

**ACTS OR PROCEEDINGS OF THE GATHERING OF THE NETHERLANDS CHURCHES
THAT ARE UNDER THE CROSS, SCATTERED IN GERMANY AND EAST FRIESLAND, HELD
AT EMBDEN THE 4th OCTOBER 1571¹**

[Cf. [Biesterveld and Kuyper](#), pp. 60-94; [Hooijer](#), pp. 67-82]

1. No church shall lord it over another church, no minister of the Word, elder or deacon shall lord it over another, but each shall guard himself against all suspicion and enticement to lord it over [others].
2. In order to demonstrate doctrinal unity among the Netherlands churches, the brethren thought it well to subscribe to the Confession of Faith of the Netherlands churches, likewise to subscribe to the confessions of the churches in France in order thereby to attest their agreement and unity with these French churches, surely trusting that the ministers of these French churches on their part will also subscribe to the Confession of Faith of the Netherlands churches, giving testimony to their mutual unity.
3. Peter Dathenus (Petrum Dathenum) and John (Johannes) Taffinum have been chosen to announce this to the ministers at the next meeting in France and will bring the answer to the next meeting of the brothers of the Netherlands churches.
4. The Netherlands ministers who are not present at this meeting will also be exhorted to agree to subscribe to the same. All others who from now on are called to the ministry of the Word shall be required to do the same before they enter the ministry.
5. The brothers consider it fitting that in the French speaking congregations the form of the Genevan Catechism and in the Neder-duits speaking congregations the form of the Heidelberg [Catechism] should be used; however, if there are any churches that use another form of catechism conformable to the Word of God, they shall not be forced to change.
6. In each church there shall be assemblies or consistories composed of ministers of the Word, elders, and deacons, which shall be held at least once every week at a place and time that each congregation shall deem most suitable and convenient.
7. In addition to these consistories, classical meetings of churches located near each other shall be held every three or six months according to circumstances and necessity.
8. Besides these [meetings] separate annual meetings shall be held of all the scattered churches in Germany and East Vriesland, of all English churches, and of all churches under the Cross.
9. Further, a general meeting of all Netherlands churches shall be held once every two years.
10. Both of the Frankfort congregations, the Schoenausche, the French [churches] at Heidelberg, the Franckendale [churches] and those of S. Lambert shall constitute a classis. Another classis shall be constituted by both of the Ceulsche churches, both of the Aecksche, those of Maestricht, those of Limburgh, those of Nuys, and those that are in the Land of Guylick. Another classis shall be made up of those of Wesel, of Embrick, of Gogh, of Rees, of Gennep, and others that may be in the Land of Cleef. Another classis shall be made up of the churches of Embden with the foreign ministers of the Word and elders of Brabant, Holland, and West Vriesland.
11. Both of the congregations of Antwerp, the congregation of Hertogen-Bosch, of Breda, of Brussels, and

¹ From *The Church Orders of the Sixteenth Century Reformed Churches of the Netherlands Together with their Social, Political, and Ecclesiastical Context*, collated and translated by Richard R. De Ridder, with assistance of Peter H. Jonker and Leonard Verduin (Grand Rapids, Mich: Calvin Theological Seminary, 1987).

others that might be in Brabant, shall also form a classis. Another classis shall be made up of those of Gent, Ronsen, Oudenaerden, Comen and the others that are in East and West Flanders. Another classis shall be made up of the Doornicksche, Rijseelsche, Atrechtsche, Armentiersche, Valencijsche, and the other Walloon churches. Another classis shall be made up of the congregation of Amsterdam, of Delft, and other Holland, Overijssel, and West Frisian churches.

12. The congregations in England shall be advised to divide their churches into classes.

13. The ministers of the Word shall be chosen by the consistory with the judgment and approbation of the classical meeting or of two or three ministers from the neighboring churches. Having been chosen, they shall be proposed to the congregation so that they, either through silent (approbation) of the congregation may be accepted, or, should there be a reason why the congregation is not agreed with the election and so minded, it may without fear present its objection within 15 days. Nevertheless, if any churches, because the election has been delayed by the congregation, cannot proceed as usual, they shall not proceed until such time as it is otherwise ordered by the general synod.

