

# THE HISTORY OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

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The Canons of Dordt

# PREVIOUS WEEKS

- The Church that needed to be Reformed: the Roman Catholic Church with its elaborate system of saints and sacraments
- Martin Luther: Reformer of Wittenberg who reclaimed the biblical gospel, which includes justification by grace alone through faith in Christ.
- Ulrich Zwingli: Reformer of Zürich whose efforts of reform involved bringing biblical data to bear upon *worship* in particular.
- John Calvin: A prolific writer and preacher, Calvin served as the principal Reformer and pastor of Geneva.



# REFORMATION CREED-WRITING

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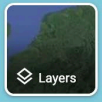
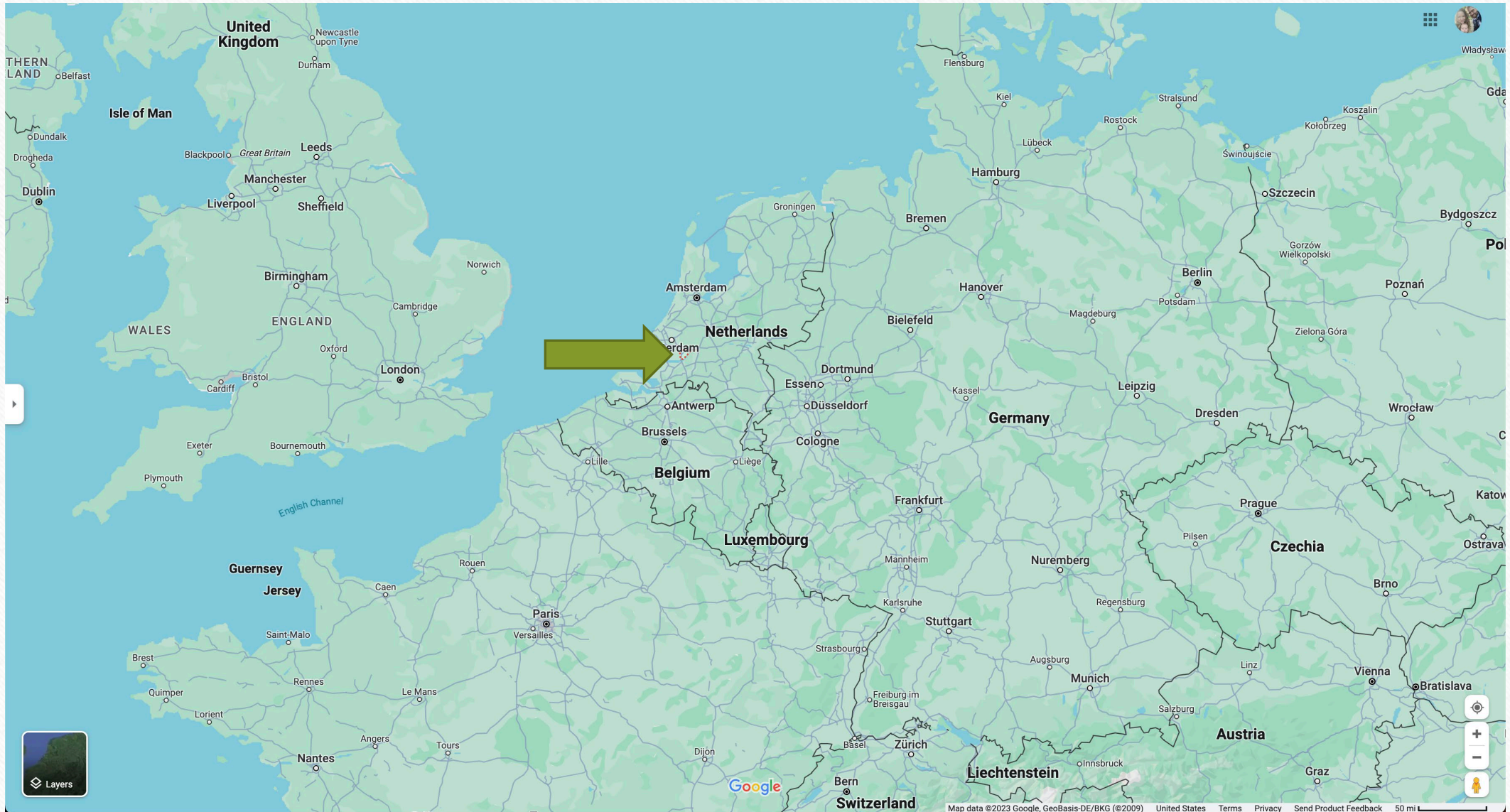
- Prolific creed- and confession-writing became a hallmark of the Reformation era for the sake of doctrinal and pastoral clarity.
- Creeds and confessions were (and are) used for the purposes of instruction, articulation of doctrine, and maintenance of orthodoxy.



