Introduction

Little is known about the three week period in March–April 1619 when the Canons of Dordt were drafted or about the drafting process itself. The Canons were drafted by a committee that kept no minutes, and the Acta of the Synod are also silent on this period since there were no public sessions.

Nevertheless, over one hundred archival documents relating to the drafting of the Canons have been preserved in various archives in the Netherlands, Switzerland, and England. These materials include several drafts of the Canons, amendment suggestions on some of these drafts by the various delegations at the Synod, and a variety of drafting committee documents. These documents have never been gathered into a collection, many have not been precisely identified, few have ever been transcribed from the original Latin, and they have certainly not been carefully studied. Since these were working documents, preliminary to the final Canons, they were never considered part of the official autographa of the Synod and were not included in the published Acta.

As far as I am aware, there are five main repositories of archival documents relating to the drafting of the Canons:

1. The Oud Synodaal Archief, now housed in the Utrechts Archief in Utrecht, contains the autographa of the Synod, seventeen volumes of official documents, but it also contains Volume 5, an unorganized collection of unofficial synodical papers that are not well identified. ¹

Among these documents are early drafts of the Canons by president Bogerman, amendment suggestions by various delegations, and a variety of drafting committee documents.

2. The journal of Casparus Sibelius, a minister delegate from Overijssel, is housed in the Stadsarchief in Dordrecht. Sibelius included Bogerman’s dictated draft of the Canons on Articles I and II, the first committee draft of the Canons on all Five Articles, Overijssel amendment suggestions to this committee draft, and two early drafts of the Conclusion. It is significant that this copy of the first committee draft became Sibelius’s working copy; on this draft he wrote in later amendments as the Canons developed through later drafts to its final form.

3. The Archives Tronchin, housed in the Musée Historique de la Réforme in Geneva, include papers of the Genevan delegate Theodore Tronchin. Among these are Tronchin’s detailed journal of events at the Synod, as well as his copies of various synodical documents. Volume 18 contains copies of Bogerman’s dictated draft, the first committee draft, committee amendments for the second committee draft, for the third committee draft, and for the final Canons, and Genevan amendment suggestions to the various drafts.

4. The Zentralbibliothek Zürich holds several manuscript volumes of materials on the Synod of Dordt, including papers of the Swiss delegate Johannes J. Breitinger and his journal on the sessions. Among these papers are copies of Bogerman’s dictated draft, Swiss amendment suggestions to Bogerman’s draft, to the first committee draft, and to the second committee draft.