14. The same method shall also be followed in the election of elders and deacons, except that the opinion of the classis or of the ministers of the neighboring churches need not be solicited.

15. Every year one-half of the elders as well as deacons shall retire [from office], others being installed in their place, who shall also serve for two years. But the churches (especially those under the Cross) shall retain their freedom to designate a longer or shorter term according to their circumstance and need.

16. The ministers of the Word shall be examined, that is questioned, by those who have chosen them. When their doctrine and life is acknowledged to be acceptable, they shall be installed with appropriate prayers and the laying on of hands (but without superstition and as a requirement).

17. No minister shall be allowed to preach in another congregation without the approval of the ministers of that congregation and of the consistory, or in the absence of the ministers, without the consent of the consistory.

18. All those who intrude themselves into office in the church in places where the office has been established shall be admonished to cease by the consistories. Should they obstinately continue, then three, four or more if possible, of the ministers of the neighboring churches of the classis in which this church is located shall be called and shall declare him (them) to be schismatic. Concerning those who follow them, should they stubbornly despise all admonitions and warnings and continue to listen to the schismatic (who has by now been declared to be such) the consistory shall proceed to expel them according to church discipline or Christian punishment.

19. Whether to sprinkle with water once or three times in baptism is considered an indifferent and free matter. We therefore allow the churches to keep their custom in this until such time as this is otherwise ordered by a following general synod.

20. We consider it an indifferent matter whether to have witnesses at baptism. The churches shall therefore be allowed their previous custom, each one according to its freedom, until such time that this is otherwise decided by the general synod.

21. In the congregations, since we have freedom to institute change, we consider that ordinary bread must be used and the same be broken in the Lord's Supper. But whether one stands or sits while receiving the Lord's Supper, we consider this to be an indifferent matter. Therefore, the congregations shall follow whatever procedure they consider most convenient. To sing Psalms or to read a selection from the Holy Scriptures while the Holy Supper is distributed is left to the freedom of the churches. Similarly, it is left to the freedom of the churches to use the words of Christ or of Paul in distributing the bread and the wine, in which great care shall be observed that speaking the words does not develop in time into an appearance or delusion of consecration [of

the elements].

22. No one who is still under the authority of his parents, or of those who are in the place of the parents, shall marry without their approval. The marriage vow so taken without their consent is void. If nevertheless one of the parents is shown to be so indiscreet and hard that he (she) refuses to give approval (which sometimes happens from hatred of religion and from other causes), then it shall be left to the judgment of the consistory whether there is any just cause to prevent or annul such a holy state [marriage].

23. An engagement [to marry] having lawfully taken place may by no means be broken, even though both parties agree to do this. Therefore, it is advisable, when the engagement takes place, that the minister or an elder be there so that before the mutual promise takes place notice be taken: whether they both profess the pure religion, whether their parents consent to their marriage, and whether both parties or one of them was formerly married, assurance being given through credible and trustworthy witnesses of the death of the first spouse.

24. The names of the persons who are to be confirmed in the marriage state shall be announced to the congregation three Sundays, or otherwise three times provided there is a reasonable time between [announcements] .

25. We feel that church discipline or Christian punishment should be maintained in every congregation; therefore it shall be the duty of the minister of the Word not only publicly to teach, admonish, and to punish, but also to admonish everyone [personally] to [do] his duty, which the elders must also do.

26. Therefore, if anyone has gone astray in purity of doctrine or has sinned in regards to uprightness of life, insofar as it has happened secretly without open offense, the rule shall be maintained which Christ expressly prescribes in Matthew 18.

27. Secret sins, for which the sinner (having been admonished in private or with two or three witnesses) shows sorrow, shall not be brought to the attention of the consistory; but hidden sins, those which might bring harm and ruin to the general welfare or to the churches, such as treason, or seducing of souls, shall be reported to the minister so that after his advice it may be determined what must be done.

28. Anyone who has sinned secretly and has not heeded the admonition of two or three persons or one who has sinned publicly shall be brought before the consistory.