# DORDRECHT

- Located in the south of Holland, the city of Dordrecht (or, often in English, *Dordt* or *Dort*) played host to the Synod of Dordt, which produced the Canons of Dordt.
- The Canons of Dordt are the historical foundation of what we now call the Five Points of Calvinism (TULIP).

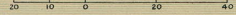




# THE NETHERLANDS

## THE WARS OF INDEPENDENCE

English Miles



### REFERENCE

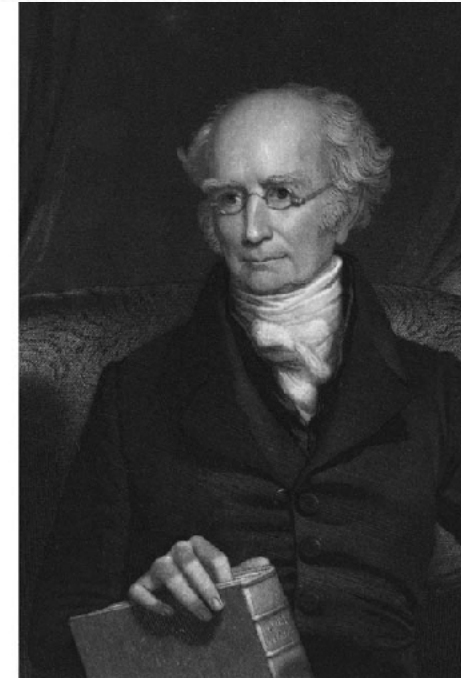
The coloured area represents the Netherlands in the Line of Charles V. The light green and the dark green distinguish the United Provinces and the Spanish Netherlands after the former had established their independence. Ecclesiastical territories are coloured purple.



# EXCURSUS: SOURCES

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- Thomas Scott's Translation of the official history published by the Synod itself (1818 edition)
- Samuel Miller's Introductory Essay to the Synod and its canons (1841)
- Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005)
- Jaroslav Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985)



# JACOBUS ARMINIUS

- Jakob Hermanszoon, b. 1560 in Holland
- As an academically gifted youth, Arminius studied under Beza at Geneva, and later took up preaching and teaching posts at Amsterdam and Leyden, respectively.
- Died in 1609, in advance of *The Remonstrance* in 1610.





# ARTICLES of the REMONSTRANCE

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**ARTICLE 1** That God, by an eternal, unchangeable purpose in Jesus Christ his Son, before the foundation of the world, hath determined, out of the fallen, sinful race of men, to save in Christ, for Christ's sake, and through Christ, those who, through the grace of the Holy Ghost, shall believe on this his Son Jesus, and shall persevere in this faith and obedience of faith, through this grace, even to the end; and, on the other hand, to leave the incorrigible and unbelieving in sin and under wrath, and to condemn them as alienate from Christ, according to the word of the gospel in [John iii. 36](#): 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him,' and according to other passages of Scripture also.

