emperor Charles v, as his oldest son and defender, mete out to him the punishment that is customary for heretics, in the manner that used to be employed by the ancient Christian emperors.

REFORMED DELEGATE: This view is not divine but human, not scriptural but profane, that is to say it sprang from man's blind reason that wants to be wiser than God. For it is not likely that we should deliver those who do not want to obey our admonishments to the magistrate. We have | learned from these miseries that only God has the right to rule over the soul and conscience, and that only God is the true avenger of religion when it is harmed.

Princes who are not satisfied with the jurisdiction that God has given them exceed their bounds when they violently arrogate to themselves that jurisdiction which God has reserved for himself alone. For such princes it is not enough that they have absolute control over the bodies and possessions of their subjects: they also seek to take control of these miserable people's souls, which are in reality the property of Christ. Thus, not satisfied with the earth, like the giants they also want to storm the heavens. This is an injustice, for faith cannot be acquired nor can it be taken away or protected by the physical sword. That is why, when we suffer persecution, we do not resist, not even verbally, but we leave it to God to avenge us. We will not act like those who want to appear to be protectors of their gods, and cruelly harass those who do not want to serve them. For Christ's kingdom is not of this world. Therefore the princes should not boast of being protectors of the church of Christ, since that church ought not to be protected by means of weapons. But let he who wants to be a protector of the church take up the sword of Paul and the other apostles and martyrs, not the sword of an Augustus or Nero. For the emperors protect cities and villages with their physical swords, but the apostles protect the church with a spiritual sword, that is to say with the word of the Gospel and with their blood that is their testimony of the word. Let them consider

3 [H. 122]. 13 [Instit. vii.171; A.P. 44]. 17 [A.P. 44 Annot.]. 26 [A.P. 42; 45 Annot.]. 37 [A.P. 3].

whether we can regard as good those who shout from the pulpit not only that it is their duty to deliver the heretics to the magistrate to be put to death, but that it is also their duty to examine the hearts of simple Christians in order to let the magistrate know if on any points of doctrine they hold an opinion that is different from that of the ministers. Oh! These miserable people err with such dishonest intent! For they believe that of all human things there is nothing better than religion. And this is why they think – erroneously – that religion ought to be protected with the greatest force. Indeed, religion does need to be protected, not by beating people to death, but by admonishments. Not with cruelty but with patience. Not with anger but with faith. On the one side are inappropriate means, and on the other side are the right means. It is necessary that in religion we use the right and not inappropriate means. For if you try to protect religion by means of bloodshed, torture, or evil, then instead of protecting religion you will be contaminating and harming it. For nothing is as voluntary a thing as religion, and as soon as the heart of the worshipper is turned away it is gone and stops being religion. The correct means therefore is that you protect religion with long-suffering or death. In this way the faith remains unharmed, which pleases God and raises the respect for religion.

Means towards the defense of religion

Force cannot protect religion, but it can contaminate it.

Religion must be voluntary  
Forbearance is the best protector of religion.

<sup>35</sup><sup>b</sup> GAMALIEL: I am pleased by this view, for it clearly accords with Holy Scripture. Furthermore we regard the Lord Christ himself as the king of his realm. He himself is also the sole foundation of his church. Don't you think that he himself is therefore powerful and dependable enough to protect his own realm and preserve his church? I would be amazed if this were not so. Should we believe that his scepter now no longer rests on his shoulder but on that of the magistrate, and that his church is now supported by the powerful arm of the magistrate? He created his church without, indeed directly against the power and will of all the powerful of this world. Now that the church has been built, don't you think Christ can also protect and maintain her?

Christ is powerful enough to protect the church with his truth

THEODORE BEZA: Let us assume there is a heretic whom we have not been able to persuade. When he has been banished from the church he will gradually gain a number of followers. He will create his own synagogue and teach his nonsense. What should the church and her members do in this case? Let them beseech the Lord, you say, and He will hear them. Certainly, the church will call on the Lord and be protected, no matter what violence Satan uses against her. But although someone who is hungry will

Beza's flawed analogy

call to the Lord, like Eijah he will have to wait until the angel brings him food. Then he will take the food that someone shall give him or that he will have obtained himself by honest and legal means as though he took it from the hand of God.

Now let us assume that there is a Christian magistrate in the church. 5 I ask you which of the two is the proper course of action: should the magistrate who does not want to brook any disturbance or discord among his subjects in worldly matters not (also) use his power when there are conflicts regarding the most important matter in the world, that which is the chief purpose of human society? Or should we allow those who 10 have not received the power of the sword to take upon themselves the punishment and correction of such disturbances? Who does not see that, if the magistrate closes his eyes to dissidence and does not acquit himself of his duty as the matter requires, this puts the public church in that land at great peril of ruin and collapse? And on the other hand who fails to 15 see that if the ministers take upon themselves or assume the task of the magistrate, like the Roman Antichrist did before, this is wrong because it confuses the powers that God has separated from each other and it will lead to an utter confusion in all things?

GAMALIEL: There is much that I do not like in the opinion you expressed, 20 dr. Beza. First of all you posit that the power of the Christian magistrate is the regular instrument for the protection of the church. Where in all of | the New Testament do you read this about the realm of Christ? 35<sup>c</sup>

THEODORE BEZA: Everyone knows that at the time of Christ and the apostles there was no Christian magistrate. Does it follow that because Christ 25 and the apostles did not appeal for help to the magistrate, who was ungodly and against them, the Christians later, when a Christian magistrate existed, should not be allowed to call on him for protection?

GAMALIEL: Let us not be confused about the meaning of the word “protection.” If by this you mean protection from violence done to one’s body, 30 possessions and name, I have no problem with that. But if you mean protection of your doctrine against challenges in the form of writings, books, or words, I cannot accept that.

THEODORE BEZA: You understand quite well that I do not have in mind protection against physical violence, but against attacks by heretics and 35 sectarians.

GAMALIEL: Even if at the time of Christ and the apostles there was no Christian magistrate to whom one could appeal for protection, that does not mean that Christ could not, as well as Moses, have foreseen that later there would be Christian kings. Thus by the same token you may not say, without manifestly denigrating Christ, that Moses cared more for the Jews than did Christ for his people. After all, Moses details the laws for kings who would not reign until several hundred years later. Do you think Christ was so neglectful that he did not utter a word to enjoin upon future rulers this protection of Christ's church and doctrine which you deem so necessary? This cannot be true. Therefore, unlike the weapons of the invincible truth, the power of the magistrate can in no wise be regarded as the normal instrument for the protection of doctrine. Don't you say the same, Beza? Do you yourself not utter the following words: "But what am I saying? If Scripture is not sufficient to solve this and similar differences, then how can we escape the conclusion that Saint Paul is a liar? For it would be as if he told us to rely on a hollow reed to save us from now on from all floods and turbulence. Furthermore, why did he himself assure us that the Antichrist will be defeated with the spirit of God's mouth? If you interpret this verse in Isaiah as a reference to the written Word of God, then why do you deny that this word can be used to resolve the differences that may arise in the church?"

Holy Scripture suffices to protect the church and is the only lawful means to do so.

Those are your own words, dr. Beza, and I regard them as right, unlike your current view. For what other "normal instrument" do you invent here for the termination of quarrels in matters of faith? Why do you now have recourse to the sword of the magistrate in order to solve these differences? In this matter you do not only contradict yourself, but also Holy Scripture and your master, John Calvin. Calvin writes about this clearly, truly and scripturally when he writes about Scripture as follows: "These are the spiritual weapons and the power of God for the destruction of all fortresses. With these we, Christ's warriors, thwart the attacks and lay low any haughty tower raised up against the knowledge of God, and make prisoners of all ingenuity under the obedience to Christ. Lo, this is the supreme power with which the shepherds of the church, no matter by what name they are called, ought to be endowed. They know that with the Word of God they can mercifully achieve anything. They know that they can force all power, glory, wisdom and pride of the world to yield to its majesty; that relying on the power of this Word they can make

God's weapons against heretics

4 [Deuteronomy 17:14]. 13 [T. 107-108]. 18 [2 Thessalonians 2:8]. 20 [Isaiah 11:4]. 28 [Instit. Viii.145]. Calvin, *Institutes* bk. IV ch. 8.9.

Beza contradicts  
his master Calvin

the strongest submit to the humblest; that thus they can build Christ's house and overthrow Satan's house, they can graze the sheep and kill the wolves, they can instruct and admonish those eager to learn, and rebuke, reprimand and subject the recalcitrant, they can bind and unbind, hurl shafts of lightning and if necessary thunderbolts, but all with the Word of God." Those are all words from your master Calvin himself. Could we find anything more at odds with what you said earlier? Your master proposes as the normal, indeed as the only defense and protection of the church the word of God in the mouth of his teachers. Does it therefore beseech you not only to go against him, but against Holy Scripture itself, by abandoning the only true, faithful and dependable aid and protection, and by seeking help and protection for the church and her doctrine from the magistrate, that is to say from people and human power? Does it beseech to have the church and doctrine of Christ rely on the arms of the magistrate for their consolation, refuge, and support?

THEODORE BEZA: I myself write that Christ's realm is not based on the help of humans.

Beza contradicts  
himself

GAMALIEL: You do indeed. It would be a good thing if that were the only case in your writing where you directly contradict yourself! After all, you immediately add the following words: "But that does not mean, Montfort, even if this drives you up the wall, that we should indiscriminately refuse such help when the Lord offers it, or that the ministers act inappropriately when, after the example of the old church, they request the magistrate's help in maintaining the majesty of God and the authority of the Word of God." Those are the words that follow. If, like your master and the apostles, you deem God's word to be sufficient for the protection of the church and her doctrine, without human assistance, which you yourself state does not constitute their foundation, then why do you abandon that sufficient and regular support (the Bible) in order to make do | with powerless and illegal assistance that is neither ordinary nor extraordinary? Is it because the old church did the same? If a means suffices to reach an end, then nothing else is needed. But you want something more than God's Word for the refutation of heretics: you want the magistrate's sword. Is this not adequate proof of the fact that you deem God's Word to be insufficient for the refutation of heretics? What use are the ecclesiastical histories to you in this regard? None. For you yourself denounce the writers of

17 [T. 182]. 20 Montfort is a pseudonym for Sebastian Castellio, whom Beza addresses in this tract.

these ecclesiastical histories as fabulists. But even if we assume that these histories are true, then what do you propose to prove from them in the absence of biblical examples? Would that not come down to saying that we must imitate anything the old church used to do? “The old church  
 5 appealed to the magistrate for protection against the attacks by heretics, therefore we should do the same today.” My dear dr. Beza, tell me, is that a sound argument? Would you be willing to imitate all the examples of the old church? Or are you Ebionizing, and do you wish to return us to the Mosaic rule?

10 THEODORE BEZA: Where do I say that? We are not so naïve as to want to bring the Mosaic laws back into use, but we distinguish in this regard between ethical, ceremonial, and judicial laws. The ethical law, being natural, remains, but that does not apply to the ceremonial law. But the judicial law also remains, for it has been instituted by nature, and not just  
 15 for one people, but for the entire human race.

GAMALIEL: If human nature is so good of itself that it automatically teaches us what God teaches us in Holy Scripture by the spirit of truth, then how can we believe you when you teach that this nature can never produce good thoughts or understanding, nor that it can make people  
 20 believe the latter? For was not the political law that God himself had instituted through Moses good? Now you say that this good law sprang from nature. Reflect whether in this you are not contradicting yourself.

Beza contra-  
dicts himself

Furthermore, in an earlier session we also debated this for awhile, when it was said that if someone wants to preach that today we should  
 25 still follow Moses’ judicial law when it comes to the killing of heretics – this being the reason for which you want to introduce that law – then that person must also prove that he is commissioned by God to keep that law when and where this suits him, and to ignore the rest. Otherwise he will have to keep all the laws. Now the first option is beyond anyone’s power.  
 30 But if someone were to keep all the laws, then among many other aspects that are unacceptable in our situation is polygamy. You would never allow that. So what reason do you have once again to make us shoulder the insufferable burden of the law of Moses? But even if we were to grant you  
 36<sup>#</sup> this point, then how will you prove that | Moses commands the killing of  
 35 heretics, or that it is lawful for you to call on the magistrate to do this? We do not find the word “heretic” in any of the books of Moses, nor in

8 The Ebionites were an early Christian sect that preached continued adherence to the Jewish law. 15 [T. 350–351]. 23 See above, the eighth session.

the entire Old Testament, nor do we encounter the thing itself, that is the heretic. I do realize that you want to subsume heretics under the idolators and blasphemers named in the Bible and subject them to their laws, but who can believe this to be true? Where do we find any heretic today who recommends to us the worship of the sun, the moon, Baal, Astaroth or similar idols related by Moses? Or who can be persuaded that an irate gambler who blasphemes God is a heretic? 5

There you have your fine proof on which you base your assertion that Moses ought to be imitated and that the magistrate must be invoked. Your words are as follows: "Therefore, oh you princes and magistrates, piously wield your sword as often and as much as the magnitude of the crime or the safety of the state shall require, that you may faithfully serve God who put the sword into your hand for the protection of the honor and glory of his majesty. For the salvation of the flock, cut down these monsters in human guise, and follow the example of Moses." Are those not your own words? 15

REFORMED DELEGATE: Verily, unless we are defeated by the Word of God, neither fire nor swords nor the most cruel torments will be able to deter us. That is why we are surprised that there is still talk of placards by means of which they aim to force a religion on the people. As if not enough blood has been shed up to now, because of religion, and as if, both in peace and in war, the physical sword ought to dominate in matters of religion against all piety and justice. It is certain that before they tyrannize our persons, they should win us over with the text of the Bible or the Gospel, without subjecting us to flames instead of reason, without cutting off our tongues and muzzling the mouths of those who want nothing else but to prove that their teachings are based on the most solid rock that can be found, to wit Jesus Christ, whose word is the only spiritual sword that can and should help us here. 20 25

Christ's word  
is the defense  
of Christians  
against heretics

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: We do acknowledge that one can go too far in this confusion. After all, on our side we have had people who, out of compassion and humility, reached the point that they not only refused to use the power of the magistrate because they had a different view from ours and despised our church laws, but they were willing to hear the preaching of those whose teachings differed from ours. In these cases such preaching was not forbidden and people were allowed to hear this deviant preach- 30 35

2 {This argument occurs in Castellio, e.g. in *Conseil à la France désolée* (1562), M.F. Valkhoff (ed.) (Geneva Droz, 1967), 57 ff.} 10 [T. 131]. 19 [C. 111, C. 211].

ing. One of those who allowed this was the cardinal of Lorraine himself,  
 36<sup>c</sup> who said, in the great conference in France held before the king, that | he  
 was in principle of the view, regarding people who, without recourse to  
 arms and out of fear of being damned, attended preaching, sang Psalms,  
 5 did not attend the mass and followed other particular rules, that the king  
 ought to forbid them to do so. But since so far the punishments had not  
 always been effective he felt that these folks should no longer be subjected  
 to judicial punishments, for he was very unhappy that with regard to the  
 latter such severe executions had been inflicted. But is it likely that you,  
 10 who have just started likewise to resort to executions by invoking the help  
 of the magistrate, would be willing to abandon this policy soon? Not those  
 of you, certainly, who do not care if people cruelly slander them because  
 of this policy.