29. Sins which by their nature are public or which have been revealed to the congregation (because of rejection of admonitions) shall be openly reconciled, not according to the judgment of one or two persons but according to the opinion of the whole consistory, in such a way and form which is considered to be most fitting for the edification of each congregation.

30. Everyone who stubbornly rejects the admonitions of the consistory shall be kept from the fellowship of the Lord's Supper, and, having once been barred, should he after many admonitions show no sign of penitence, steps shall be taken leading to excommunication.

31. The minister shall publicly admonish the obstinate sinner from the pulpit. He shall clearly explain his sin, and how diligently he has been punished and kept from the Lord's Supper; he shall exhort the congregation to diligently pray for this impenitent sinner, before the congregation is forced to come to the final remedy of excommunication. Three admonitions shall be made: in the first the sinner shall not be named that he be somewhat spared. In the second he shall be named. In the third the congregation shall be informed that he will be excommunicated or excluded, unless he repents, so that he, should he remain obstinate, by means of the silent consent of the congregation is cut off. But concerning the length of time between the admonitions, this shall be left to the judgment and discretion of the consistory. If he cannot be brought to conversion through this diligence of the ministers, then the banning and cutting off from the body of Christ of such an obstinate person

shall be announced to the congregation. The minister shall fully explain the use and the purpose of the ban and shall admonish the believers not to have any overly familiar or unnecessary conversation and company with the banned person, but to shun his company mainly to the end that the banned or excluded one, being ashamed, may earnestly consider conversion.

32. Those who have committed grievous sins and sins that are slanderous to God's congregation, or such deeds that should be punished by the authority and power of the government, even though they verbally express penitence, shall nevertheless be barred from the Lord's Supper. However, just how long this shall last shall be left to the judgment of the consistory.

33. If ministers of the Word, elders, or deacons have committed a public sin that brings shame and slander to the congregation or one that should be punished by the power of the government, elders and deacons shall immediately be deposed from their office by the authority of the consistory, but the ministers of the Word shall be temporarily suspended from their office. Whether they shall be completely deposed from office shall be decided by the classis. If they are not satisfied with that decision, they shall appeal to the provincial or General Synod.

34. As to the question whether the ministers of the Word, elders, and deacons who have been deposed should be readmitted to their office after they have satisfied the church by their penitence and have again been chosen: as regards the elders and deacons, that shall lie in the discretion and judgment of the consistory, but as far as the ministers of the Word are concerned, the classis shall judge.

35. The ministers who have been born in the Netherlands and who have entered service in foreign churches, in case they be called again by the Netherlands churches, shall give diligence to follow up on that call, setting a certain time for their churches during which they may be provided with other ministers. But if the foreign churches do not want to let them go, the matter shall be taken up with other churches that are not prejudiced. Those who have not yet bound themselves to anyone shall be admonished to retain their freedom, so that they can follow up in case they are called.

36. Members of the church who have in any way used the services of the ministers in the days of freedom shall be admonished to provide the same with support if they have any need.

37. Those from the dispersion who are gathered in any city or place shall support a number of students who shall be under obligation to them [to serve in those churches], whose service they [the churches] may do without even if they have supported them, and may allow another church to take over the same completely. They may require the return of the incurred expenses, but may not do that if they loan them for a limited time.

38. There is a register listing the ministers who are now without a charge, some of whom are qualified for the ministry. Every clas-sis here [present] shall designate a minister who shall exhort the ministers of his classis in the name of this synod that they diligently observe whether any churches in their classis are without ministers and admonish such churches to call a minister, and that they also propose someone whose name is on the register so that he may be called with common consent.

39. At Embden [the following] are appointed: Dominicus Julius, Cornelius Rhetuis, Johannes Arnoldi; at Wesel; Johannes Lippius, Peter Rijkus, Michael Jordans so that the Nederduitse churches that have no ministers may know that they should write these men, so that these [men] may propose to the churches certain ministers living in their area or in adjacent places.

