

## **Canons of Dort–3&4HoD: Articles 10-13 –What is True Conversion?**

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: So much talk about sin can be overwhelming and make you feel depressed and hopeless. And this is exactly what God wants. God wants to destroy your self-esteem for self-esteem can make you think that you contribute something to your salvation. But your loving Father does not want you to stay in the doldrums of hopelessness. Feeling bad about yourself was part of the conversion process, the first step on your journey to redemption. The next step was the effectual call of the Holy Spirit to come and rest on Jesus. Today you will hear about the result of that effectual call: Conversion.

Our headings are:

**Conversion is a Work of God**

**Conversion is by Means of The Holy Spirit**

**Conversion is a Supernatural Work**

**Conversion is an Incomprehensible Work**

Our goals are: **That you will see that your conversion was totally outside of your abilities or desire, that you will rejoice in your conversion, and that you will then labor for the Lord who converted you.**

### **Conversion is a Work of God**

**Article 10: Conversion as the Work of God** - The fact that others who are called through the ministry of the gospel do come and are brought to conversion must not be credited to humankind, as though one distinguishes one's self by free choice from others who are furnished with equal or sufficient grace for faith and conversion (as the proud heresy of Pelagius maintains). No, **it must be credited to God**: just as from eternity **God chose God's own (people) in Christ**, so within time God **effectively calls** them, **grants them faith and repentance**, and, having **rescued them from the dominion of darkness, brings them into the kingdom** of the Son, in order that they may **declare the wonderful deeds** of the One who called them out of darkness into this marvelous light, and may boast not in themselves, but in the Lord, as apostolic words frequently testify in Scripture.

**1. Conversion is the work of God alone, unlike what Arminians teach.** There is no human collaboration in conversion.

**Romans 9:16** So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, **but of God who shows mercy.**

Because you are saved by grace through faith, not of your works, **you have no ground to boast in yourself but in God alone.** **1Corinthians 1:30...**you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption— 31 that, as it is written, "**He who glories, let him glory in the LORD.**"

This is why God had to destroy your self-esteem first.

**2. Specifically, how did God convert you? God chose you. God called you at the time he determined through his Word and**

**Spirit. God gave you faith and repentance.** (Repentance is not a natural yearning 渴望 of the soul-rebellion is. Faith is a gift which you use to receive what God offers.) Simply put, God – God alone- rescued you from darkness and brought you into his Son's kingdom of light. "I sought the Lord and afterward I knew that he was the one who sought me first."

**3. Since you have been brought (you did not walk by yourself) out of darkness into the kingdom of light you have seen the greatness of your salvation. Now enjoy it. Then declare it to the world. Let doctrines inspire your evangelism. Then boast about God.** Season your speech with praise of what God has done. And when you accomplish anything, remember to say: "By God's grace I am able to do this," or "With God's help I was able to come through this trial." By doing this you will **cause others to praise God.** Furthermore, watch out for one who doesn't sing God's praises! Watch out for those who use a lot of "I's" in their speeches. Don't be too close to them. Don't marry them.

**Romans 11/12:36** For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. 1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

The Arminian doesn't want to give God his full glory, **but you who know better must do better by your word and works.**

### **Conversion is by Means of the Holy Spirit**

**Article 11: The Holy Spirit's Work in Conversion** - Moreover, when God carries out this good pleasure in the elect, or works true conversion in them, God not only sees to it that the **gospel is proclaimed to them outwardly**, and enlightens their minds powerfully by the Holy Spirit so that they may rightly understand and discern the things of the Spirit of God, but, **by the effective operation of the same regenerating Spirit**, God also penetrates into the inmost being of people, opens the closed heart, softens the hard heart, and circumcises the heart that is uncircumcised. **God infuses new qualities into the will, making the dead will alive**, the evil one good, the unwilling one willing, and the stubborn one compliant. God acti-

vates and strengthens the will so that, like a good tree, it may be enabled to **produce the fruits** of good deeds.

**1. Specifically, God works conversion by his Holy Spirit.** God sends a preacher to the sinner and he preaches of God and his holiness, man and his sin, and Christ and his redemptive work, and then the Holy Spirit works that Word in man to create faith in him and pull him to the Savior in an irresistible way. With faith and a renewed will, man then responds and receives what Christ did. You see, fundamental to the work of God's Holy Spirit is the preaching of the Word. The Word does not work on its own. This is why many who have studied the Bible do not – and cannot – become Christians. A deaf man may have the best reader, but he won't hear anything! Only the Holy Spirit can open his ears! Look at how closely the Word and the Spirit are linked.

**Ephesians 6:17** And take the helmet of salvation, and the **sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;**

Now look at the Word and Spirit individually.

**Hebrews 4:12** For the **word of God is living and powerful, and sharper** than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

**Ezekiel 36:26** "I will give you a new heart and put a **new spirit within** you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 **"I will put My Spirit within you** and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

**John 15:26** "But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the **Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.**

**1Corinthians 6:9** Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And **such were some of you.** But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and **by the Spirit of our God.**

When the Holy Spirit works, he brings a radical change to the sinner...something outside of the sinner's ability.