THEODORE BEZA: Who are guilty of that?

15 CATHOLIC DELEGATE: I believe that you yourself have done this several  
 times, dr. Beza.

THEODORE BEZA: Think all you want.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: Not only do I think so, but I know so, and I am  
 easily able to cite some relevant passages, starting for example with your  
 20 following statement: “Surely, when one of the faithful ministers requests  
 the lawful help of the magistrate against the insolence of the heretics  
 whom he has not been able to subdue by oft-repeated admonishments,  
 but whose heresy has in fact expanded and waxed bigger than before,  
 then people will immediately say that he is inhuman and cruel.” Tell me,  
 25 dr. Beza: since you say of us, when we do the same thing, that we dis-  
 pute not by means of the Word of God, but by means of the power of  
 the magistrate, fire, and sword, can the same thing therefore not truly be  
 said of you by others, when they see you act the same way against others?  
 Or when they read where you write as follows: “Why should the minis-  
 30 ters therefore not be allowed to appeal to the magistrate to request that  
 he use his power to suppress a ravenous wolf who has remained entirely  
 unmoved by the ministers’ instruction?” What else can others who read  
 this passage conclude, I repeat, except that in doing this you are using the  
 same methods and try to accomplish the same things as we did before?  
 35 Can it be right that you denounce us for Antichrist-like cruelty when we

Beza wants to  
 be cruel yet not  
 be seen as cruel

Beza advocates  
 calling on the  
 magistrate for help  
 against heretics

2 {The gathering at Fontainebleau, August 21–26, 1560. La Place, *Commentaires*, 67}.

6 [C. 103]. 24 [T. 115]. {Beza, *T.A.M.*, 185–186}. 32 [T. 162].

do this, and that when you do it it counts as an act of “Christian mercy towards the sheep”? “May the Lord save us from such mercy!” said a lawyer who stood before such “merciful” judges. If you deem our counsel in this matter wrong, then why do you imitate us? If our counsel is right, then why do you denounce us for it? 5

THEODORE BEZA: Why should I not approve of a counsel which so many faithful princes, so many famous republics and so many holy churches have not been ashamed to follow collectively and unanimously? A counsel, I say, without which the church today would already have been suppressed by the evil and criminal Anabaptists who would have ruled over it? This is why I repeat here that if the magistrate tacitly allows such miscreants and does not acquit himself of his task as the situation demands, he places the church in great danger and leads her to her destruction. 10

The magistrate's sword is the foundation and support of Beza's church

Beza writes against the teachings of his master Calvin.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: From now on do not try to have us believe, dr. Beza, that in this matter you agree with your master. But the latter should ponder whether later on he does not contradict himself, for he said exactly the opposite when he wrote the following words: “Nonetheless people ascribe too much power to themselves when they expect better results from following their own counsels than from the means that God has prescribed for them.” What? Do they imagine that God is blind and careless, thoughtlessly putting his church in danger? After all, since he is the best ruler of everything, we are able to overcome all tangled difficulties with this one adage of Abraham: “God will provide.” Could it be that we, God willing, care for human society, but that God the Creator is not always concerned with caring for that society? Could it be that the church has been miserably abandoned by her only president and protector, and now has been left to our care? 15 20 25

Beza wants to be wiser than God.

That is what master John Calvin writes about this, and he shows that at the time when he wrote it he had more faith in God and his truth than Beza does here – or, for that matter, than he himself did afterwards, when he appealed to the magistrate for help and protection, not against someone's violence, but against errors or heresies. And these are the folks who want to censure us for what they themselves praise by imitation! 30

GAMALIEL: If it is possible to speak the truth without causing sadness to anyone, then let me say that those who call on the magistrate for protec- 35

13 [T. 296]. 20 [Calvin De Scanda. 148–149]. {Calvin, *De scandalo*, in *Tractatus theologici* (Amsterdam, 1667), p. 89}. 23 Genesis 22:8.

tion of their doctrine clearly show by that action that they have no faith in the truth and that they seek support in human powers. Two things are especially of note here: first, whose task it is to defend against false teachings, and second, what weapons should be used. Holy Scripture regularly  
 5 testifies that this is the task of the ministers, and not of the civil magistrate. To cite just one passage: the apostle Paul says the following about  
 37<sup>A</sup> a bishop: “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, | that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” Dr. Calvin says very aptly about this statement, that a bishop  
 10 must have two voices: one to convene the sheep and gather them, but the other to harass and chase off the wolves, that is: to refute the enemies of the truth.

Whose task it is to defend against false teaching.

With regard to the means, that is the weapons used to resist false doctrine, anyone can see, also from Calvin’s own words cited above – and  
 15 I am leaving out the clear words of the apostle himself on defeating the gainsayers – that the truth provides these means. Or should we think that the truth alone, without the magistrate’s sword, is too weak and unable to achieve this purpose? Whoever believes that implies that the almighty truth is more feeble than are vain lies, and whoever, out of mistrust in  
 20 the truth, seeks other help deems the truth by herself too weak to defeat the lie. Is that a way to give due honor to Christ, who is himself the truth? David proved his trust in God when he rejected the royal weapons offered to him by king Saul. Or did he, as Beza said, tempt God when he refused the means handed to him by the king himself, like the one [Elijah] who  
 25 waited for the bread brought by the angel? David and Paul knew in whom they trusted, and by that showed that they knew God’s omnipotence and faithfulness. But can that also be true of those who do not have faith in the power of the all-powerful truth against the insignificant lie, and who request and have faith in the help of fragile people? Does not Calvin him-  
 30 self say, with regard to the aforementioned passage addressed to Titus, that the truth revealed by the Lord easily vanquishes all lies? He surely does. Those are his own words, and I must assume that Beza also read them. Thus, if they really believe that, then why do they so shamefully dishonor the all-powerful truth that they mistrust and abandon it and  
 35 seek consolation, protection and help for the defeat of lies from feeble humans? Does the church, which is built on the rock of Christ, need any other foundations and protections against the gentle waves of the sea, and

What weapons should be used to resist false doctrine

against wind and rain? How can we escape the conclusion that all those who seek the help of the magistrate for protection of the true doctrine and the church against the lie and heresy, out of fear that the church will fall and be ruined, do not know truth itself, however much they vaunt that they do? That they mistrust the all-powerful truth, diminish its honor 5 that cannot be praised enough, and ascribe that honor to people, to wit: to the magistrate?

REFORMED DELEGATE: Gamaliel speaks well, even though some of our leaders teach differently. But the latter are also human and can err in some things, as the entire Roman church erred miserably on this point. Let us 10 see with what weapons our forebears, the old | Fathers, triumphed over 37<sup>B</sup> the heretics of their times. We need to try all means to pull up all those who have sunk in the morass of error. We should not be like those who, when they see that a person, or an animal being loaded on to a boat, has fallen into the canal, give that creature an extra kick with their feet. No, 15 we should without hesitation help all those who desire our help. Whoever does differently lacks charity. In other words, they hate the people more than they hate their shortcomings. Let us pray God unceasingly for them, and let us do all that we can, as long as there is hope that we may convert these people. Sweetness will be more helpful than severity. “Let us 20 get rid of the devilish names of partisanship, quarrel and rebellion, such as ‘Lutherans,’ ‘Huguenots’ and ‘papists.’ But let us not remove the name of Christians.” But from now on let us strive to be adorned with virtues and good morals, and then assail them (the heretics) with the weapons of love, prayer, persuasion and the words of God which are well-suited for 25 this battle. As the saying goes, a good life is more convincing than words. The sword is of little use against the spirit. At most it will cause the perdition of body and soul. What has been achieved in this matter by the help and sword of the magistrate? Has heresy been destroyed? Far from that: it has in fact increased. Myriads of people have been killed as Christians be- 30 cause of the truth, or as sheep because of their ignorance. This has led to the emergence of many heresies. Could this be the desired result? Do we ourselves not speak these words in our request to the arch-duke Matthias: “Although they have diligently striven to extirpate the [Reformed] reli- 35 gion by all possible means, it has nonetheless become clear, sir, that the more they killed and persecuted, the more the number (of the Reformed)

Sweetness is more helpful than severity  
The right weapons against heretics

The sword does not help against the spirit

The killing of heretics breeds heretics.

23 {Cited from Michel de l’Hospital’s opening remarks to the Estates General of 1560, cited in Joseph Lecler and Marius-François Valkhoff (eds.), *Les premiers défenseurs de la liberté religieuse* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1969), vol. 1, 67–71}.

increased.” The princes themselves are starting to notice these results of the miserable executions. They learn from their experience and are looking for another remedy. Should we then cling stubbornly to that false and murderous remedy, and continue to appeal to the magistrate? If we go  
 5 down this road again, will we not sink once more into the abyss of civil war?

THEODORE BEZA: It is the task of the magistrate, if all else fails, to risk the external peace in order to keep and maintain the purity of the true service of God in his country. This means that the princes should use the power  
 10 given to them by God for the protection, maintenance and expansion of religion against all enemies, internal and external, even if – when this cannot be avoided – this should lead to the utmost confusion in the entire republic, causing harm to their private citizens.

The magistrate must risk the external peace for the sake of the true religion

REFORMED DELEGATE: If what dr. Beza says is correct, then I do not see  
 37<sup>c</sup> how we can justify not only what the king of France | did, but also the actions of the States General of the Netherlands. Out of love for the prosperity of the land and the general peace they allowed us to have and practice our religion. But I also wonder how one will justify what we ourselves have done when we insistently advised and incited them to do just  
 20 that. For if they did wrong in this, then how can we have been right when we advised them to do it? Do we ourselves not insinuate, in our request to the arch-duke and the councils of the States [of the Netherlands], that if our religion and its practice are not permitted this will make the subjects rebellious and lead the country to perdition? In that request we state  
 25 explicitly that after so much bloodshed Germany and France could find no other way to stop the violence except by tolerating both religions. Is this not what the States General are saying at the peace negotiations in Cologne, in the twelfth article submitted there, which concerns the means to preserve the peace? Did they use any means in order to be able to pre-  
 30 serve the tolerance of our religion and its practice other than to pretend that peace and tranquility would ensue? Now if dr. Beza is right in what he opined earlier, then the States and we ourselves (at whose request this was brought up) acted wrongfully and have sinned against God. I hope that is not true, and I cannot believe it, with no offense to the honorable  
 35 dr. Beza.

1 [C.27. v.] {Request dated June 22, 1578 – this request was quoted at length in the eleventh Session: see above\*, p. 95, note 268}. 13 [T. 292]. {Beza, *T.A.M.*, 293 and 306}. 29 [A.P., fol. 21].

But if the princes could be persuaded [to protect religion], will they be able to succeed in their endeavor during their lifetime? Will they be able to free the churches from scandals, heresies and the attacks by heretics? We know that the answer is no: for just as religion cannot be planted in the human heart by force of arms, likewise heresy cannot be rooted out from the heart by force of arms. This is what the States General of the Netherlands state.

Religion cannot be planted by force; heresy cannot be eradicated with weapons

5

Only one of two things can be true: the religion that one wants to destroy through an appeal to the power of the magistrate is either false or true. If she is false, then she is based on lies. If the all-powerful truth is incapable to put these lies to shame, to defeat and destroy them, then no poor human sword or force will be able to accomplish this, and it is useless to try it. If the religion is true, then she is based on the all-powerful truth itself. Who would be able to destroy the truth, even if all the kings in the world should desire this and conspire to this end, and strive for it with all their power? Master Calvin understood this well when he wrote as follows: “Those who believe that they can easily accomplish their plans by means of swords and flames do not realize this in the least. But they will be deceived, for whatever they try and do, the Word of God will be a fortress and it will overcome all obstacles that have been put in its way to block it, and the church will grow even in the midst of the persecutions. For there is no other means for the eradication of godless sects and heresies except to make room for the pure truth of God. Its splendor alone will banish the darkness. Experience | gives us ample evidence of this.” These are Calvin’s words. I agree with them and regard them as true.