40. If there is any church so poor and needy that it cannot support the minister whom they have called, the classis shall provide as follows: first some neighboring churches may be joined together. In addition, the ministers of the scattered churches shall be admonished that they prod the members of the churches to assist; but they shall especially prod those who are from the same province or region in which the churches lie. The

ministers shall set an example in this.

41. The ministers of the classis shall, in those places where the ministry of the Word cannot be established, ordain readers, elders, and deacons so that in this way churches may be established.

42. The ministers and elders of the classes that are under the Cross shall in all cities and towns in their classes or located nearby diligently enquire and learn of those who are inclined to the pure religion in order to admonish them concerning their bounden duty. In addition, they shall try to gather churches or the rudiments of churches. In order the better to do this, the classes shall divide all the closest cities and towns among them so that this is not neglected. The dispersed congregations shall exercise the same care concerning the cities and other adjacent places, especially those located far from the classis. The dispersed believers shall help the ministers of the classes under the Cross in this, carefully giving them the names of those they know were inclined to religion in the places from which they were expelled or emigrated.

43. It is very fitting that there be such a union of churches so that they may frequently let each other know by mutual letters what would be useful for the maintenance and growth of the churches in general or also of some in particular, and that they may especially warn one another concerning heretics, schismatics, hirelings, tramps, and other such dangerous people so that the churches can be on guard against such.

44. So that the heavy burdens of the churches may be prevented and lightened, which daily increase through the rashness of those who all too easily change their place of residence, and of those who, under the pretense that they are believing and needy, take away the alms belonging to those of the family of faith who are needy, we consider it advisable that in each and every one of the churches it be announced that those who move from there henceforth will not be helped as part of the household of faith in other congregations unless they have attestation and testimony as to how they formerly conducted themselves in doctrine and life in the congregations from which they have come.

45. The ministers shall take care that they ask all those who desire an attestation or testimony for what reason they want to move and, if they find the reason for their moving to be insufficient, they shall refuse to give them an attestation. The ministers and deacons shall also take care that they are not too much inclined to unburden the churches of the poor with whom they needlessly burden other churches. Those to whom they give an attestation shall give their name, surname, native country and trade in the letter besides the reason for their moving, how long they have been in the congregation, how they have conducted themselves since when they parted from it, where they want to go, and other similar things.

46. To those who move as much assistance shall be given as is judged to be enough [for them] to get to the nearest congregation through which they shall pass, but, whatever this amount is, this shall be written on the attestation. Other congregations through which they pass shall also do the same, each one according to their authority. They shall examine the attestation, and, if it is valid, give as much as is needed to reach the nearest congregation. How much they are given and when they depart shall be written on the attestation. Other congregations shall support them in the same way until they come to the place they want to be, where the delivered attestation shall be torn up.

47. All those who leave the congregation after next November without a testimony or with no testimony in the form described shall not be counted as members of the household of faith to whom, according to the teaching of Paul, good should especially be done. Nevertheless, if any come from the congregations under the Cross, or from such places where no congregation has been established, they shall be examined whether they pray and can give an account of their faith, for what reason they have moved and similar things. It shall be left to the discretion of the deacons how much support shall be given to such persons.

48. Duke of St. Aldegonde shall be asked in the name of this synod to write a history of the things that have

happened in recent years, especially of the things concerning the establishment of churches, the persecution of the same, the casting down and restitution of the images, the stedfastness of the martyrs, the awful judgments of God against the persecutors, the charges of the police, etc.

49. All ministers together with all others who with their help can promote this undertaking shall diligently search for and examine everything that contributes to such a history and send it in writing to one of those chosen for this purpose, who shall later faithfully copy these things for Mr. Van S. Aldegonde.

50. Those chosen for this: from Embden: Christopher Becanus and Cornelius Rhetius; from Wesel: Pieter de Rijke and Curolus Nielius; from Coelen: Adrian Van Conincksloo and Johannes Regius; from Aecken: Johannes Christiani and Johannes Heuckelom; from Frankfort; Mr. Van Bailleul and Sebastian Matte: from Heidelberg: Petrus Dathenus and Johannes Taffinus; from Franckendael: Casper van der Heyden and Petrus Anthonii; from Schonau: Franciscus Iunius; from St. Lamberts: Nicolaus Schoubrouck.