**2. The Holy Spirit does not make a gentle whisper to come to God, as Arminians believe.** He makes an effective irresistible call. If fact, the Arminian thinks that God would insult man if he compelled man to believe. He thinks man is perfectly able to do it by himself. The Arminian argues this way: Satan says "no," God says, "yes," but I will decide by my own abilities. But the Bible teaches that: "God must pull you, or you won't come!"

**3. A further error of the Arminian is this: He argues that God did not have to instill anything in man's heart to make him repent and believe.** He believes that everything man needed was already in him. He teaches that man was only "sick" in sin and that man was therefore capable of making good decisions. Warn your Arminians friends against robbing the Holy Spirit. It is funny how the Arminian talks about gifts of the Spirit and speaking in tongues...and yet they rob him of his rightful honor.

**4. Reformed believers, you must not expect your children to be saved simply because they were baptized.** Rather, consistently bring the Word of the Gospel to them. This is why throughout history the prophets and Apostles called on parents, fathers in particular, to teach their children. Deuteronomy 6. Psalm 78. Ephesians 6.

## **Conversion is a Supernatural Work**

**Article 12: Regeneration a Supernatural Work** - And this is the regeneration, the new creation, the raising from the dead, and **the making alive so** clearly proclaimed in the Scriptures, which God **works in us without our help.** But this certainly does not happen only by outward teaching, by moral persuasion, or by such a way of working that, after God has done the divine work, it remains in our power whether or not to be reborn or converted. Rather, it is an **entirely supernatural work**, one that is at the same time **most powerful** and **most pleasing**, a **marvelous, hidden, and inexpressible** work, which is not less than or inferior in power to that **of creation** or of **raising the dead**, as Scripture (inspired by the author of this work) teaches. As a result, all those in whose hearts God works in this marvelous way are **certainly, unfailingly, and effectively reborn** and do actually believe. And then the will, now renewed, is not only activated and motivated by God, but in being activated by God is also itself active. For this reason, human beings themselves, by that grace which they have received, are also rightly said to believe and to repent.

**1. Conversion is a supernatural work in 2 ways.**

**a. Conversion is a kind of resurrection.** Any resurrection is a supernatural act.

**b. Conversion is like a re-creation.** Creation was a supernatural act, and so is re-creation.

But note this: Those who teach that you must have a dramatic conversion story ignore the whole tenor of Scripture. Most people come to believe through a long process of time...in a gradual way...just like a pregnancy. The difference here is that it is a dramatic internal work. Some people quietly come to Christ.

**John 3:5** Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

**This supernatural work is “most powerful, most pleasing, marvelous, hidden, and inexpressible.**

**2. And once this supernatural action takes place, the sinner is unfailingly, and effectively reborn.** Having been reborn, you are then able to believe and repent. Arminians, of course, reject the fact that their wills need to be reborn. They effectively rob God of praise for this supernatural work. The Arminian is a thief of the worst sort...he steals from God.

**3. Knowing that your conversion was so supernatural, you have all the more grounds for praising God.** You were wretches with no will to do good. Then you were saved. You were saved in a most incredible way. No gets depressed knowing that he was rescued from a most hopeless condition and then established as a royal priesthood. A normal man would be full of joy and would praise his rescuer – and offer his rescuer his life! At least he would want to serve him!

**4. This knowledge reminds you of how to view the world.** You know that the world doesn't need morals...it needs a resurrection in the soul. So Jesus and his work is the answer that the world truly needs.

### **Conversion is an Incomprehensible Work**

**Article 13: The Incomprehensible Way of Regeneration** - In this life believers cannot fully understand the way this work occurs; meanwhile, they rest content with knowing and experiencing that, by this grace of God, they do believe with the heart and love their Savior.

**1. Conversion happens in such a way that you cannot fully understand - just like creation was incomprehensible.** You know you are converted because the Bible says so and God's Holy Spirit works in you to believe it. For example, I, who am technologically deficient, might ask you how my computer runs and you might know and explain it to me. I won't understand. Because I know you and I trust you based on my past experiences with you, I believe what you say. So you are to trust God's Work in your conversion.

**2. You must rest in contentment even though conversion is incomprehensible.** You must rest in contentment that as a sinner, the Savior loved you and died for you. You must rest in contentment that you will be with him in glory on the last day. You must rest in contentment that he will give you everything you need to wait for that time.

Isaiah 55:9 "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. 10 "For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, 11 So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. 12 "For you shall go out with joy, And be led out with peace; The mountains and the hills Shall break forth into singing before you, And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Notice how Isaiah does not attempt to explain the unexplainable; he simply wants you to enjoy it and respond to it.

### **Conclusion:**

You were converted by the work of God alone. He did this by his Holy Spirit working through his Word to create faith in you by which you received what Christ did. This work of conversion was a supernatural work, done apart from any human intervention. No one can fully understand exactly how God does this work, but you understand your duty to the Savior.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

Having experienced this most powerful, most pleasing, marvelous, and inexpressible conversion through Jesus Christ, how then must you respond? Rejoice! Yes, yell it out to the world: "I'm saved, and I know that I am." This will bring glory to God and good to those who hear. How can they believe unless someone tells them? Would you now do your duty! Tell others of Jesus. Support missions. Become a missionary.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, be clear about this: No Christ, no conversion. But if you say today: "Lord, I want you to work supernaturally in me and give me a new heart, and new record, and a new life because Jesus took the punishment for me," he will give you everything you need and more.