The truth is the only means for the eradication of heresy.

10

15

20

37<sup>p</sup>

25

Now if it is true that it is not within the power of the magistrate to suppress true doctrine, and that this is not appropriate for the suppression of heresies either, which is a task that the truth is much better suited to accomplish, then would it not be pure folly to bring people and countries to perdition in order to accomplish something which they have to admit is impossible?

30

We can read such opinions also in some of our writings – I mean written by the Reformed, and expressed so humbly that I will gladly relate and you, gentlemen, will gladly hear these words: “There are those,” he says, “who think that when the sword is put away in the scabbard, this immediately means the end of religion. We would certainly be doing the Lord

35

24 [Calvin, *Instruct.*, book 69]. {Unclear reference}. 34 [Acontius, 95]. The following passages are taken from Jacopo Acontius, *Stratagemata Satanae* (Basel, 1565); in the 1652 edition (Amsterdam), 146–149).

a grave injustice if we imagined that he is asleep and that he does not care at all about his people; or that He is unable to protect his Gospel without a sword. As if his Word has no power whatsoever and Christians pinned all their hopes on the sword. When Satan's deceit had spread everywhere and Satan himself was in control, the power of the Word was nevertheless so great that it succeeded in driving Satan from his mighty and sturdy kingdom. Now if we consider that, is it likely that that same Word of God is completely powerless and impotent against the blunt and broken arrows of Satan? Be reassured. The Lord does not sleep, he is awake. If only we place all our hope in Him, if only we fight with his Word, but inspired by his spirit (which can be obtained through steady prayer), and vigilantly and wisely avoid Satan's deceitfulness, then we have nothing whatsoever to fear from heretics. Let the truth prudently enter the battlefield against deceit. In the end truth will necessarily have the upper hand. Therefore, if there are some who raise new controversies every day, who spawn new quarrels, who rage against the ministers and cause trouble, let them stop for a moment and think: What does Satan want to accomplish with this? He comes to attack the truth of the Gospel. But is that all? How is that? Is he doing this with yet another, greater purpose in mind? I mean that he is busy (and this thanks to your actions) laying the foundations for a new tyranny, in order to put it into action in the future against the pious servants of God, and thus to destroy the Gospel itself once he is in full control.

So what do you say to this, you who claim to be on fire for the honor of God? You who believe that you love the truth of the Gospel so much? You who think that you are entirely devoted to the wellbeing of the church? What, I repeat, will you do? Will you leave and join forces with Satan? Will you enter his service? Will you give him the tools and send him the bricks? Will your sweat mix with the sweat of Satan's slaves? Will you thus assist in laying the foundations of such a great evil, | and only in order to avoid temporary difficulties? What of that? Did Satan not do this in order to take the weapons that he fears the most from your hands and to draw you to weapons that he does not fear at all and holds in great disdain? It is certain that he does not care a fig about iron (weapons) and similar horrors, since there is nothing that he fears more or finds more irresistible than the Word of God.

Satan does not fear iron or steel, but he fears God's Word.

When the  
magistrate's sword  
protects doctrine  
the shepherds  
turn into lazy  
and unlearned  
Epicurean swine.

But verily, if he succeeds one day in getting the shepherds to comply, so that if anyone so much as dares to cough they call for the executioner to cut all knots by the sword, then what need would there be for the study of Holy Scripture? They will surely realize that they no longer have much need for that. For then they can foist on their poor people whatever they 5 have dreamed up, and their dignity and position will still be protected. Woe to us and to who will come after us, if we cast from us the only weapon that we have been permitted to use in this struggle and that will always bring us victory!

But, you may say, the insolence and quarrelsomeness of some is so 10 extreme and unbearable that it is necessary to suppress it with other weapons than only the Word. Do you want me to tell you what I think of that? Verily, this is the same as if a soldier – and one who moreover boasts that he exceeds all others in piety – says that his enemy fights so bravely and so mightily that he is forced to cast away his gun and obey his en- 15 emy. Oh, an excellent soldier indeed! Isn't it just like Satan to create such marvelously corrupt people to harass the servants of God? But should we therefore, since they perform Satan's work so diligently, also do what Satan wants us to do most of all? This, I say, is the chief goal of Satan's efforts, to tear the weapon of the Word from our hands and to have us enter the 20 battlefield with another kind of weapon, one that he provides us with and which he disdains. Now because this is what Satan wants to achieve most of all, because he fights unceasingly for this and selects soldiers who are well-suited to the execution of his designs, does that mean that we should also obey him? Should we cast away the weapons that alone can render us 25 victorious and take up weapons that will immediately bring us defeat and which will soon turn against us to cut our throats? Let us rather, through thick and thin, hold on to the weapon of God's Word, let us only fight with that weapon in hand and let us strive therewith to destroy Satan and all his messengers." 30

GAMALIEL: Because of its importance, we have dwelt on this topic for a long time and I feel that valuable things were said. Regarding those who, lacking in trust and without an express command, indeed against 38<sup>B</sup> an explicit prohibition, seek and put their trust in a defense, protection, | 35 and weapon other than the truth and the Word of God itself, a Word whose sole task it is to put to shame and defeat the lies, falsehoods and heresies of the heretics – regarding them, let me reiterate that they do not duly honor God, his promises and his truth in Jesus Christ. Is it not

38 [Isaiah 11:4; Psalms 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 2:8].

an obvious sign of mistrust in God if one mistrusts his son Jesus Christ, the eternal and all-powerful truth? Does Jesus not promise his followers that he will be present until the world ends? Does it not show mistrust in God when a person who knows that God is with him is afraid of another person? Is God not with his church? And if God is with his church, then who can be against her, let alone defeat her? He is their strong city, their shield, their protector, help and mighty warrior who fights for them. Can this all-powerful and mighty Creator of heaven and earth be defeated by anyone? His omnipotence breaks the bow and shield and sword and heads of his enemies; he lays siege to his enemies, breaks their walls of steel, fights in person among the mighty, triumphs over his enemies and mocks the godless existence of the kings whose hearts are all in his hands, so that he may bend them as he wills. Should those who know that such an all-powerful God is with them be afraid of ruin or destruction? Or can God be with people who manifest so openly their great fear of defeat? Or could it be that our faithful God has become unfaithful to his solid promises and has unfaithfully left his children when they are in need? This is as impossible for him to do as it is for him to abandon himself and his divinity. For his faithfulness consists in that He keeps his promises and fulfills his words, and that he cares for his faithful. He assists his faithful, he keeps away the enemies, he strengthens his flock and scatters those who hate his people, he delivers us from temptation, covers the just with his right hand and protects those who know his name, who live a simple life and put their trust in him. In truth, should those who know that they have on their side such an all-powerful, true and faithful helper fear that they will be vanquished and destroyed by the hollow and worthless lie? Could they harbor this fear when they know that such a helper is on their side? Can those who do not know this rightfully call themselves believers? Can they call themselves God's people, or the church of Christ?

JEZONIAS: The Catholics along with some of the Reformed say yes to the question of whether it is Scriptural that church leaders seek the help of the magistrate to protect their doctrine. Quite a few of the Reformed, along with Gamaliel, disagree and say explicitly "no" to the proposition.

3 [Matthew 28:20]. 6 [Romans 8:31]. | [Isaiah 26:1]. 7 [2 Kings 22:3]. {Incorrect: should be 2 Samuel 22:3}. | [Judges 6:13; Jeremiah 20:11]. 9 [Genesis 17:1; Genesis 46:3]. 10 [Psalms 75:4; Psalms 76:2]. Unclear references. 13 [1 Kings 26:8; Psalms 106:16; Jud. 5:13; Isaiah 9:11; Ecclesiastes 4:33; Psalms 2:4; Proverbs 21:1]. 1 Samuel 26:8. Not all references are clear. 19 [Acts 13:33; Ezra 9:8; Psalms 93:18; 1 Peter 5:7; 2 Timothy 4:17; Soph. 3:15; Psalms 17:41; 1 Peter 8:9; sap. 5:17; Psalms 90:14; Proverbs 2:7; Psalms 90:2-5]. Psalms 93; Psalms 17:13-14; Not all references clear.

Those who say yes cite some examples and also deem it necessary for the church which, they say, will of necessity collapse if this instrument of the protection by the magistrate is not utilized. This, they claim, would be nothing less | than to taunt God insolently. Since God has not given <sup>38c</sup> us pious princes for nothing, they are bound rather to bring their land <sup>5</sup> and subjects to perdition than to neglect the honor of God. The other Reformed and Gamaliel counter that the protection of true doctrine is the domain of those who know it well, to wit: the ministers themselves and not the princes. Not the latter, but the ministers or shepherds were commanded to do so, not with the steel swords that are the weapons of <sup>10</sup> princes, but with the word of God of the shepherds. That is why those who reject the prescribed sword, that is Holy Scripture, and use the sword that is alien to this spiritual realm, to wit the secular magistrate, act wrongfully. They do this out of a lack of trust in God's weapons, dishonoring God while none of their objectives, which are the reduction of the num- <sup>15</sup> ber of heresies and heretics, are actually reached at all. Indeed, experience shows that such force leads to the increase of heresies.

These and other causes and reasons were discussed more broadly on both sides and were, as I see, recorded by our secretary. May the Lord expedite the return of our honorable President, so we can hear his decision <sup>20</sup> on this as on the other issues and see it put into practice. Amen.

*Denouncing Mercifulness, Praising  
Severity, and Recommending  
Bloodshed in Matters of Faith*

5 Participants: Jezonias, Catholic Delegate, Reformed Delegate, John Calvin, Theodore Beza, Gamaliel

JEZONIAS: Since it is a punishment for the good if we save the wicked, and no one can be found who is more wicked or harmful than the person who corrupts the people and kills them forever in their spirit, which is the  
10 noblest human possession, there are those who consider it to be a cruel mercy if we save the heretics, the corrupters and murderers of unwise souls. Therefore, they say, such heretics ought to be punished with the utmost severity, and that doing this shows mercy towards one's neighbor, in preventing his eternal perdition.

15 Others disagree. They point to the uncertainty of this matter regarding the knowledge of who is a heretic, as well as the chance that the power of the ecclesiastical and secular authorities comes into the hands of the godless who will condemn Christ's members as heretics, as has happened so many times, and who will thus perpetrate a horrible sin against Christ  
20 himself, causing irreparable damage. This is why they see it as brash cruelty to invite the ministers, who are often | more zealous than wise, and  
38<sup>p</sup> the princes who are seldom if ever pious, to exert tyranny over pious Christians. Under those circumstances, they say, it constitutes merciless cruelty to kill people on such uncertain grounds. Therefore it would be  
25 better to let ten seducers or heretics live than to kill one true member of Christ.

This is the issue that our president, Master Daniel, considered to be important and deserving of due deliberation, and it is his earnest wish that you gentlemen, assembled here, would give it your serious attention  
30 and considered opinion.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: We are well aware of what Calvin has done in the case of Servetus, and how he has taught in a published tract that heretics ought to be punished by law. Servetus's followers cry out that Calvin, being unable to defeat Servetus with Scripture, had recourse to force and the sword. But far be it from us to decry Calvin's action against Servetus. After all, we would have been only too happy if what Calvin did to Servetus had been done in 1527 to the first and chief architect of all these sects. That would have been a paramount example of divine mercy! For then many thousands of peasants would have been saved, who were not only robbed of their freedom by means of the "freedom of the Gospel" that is being preached today, but who were also led to a harsher servitude, for many of them perished physically and spiritually as a result. Furthermore, there would not have been so many princes taken prisoner or killed, or so many noblemen defeated, or so many miseries visited on Germany. We would not have these spiritual tyrants, such as Brenz, Calvin, Schwenckfeld, and those masses of Picards and Anabaptists who, despite the fact that they assailed the souls of many people in such a horrible manner nonetheless believed that they were done a grave injustice when they suffered any persecution at the hands of the Christians and regular believers. Nonetheless these folks, being themselves heretics, persecute their own heretics and they – whose own beliefs differ from those of all of Christendom – do not want to tolerate those who believe differently than they do.

Jerome wrote very aptly that a spark is a tiny thing and easily overlooked at first sight. But when it catches and the fire is fed, it will devour walls, towns, forests and landscapes. Likewise the leaven seems to be a small and negligible thing, but when it is mixed with flour its power will make it rise and all that it has been blended with will take on its nature. In the same manner false teachings begin with one person and will at first hardly gain two or three listeners. But gradually the cancer spreads through the body and, as the saying goes, one rotten apple will spoil the barrel. That is why that spark must | be extinguished as soon as it manifests itself, the leaven separated from the dough, the rotting member cut off and the rotten apple removed from the barrel, so that the entire house, the dough, the body and the barrel do not burn, rise or perish. Arius was just a spark in Alexandria, but because he was not extinguished right away

Better to cut off  
a rotten member  
than have the  
whole body perish

3 [Hosius, 241.b 250]. {The Catholic's statement is taken from Hosius's *Confutatio*, v, 602–603, with references to St. Jerome, St. Bernard and St. John Chrysostom. The tract referred to is Calvin's *Déclaration pour maintenir la vraie foi* (Geneva, 1554)}. 16 The Picards were a Moravian sect found in Bohemia and in the Flemish Netherlands.

his flame destroyed the entire world. Likewise Luther was just a spark in Saxony, but because he was not stopped right away such a fire was lit that it is impossible to tell the story without weeping. What St. Bernard said was apt, when he wrote that the wicked person must be removed so that he does not infect others, and that it is better for one to perish than for the church as a whole to go down. But Chrysostom also said: If someone were to come with fire to set alight and destroy this church and wanted to demolish the altar, would not all of you assembled here stone that person to death as a criminal and felon? So what is one to do with him who, with a flame that is much more devouring, dares to destroy the temples that are not made of stone or altars not made of gold, but temples that are much more precious than these walls or this altar? Tell me, would such a person merit mercy?