51. No one shall print or have printed any book of his own or written by another in which religion is dealt with, or otherwise bring it to light, unless the book has been examined and approved by the ministers of the classis or by the public professors of theology who are of our faith and confession.

52. It is fitting that in large congregations persons who show promise that they will at some future time be able to serve the church of God shall especially be given opportunity to exhort. In order that this may take place in an orderly way, a minister shall preside over this activity.

53. These articles concerning the lawful and proper order of the churches have been adopted by common consent, so that if the welfare of the churches requires, they may and should be altered, augmented and diminished. However, no individual church shall be free to do this, but all churches shall diligently observe them until it has been otherwise decided by a synod.

At Embden the 13th of October

In the year of our Lord 1571.

Caspar Van de Heyden, Pres. of Synod

Johannes Polyander, Clerk

APPENDIX TO THE ABOVE SYNOD, CONTAINING CERTAIN SPECIFIC QUESTIONS, TOGETHER WITH CERTAIN STATUTES ANSWERED IN THE SAME

1. Having heard the complaints and the requests of both of the churches of Embden, the delegates to the synod promised that as soon as they arrive home they shall see to it that the churches of their classis shall be informed that the deacons of the churches of Embden will help those fellow believers who have delivered a valid testimony of their previous pious and godly life from the church from which they have come, as an example to the other churches through which they shall travel, but that they cannot support those who have to wait many days or several months (as it sometimes happens) for the wind in order to travel to England, so that no one, trusting in a vain hope, moves lightly from one place to another.

2. In answer to the first question of those from Keulen, whether all things must be supported by Holy Scripture, the brethren answer that matters of conscience must be supported by God's Word but the things that concern the good order of the churches or are indifferent must not be held to such a requirement.

3. In answer to the second question concerning a good Netherlands (Holland) translation of the Bible the brothers judge that this should be postponed until the general synod.

4. The third and fourth questions are answered in Articles 51 and 52.

5. In answer to the fifth question concerning the actions of the last Synod of Rochelle in France, the brothers

enjoined Dathenus and Taffino to obey.

6. The sixth question is answered by Article 38 concerning the calling of ministers.

7. The seventh question is answered thus: it is permissible to produce and hear witnesses in the consistories. Where there are none, an oath shall be required in weighty matters, although not imperatively, which belongs only to the authorities, but by way of exhortation and encouragement. Although it would be permissible to use the public form of oath which is in common use by the magistrate, it still is better to refrain from that and to remind the person of the serious vengeance of God against the perjurer, and to desire that each one confess the truth. It is still most advisable that witnesses are seldom brought forth and the oath seldom required.

8. In answer to the question of those from Keulen concerning the husband whose wife will not go along with him: it is answered that it is necessary to call on the authority of the magistrate, and that therefore the man may move to a city where the magistrate will exercise its help and authority between them.

9. In answer to the tenth question of the brethren from Keulen whether it is permissible to baptize the child of a Roman Catholic who claims that the form of baptism which is used in the Reformed churches is purer than that used by the Papacy: those who desire to be satisfied in this should receive a copy of what the brethren from Geneva have written about this.¹

