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*For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion:
in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;
he shall set me up upon a rock.
—Psalm 27:5*

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And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation. And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance.

—Exodus 34:5–9

The Name of the Lord

After speaking with God in the tabernacle of the congregation, Moses went up into Mount Sinai early the next morning. Jehovah descended in the cloud of his presence and stood with him there. God would again write his law in the tables of stone. But God would also proclaim his gospel to Moses, for God would speak to Moses his name.

Moses stood in a special place by God upon a certain rock that God showed him. In that rock was a cleft—a crevice or cavern that was big enough for a man to hide in. Jehovah took Moses and put him in the cleft of the rock and covered the opening with his hand and began to pass by Moses. When Jehovah's face was past the opening, God removed his hand from the cleft, and Moses could see the back parts of God receding. Moses saw the stunning glory of God.

The entire time that God was passing by Moses, he was proclaiming his name. The name of God is a long name. Oh, we can write it in three letters—G-O-D—and we can say it in a split second. Nevertheless, God's name is very, very long. That is because God's name is his whole revelation of himself. We could say that the whole Bible is God's name because the whole Bible reveals God. As God passed by Moses, God proclaimed his name. This means that Moses both saw God's glory when God uncovered the cleft of the rock and *heard* God's

glory in the proclamation of God's name. Moses' hearing and seeing teaches us that when we *hear* the name and revelation of God, we are actually *seeing* God's glory. This is the beauty of faith. Faith hears the word of God and by that hearing sees the glory of God. Faith sees what it hears. That is how faith can be the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1). By hearing God's promise, faith sees the unseen.

God proclaimed to Moses the essence of his name. He is Jehovah, Jehovah God. That is his name, but there is more to his name. His name is *merciful*—he has tender affection for his people in Christ. His name is *gracious*—he favors us, though we do not deserve it; and he rescues us from sin and death. His name is *longsuffering*—he bears long with us according to his grace and not according to our sin. His name is *abundant goodness*—he pours out to us all the riches of salvation through our savior. His name is *abundant in truth*—he is faithful to his own being and to his word, though it cost him the death of his only begotten Son. His name is *keeping mercy for thousands*—watching over his chosen people and saving them through all the long years of their generations. His name is *forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin*—clearing the sin and guilt of his people through Christ. His name is *by no means clearing the guilty*—paying for his elect people by atonement and visiting the curse upon

the reprobate. His name is *visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children*—judging the sins of the wicked with more sin to run throughout their generations. All of this is the name and glory of God!

When Moses heard it, he made haste and bowed and prayed, Go among us! Pardon our iniquity!

Take us for thine inheritance! God would do this for the same reason that he always does—for his name’s sake! “Nevertheless he saved them for his name’s sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known” (Ps. 106:8).

—AL

CANONS OF DORDT

Historical Background of the Canons (1)

The historical background of the Canons of Dordt was the rise of the Remonstrants in the Reformed churches in the Netherlands in the early 1600s. The Remonstrants included influential members of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands: ministers, professors of theology, elders, and leading political figures. Most influential of all was James Arminius, from whom the Remonstrants got their name Arminians. Through the influence of Arminius and others in the Dutch Reformed seminaries and pulpits, Arminianism spread widely and rapidly throughout the Netherlands.¹

Led by James Arminius, the Remonstrants opposed the Reformed doctrine of God’s sovereign predestination of the elect and the reprobate. Even though the existing Reformed confessions of the day—the Belgic Confession (1561) and the Heidelberg Catechism (1563)—both taught sovereign predestination, the Remonstrants proposed a doctrine of contingent predestination. According to Arminius and the Remonstrants, God’s election of men to salvation was contingent upon men’s free will, their good use of the light of nature, their act of faith, their imperfect obedience, and their perseverance in faith and obedience, among other things. The Remonstrant doctrine of election bristled with conditions.

The Remonstrant doctrine of conditional election infected every doctrine of salvation, as it must. Because God’s predestination was contingent

on man’s will and activity, so also the efficacy of Christ’s atonement was contingent on man, the power of God’s grace was contingent on man, and the perseverance of the sinner was contingent on man. The Remonstrant doctrine of divine contingency left the sinner hopelessly dependent on himself for his salvation.

