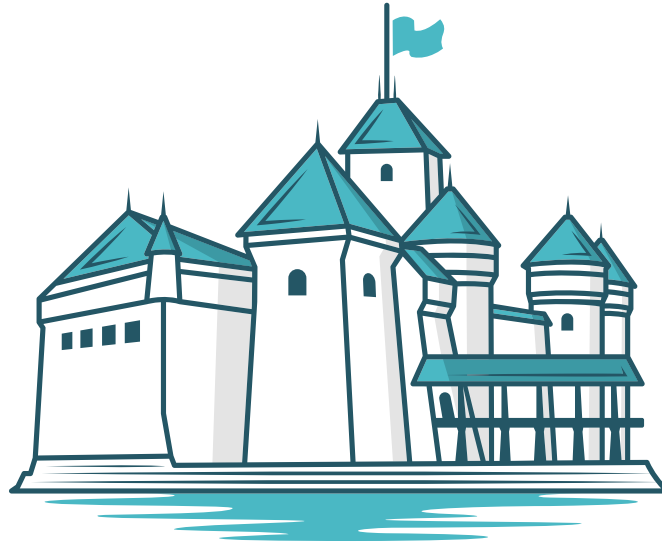




REFORMED

— P A V I L I O N —

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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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Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

—Philippians 1:2

Benediction

Grace. Grace is God's favor. Grace is favor in the eternal depths of God's heart for his elect people in Christ. Grace is such favor of God for his people that whenever he thinks of them—which is from eternity to eternity—he delights in them. Grace is such favor of God for his people that whenever he looks upon them—which is from eternity to eternity—his face shines with delight. “The LORD make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee” (Num. 6:25).

Grace is God's undeserved favor. There is nothing in God's people that can attract God's favor. We are not favorable. We are not beautiful. We are not attractive to the eternally holy and righteous God. Far from it! We are ugly in sin. “There is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Rom. 3:12). But grace is God's favor for the undeserving, for the sinner, for the spiritually ugly. “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom. 5:20).

Grace is God's undeserved favor in Jesus Christ. Jesus is not sinful but favorable! Jesus is not ugly but beautiful! “Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever” (Ps. 45:2). God delights in Jesus. God's face shines with delight upon Jesus. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17). And God has chosen his elect people in Jesus Christ, uniting us to Christ by his Spirit forever and imputing unto us all the beautiful righteousness of Christ. Favoring Jesus Christ, God favors us. Looking upon Jesus Christ with delight, God looks upon us with delight.

Saints in Jesus Christ, with the bishops and deacons—that is, beloved church of Jesus Christ—grace be unto you.

Peace.

Peace is perfect harmony. Peace is perfect harmony in the eternal depths of God's heart between himself and his elect people in Christ. In God's heart, from eternity to eternity, there is no warfare toward his people. In God's heart, from eternity to eternity, there is no enmity against his people. In God's heart there is only complete and perfect agreement, harmony, and peace with his people. “I will hear what God the LORD will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people” (Ps. 85:8).

Peace is God's perfect harmony with those who by nature are at war with him. God does not agree with his people because they agree with him. God is not free of enmity against his people because they are free of enmity against him. By nature and by first father and by practice, God's people have been at war with God. But God has never been at war with us! From eternity to eternity he has only ever spoken peace to us. “For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee” (Ps. 122:8).

Peace is God's perfect harmony with his people in Jesus Christ. For in Jesus Christ God has forgiven his people's enmity against him. In Jesus Christ God has forever demonstrated his love for and peace with his people.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. (Rom. 5:8–10)

Saints in Jesus Christ, with the bishops and deacons—that is, beloved church of Jesus Christ—peace be unto you.

It is a benediction. That is, it is a good word from God to his beloved church. The apostle, writing on behalf of God the Father and the Lord Jesus

Christ, reveals the word that God says to his people. And that word for his sinful and beleaguered people is good. It is a benediction. It is this: “Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.”

—AL

CANONS OF DORDT

Title and Subtitles

The Synod of Dordt gave its Canons a title and two subtitles. Each is significant, for each indicates what will follow in the subsequent articles, and each indicates the synod’s purpose with the Canons. The title and subtitles of the Canons are

THE CANONS OF THE SYNOD OF DORDRECHT

Judgment of the National Synod of the Dutch Reformed Churches

The sentence concerning divine predestination, and the heads annexed thereto, which the Synod of Dordrecht judges to be in harmony with the word of God and to have been received up to now in the Reformed churches, expounded in certain articles.