¹ This is a copy of the Genevan Articles serving as an answer to the tenth question of the Brethren of Keulen: The best and safest [procedure] is to admit or receive no children for baptism than those whose fathers are members of the body of churches, and indeed this is the ordinary rule which should be used in these cases; yet to temper the severity in these things, one should always take into consideration that God's covenant extends to the thousandth generation, not in order to receive pellmell all sorts of children who are offered for baptism, under cover that their ancestors of more than a thousand years ago were Christians, but by good and appropriate means to accept and to add to the churches again those who have been estranged therefrom; but now the means and the circumstances are various and many. Because, if it were certain that it pleased God to restore again his ruined churches and that the ordinary administration of baptism (which the enemies of the truth nowadays misuse) would again be placed in the hands of upright pastors, even though it were plain that many people were not so quickly reformed or convicted or regenerated, nevertheless the children of such people (who come to the churches) should not be shut off from baptism. Because not only would such be wronged, but also the fellowship of believers and the promises of God. We gave a similar answer to those of the Kingdom of Scotland when they asked our advice about these matters. As to the places where the church under the Cross hides or is secluded and concealed: if the parents of the children are still so weak and fearful that they do not dare to affiliate with the congregations, or, still raw and being unfit, will not bow under the yoke of Jesus Christ, nevertheless give permission and authority to some of their friends to offer their little children to be baptized in all propriety and purity, there is no cause or reason that would hinder accepting these children, except that the godfathers and godmothers or the witnesses of baptism must pledge themselves to faithfully fulfill their office and duty in this, and also assure and prove that they have the authority and consent of the parents to do this, because this is just as much as if the fathers of the aforesaid children have set aside their fatherly right and action and have given them into the hands of the aforesaid godfathers and godmothers. But if there is any person who knows nothing of the Gospel and is completely ignorant of it, we would not advise accepting such a child without requiring such a person to promise first of all that he will allow his child in due time to be taught and instructed by the godfathers and godmothers in the pure doctrine of the Gospel, and that he by his fatherly authority or influence will neither now nor in the future ever force or bring his child to the point where the child would again be brought to the superstitions or differing beliefs of the Papacy, but that they will give this child much more freedom to live according to the teaching of the Gospel in which it (he) is taught. If in these cases the reins were slackened too much, ambition or boldness would rule too much, and there would follow much ruin and impropriety.

[The numbering of the next two articles was faulty.

They are therefore numbered 11 and 11a following the original manuscript.]

11. The eleventh question of those from Keulen whether fathers must be accepted who, though they support the pure doctrine, do not join the congregation. We answer that while the brethren think it well to allow the use of the fathers in baptism, who are present in the churches as witnesses that the child is baptized, those who are questioned may be permitted to do so, but they are accepted on the condition that they provide for the teaching of the child and are regarded as members of the church.

11a. The brothers from Aken and Keulen have asked whether a brother who lives in an ungodly way, after many admonitions given him in vain, must be excommunicated since he threatens to tear the church apart. We answer that those must be excommunicated who according to God's Word should be excommunicated, even though the church is threatened with disturbance. But inasmuch as the times of the exhortations that take place publicly and the announcement of excommunication are left to the judgment of the church, the times of exhortation and excommunication may be postponed provided that the preservation of the church be observed and also that the necessary excommunication is not neglected.

12. To the question of the brothers from Antwerp concerning ministers who are without charge and, having been called elsewhere, refuse to accept, we answer that concerning ministers who are without charge and being called by any of the churches refuse to accept, the classis shall judge whether they shall be urged or prompted [to accept] .

13. To the question of the same [brothers] whether a believing woman who is married to an unbelieving husband may present his child against his will for baptism in the congregation. We answer: it is permissible and should be done, but since it possibly would not always be profitable for the welfare of the churches, it will be necessary that in this difficulty she ask the advice of the consistory whose prudence shall allow it to act in such a way that neither the fearful is given too much rein nor the conscience burdened by too much harshness.

14. In answer to the question of some churches whether the brethren are allowed to trade coinage with other men in order to melt the same or to cause it to be melted or devalued, or to give occasion thereto. We answer that it is lawful to trade, but to gather money so that it is melted into devalued money, or otherwise to coin money or cause it to be coined so that loss and harm are done to the general welfare, notwithstanding this takes place with the connivance of the magistrate of that place, it still is very unrighteous and an enemy of love, and therefore unworthy of those who confess the pure religion.

15. In answer to the request of the brethren from Gent and Antwerp: the consistory shall consider and decide with mature judgment according to the character of the sin, according to the greatness of the offense, according to the frequency in which the errors occur and are repeated, and according to the size of the place and other circumstances, whether someone shall be barred not only from the Lord's Supper but also from the meeting of the Churches under the Cross, and if something more or further is required, this shall be postponed until the classical assembly.