James Arminius died in 1609, but the Remonstrant cause continued to infect the churches. The Remonstrants enumerated their doctrine in five points in 1610 in their document *Five Articles of Remonstrance*. The Remonstrants expanded the same five points in 1618 in their document *The Opinions of the Remonstrants*. Beginning with conditional election, the *Five Articles* and the *Opinions* applied the notion of divine contingency to predestination, the atonement, the sin of man, the grace of God, and perseverance. The five points of Arminianism can be remembered by the acronym TAIN^T: Tentative Election, Available Atonement, Incomplete Depravity, Negatable Grace, Temporary Perseverance. TAIN^T is an appropriate acronym for the five points of Arminianism because the deadly toxin of contingency taints—contaminates and pollutes and befouls and poisons—the pure gospel of God’s sovereign grace in Christ.

The Remonstrant doctrine agitated the Reformed churches in the Netherlands and troubled the souls of God’s people. The Synod of Dordt (1618–19) would later reflect on this disquieting effect of Arminianism in the churches. Writing in

¹ For a more detailed history, see Dewey Engelsma’s nine articles on the life of Arminius, printed in *Reformed Pavilion* beginning November 1, 2025.

its preface to the Canons of Dordt—which preface the synod intended to be its historical introduction to the Canons—the synod recalled,

James Arminius and his followers, bearing the name Remonstrants, assailed this church with various errors, some old and some new, first secretly and then openly; and, troubling her with scandalous quarrels and obstinate schisms, they brought the church into such a crisis, that, had not the mercy of our savior intervened at just the right time, this most flourishing church would have finally been consumed by the horrible fire of dissensions and schisms.²

Standing against Arminius and the Remonstrants were many ministers, professors, and elders within the Reformed churches, as well as influential political figures. Chief among the opponents of Arminius was Franciscus Gomarus, a professor of theology in the University of Leiden.

Over against the Arminian doctrine of divine contingency, Gomarus and the Reformed churches maintained the doctrine of divine sovereignty. God did not depend upon the will or activity of man in order to elect him, but God sovereignly chose men unto salvation of his sovereign good pleasure. Not only was God’s predestination sovereign, but also Christ’s atonement was sovereign, God’s grace is sovereign, and God’s preservation of his people is sovereign. The Reformed doctrine of God’s sovereignty is the blessed gospel of salvation by grace alone, making the sinner blessedly dependent upon God alone in Christ alone by faith alone. “Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation” (Isa. 12:2).

The Synod of Dordt would enumerate its doctrine in five points, matching and answering the five points of the Arminians. The five points of the synod can be summarized as Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Total Depravity, Irrresistible Grace, and Preservation of the Saints. These five points—ULTIP, in the order in which the Synod of Dordt enumerated them—are often

remembered by the acronym TULIP. TULIP is an appropriate acronym for the five points of Dordt because the tulip is a lovely flower often associated with the Netherlands. God came to the Synod of Dordt in 1618–19, and by his word and Spirit he banished the TAIN^T of the Remonstrants from the Reformed soil and replanted the TULIP of his gospel of grace.

The States General of the Netherlands—the governing body of the Dutch Republic—convened the Synod of Dordt in 1618. The main work before the synod was to judge the doctrine of the Remonstrants. The synod resoundingly rejected Arminian doctrine and maintained the old Reformed doctrine of John Calvin and the Reformation. The synod, reflecting on its convening, wrote the following in its preface to the Canons:

But blessed be the Lord forever, who, after hiding his face for a moment from us (who had provoked his wrath and indignation in many ways), has testified to the whole world that he does not forget his covenant nor despise the sighing of his people. For when it appeared that, humanly speaking, there was scarcely any hope of a remedy, he inspired the most illustrious and mighty States General of the Dutch Federation with this mind, that with the advice and direction of the most illustrious and courageous Prince of Orange, they resolved to advance against these raging evils by those legitimate means, which have been sanctioned over the long course of years by the examples of the apostles themselves and the Christian church that followed them, and which have been employed before this with great fruit in the Dutch church as well; and by their authority they convened a synod at Dordrecht from all the provinces which they governed; having sought for it the favor of the most serene and powerful King James of Great Britain and of the most illustrious princes, earls, and republics; and having obtained many of the most esteemed theologians; that by the common judgment of so many theologians

² See “Canons of the Synod of Dordrecht: Preface,” *Reformed Pavilion* 3, no. 15 (July 19, 2025): 8.

of the Reformed church, those doctrines of Arminius and his followers would be judged accurately and by the word of God alone; that true doctrine would be established and the false rejected; and that—by divine blessing—concord, peace, and tranquility would be restored to the Dutch churches. This is

that blessing of God in which the Dutch churches rejoice, humbly acknowledging and gratefully proclaiming the mercies of their faithful savior.³

(To be continued)

—AL



³“Canons of the Synod of Dordrecht: Preface,” 8–9.