Title

The Synod of Dordt entitled its document *The Canons of the Synod of Dordrecht*. The word *canon* literally means “measuring stick” or “rule.” A canon, therefore, is an official rule or principle that serves as the standard of judgment. Just as there are measuring sticks—rulers and yardsticks and chalk lines and lasers—by which a builder can judge whether his wall is straight, so there is a measuring stick—holy scripture—by which the church can judge whether her doctrine is straight. The Synod of Dordt met in the consciousness that the Reformed church had one canon, or one standard, by which she could judge all doctrine: the word of God. By the

time the Synod of Dordt met, the Reformed church had already been confessing for more than half a century “The Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures to be the Only Rule of Faith” (Belgic Confession 7). The Synod of Dordt was committed to the rule that “those doctrines of Arminius and his followers would be judged accurately and by the word of God alone.” Indeed, “synod bound itself by a holy oath that it would accept sacred scripture alone as the standard of judgment and that it would operate with a good and clear conscience in examining and judging this cause.”¹

When the Synod of Dordt entitled its document *Canons*, it was not suggesting that the synod’s work was equal to the scriptures or a standard alongside the scriptures. Rather, first, synod was declaring that its judgment in the subsequent articles was in harmony with the scriptures as the one canon of truth. Synod’s document was subordinate to the word of God, drawn from the word of God, and in harmony with the word of God. Being in harmony with the word of God, the Canons could be a rule—under scripture—by which the church could evaluate the claims of the Remonstrants. In this sense the Canons of Dordt is a canon to determine whether a teaching is true.

Second, by the title *Canons* the Synod of Dordt was declaring that the subsequent articles were the official confession of the Reformed church. Reformed doctrine is not defined by what this or that private individual says but by the official,

¹ See “Canons of the Synod of Dordrecht: Preface,” *Reformed Pavilion* 3, no. 15 (July 19, 2025): 9.

settled, and binding confession of the church. In this sense the Canons of Dordt is a canon to determine whether a teaching is Reformed.

Having a canon to determine whether a teaching is Reformed is important because of the many caricatures of the Reformed faith that men invent. The opponents of the Reformed faith claim that the Reformed faith makes God an arbitrary and bloodthirsty tyrant, makes man a senseless stock and block, and motivates man to live according to his flesh. These claims are all straw men and do not truly express what the Reformed faith teaches. When one evaluates these false claims, the Canons of Dordt is the measuring stick by which a man can determine whether these are truly the doctrines of the Reformed faith or not. The Synod of Dordt had to contend with many such claims in its day, just as the Reformed church must contend with many such claims today. In its Conclusion synod wrote,

Wherefore, this Synod of Dordrecht, in the name of the Lord, implores as many as piously call upon the name of our Savior Jesus Christ to judge of the faith of the Reformed churches, not from the calumnies which are heaped upon it from every side; nor even from the private statements of a few authorities, whether ancient or modern, which statements are often either quoted in bad faith or else falsified and twisted into a different meaning; but from the public confessions of the churches themselves, and from this very declaration of the orthodox doctrine that has been confirmed by the unanimous consent of each and every member of the entire synod.²

Having a canon to determine whether a teaching is Reformed is also important because of the many departures from the Reformed faith that Reformed churches are prone to make. In fact, these departures from the Reformed faith are more dangerous to Reformed churches than the caricatures of the foes. The enemies without the gates may mock and rail against the truth, but the enemies within the gates transform Reformed churches into the foes of their own Reformed

faith. Reformed churches today cherish Arminian notions—common grace, a well-meant offer of the gospel, a conditional covenant, justification by sanctification, a merely partial depravity of man, and more. These Reformed churches claim that they hold the Reformed faith. But in truth they eviscerate the heart of the Reformed faith, which is the sovereignty of God in the salvation of man. The Canons of Dordt is a measuring stick by which the departures of Reformed churches from the Reformed faith can be identified, exposed, and repudiated.

Because the Reformed faith is the gospel that man's salvation belongs to God and not to man, the Canons of Dordt is for the comfort of God's sinful people. To harlots and publicans and sinners come the glad tidings of great joy that salvation is of the Lord.

First Subtitle

The first subtitle of the Canons is “Judgment of the National Synod of the Dutch Reformed Churches.” The word *judgment* expresses the fact that the Synod of Dordt sat as a judge in a trial and rendered a verdict. The word *judgment* is a solemn word, capturing the spiritual gravitas and weighty character of the Synod of Dordt. Even an earthly court is a solemn place, for men and their lives are judged there. Even an earthly judge is a weighty figure, for he decides between what is true and what is false. How much more solemn and heavy was the Synod of Dordt. The synod did not preside over mere earthly things but sat in judgment over the heavenly matters of sound doctrine. Before the synod were two causes: the Remonstrant doctrine of divine contingency and the Reformed doctrine of divine sovereignty. The synod weighed the two causes against the divine standard of scripture and rendered its judgment: the Reformed doctrine is the truth from heaven, and the Remonstrant doctrine is the lie out of hell.