Nothing can be said that is more true. If this hellish blaze had been extinguished before it set a house on fire, then we would not see so many fires today in Christendom. This is so true that someone said: He who saves the wicked is cruel to the good. He who shows mercy to the godless heretics tyrannizes the pious. One is of the utmost cruelty if in punishing the heretics one wants to appear kindly and merciful. If king Saul suffered heavy punishment for saving Agag, king of the Amalekites because of his ill-considered mercifulness, then how much more severe will be the punishments that the princes may expect who not only refrain from punishing the heretics, but who even give them places to live in their country, heedless of the fact that many people are being infected with these pestilential errors! Verily, they are just as guilty as the very people by whom the poor flock is being seduced with various strange teachings, and will just like them be relegated to the abyss of hell and the eternal fire. Thus both will be subject to the same punishment on that terrible day when heaven and earth will be moved.

Mercy to the heretics is cruelty to the innocent.

Those who save the heretics will be punished by God, together with the heretics.

REFORMED DELEGATE: Anyone who has read our creed or our confession of faith as it was clearly expressed in our letter to the king of Spain and in the book that followed can easily see how alien from Holy Scripture and how made up of human ingenuity we believe their view to be. For in that letter we wrote as follows: “We humbly request in the name of Him who has established you | in your kingdom and who protects you, that you will not allow your ire to be ignited against us by those who,

21 1 Samuel 15. 33 [B.d.g. 7]. *Bekentenisse of Belijdenisse des gheloofs, int gemeyn, ende eendrachtelicken vanden gheloovigen die inde Nederlanden overe al verstroyt zijn* ([Delft], 1566), 7.

prompted by spite, ambition and other evil impulses have turned to you to use your support, authority and power to satisfy their wishes and to slake their thirst for the blood of your subjects, embellishing and cloaking their deeds with an honest zeal of God-fearing piety and using words such as rebellion, dissidence, harmfulness and the like.” And we go on to say in this tract: “There are chiefly two kinds of people who approach us as if we are raving animals, and who do their utmost to turn you away by any means from your natural benevolence and goodness and to turn you into participants in their bloody and raging cruelty. Rather than by reason, one kind is prompted by an unreasoning zeal and love for some religion (without knowing which one) which is only based on a general and age-old error. The other kind persecute us, not because we disturb their devotion – for they have none – but because the Gospel (in agreement with which we desire to reform ourselves) is the opposite of their godlessness, spitefulness, ambition, whoring, murderousness, drunkenness and other evils wherein they wallow and roll about like beasts. Regarding the first kind we know that they belong to those of whom Jesus Christ says that they think they offer God a service by delivering us to death. They appear to be innocent to human eyes, but verily they are guilty before God. It follows that the religion that they promote with such cruelty is not grounded in the Word of God but in their fantasy and the opinions of their forebears.”

THEODORE BEZA: There are those who are looking everywhere for ways to confiscate the goods of poor people. They constantly whisper fiery exhortations into the ears of the princes, telling them that they must mete out due punishment to these rebels and blasphemers – lo, these are the names they use for the true Christians. Immediately harsh placards are produced which only speak of burning and killing, so that one would think that they had been written in blood rather than ink. Such a placard told Pilate to crucify Christ lest he would lose favor with the emperor. The cardinals for their part will also make their moves, as will the fiendish bishops, priests, canons, monks and all the other vermin of the Antichrist! Even though the judges know in their heart that this is going on and see with their own eyes these proofs, they nonetheless deliver these poor and innocent children of God into the hands of the executioner. They do this because they receive part of the loot, or because they want to ingratiate themselves with the king and with the prominent members of the court, or, in the case of

those who are ignorant rather than smart, because they are beholden to the conscience of the theologians. Behold the tyranny of the papists!

39<sup>c</sup> CATHOLIC DELEGATE: We see what you choose to call “tyranny” or cruelty as pure mercy. You see it the same way, but you praise in yourselves what  
5 you blame us for doing. How can one and the same thing be a virtue and a sin?

THEODORE BEZA: Easily. Just as it is a sin to kill Christians, but a virtue to kill heretics. You do the former, we the latter.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: It is the same old song. You say this as a judge in  
10 your own cause, but it has not yet been determined by any impartial judge. If we can err in judging a heretic, so that while thinking we are having heretics put to death the ones being executed are actually children of God, then why are all of you angels or even omniscient gods who cannot err? Who will assure us of this? If we are wrong in deeming mercifulness when  
15 applied to the saving of heretics to be cruelty and in urging the princes to kill those whom we condemn as heretics, then certainly you can also err when you do the same, for almost all your coreligionists do as we do. Who is crying out louder nowadays than you against sparing the heretics, which you too call a cruel mercy?

20 JOHN CALVIN: I don’t think you are right, but I do know very well that today our greatest enemies are the papists, who have received the same baptism as we have and confess belief in Christ, and yet fanatically persecute us and wish our utter annihilation because we reject their superstitions and idol worship. And there is nothing that enrages the popes more  
25 against the evangelical doctrine that has now been reborn, making them use all their power to suppress it and to incite all kings and princes to cruelty, than that they realize that their entire dominion will disappear and collapse if Christ’s gospel progresses unimpeded. This is why these days the papacy is in the grips of such abominable viciousness, which will not  
30 escape God’s horrible punishment.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: If you don’t think, dr. Calvin, that your coreligionists cry out against the sparing of heretics as a “cruel mercy,” in the same manner that we also oppose such mercy, then let us take one instance that will serve as an example for all. This example will be provided by

24 [Commentary on Isaiah 34:5; Institute viii.129]. {Calvin’s comments are based on a combination of his commentary on Isaiah 34:5, the *Institutes* and the *Déclaration*}.

28 [S.C. 25]. 34 [T. 250].

Beza complains  
about the princes'  
benevolence to-  
wards the heretics

your disciple, Beza, who reproaches the magistrate for his mildness in the punishment of heretics, as follows: "I can frankly state before God and his angels that all the vices that we see at loose these days in the church and that to our great chagrin we are forced to tolerate, are the result of the following vile cause: that the | princes have decided not to join and show a solid front with the true ministers of the church. This is in part because they do not understand what their task is, partly because they themselves were corrupt and partly due to weakness, which they who seek to flatter them falsely call "clemency" and "benevolence." Another cause of this are some crafty foxes who by surreptitious means manage to sneak into God's sheep's pen. These foxes, who had no respect for the keys of the church, should have been shown the sword wherewith God has armed the magistrate, but the latter did not use that sword as severely as he should have." Those are dr. Beza's own words. Is that not the same as what I said at the start of this meeting? Does he not also blame the weakness of the princes with regard to punishment as the cause of all these different sects? Does he not condemn such mercy as cruelty, just as we do? In the same book, does he not call those who feel that the wolves ought to be spared the most cruel people in the world? I therefore believe that this is precisely the same as our opinion in this matter. Is it thus right that he blames us for that opinion? Looking at the passage that immediately follows in Beza's book, one will read the following: "...(T)ell me, my dear man, what kind of goodness is this, when one is nice to the villainous and cruel wolves, so that they can at will tear to pieces the poor innocent sheep that were bought by the blood of Jesus Christ? What kind of patience is this, which allows these strange monsters to destroy the Lord's vineyard? What kind of benevolence is it to see the name of the Lord wronged in several ways without being disturbed by this? Shame, therefore, on what is extreme cruelty rather than love, which in order to save I don't know how many wolves delivers Jesus Christ's flock to robbers!" Those are again the words of Beza himself.

Can anyone therefore still doubt that just like us you condemn that cruel mercy that many unwise, impious or weak princes are guilty of when they spare those heretical killers of souls and those cruel wolves who devour Christ's little sheep? That is what we do too. We acknowledge that and we do not criticize you for that. But we do criticize that you, who are yourselves heretics who deserve to die, nonetheless deem yourselves to be Christians and us to be heretics or idol-worshippers. Furthermore,

19 [T. 53-54]. 30 [T. 58; 131].

not only do we know, but we are also deeply pained by the terrible harm that such seducers and killers of souls do to simple folk. We are therefore not ashamed to show our Christian compassion for those poor sheep in order to save them from seduction as best as we can. We do this by advising the princes that they are obligated to punish such seducers severely, and by beseeching these Christian princes to fight against such satanic and crafty snares laid by those who attack their realms under the guise of the Gospel, and by telling them to use their weapons to resist them, since it is for that reason, and that reason alone, that God has put the sword  
 5 into their hands: to protect the good | and to punish the wicked.  
 40<sup>a</sup>

Can anyone deny that heresy is evil and a capital crime? Or that the heretic is a deadly evil? Saint Paul said it. Therefore the heretic ought also to be punished by death and to be subjected to the sword of the magistrate. Thus our request is reasonable, saintly, and Catholic, accompanied  
 15 by the express commandment of God which ordains you, oh princes, to honor and grant us this request. This decree is expressed many times in many different passages. He (God) speaks of the idolators and pagans who have turned away from the law. Today Christians regard and count the heretics among them as such. The words of the said law are as follows:  
 20 “See to it that you never befriend, ally yourselves with or marry them. Make sure not to let them live in your country. Do not show mercy. No, cut them down and destroy them, that is: kill them!” There you have our counsel in this matter, this is what we urge the princes to do, and we can do this with God and with honor, so that we do not have to be ashamed  
 25 of this at all. But how can you denounce us for this, yet imitate us with regard to others? We know that in the beginning, when they were weak, many of your followers abhorred the persecutors (as they called us and the Christian magistrate). But afterwards, when they attained to a position of power, they left the weapons of Christ (as they called the Word  
 30 of God) and took up the weapons of the Pharisees (as they called them), without which they could not protect themselves.

The Catholics  
incite the princes  
to kill heretics

THEODORE BEZA: These words that were uttered are so wrong that they may not be applied to the words from the books on which I based most of my *Treatise on the Authority of the Magistrate in the Punishment of*  
 35 *Heretics*. If you do you are acting craftily and blatantly slandering me.

10 [C. 148]. 1 Peter 2:13–14; Romans 13:3–4. 12 [C. 155]. 22 {Cf. Deuteronomy 7:1–3; Joshua 23:12–13; Exodus 34:11–16}. 26 [T. 187]. 35 [T. 287].

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: That is a denial of such a manifest truth that it cannot be contradicted except by the lie itself. For we have already established earlier that at first overall you greatly lamented the killing of your people by the princes. Who does not see this? Furthermore, who does not see that now, having attained to power, you have wrenched away the keys from the hands of Saint Peter and taken up the sword of St. Paul with which, by means of your magistrate, you have slain Servetus, Valentin Gentile and others? After all, who has not read the books you both [Calvin and Beza] wrote and published to prove that this was right? Do you yourself not say, oh Beza, in your book against those who disagreed with you in this regard, that the function of the magistrate requires that an apt and severe punishment be meted out to them? Why did you say this? Because they see it as wrong that you teach that heretics | ought to be killed. That opinion in itself is enough to render them heretics who deserve to die, according to your benevolent judgment! Do you not also imply that a prince who is in power and has the means and wherewithal to suppress a shameless heretic, but who does not do this, will not be able to escape being found guilty of having treasonously given over the republic of God, which God had given him for safekeeping, to the devil? Is it possible to incite the civil magistrate to the killing of heretics in a more fanatical, fiery and horrible way than by such means?

Since therefore in all this you do exactly as we do, why don't you agree with us that when we do it we also do the right thing and consequently that you have unjustly slandered and caluminated us for our just deeds? Alternately, if you still want to say that in doing this we are wrong and act brutally and cruelly, then you acknowledge that when you imitate us in this regard you also act wrongly, brutally, and cruelly.

GAMALIEL: This meeting has been more concerned with hurling imprecations back and forth than with what was necessary above all: a lawful examination of which of the two is right regarding the question of whether according to the testimony of Holy Scripture it is mercifulness or cruelty to kill someone because of errors in religion. Only when these two possibilities have been thoroughly examined can we understand whether it is right or wrong to admonish and incite the princes to kill those who err. This would involve an extensive examination of the task, command, and power which princes received from God in this regard. But since in the course of these discussions our time has also run its course, so that it is

impossible for now to speak of this matter, I will remain silent on this issue. I just want to give my view in this matter to this extent, that it is only human not to have a perfect solution for everything, and that it is a cause for concern if someone advises the magistrate to kill people for religious matters without an express decree from God to do this, a decree that does not exist anywhere. Thus, since the magistrate has not been commanded to do this, he cannot sin if he does not kill, but he can commit a grave transgression in killing people for matters of religion. The way to kill and destroy the heresy in a manner that is easy, assured of success, and in accord with the divine commandments, is to do so with the all-powerful truth, sparing, indeed saving the heretics. Contrariwise, with the magistrate's sword in hand one strives in vain, but with great peril, to destroy the heresy by killing the heretics. After all, the flames of heresy only increase and flare up by such killing and shedding of the blood of heretics. That has the same effect as to throw sulphur on the fire in order to extinguish it. I feel that in all cases of a questionable judgment the most merciful verdict is the best, the safest, and the most saintly. For it is undoubtedly true that oftentimes the princes, | believing they are rendering God an agreeable service, have the followers of Christ put to death. The hands of such men are full of blood, they are bloodthirsty men and abhorrent to God. He avenges the blood of his righteous servants, in such wise that he will not forgive the sins of their killers.