16. The brethren from Gent asked if these sins should be considered public or secret, namely, to get a pardon or indulgence secretly, to be married by the Papists, to have the children baptized there, to deny Jesus Christ while holding the office of mayor or some other office in the government, to swear an oath by the saints or anything else. This question, because it is variously argued and spoken about, is postponed to another meeting.

17. The question of those from Aken concerning a young man and a (maid) servant, the brethren postpone [the matter] until after a diligent investigation of all the circumstances of the acts, which [investigation] shall be done by the consistory, and afterwards they shall bring [this] to the classical meeting.

18. In answer to the question from the Walloon Church of Antwerp, what should be done with a woman who says that her husband died in the war five or six years ago and still cannot prove his death with any degree of certainty: in this case the way to obtain a declaration by the authority of the government must be followed, and if she cannot get this, she shall ask the government to decree how long she still must wait. In case she cannot obtain either of these two, she shall resort to the higher government authority to use its help and authority.

19. In answer to the other question from the same church concerning a widow who wanted to marry a month or two after her husband's death: the consistory may not nor should prescribe a certain time, since the apostle Paul allows widows to remarry without setting a certain time. Nevertheless, modesty demands that she does not enter upon a second marriage for four or five months, and in case she has been left pregnant not for about two months after childbirth.

20. In answer to the third question from the same church concerning one who having been barred from the Lord's Supper because of a great sin wanted to marry a lady in the congregation before he has publicly confessed his sin: the ecclesiastical admonition shall be used against him. If he repents, he shall be permitted [to marry] ; if not, the lady shall be admonished not to marry a man who is defiled with great and public sin and is a despiser of the congregation, one who is kept from and shut out from the same.

21. It is asked what degrees of social and blood-relationship are forbidden in marriage. The answer is that it is best, especially since the government is unbelieving, to follow the laws and ordinances of that place insofar as such can be done without making God angry, so that a marriage contracted against such [laws] is not declared null and void and the children illegitimate, and the goods and property not be given to another, and other such things not develop from this.

22. The question presented by those of Aken concerning the minister who has a heretical housewife is answered in this way: since he is installed in his office, diligent investigation shall be made by the consistory as to what effort and pains he has taken, both by holy behavior as well as with continual admonitions from God's Word so that he might win his wife for Jesus Christ. But if he is found negligent in doing his duty, he shall be suspended or deposed from his office by the judgment and authority of the consistory. If the consistory acts too easily and lightly in this, the matter of the inattention and judgment of the consistory may be appealed and taken to the classis by decision of members of the church.

23. The general synod shall be convened next spring provided the churches of England declare that they wish and can at least send some to it, even though not all of them agree; if not, the synod shall be postponed to the spring of the year 1573.

24. The Classis of Paltz is appointed to call the general synod.

CHAPTER II CERTAIN REGULATIONS FOR CLASSICAL MEETINGS

1. In the classical meetings one of the ministers shall deliver a sermon which the other assembled ministers shall judge. If there is something that needs improvement, they shall make this known. All the others shall do the same, each in his turn, in succeeding classical meetings.

2. After this the president shall be chosen by the general vote of the ministers. After he has offered prayer, he shall ask each one individually whether the consistory meetings are held in their churches, whether church discipline is maintained, whether they have any struggle with heretics, whether they have any doubt concerning any articles of doctrine, whether they need the advice and help of the other ministers for ruling the churches, and other such things.

3. If there is anything that has transpired in any church of the classis that could not be finished in the consistory, it shall be considered and decided on in the classical meeting, from which appeal may be made to the provincial synod.
4. Further, only those things shall be dealt with in the classis meetings which concern the churches of the classis.
5. This having been done, the president shall present one or more questions of the articles in which there is any difference between us and the Papists in order in this way meanwhile to sharpen and to stimulate one another to study.
6. In classical meetings which precede the next provincial synod persons shall be chosen whom the assembly desires to delegate to the provincial synod in the name of the classis.
7. Two ministers shall be sent from each classis with as many elders or deacons, or at least one minister with one elder or deacon.
8. Before the points which are proposed [for consideration] to the provincial synod are determined, it is advisable that the acts or proceedings and decisions or regulations of the previous synod are diligently reviewed so that the provincial synod and especially in the general synod those things which formerly have been considered and decided by common consent are not again proposed unless a new reason for doubt occurred concerning that which has been previously considered.
9. Lastly, the time and place of the next meeting shall be decided, and the president shall give thanks to God.