The spiritual weight of the synod is further emphasized by the fact that it was “the National Synod of the Dutch Reformed Churches.” The verdict rendered by Dordt was no mere private opinion of men but was the judgment of the church of

² See “Conclusion,” *Reformed Pavilion* 3, no. 24 (September 20, 2025): 9.

Jesus Christ. The church spoke at Dordt. The church—which is the body and bride of Christ—spoke at Dordt. The church—which knows the mind of Christ through his Spirit and word—spoke at Dordt. The church—which judges what her Lord and husband judges—spoke at Dordt. Yes, certainly, men can err. Yes, certainly, the church can err. But when the church judges according to the word of God, that is Christ’s judgment through his Spirit as he operates in his church. As the Jerusalem Council could say many years ago, so the Synod of Dordt could say, and so the church of Jesus Christ may say today: “It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us” (Acts 15:28).

When the Synod of Dordt rendered its judgment, it settled the matter for the Reformed churches. Oh, not everyone agreed with synod. The Remonstrants played the political game well and were able to regain a place in the Netherlands before long. But the matter of what was the doctrine of the Reformed faith was settled. Synod had sat in judgment over the matter, investigated the matter thoroughly, considered the matter in light of the word of God, and rendered its judgment. The doctrinal matter was not an open question in Reformed churches any longer. Divine contingency is gross error; divine sovereignty is God’s truth. Case closed.

The Synod of Dordt’s conviction regarding its role in the Remonstrant controversy is necessary for Reformed churches today. Let Reformed churches take care that they judge righteous judgment according to the word of God and not of man. For when Reformed churches render their verdicts concerning matters, they are not merely expressing opinions; they are not merely offering suggestions; they are not merely setting a few options before their members. Rather, they are judging heavenly matters and rendering heavenly verdicts. They claim to speak with the voice and authority of Christ, as the bride of Christ, in declaring that this is right and true, while that is wrong and false. They must be able to say at the conclusion of their judgment that this is the judgment of the Holy Ghost, which they can only say when their judgments are according to the word of God. The church’s position regarding her judgments must be that God has spoken, and the matter is settled. Yes, let Reformed churches take care, indeed.

The members of Reformed churches must also know that the verdicts of their churches are settled and binding. The church is a spiritual court, and her judgments render the case closed. Oh yes, the church can err by departing from the scriptures. Oh yes, the church can speak her own will and deceitfully call it the will of God. Then the case is not closed at all, and the matter is not at all settled—for the believer. Then the believing officebearer preaches and teaches; then the believing member protests and appeals. For believers are anointed with Christ and have received “the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God” (I Cor. 2:12). No, the false judgment of the false church cannot bind the believer. But the false judgment of the false church does bind the church. If a church judges an Arminian position to be true, then that church’s settled and binding doctrine is Arminian, and she is an Arminian church. Let the believer not stay there if the church will not reform. But if a church judges the Reformed faith to be true, then that church’s settled and binding doctrine is Reformed, and she is a Reformed church. Then let the believer join her, not leave her, and be nourished unto life by Christ’s gospel committed to her.

Second Subtitle

The second subtitle of the Canons is “The sentence concerning divine predestination, and the heads annexed thereto, which the Synod of Dordrecht judges to be in harmony with the word of God and to have been received up to now in the Reformed churches, expounded in certain articles.”

This subtitle emphasizes several things. First, the Synod of Dordt called its judgment its “sentence.” Like the previous subtitle, this subtitle indicates that the synod’s decision was its official verdict concerning the Remonstrant controversy. Having evaluated the controversy, the synod passed its sentence on it.

Second, synod indicated that the main doctrine in the controversy was that concerning divine predestination. There may have been five controversial points—the beautiful Reformed TULIP versus the vile Arminian TAIN’T—but the essential controversy was about predestination. Did God choose

men because of their faith and obedience—the Remonstrant doctrine of divine contingency? Or did God choose men unto faith and obedience—the Reformed doctrine of divine sovereignty? The remaining four controversial points of doctrine are significant, but they are “annexed” to the doctrine of predestination. Homer Hoeksema’s comment on the primacy and solidity of the doctrine of predestination is stirring.