JEZONIAS: In none of our meetings have the interlocutors reached agreement, and this meeting is no exception. For no matter that the Catholics praise Calvin's severity against Servetus and also say that it is much easier to put out a spark than it is to put out a fire, and that when one spares the mangy sheep one is cruel to the entire flock which is infected by it, as we saw with Arius, Luther and others: nonetheless, the Reformed criticize the Catholics in this regard as being excessively cruel, saying that often when they think they are killing heretics they kill the true members of Christ, not acting based on true knowledge but based on good intentions, which anger God instead of serving him. The Catholics again show that the Reformed do indeed praise this cruelty when it is visited on others.

None of this pleases Gamaliel, who would prefer to find the golden mean and tread the middle path which he takes for the safest, saying

19 [John 16:1]. John 16:2. 20 [Isaiah 59:3]. | [Psalm 5:7]. Psalm 5:6. 21 [1 Par. 6:23; Deuteronomy 32:43]. 22 [4 Kings 14:3-4]. 2 Kings 24:3-4.

that in not killing one cannot go wrong, all the more so because there is no express decree from God on this issue, a decree which is especially necessary in such an important matter.

On this matter also we must await the judgment of our lord the President when he arrives.

*Whether it is Right for Religious Leaders  
to Tell the Civil Magistrate that They  
Have a Duty towards God to Kill  
Some People for Matters of Religion*

5

Participants: Jezonias, Catholic Delegate, Reformed Delegate, Theodore Beza, Gamaliel

JEZONIAS: Finally there is considerable disagreement between Catholics and many others, and also among many of the Reformed themselves,  
10 about whether the magistrate is obligated by God's commandment in Holy Scripture to put to death someone who has not sinned against the political laws, only because of matters of faith that that person holds in private or that he teaches to others. I would like to hear each of you, gentlemen, give your view on the matter so that, after having heard and  
15 recorded your words, we can conclude and close this synod.

40<sup>D</sup> CATHOLIC DELEGATE: We confess openly that the magistrate | is a protector of the first and second tables of the Law, with regard to external discipline. For the magistrate is there to prevent external evils, to punish the guilty and to prevent your idolatries and blasphemies, so that you  
20 do not offer the people your word instead of God's word, and thus have the uneducated folk worship your word instead of God's word because of a few words that you have taken from Scripture and misinterpreted. Therefore the magistrate ought to protect and promote the divine doctrine which was handed down from father to son and which he received  
25 from the hands of his father, and he should destroy your godless teachings together with your godless religion. We are aware of the fact that in religion you do not wish to accept any judge except for Christ. But that is exactly what has always been the desire of all patricides, murderers, poisoners, thieves, street ruffians and all other capital criminals: they all

The magistrate should protect true and destroy false doctrine

wish that there be no judge on earth except He who we believe will come to judge the living and the dead, so that in the meantime they will have the license freely to abuse everyone's goods and bodies. But you are much more wicked than they, since you abuse the souls rather than the bodies of the pious, and cast those same miserable souls into the nethermost part of hell due to your pestilential teachings. 5

REFORMED DELEGATE: Eternal and Almighty God has spoken from heaven, saying that Jesus Christ is his beloved son in whom He was well-pleased. And now you, who are only human and thus full of weakness and corruption, dare to say that God is well-pleased not in Christ but in your fabrications? If, in the midst of the flames and suffering of death, you were unable to tear the faithful martyr away from the trust he put in Jesus Christ, then will you not confess that you are again persecuting and crucifying Christ, while your hearts and hands are soaked in the blood of him who strives to remake himself in God's image by a living faith and to put on Christ through the spirit of regeneration? See what is done daily by the popes, bishops and princes with their counselors and servants: they convene diets, they compose bloody placards against the Evangelicals, they subject the Gospel and the church to severe persecutions. The spiritual Fathers gather and consult with each other, and say that they will convene a council. And for what reason, do you think? In order completely to eradicate and get rid of this new (as they call it) Evangelical doctrine. That is why it is said of these Circes, these accomplished sorceresses, that they are not just sprinkled, touched or made wet by the blood of the saints and the holy martyrs, but that they are drunk with it. Those martyrs testified to their faith in Jesus Christ by preaching the Gospel, and they ascribe our salvation only and exclusively to Christ. The histories show how many | thousands, indeed tens of thousands of martyrs have been put to a most horrible and painful death over the last five or six hundred years with the encouragement and through the actions of the popes. What has happened over these last fifty-five years which we can still remember, in the way of the copious shedding of human blood, constitutes a horrific tale. For whoever abhors the papal see and the image of the beast is deemed a desecrator of the church and someone who has committed what is tantamount to the crime of treason, and is thus seen as 35

The Reformed denounce the Catholics for killing in matters of religion 10

9 [B.d.g. 34]. Mark 1:11. 16 {2 Corinthians 3:18}. 20 [Bullinger, in *Apoc. Conc.* 85, fol. 261]. [Bullinger, *In Apocalypsim: conciones centum* (Basle, 1559), sermons 85 and 73].

21 [Idem *ibid.*, conc. 73, fol. 229].

unfit to live. Consequently, these heretics and all whose teachings or ideas about the sacraments differ from those held by the Roman church, were cast out forever. That church ordains furthermore that these people be deprived of all honors and subjected to the judgment of the secular magistrate, in order to receive what they call their well-deserved punishment. And should the magistrate refuse to punish and to protect the church in that way, then he too must be deprived of all honor, etc. But why am I telling these things? Everyone sees and knows what is happening these days. All those who refuse to return to the adoration of the image of the beast are being condemned, banished, imprisoned, tortured and finally cruelly put to death.

CATHOLIC DELEGATE: You utter strong complaints against us, claiming primarily that we oppose the Gospel and persecute the Gospel's true teachers in order to kill them. We, on the other hand, regard you as heretics and seducers of the common people. If we grant you (something which in reality we cannot do) that the judgment of the saintly council of Trent was not valid, then there has not yet been a lawful verdict determining which of us judges rightly in this matter, that is if you judge us or we judge you correctly. The council of Trent supported us against you. You do not have a council supporting you against us. Still you execute and condemn us for persecuting and executing your coreligionists as heretics, which is how we have to regard them. But if we assume that there has been no judgment between us and this is still an open question, then you fall into your own trap and ditch. Or did you think that we were ignorant of the fact that in this regard you do to others that of which you complain when we do it to you? Let us set aside for the moment what you have already done so far in the way of executions. Do we not see in the books written by your own leaders that they strive to prove – as has already been said and proved earlier – that heretics should be punished and killed with the magistrate's sword? What else is it that Calvin and Beza both attempt in their published works on this matter, in order to prove that Servetus was rightly killed and that similar heretics ought likewise to be killed? Does Beza not state expressly that serious punishment must be meted out to the heretics who are already condemned by the testimony of their own conscience? This he cannot deny.

All right. Let me now speak, not about how we see this, but about how you, | the Reformed, saw it at the time when you complained about

The Reformed  
desire the killing  
for religion's sake

1 [Idem *ibid.*, conc. 59, fol. 187]. 35 [T. 167].

us because we killed and executed your coreligionists as heretics. At the time you usually said the following: Who can legally have someone put to death as a heretic without being certain that that person is indeed a heretic? If it is a heretic who has been condemned by the testimony of his conscience, as Beza said, then how can Beza or anyone know this for certain about a person? Does anyone know what is in a person except for God or that person himself? Or does any heretic say for himself that he is condemned for his errors by his own conscience? Certainly not. Then how can Beza, based on his own words, know who is a heretic? Or does the church judge the things that are hidden? Yet these are the people against whom Beza wants us to inform ourselves and to proceed – “not,” as he says, “to force them to put on a mask or to feign remorse, but to let the magistrate serve God truly, whose servants they are, and kiss his Son. That is to say that they must avenge the injury done with insolence and shamelessness against the majesty of God, whose prosecutors they are in this world, meant to maintain the external enforcement of the doctrine as well as of morality. They cannot achieve this unless they suppress the stubborn disturbers of the latter, so that by amputating a rotting limb when this is necessary they protect and preserve the health of the entire body, which would otherwise find itself in the end infected with the same putrefaction. Thus by punishing one they will keep the others on the straight path. If there is someone whom they cannot persuade by means of threats or entreaties to maintain the same doctrine as the others, and in accordance with the Word of God, then they must remind the magistrate of his power and let him at least make sure that these transgressors are removed, so that a little bit of leaven will not permeate the whole dough. And you consider these things so unimportant that you do not think they are enough reason to punish the heretics!” These words, as I quoted them, are what you, dr. Beza, state verbatim.

REFORMED DELEGATE: In this way, dr. Beza, we would be putting a sword into the hands of the Catholics, and they are folks who are already fanatical enough. Verily, it was not necessary to bring up this matter in these miserable times, since it appears to be more urgent to diminish (or reduce) their power than to increase (or expand) it. Is this not all the more true since a good prince is a rare thing? That is why we need to take care that we do not put a sword into the hand of a madman, who will then also

Beza calls the killing of heretics “the princes kissing the Son”.

Better to cut off a rotting limb than to have the whole body infected

Forcing others to follow their doctrine

Beza and his followers fall into their own trap

10 [T. 169]. 14 See Psalm 2:12, “Kiss the Son, lest He be angry...” 28 [T. 169]. 34 [T. 205].

cut the throats of good folk with it, and that we thus do not bring upon us other unwanted consequences.

THEODORE BEZA: Your argument has some appeal, especially to those  
 41<sup>c</sup> who feel revulsion | – and rightfully so – as soon as they hear people  
 5 talk about the cruelties committed by the papist butchers. But as far as  
 I am concerned: although I have indeed requested in the name of God  
 (and why should I not glory in serving the Lord?) that some would exert  
 cruelty, I nevertheless declare that I cannot share your view that we should  
 not bring up this matter at this time so as not to embolden the papists.  
 10 For the common cruelty of tyrants or the foolish zeal of some should not  
 prevent the good princes from kissing the Son, that is to say, should not  
 keep them from utilizing with due moderation the power that God has  
 granted them against those whom the devil possesses and secretly inserts  
 to corrupt and destroy religion, if they can, by their boundless insolence  
 15 and deliberate ignorance.

Beza acknowledges that by discussing this doctrine of the killing of heretics the Catholics are emboldened in their policy.

REFORMED DELEGATE: Have we not seen and experienced daily that the  
 more violence was used against people because of religion, the worse the  
 condition of the Roman Catholic churches became? So why should we  
 think that in following the same advice we will fare any better? Or do  
 20 we think that when we, like they did, pour oil on the flames we will be  
 more successful than they in extinguishing that fire? After all, we consider  
 ourselves to be believers in Christ. Someone who claims to believe in  
 Christ ought to walk in Christ's footsteps. He did not come to hit others,  
 but to be hit; he did not strike another person on the cheek, but he was  
 25 struck; he did not crucify anyone, but was crucified, and he did not kill  
 anyone, but was killed. He who is killed is a follower of Christ, but he  
 who kills follows the Antichrist. Each person therefore should examine  
 and heed his conscience: people who persecute others are children of the  
 flesh, but those who suffer persecution are children of the spirit. This is  
 30 why we should denounce and condemn the Jewish and Anabaptist error,  
 for they imagine and dream that before the youngest day the church will  
 become a secular polity or government that will be governed and ruled  
 by the pious or the believers who will eradicate the godless by the sword  
 and conquer all secular kingdoms. We are co-heirs of Christ: if we suffer  
 35 with Him, we will also be glorified with Him. Likewise we were saved  
 in this hope. Likewise He also predestined those whom He foreknew to

The use of force in matters of religion has worsened the condition of the Catholic church.

Killing heretics goes against Christ's example. Those who kill others for matters of faith are followers of the Antichrist. Those who persecute are children of the flesh, those who are persecuted children of the spirit.

be conformed to the image of His Son. Likewise “for your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.” These passages testify and teach us that glorification does not occur in this life, but that here we must suffer the cross, oppression and persecution, as we read in Matthew 16:24: “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny 5 himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” Likewise, we read in John 16:33: “You will have tribulations in the world.” And in | 2 Timothy 3:12: 41<sup>D</sup> “All who desire to live godly in Christ will suffer persecution,” etc. These passages demonstrate very clearly that in this life the church is under the cross. Likewise Paul says clearly that the Antichrist shall rule until the 10 Day of Judgment, when Christ will come again and destroy his realm. And many godless people will control and possess the kingdoms of the world, and they will persecute the church of God very cruelly until the glorious coming of Christ.

It is not Christians  
but the godless who  
persecute others.

Therefore, since the Gospel clearly teaches that Christ’s realm is a spir- 15 itual realm and brings us spiritual and eternal goods and does not imply secular domination or rule but suffers persecution instead, we should understand and interpret the prophets in accord with the Gospel. For the apostles clearly apply the passages where promise is made of the kingdom of David to the spiritual kingdom of Christ which is subject to perse- 20 cution, etc. The church will suffer persecution in this life, as the second Psalm teaches us, etc. The death of his saints means a lot to him and he cherishes their blood. The Lord gives you bread in adversity and water in affliction, etc. Here He proclaims and teaches how the church will be protected and saved: but it will be under the cross and under oppres- 25 sion.