CHAPTER III CONCERNING THE PROVINCIAL SYNOD

1. Those who are delegated to the provincial synod shall bring credentials together with the points they will propose in written form. They shall not present any other things than those which could not be completed in the consistorial or classical meetings, or such things that concern all the churches of the province, so that the provincial meetings are not lengthened by unnecessary problems.
2. When they have thus gathered, the minister of that place, or if there is none, the one who presided at the last meeting, shall lead in prayer to choose a president, a vice-president, and a clerk.
3. The president, having been chosen, shall lead in prayer concerning the entire agenda. After that he shall see to it that the names of those present are recorded, likewise the names of those who are absent so that they may explain the reason for their absence. He shall then request the letters or credentials so that they may be read, likewise the mandates with each signature and seal which he shall present separately and properly, and the whole assembly shall decide, having listened. He shall gather the ballots declaring what is the opinion of the majority. The clerk shall record this and, having done so, he shall read it clearly so that it may be confirmed by common consent.
4. After this the things that concern doctrine and those pertaining to church government shall be read and respectively put into writing, and after this the special items [shall be taken up] .
5. The office of the president is to see to it that each one speaks in his turn. He shall order the bitter and contentious persons to be silent, and, if they refuse, they shall be ordered to leave the meeting so that they may be punished according to the judgment of the brethren and according to what they have deserved.
6. The president's office ends with the adjournment of the synod. It is left to the next provincial synod to choose the same or another president.

7. The elders or deacons who are delegated to these meetings shall vote together with the ministers of their churches in all sessions and sittings. Among the elders of the place where the meetings are held only two votes shall be valid, although the other elders are allowed to be present and to express their opinions.
8. The chairman shall begin all sessions with prayer and close them with thanksgiving.
9. All transcribed and adopted articles shall be read again so that they are approved by every one, and each one shall receive a copy of the same from the president and clerk so that they can be read in the consistory of each church.
10. A church shall be chosen by common consent of the whole provincial synod which with the judgment of its classis is entrusted with the power and responsibility to decide the time and place of the next provincial synod.
11. All weighty matters that occur in other churches, or that could not be finished in consistories or classis, or such weighty matters that affect the whole province must first and in time be sent to this church.
12. This church shall let the other churches know the time and place of the next provincial synod three months ahead of time, and shall at the same time transmit the copy or duplicate of all the main articles thereof which have been sent to it, which each church may consider in time and present their judgment in the classical meetings, so that those who are delegated by the classis may present with premeditated judgment what is the feeling of all the churches of that classis [in these matters].
13. Nevertheless the church to which the task of designating the location and time of the next provincial synod was given [is not required] to write to each individual church of all the classes of the province and in that way to be overly burdened; therefore a church shall be designated in each classis to which [this church] shall write in order to inform the ministers of the classis concerning whatever items they have themselves received [from the convening church] .
14. Those who are delegated to the synod shall attend at the cost and expense of each classis.
15. After the synod has ended the Lord's Supper shall be celebrated by the ministers and elders who have come to the synod together with the people of the place where the synod is held according to the ability of the place to do so.
16. The church where the synod is held shall see to it that it brings or sends to the next synodical meeting the acts and decisions of the previous synod.

CHAPTER IV CONCERNING THE GENERAL SYNOD

The same things that are prescribed (for the provincial synod) shall also be maintained in the general synod, which shall be attended by ministers and elders delegated not by the classes but by the provinces with testimonials and credentials and instructions concerning doctrine, church government, and other special matters which could not be carried out or completed in the provincial meetings, or which concern and affect all the churches.

Signed at Embden 1571
Caspar Heydenus, minister of the Franckendalen Churches
Johannes Taffinus, minister of the Heidelbergensis Gallican
Church, and others.