We do well to understand that in the Canons the real line of battle is clearly defined. We say, as it were, in the first head of doctrine, “Put your straw men and your caricatures of the Reformed faith away. When you fight against them, you do not fight the Reformed faith. Here is the truth. Here is the Reformed confession. Here is the battle line. Here is the first line of defense. If you would vanquish the Reformed faith, you must make a frontal assault against this bulwark of divine predestination as defined in the first head of doctrine. But remember, the timbers of this bulwark are firmly fastened in the foundation of the infallible word of God. Unless you can destroy that foundation, you will surely leave the battlefield utterly routed.” Behind this bulwark of the truth therefore let every Reformed believer take his stand and find his defense.³

Third, synod declared in this subtitle that it judged its doctrine to be in harmony with the word of God. The authority of synod’s judgment was not that so many delegates agreed; the authority of synod’s judgment was not the spiritual character of the delegates; the authority of synod’s judgment was not even that the church had spoken. Rather, the authority of synod’s sentence was that it was “in harmony with the word of God.”

It was a special concern of the Synod of Dordt that its decisions be biblical. As it did in this subtitle, so synod would declare in its Conclusion, “The synod judges that this doctrine and the rejection

of errors are derived from the word of God.”⁴ The synod demonstrated what it declared—synod practiced what it preached—for the Canons are marked throughout by quotations from scripture and allusions to scripture. As one reads the Canons and its many scriptural references, he has the keen sense that he is dealing with sound biblical doctrine. The child of God—who is a sinner—is greatly encouraged as he reads the Canons, for he finds that the Reformed doctrine of salvation by the sovereign will and good pleasure of God in Christ is in fact the doctrine of the Bible.

Fourth, synod declared in this subtitle that it judged its doctrine to be the doctrine that had always been held in the Reformed churches. It was not as if the truth of God’s sovereignty in salvation was some new teaching that had caught synod’s fancy. Rather, the doctrines in these heads “have been received up to now in the Reformed churches.” It was not the Remonstrants who were walking in the old paths of sound doctrine but the Reformed.

It was a special concern of the Synod of Dordt that its decisions be in harmony with the existing Reformed confessions. The Belgic Confession (1561) and the Heidelberg Catechism (1563) had already set forth the truth of God’s sovereign election and sovereign salvation of men. In its Conclusion synod would state, “The synod judges that this doctrine and the rejection of errors are derived from the word of God and are in agreement with the confessions of the Reformed churches.”⁵ The child of God is encouraged by this. The truth of the gospel is not a mist that blows this way or that with the wind. The truth of the gospel is solid. It endureth to all generations (Ps. 100:5). What was true in 1561 and 1563 was still true in 1618 and 1619. And it is still true today! The child of God can stake his life, the life of his family, and the life of his church upon that gospel. For God is God, and he changes not. “I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal. 3:6).

—AL

³ Homer C. Hoeksema, *The Voice of Our Fathers: An Exposition of the Canons of Dordrecht*, 2nd ed. (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2013), 2–3.

⁴ “Conclusion,” 9.

⁵ “Conclusion,” 9.

REFORMATION DAY LECTURE

MARTIN LUTHER'S "Theology of the Cross"

Friday, October 30, 2026 · 7:00 p.m.

Martin Luther is most remembered for his 95 Theses, nailed to the church door in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. But though his 95 Theses may be Luther's most famous contribution to the Reformation, he made his most profound contribution six months later at the Heidelberg Disputation on April 26, 1518. With the eyes of Europe and the church upon him to see if he would soften his 95 Theses, Luther ran even further into the Reformation with his "Theology of the Cross." It electrified the audience. Not only did Luther not soften his 95 Theses, but he advanced beyond them by leaps and bounds. Luther's "Theology of the Cross" was unlike anything the wisdom of man had heard before. Europe staggered; the church was scandalized; the best and brightest men mobilized against it. Still today, Luther's "Theology of the Cross" appears to be great folly to the wisdom of man. Ah, yes—it appears to be great folly to the wisdom of man; but the "Theology of the Cross" is a sweet comfort to the mind of faith. For the "Theology of the Cross" is simply the gospel of our Savior applied to the doctrine and life of his church.

What is Luther's "Theology of the Cross"? It is not so much a doctrine to be set alongside other doctrines. Rather, the "Theology of the Cross" is a way of thinking. It is the way for faith to think like God and not like man. For God did not glorify himself in the palace of a king but in the sweat and blood and death and curse and scandal of the cross. When the church grasps this by faith, then she understands all of theology and all of life.

This Reformation Day weekend, we would be very pleased if you would join us for a lecture on Martin Luther's "Theology of the Cross."

DATE	Friday, October 30, 2026
TIME	7:00 p.m.
SPEAKER	Rev. Andrew Lanning
TOPIC	Martin Luther's "Theology of the Cross"
PROGRAM	Lecture, followed by Q&A and refreshments
VENUE	Pavilion Christian School 9181 Kenowa Ave. SW, Grand Rapids, MI 49534
HOST	Remnant Reformed Church

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