All these and countless other passages in Holy Scripture declare unequivocally that the disciple is not better than his Master, whom the world has hated. It will therefore also hate his disciples. Or do we imagine that in these awful times the world is a better place than in the past? Or will 30 Christ’s disciples now bathe in roses, while the feet of the Master trod on thorns? That is not credible, nor is it credible that the persecuted should change into persecutors and Isaac should change into Ishmael.

Therefore no offense to the honorable masters John Calvin and Beza, 35 but in this weighty and perilous matter I cannot agree with their dangerous opinion. For even though it may be of some persuasive ingenuity, it clearly contradicts divine Scripture. Therein I do not find one express

1 Romans 8:29.    2 Romans 8:36; Psalm 44:23.    14 [Idem *ibid.* fol. 92.c; 93.b].  
2 Thessalonians 2:8.    22 Psalm 2:1–3.    24 Isaiah 30:20.

passage, statement or text that indicates that heretics should be punished by death. How can we dare to adopt such a dangerous course of action without God's express decree? How can we advise the magistrate to such action? How can we expose Christ's members to such danger? Should we  
5 believe obscure writings against so many clear texts that say the opposite? Should we believe what one or two people have said against and above the consensus about the New Testament? Of what else does the New Testament teach and admonish the children of God, as was stated before, except the cross, persecution, and suffering? Where does it say that the  
10 children of God will have dominion in this world, that they will persecute and kill others? Nowhere! Therefore I cannot believe any people – even if they seemed to be angels – who teach a different Gospel outside of and against the Gospel of Christ. That is why I feel compelled to state as my view that it is not right at all to advise the magistrates to banish  
42<sup>a</sup> people, let alone to kill | people for matters of faith. It should be sufficient to us if the magistrate protect us from violence done to our worship and our persons, and we would be dishonoring and casting shame on our religion if we appealed to the magistrate to punish heretics. After all, if we do this people will rightfully suspect that we are aware ourselves that we  
20 have no truth wherewith to defeat the lie of our opponents. Or if we do have that truth, by acting this way we show that we mistrust it and do not know its all-powerful force, and therefore that our doctrine is false or misunderstood by us, since we do not know how to defend it or how to silence, put to shame, and defeat those who attack it.

25 GAMALIEL: That sounds good, that is in the spirit of Christ, that is spoken biblically by a man of the Bible, and I have to agree with you. Oh you, noble and powerful Christian princes, please do not believe those who advise you to shed blood in the cause of religion, and refuse to act as their executioner. Believe me, if they were persecuted themselves they  
30 would not advise you this way, and no true Christian will ever give you this advice. For as Paul says, and as has been proven extensively by the Reformed delegate, all those who want to live a pious life in Christ will suffer persecution. And if they suffer persecution, like Christ and his apostles they will never recommend that others be subjected to persecution.  
35 Be satisfied with the sword that God has given you. Punish murderers, traitors, false witnesses and the like. And as far as religion is concerned, it is your duty to protect the pious against the violence of others. Theo-

logical doctrine cannot be discussed with the sword. Otherwise, should the theologians succeed in getting you to promote their teachings by the sword, the physician will later dare to request similarly that you protect his opinion against the opinion of other physicians, and the dialectician, the rhetorician and other practitioners of the liberal arts will do the same. 5 Now if you are unable to settle these matters with the sword, then how much more is this true in theology, since it concerns the spirit and understanding of what is in the mind of man. And if a physician can adequately prove his doctrine by his science, without the magistrate's support, then why should a theologian not be able to do the same? Christ can do this, 10 the apostles can do it, and their followers will likewise be able to do it. Protect the bodies of the pious with your physical sword. That sword cannot touch the soul.

Come to your senses: follow the counsel of Christ and not that of the Antichrist. For if you act differently, you will find there to be no end to re- 15 bellions and wars until all those who have shed blood will have perished miserably. And do not think that by acting cruelly we can get rid of rebellions, for if because of such cruelty we would reach a point | that there 42<sup>B</sup> were only two people left in the world, then those two would quarrel with each other and beat one another to death. This is what happened erstwhile 20 to the Midianites, and we should be concerned that this may also happen to us, unless we stop attacking each other. If cruelty provided any remedy against evil, then all evil would have long ago been eradicated, considering that cruelty has now raged for over five thousand years! But one thing is certain: evil was never vanquished by evil, and there is no other 25 remedy against killing than to stop the killing. God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. Therefore it would be desirable that each one who wants to be the greatest would become the others' servant. That is how our only Master has set himself as our example, admonishing us that we should learn from him that He is gentle and has a kindly heart. 30 One person should bear another's burden, for thus will one fulfill the law of Christ.

No one errs voluntarily. Who would want consciously and willingly to incur the eternal chastisements? Erring results from ignorance. We all stumble in many things, for we are all human and not omniscient, 35 like God. We may therefore err in what we do not know. If thus all error

21 Judges 7:20–23. 27 [1 Peter 5:5; Luke 14:8]. 28 [Matthew 10:26; Matthew 23:7; Matthew 9:34]. Matthew 20: 26–27; Matthew 23:7–8; Mark 9:35. 30 [Matthew 11:29]. 32 [Galatians 6:1]. Galatians 6:2. 34 [A.P. 43.text]. 36 [James 3:2].

were lethal and damnable, then who would be saved from the sword and from hell? Should someone know more than another, then let him thank God and use this gift for the betterment of his neighbor, not to bring him down. In his younger years Paul, who had been chosen from eternity by  
5 God to fulfill his glorious task, erred due to his ill-advised zeal so that he persecuted Christ in his members, thinking thus to be of service to God. Therefore should not every serious Christian, belonging either to the ecclesiastical or to the civil authorities, consider carefully that what happened to such a chosen vessel could also happen to him? And espe-  
10 cially with regard to this matter, on which we cannot find any express decree in the entire Scripture? If we do not kill and persecute anyone because of their faith, then how can we feel remorse about this, since we are not breaking any law? And if we do persecute and kill Christ in his members – which may be and usually is the case when we persecute and  
15 kill – then who will find us innocent for having done what we had not been told to do? For these reasons and for the reasons that the Reformed delegate related very aptly, I feel that we should defer any action in this matter until the arrival of president Daniel.

JEZONIAS: We have discussed many issues that were raised in these various  
20 sessions. Thus the Catholics have said here that the princes were appointed by God to punish the evildoers, and that those who perpetrate the most evil on other people are indeed the most evil people. They who kill man's eternal soul are the worst evildoers. And since it is the heretics who do this, the princes should visit the most severe punishment  
42<sup>c</sup> on the heretics. | Now someone who inflicts physical death on another person is executed physically. Therefore we have much more reason physically to kill those who cause a person's body *and* soul to perish eternally. And they proved that some of the Reformed leaders now teach the same thing.

30 Some of the Reformed, on the other hand, cannot accept the killing of heretics, believing that in doing this people have often erred grievously due to ignorance and crucified Christ once again in his members. Erroneously, the popes strongly urge the princes to this kind of persecution, which often put the sword into the hands of eager tyrants.

35 Gamaliel here agrees with the Reformed delegate, complaining that after having attained to power the others advise the princes to engage in persecution, something which earlier, when they themselves were persecuted, they strongly condemned. Those who act wrongly, not those who believe wrongly are punishable by the magistrate, he says. He also claims

that true religion can be protected by the truth, not by a sword, for the sword cannot accomplish this, but the truth can.

And now that we have reached the conclusion of our discussions, let us thank the Lord to whom we pray unanimously that He may mercifully promote all the recommendations that were made according to his holy will, and may obviate whatever may hinder them, in honor of his name, for the expansion of the kingdom of Christ, and for the salvation of many people.

Thus I have tried to present a succinct summary here of the things we have discussed, so that we may all remember them better for further personal reflection. And I intend to give each of you, gentlemen, these records, so that before the arrival of our president, master Daniel, each may still add to or subtract from what was said, as you see fit. Thus that same President will be able to consider and treat your recommendations all the better and more maturely.

Thus you, gentlemen, have discussed and examined if the Reformed, in imitation of the Catholics, also strive to attain dominion over all lay people in general and over the magistrate in particular. The first book regards everybody in general and the contention that the church cannot err. You debated

1. Whether the truth of her religion can be proven based on Antiquity...
2. Based on tradition...
3. Based on today's new teachers...
4. Based on the Fathers...
5. Based on the councils...
6. Based on the pagans...
7. Whether people should pass judgment on everyone yet not wish to suffer anyone's judgment;
8. Whether they, and not the people, are to judge doctrine;
9. But in the second book, which concerns the magistrate, we discussed who is to judge heresy and heretics...
10. freedom of conscience and whether we should only allow one religion...
11. those who disturb the external peace of the church...
12. those whose teachings deviate from the church's teachings...
13. about ceasing to dispute with dissidents...
14. about making and printing books...
15. about condemning a party that has not been heard...

16. about ministers who ask for help from the magistrate...
  17. about denouncing the mercifulness of those who spare heretics...
  18. about killing for the sake of
  19. Faith.
- 5 In all these matters the Reformed erstwhile denounced the Catholics for their deeds, and now they imitate these deeds as if they were good.
- The Lord is our best guide. Amen.



## Appendix – The Balance<sup>1</sup>

### *THE ROMAN CATHOLICS...*

1. Denounce clemency and praise cruelty towards heretics
2. Do not want to tolerate those who criticize their doctrine or those who disturb the outward peace of their church
3. Do not want to allow the freedom to write, print, read, have or read books
4. Institute many ceremonies as they please
5. Use councils as proof
6. Do not wish conscience to be free in any way in matters of faith
7. Do not want to engage in disputations with heretics
8. Make use of examples from ecclesiastical histories as proof
9. Make use of testimony from pagans
10. Seek the support of the magistrate for the protection of their church and doctrine

### *THE REFORMED...*

- Denounce the Catholics for this, but do the same thing
- Denounce the Catholics for this, but do the same thing
- Denounce the Catholics for this, but do the same thing
- Denounce the Catholics for this, but do the same thing
- Denounce the Catholics for this, but do the same thing
- Denounce the Catholics for this, but do the same thing
- Denounce the Catholics for this, but do the same thing
- Denounce the Catholics for this, but do the same thing
- Denounce the Catholics for this, but do the same thing
- Denounce the Catholics for this, but do the same thing

<sup>1</sup> This “Balance” was included in the original 1582 edition of the *Synod*, available at <http://sarawati.ic.uva.nl:8510/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=coo;cc=coo;idno=coo.09.02;node=coo.09.02%3A12;seq=90202630>

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 11. Desire that they who teach differently be executed   | Denounce the Catholics for this, but do the same thing |
| 12. Want the teachers or shepherds to have the monopoly of judgment regarding doctrine                                 | Denounce the Catholics for this, but do the same thing |
| 13. Want judgment of heresy and heretics to reside solely with the ecclesiastical and not with the secular authorities | Denounce the Catholics for this, but do the same thing |
| 14. Want to judge everybody yet suffer no one's judgment of them   | Denounce the Catholics for this, but do the same thing |
| 15. Use proof based on the authority of antiquity  | Denounce the Catholics for this, but do the same thing |
| 16. Use proof based on the testimony of the Church Fathers   | Denounce the Catholics for this, but do the same thing |

# Glossary

**Acontius, Jacob** (1492–1566): Jacopo Aconcio, Italian humanist jurist and theologian, had to flee Italy because of his Protestant convictions, found refuge in England shortly after the accession of Elizabeth I (1559). Advocate of religious tolerance, most notably in his work *Stratagemata Satanae* (1566).

**Albigensians:** Name of the best known group of Cathars. This sect arose in the twelfth century and is named after the town of Albi in Languedoc (southern France). The neo-Manichean sect had its own ecclesiastical hierarchy and followed a dualistic creed. They were decimated in the Cathar Crusade (1209).

**Ambrose of Milan** (c. 339–397): Bishop of Milan, church Father, one of the four *doctores ecclesiae* of Western Christendom (together with Jerome, Augustine – who was baptized by Ambrose, April 18, 387 – and Gregory). Upholder of orthodoxy who combated Arianism and resisted the pagan party at the imperial court.

**Anabaptists:** Sect that originates in Zurich (1525) and takes this (pejorative) name from a central tenet: adult baptism, which sealed one's confession and made one enter the community of the regenerated. Anabaptists rejected the intermingling of state and church. A revolutionary branch of Anabaptists wanted to establish God's kingdom on earth by force (as in Munster in 1534). A peaceable branch of spiritual Anabaptists wanted to avoid secular involvement (by not swearing oaths or taking office). Best known among the latter are the Mennonites, followers of Menno Simonsz.

**Arenius, Guillaume** (d. c. 1579): Guillaume Dauvet, seigneur of Arènes, who embraced the Reform c. 1562. On behalf of Protestants in Basle, he submitted a request to king Henry III in 1575, drawn up by Protestants in Basle, asking for full freedom to practice their religion in France.

**Arians:** *See Arius*

**Aristides of Athens** (c. 530–468 B.C.): Athenian statesman and strategist at the battle of Marathon (490), later organizer of the Delian League.

**Arius** (c. 250–336): Priest in Alexandria who was excommunicated in 318 because of his denial of the divinity of Christ. The Council of Nicea determined that the Logos (Christ) is *homoousios*, identical with the Father. The Council banished Arius, especially due to the efforts of Athanasius. The conflict over Arianism dominated the early church for many years.

**Athanasius** (c. 295–373): Patriarch of Alexandria, staunch defender of the divinity of Christ, the Word (Logos) against the Arian "heresy". He refused to readmit Arius to the church, as bidden by the emperor, and spent many years in exile.

**Atticus, Titus Pomponius** (109–32 B.C.): Roman author and publisher, whose correspondence with Cicero shows the close friendship between the two.

**Augsburg Confession:** The Lutheran creed, written by Melancthon and submitted at the Diet of Augsburg (June 25, 1530). The Confession was incorporated as the fourth book in the Lutheran *Book of Concord* (1580), Lutheranism's collection of ten credal documents.

**Augustine, Aurelius** (354–430): Latin father, philosopher and church doctor, born in what is today Algeria, a Manichean in his youth until his conversion in Milan (see Ambrose of Milan). He became bishop of Hippo (in present-day Tunisia) and wrote numerous works, most notably the *City of God* and his autobiography, the *Confessions*. He combated heresies such as Donatism and Pelagianism.

**Basil the Great** (c. 329–379): Bishop of Caesarea, Church Father who played an important

role in the defense of the Nicene creed (as against the Arians). Together with Pachomius he also established guidelines for cenobitic monasticism.

**Bergisches Buch:** A formula of concord composed in the monastery of Berg, Saxony, in 1577, intended to resolve disputes that had arisen among Lutherans on certain articles of faith.

**Bernard of Clairvaux** (1090–1153): Founder and abbot of the monastery of Clairvaux, center of the reforming Cistercian order, and doctor of the Church. On behalf of pope Eugene III Bernard preached the Second Crusade (1147–1149).

**Beza, Theodore** (1509–1605): French Protestant theologian, professor of Greek and theology in Geneva and first head of the Academy there. He defended the Huguenots at the religious colloquy of Poissy (1561). After the much debated execution of Servetus in Geneva, Beza defended the punishment of heresy by the magistrate in his *On the Punishment of Heretics by the Civil Magistrate*. He succeeded John Calvin after his death (1564).

**Brenz, Johannes** (1499–1570): Lutheran theologian and Swabian Reformer who was won over to Luther during the Heidelberg disputation (1518). He took part in the colloquy of Marburg, and after 1534 was the leader of the Reform in all of Württemberg.

**Bucer, Martin** (1491–1551): German Reformer who led the Reformation in Strasbourg and was very influential in the spread of the Reformation in Europe. He was on the side of the Zwinglians regarding the Eucharist, but attempted a reconciliation with the Lutherans on this point. He took part in the failed religious colloquy of Regensburg (1541) which tried to reconcile Protestants and Catholics.

**Bullinger, Johann Heinrich** (1504–1575): Swiss Reformer who succeeded Zwingli in Zürich. Reached an agreement with John Calvin regarding the Eucharist in the *Consensus Tigurinus* (1549). His *Confessio Helvetica* was accepted by practically all Swiss churches (1566). Through his extensive correspondence of some 12,000 letters he exerted much influence Europe-wide.

**Calvin, John** (1509–1564): French Reformer who embraced the Reformation as a student in Paris and had to flee France. In Basle he published his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), one of the most influential works in church history, which he would expand and republish several times (the last edition in 1559). At the urging of the Swiss Reformer Farel, he stayed in Geneva and led the Reformation there. Conflict over church discipline led to Calvin's banishment from Geneva (1538). He was invited by Bucer to Strasbourg. In 1541 he was able to return to Geneva where he organized the church around a consistory (ministers and elders) that exercised discipline in such close collaboration with the city council that Geneva approached a theocracy. Doctrinal deviance was not tolerated, as in the case of Castellio who had to leave Geneva, or of Bolsec who disagreed with Calvin's teachings on predestination and was banished. Most famously, the anti-Trinitarian Michael Servetus was burned at the stake at Calvin's behest (1553), an event that triggered a debate about toleration (see *Castellio*). Calvin's influence on the reformation was European-wide. In numerous tracts and letters he combated Anabaptists, Spiritualists, and Nicodemites – among the latter Coornhert, whose *Verschooninghe van de roomsche afgoderije* ["Apology for Roman Idolatry"] he read (in Latin translation) and refuted.

**Campanus, John** (1500–c. 1575): Lutheran theologian who broke with Luther over the issues of the trinity and the Eucharist and became an influential exponent of the Radical Reformation and a spiritualist. His chief work is the *Restitutio* (1531).

**Cano, Melchior** (1509–1560): Spanish Dominican bishop and theologian who played an important role in the deliberations at the council of Trent. He opposed the Jesuit order. His main work is *De locis theologicis* (1565).

**Capito, Wolfgang Fabricius** (1478–1541): One of the Reformed leaders in Strassbourg, who took part in the conference of Marburg and several religious colloquies. He tried to reconcile Luther and Zwingli on the issue of the sacraments. Together with Bucer he formulated the *Confessio Tetrapolitana*.

**Castellio, Sebastian** (1515–1563): French Protestant humanist, who stayed with John Calvin

in Strasbourg (1540) and followed him to Geneva, where he became rector of the *Collège*. Clashed with the Reformer over Scriptural interpretation and left for Basle (1545). Best known for his condemnation of the burning of Servetus in Geneva, in *De haereticis an sint persequendi* (*Concerning Heretics and Whether They Ought to Be Persecuted*). The carnage of the French wars of religion prompted him to write the moving *Conseil à la France désolée*. He translated the Bible into French and Latin. His important late work, *De arte dubitandi* (*The Art of Doubting*, 1562) was not published in full until 1981. Coornhert often cited Castellio's works and translated several of his writings into Dutch.

**Cathars:** See *Albigensians*.

**Cato, Marcus Porcius** (234–149 B.C.): Roman statesman, also known as “the Censor”. Stern defender of Roman Republican virtues and advocate of the destruction of Carthage (*ceterum censeo Carthaginem esse delendam*).

**Charles V** (1500–1558): Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (as of 1519; with one exception, the elective imperial crown would remain in Habsburg hands until the end of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806); king of Spain (as Charles I, as of 1516) and its overseas possessions, and sovereign of the Netherlands (as of 1515). Born and raised in the Netherlands. Called Martin Luther to the Diet of Worms (1521) and outlawed him. In the Augsburg Interim (1548) he made temporary allowances for the Lutherans, awaiting the outcome of the Council of Trent. Fought with France and the Ottoman Empire (stopping the Turkish advances at the siege of Vienna in 1529). The Peace of Augsburg concluded the wars of religion in the Empire in 1555 and introduced the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* (the rulers determine the faith of the subjects within their territory, Roman Catholic or Lutheran). Charles was determined to combat the spread of heresy in the Netherlands. Exhausted and disappointed, Charles abdicated in 1556. His empire was divided between his son Philip II (Spain) and his brother Ferdinand.

**Charles IX** (1550–1574): Son of Henry II, king of France (1560–1574). His mother, Catherine de Medici, ruled as regent for him.

**Chrysostom, John** (c. 347–c. 407): Church Father, bishop of Constantinople, great preacher (“Chrysostom” = “Golden-Mouthed”). Chief among his writings are his sermons (with a practical focus on how Christianity applied in everyday life) and his exegetical works.

**Clement of Alexandria, T. Flavius** (c. 150–c. 216): Early Church Father who combined Greek philosophical traditions with Christian teachings and developed Christian Platonism. Chief among his works are the *Protrepticus* (“Exhortation to the Greeks”), the *Paedagogus* (“The Pedagogue”) and the *Stromata* (“Miscellanies”).

**Constantine the Great** (c. 280–337): Roman emperor, sole ruler of the Roman Empire after 324 (after the final defeat of co-emperor Licinius). Issued the Edict of Toleration (313) which legalized Christianity. Convened the council of Nicea (325) where Arius was condemned. Established new capital in Byzantium (Constantinople).

**Constantius II, Flavius Julius** (317–361): Son of Constantine the Great, succeeded first as emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire, as of 353 as sole ruler over the entire empire. His choice for Arianism brought him into conflict with Athanasius.

**Council of Chalcedon** (451): Fourth of the seven ecumenical councils, rejected Monophysitism (according to which Christ had just one nature) and determined that Jesus, as second person of the Trinity, was fully human and fully divine.

**Council of Nicea** (325): First ecumenical council, called by Constantine the Great, which, in the Nicene Creed, rejects Arius's heresy and determines that Christ is divine and of the same substance with God (*homo-ousion*).

**Council of Trent** (1545–1563): The Catholic response to the Reformation, introducing reforms and combatting abuses (“the Catholic Reformation”). The council determined the doctrines of the church (on justification, original sin, the sacraments, the Biblical canon, and the veneration of saints).

**Cyprian of Carthage** (c. 200/210–258): Church father, bishop of Carthage at a time of perse-

- cutions. His well-known adage, *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* (outside the Church no salvation) was meant in a spiritual rather than an institutional sense. He believed that the Holy Spirit only worked in the Church. Died a martyr's death under emperor Valerian.
- Dionysius Areopagita, or Pseudo-Dionysius** (c. 500 A.D.): Unknown author of several important mystical writings (the *Corpus Dionysiacum*) that were ascribed to Dionysius, Paul's disciple. His work attempts to harmonize Christianity with Neo-Platonic thought. Its authenticity was not doubted until the fifteenth century.
- Donation of Constantine:** Forged eighth- or ninth-century document in which Constantine the Great purportedly gave pope Sylvester I pre-eminence over the other bishops and patriarchs and gave him the imperial possessions in the Western Roman Empire. Humanists in the fifteenth century exposed the document as a forgery.
- Donatism:** Movement in the early Christian church in North Africa, named after Donatus, schismatic bishop of Carthage (d. 355). Donatists regarded priests who had surrendered church books to the authorities during the persecutions as unworthy of performing the sacraments. Augustine combatted the Donatists and defended the use of constraint against heretics.
- Ebionites:** An early Jewish-Christian sect in Palestine, Syria and Asia Minor preaching continued adherence to the Jewish law and rites. Their Christological views showed gnostic influences. They regarded Paul as an apostate and James, the brother of Christ, as the head of the church in Jerusalem.
- Edict of Chateaubriant** (June 27, 1551): Issued by Henry II of France, part of a series of edicts containing increasingly severe measures against the Huguenot heresy. This edict stipulated loss of one third of property of Huguenots and censorship rules.
- Eudoxius of Constantinople** (d. 370): Arian bishop of Antioch and (as of 360) of Constantinople, whose support for Eunomius contributed to his being deposed by the emperor.
- Eunomius** (d. c. 395): Arian bishop of Cyzicus, leader of the most extreme form of Arianism (the anomoeans, from *anhomoiōs*, who believed that Christ was of a different nature from God). He was banished by emperor Theodosius.
- Eusebius of Caesarea** (c. 265–339): Early church historian, bishop of Caesarea (Roman capital of Palestine) since 313. Theologically he followed the Origenist tradition and tried to find a middle way between Arianism and Nicenean orthodoxy. His *Ecclesiastical History* is of inestimable value, as it preserves many older documents that would otherwise have been lost.
- Evagrius Scholasticus** (c. 536–c. 595): Ecclesiastical historian, author of six books that cover a period of 163 years (431–594). His work was a continuation of that of Eusebius and other early church historians.
- Fabricius, Caius Luscinus** (d. 250 B.C.): Roman commander and statesman renowned for his incorruptibility and austerity, virtues that were seen as typifying the Roman Republic.
- Ferdinand I** (1503–1564): Younger brother of Charles V, German emperor (1556–1564) and king of Bohemia and Hungary. He followed a policy of toleration vs. the Protestants, established a *Religionsfriede* (religious peace – see the eleventh session).
- Francis I** (1494–1547): Valois king of France engaged in struggle against the encirclement by the Habsburg empire and for influence in Italy. He was a Renaissance prince and great patron of the arts.
- Gentile, Giovanni Valentino** (1520–1566): Italian humanist, like Servetus clashed in Geneva with Calvin, chiefly over the Trinity, and was decapitated in Bern for his anti-Trinitarianism.
- Gratian, John** (d. c. 1160): Author of the “Concordantia discordantium canonum,” also known as the “Decretum Gratiani,” which became the chief foundation of canonical law in the Middle Ages.
- Guisse, Charles de** (1524–1574): Cardinal of Lorraine, very influential at the Council of Trent and during the rule of Francis II; participant in the colloquy of Poissy.
- Henry II** (1519–1559): Son of Francis I, king of France (1547–1559), married Catharina de

Medici. Combated Protestantism in France. Continued the struggle with Charles v until the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis (1559).

**Henry III** (1551–1589): Son of Henry II, king of France (1574–1589, succeeds his brother, Charles IX), and briefly king of Poland (1573–1574). Instigator of the St. Bartholomew Day's massacre (1572) at which thousands of Huguenots were killed. He issued the Edict of Beaulieu (1576), granting concessions to the Huguenots. The Catholic League, led by Henry, duke of Guise, was formed in response. When the Huguenot Henry of Navarre became his likely successor, Henry III rescinded the concessions of Beaulieu and annulled Henry of Navarre's right to the throne. After his assassination he was succeeded by Henry of Navarre, who became Henry IV.

**Hilary of Poitiers** (c. 310/320–367): Church Father and doctor, chief fourth-century theologian in the West. Refused to accept the condemnation of Athanasius and was banished to Asia Minor. After his return to Gaul (360) he continued his struggle against Arianism.

**Hosius, Stanislas** (1504–1579): Polish cardinal and theologian, papal delegate at the council of Trent. His *Confessio catholicae fidei* (1552) saw over thirty editions during Hosius's lifetime.

**Hus, John** (c. 1370–1415): Czech Reformer and supporter of the ideas of John Wyclif (against the secularization of the church). Summoned to the council of Constance (under promise of safe-conduct) to defend himself. Burned at the stake.

**Jerome** (c. 347–c. 420): Church Father and Christian apologist, foremost theologian of his time. Best known for his translation of the Bible, from Hebrew and Greek, into Latin (the Vulgate). Lived for five years as an ascetic in the desert.

**Julian, Flavius Claudus** (331–363): Roman emperor, called “the Apostate” by Christians for his rejection of Christianity and restoration of Greco-Roman religion. He died during a campaign against the Sassanid Empire of Iran.

**Justinian I, the Great** (c. 482–565): Byzantine emperor who attempted a restoration of the Roman Empire by reconquest of the West, an effort which succeeded only partially. His most significant and lasting legacy is the codification of Roman law (the *Corpus Iuris Civilis*).

**Karlstadt, Andreas Bodenstein** (c. 1480–1541): German Reformer, won over to Luther at Wittenberg. More radical than Luther; ended the mass in Wittenberg during Luther's absence at the Wartburg and occasioned an outbreak of iconoclasm. Luther broke with him due to Karlstadt's symbolic view of the Eucharist. Karlstadt ends up as minister and professor of Hebrew in Basel.

**Leo X** (1475–1521): Son of Lorenzo de' Medici, Renaissance Pope (1513–1521). Patron of the arts. Known for the sale of indulgences to finance reconstruction of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. Issued the bull *Exsurge Domine* (1520) against Luther's theses and excommunicated Luther the following year.

**Libertines**: In the sixteenth century, “Libertine” is often used as invective for freethinkers who reject the discipline of the church and who are morally unrestrained.

**Lorraine, Cardinal of**: See Guise, Charles de.

**Louis XII** (1462–1515): King of France (1498–1515) who fought several wars in Italy. Popular king known as “père du peuple” (father of the people) for his fiscal and judicial reforms. The sixteenth session relates his clemency towards the Albigensians.

**Luther, Martin** (1483–1546): First German Reformer. Augustinian monk, studied scholastic theology, became priest (1507) and taught biblical theology in Wittenberg. He was strongly influenced by Augustine's anti-Pelagian teachings on grace. Luther taught that salvation is God's free gift to the sincere believer in Christ (solafideism, with Romans 1: 16–17 as central text), and that only the Bible has religious authority (sola Scriptura). His 95 theses, prompted by the sale in Saxony of indulgences, brought him into conflict with the church and led to his excommunication (1521). He translated the Bible into German. During the Peasant Wars (1525) Luther recommended severe suppression of the uprising by the prince. He entered into a dispute with Erasmus about the freedom of the will. He disagreed with fellow Reformers (most notably Zwingli) about the Eucharist, which the latter saw as symbolic in nature,

- whereas Luther believed in the real presence of Christ in the wine and bread (See: Marburg Colloquy, 1529).
- Macedonius** (d. c. 364): Bishop of Constantinople, according to a later tradition the founder of a heresy denying the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Followers were called Pneumatomachians (“those who fight the spirit”) or Macedonians.
- Manicheans**: A syncretist gnostic religion (strongly influenced by Zoroastrianism), founded by Mani in northern Mesopotamia (216–277). It was a missionary universal religion based on dualistic principles: the struggle between light and dark, God and matter, truth and the lie.
- Marburg Colloquy**: Colloquy (October 1–4, 1529) between leading Reformers, convened by Philip I of Hesse. It was intended – but failed – to resolve the differences between Reformers about the real presence in the Eucharist (maintained by Luther but rejected by Zwingli in favor of a symbolic understanding).
- Marcian** (396–457): Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire (450–457) who introduced several financial and economic reforms. The Council of Chalcedon occurs during his reign (451).
- Marsilius of Padua** (c. 1275/80–1343): Physician and theologian, rector of the university of Paris, author of the treatise *Defensor pacis* which defends popular sovereignty for the state as well as the church. In the latter he regarded the general council as the highest authority and claimed that the church did not have a visible head. He was excommunicated by pope John XXII.
- Martyr, Peter**: See Vermigli, Peter Martyr.
- Matthias** (1557–1619): Son of emperor Maximilian II. The States General of the Netherlands elected him as governor in 1577. He was completely dominated by William the Silent and returned to Austria in 1581. He was Holy Roman Emperor from 1612 until his death.
- Melanchthon, Philipp** (1497–1560): German humanist and Reformer, professor of Greek and theology at Wittenberg, foremost leader of the German Reformation next to Luther. He composed the Augsburg Confession (1530) and was the chief Protestant leader in the religious colloquies and negotiations with Catholic theologians. His irenic disposition and willingness to compromise, as well as his view of the Eucharist, put him at odds with Luther’s views.
- Menno Simonsz** (c. 1495–1561): Dutch priest who became leader of a peaceful branch of Anabaptists, rejecting the radical chiliastic Anabaptism that was responsible for the excesses in Münster (1534–1535) and elsewhere.
- Montanism**: Early eschatological Christian movement founded by Montanus (c. 156) who announced the imminent end of the world. Ecstasy and strict ethics typified the movement. Tertullian was a Montanist.
- Moravian church**: Also known as the Moravian or Herrnhuter Brethren, this church was founded as the *Unitas Fratrum* in Bohemia (1457). The church goes back to John Hus and places great emphasis on personal piety.
- Mornay, Philippe du Plessis** (1549–1623): French Calvinist theologian and statesman, leader of the Huguenots and advisor of William the Silent. The monarchomach treatise *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* has been attributed to him. He fought in the French wars of religion and was made governor of Saumur by Henry IV. He was the main author of the Edict of Nantes (1598).
- Musculus, Dusanus Wolfgang** (1497–1563): Reformer in Germany and Switzerland, in close contact with Bucer in Strasbourg; called to Augsburg in 1531; he took part in the religious colloquies at Regensburg and Worms. He tried to alleviate the struggle between the Zwinglian and Lutheran views of the Lord’s Supper.
- Nestorius** (c. 382–451): Greek theologian, appointed as patriarch of Constantinople (428), gave his name to Nestorianism, a theology deemed heretical by the council of Ephesus (431). Nestorius emphasized the two distinct natures of Christ and rejected the adjective “Theotokos” (Mother of God) used for Mary in favor of “Christotokos” (Mother of Christ).

- Numa Pompilius** (c. 715–673 B.C.E.): According to tradition the second king of Rome (after Romulus), credited with great wisdom and piety.
- Oecolampadius, Johannes** (1482–1531): Swiss Reformer and humanist, assistant to Zwingli in Basel. He defended the symbolic view of the Eucharist at the colloquy in Marburg.
- Origen** (c. 185–254): Early Christian theologian and one of the most creative authors of his time, who dedicated much of his life to formulating the faith of his church, although the church later condemned him on many points. Banished from the church of Alexandria, he opened a much frequented school in Caesarea, in Palestine. His chief theological work is *De Principiis*, synthesizing Platonic, gnostic and Christian thinking.
- Parlement of Paris**: This body developed from the *Conseil du Roi* (King's council) and had a consultative and judicial role, including the right to ratify legislation.
- Perfectionism**: Coornhert's belief in man's perfectibility (*perfectisme*), claiming that man is able to follow the path of virtue to complete fulfillment of God's commandments (Matthew 5:48). This path to perfection takes place in stages, preceding and following the central event of one's rebirth in Christ.
- Philip II** (1527–1598): Habsburg ruler, son of Charles V and Isabella of Portugal, king of Spain and its possessions (1556–1598), and king of Portugal (1580–1598). Dedicated to the eradication of Protestantism from his realms, he sent Alva to the Netherlands after the iconoclastic fury of 1566. Alva's severe repression contributed to the outbreak of the Dutch Revolt in 1568, and in 1581 the States General of the Netherlands declared Philip deposed (in the Oath of Abjuration).
- Phocion** (402–318): Athenian general and statesman with a reputation for incorruptibility, he was elected 45 times as strategos. C. 350 he sided with the pro-Macedonian party against Demosthenes. After the death of Alexander the Great (322) he was the virtual ruler of Athens, under Macedonian occupation. When democracy was restored in Athens (318) he was condemned to death.
- Photinus** (d. 376): Bishop of Sirmium (in Pannonia), deposed for heresy. He is said to have denied the divinity of Christ, was anathematized and sent into exile.
- Picards**: A sixteenth-century sect of Neo-Adamites (practicing holy nudism) in Bohemia and in the Flemish Netherlands.
- Poissy, Colloquy of** (1561): Religious colloquy organized by Catharine de' Medici at the behest of her chancellor, Michel de l'Hôpital, with the aim of reconciling Huguenots and Catholics. The Protestant participants included Theodore Beza, and the Catholic side Charles de Guise.
- Quintin, Jean**: Representative of the Catholic church at the States-General in Orléans (1560–1561).
- Regius**: See Urbanus Rhegius.
- Religious Peace** (*Religionsfriede*): Religious peace was declared on several occasions during the sixteenth century in order to end the many religious conflicts that raged at the time. In particular the term refers to the (unsuccessful) religious peace instituted in the Netherlands, at the urging of William of Orange, by governor Matthias and the States General.
- Sacramentarians**: Usually small groups of Reform-minded faithful during the early Reformation who lacked a confessional identity but shared displeasure with the abuses in the Catholic church. Luther labeled spiritualists *Sacramentarierer* because of their disdain for the sacraments.
- Schwenckfeld, Caspar** (c. 1489–1561): Protestant Reformer in Silesia. Schwenckfeld broke with Luther over the Eucharist, denying the real presence. He rejected extremism and followed a middle way. Schwenckfeld opposed constraint of conscience by the government, infant baptism, and oath-taking. Coornhert learned about Schwenckfeld's ideas through his friend, Aggaeus van Albada.
- Servetus, Michael** (c. 1511–1553): Spanish theologian, physician and humanist; heresiarch, persecuted by Catholic and Protestant alike due to his anti-Trinitarianism and his pantheistic beliefs. His *Christianismi restitutio* was intended as counterpart to Calvin's *Institutio*. In 1540

- he lived (under a pseudonym) in Vienne (France) as physician to the bishop. He was captured by the Inquisition, which had been tipped off by Calvin. He escaped, but was arrested upon his arrival in Geneva and burned at the stake.
- Sigismund I** (1467–1548): King of Poland (since 1506). He is regarded as a wise ruler and accomplished humanist, who contributed significantly to the blossoming of the arts, science and literature.
- Simeon Stylites** (c. 390–459): A Christian ascetic who lived for 37 years on a platform on top of a pillar (in Syria).
- Socrates** (c. 470–399): Perhaps the most influential Greek philosopher, great in the impulses he gave to philosophical thought and the examples provided by his life and death. He did not produce any writings, but lives on in some writings by Xenophon, and in the many dialogues by Plato. The central question in his dialogues was what constitutes the best way of living. In 399 he was accused of introducing new gods and of corrupting the youth, and condemned to death.
- Socrates of Constantinople** (c. 380–c. 450): Early Christian church historian who continued the work of Eusebius of Caesarea. His *Historia Ecclesiastica* covers the years 305–439.
- Soto, Pedro de** (c. 1495–1563): Spanish theologian and Dominican, confessor of Charles v (1542–1548) and vicar-general of the Dominicans in Germany (1542–1555).
- Sozomen** (c. 400–c. 450): Early Christian church historian in Constantinople whose history covered the years 324–422 and is in many respects dependent on the work of Socrates of Constantinople.
- Tapper, Ruardus** (1487–1559): Dutch theologian and Inquisitor, professor at Louvain (1526–1553). He took part in the second period of the council of Trent. He was theological adviser in the trials against Protestants, and as of 1537 he was Inquisitor-General.
- Tertullian, Quintus Septimius Florens** (c. 160–after 220): Church Father and priest of the church of Carthage, who wrote numerous apologetic, dogmatic and ethical treatises. After 206 he joined the Montanist sect, and later formed a sect of his own.
- Theodoret of Cyr** (c. 393–c. 460): One of the most important early Christian theologians of the Greek church who defended orthodoxy against the Monophysites.
- Theodosius I, the Great** (346–395): Proclaimed emperor of the eastern part of the Roman empire in 379, he defeated and subdued the Goths. He defeated his co-emperor Maximus (388) and became the last single ruler of the Roman empire. He suppressed Arianism and prohibited pagan worship.
- Theodosius II the Younger** (401–450): Emperor of the Eastern Roman Empire (408–450). The first official imperial law code, the *Codex Theodosianus* (438) was named after him.
- Valentinian III** (419–455): Emperor of the Western Roman Empire (425–455).
- Vermigli, Peter Martyr** (1500–1562): Italian theologian who as prior of an Augustinian monastery joined the Reformation. He was a professor first in Strasbourg (1542), then in Oxford (1547) and promoted the Reformation in England until he had to flee under Mary Tudor. He took part in the colloquy of Poissy.
- Wyclif, John** (c. 1328–1384): English church reformer. He was an Augustinian scholastic philosopher opposed to the extension of papal power and against the secular power and opulence of the church. He believed in an invisible church of which only Christ was the head, and he saw the Bible as the sole source of knowledge on revelation (*De veritate sacrae scripturae*). He translated the Vulgate into English, and attacked the belief in transubstantiation. His teachings were spread by the Lollards and found their way to the continent, where they were of particular influence on John Hus.
- Zwingli, Huldrych** (1484–1531): Swiss Reformer who led the Reformation in Zürich, independent of Luther's reform. At a religious colloquy with papal delegates Zwingli defended his reforms in 67 theses; Zürich's council declared Zwingli the victor and instructed the priests in the canton to comply.