# ARTICLES of the REMONSTRANCE

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**ARTICLE 2** That, agreeably thereto, Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world, died for all men and for every man, so that he has obtained for them all, by his death on the cross, redemption and the forgiveness of sins; yet that no one actually enjoys this forgiveness of sins except the believer, according to the word of the Gospel of [John iii. 16](#): 'God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' And in the First Epistle of [John ii. 2](#): 'And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.'

# ARTICLES of the REMONSTRANCE

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**ARTICLE 3** That man has not saving grace of himself, nor of the energy of his free will, inasmuch as he, in the state of apostasy and sin, can of and by himself neither think, will, nor do any thing that is truly good (such as saving Faith eminently is); but that it is needful that he be born again of God in Christ, through his Holy Spirit, and renewed in understanding, inclination, or will, and all his powers, in order that he may rightly understand, think, will, and effect what is truly good, according to the Word of Christ, [John xv. 5](#): 'Without me ye can do nothing.'

# ARTICLES of the REMONSTRANCE

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**ARTICLE 4** That this grace of God is the beginning, continuance, and accomplishment of all good, even to this extent, that the regenerate man himself, without prevenient or assisting, awakening, following and cooperative grace, can neither think, will, nor do good, nor withstand any temptations to evil; so that all good deeds or movements, that can be conceived, must be ascribed to the grace of God in Christ. But as respects the mode of the operation of this grace, it is not irresistible, inasmuch as it is written concerning many, that they have resisted the Holy Ghost. [Acts vii.](#), and elsewhere in many places.

# ARTICLES of the REMONSTRANCE

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- **ARTICLE 5** That those who are incorporated into Christ by a true faith, and have thereby become partakers of his life-giving Spirit, have thereby full power to strive against Satan, sin, the world, and their own flesh, and to win the victory, it being well understood that it is ever through the assisting grace of the Holy Ghost; and that Jesus Christ assists them through his Spirit in all temptations, extends to them his hand, and if only they are ready for the conflict, and desire his help, and are not inactive, keeps them from falling, so that they, by no craft or power of Satan, can be misled, nor plucked out of Christ's hands, according to the word of Christ, John x. 28: "Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." But whether they are capable, through negligence, of forsaking again the first beginnings of their life in Christ, of again returning to this present evil world, of turning away from the holy doctrine which was delivered them, of losing a good conscience, of becoming devoid of grace, that must be more particularly determined out of the Holy Scriptures before they can teach it with the full persuasion of their minds.

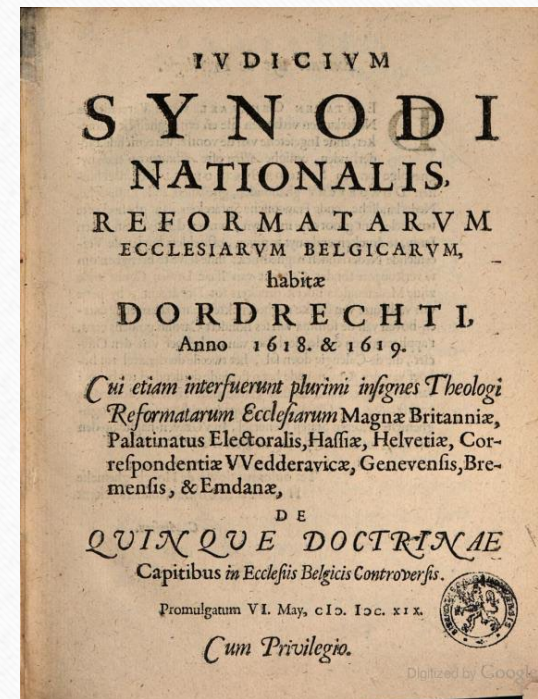
# SYNOD of DORDT

- A called synod convened on Nov. 13, 1618, and met until May 29, 1619.
- Delegates in attendance represented many different kingdoms or city-states throughout Europe.
- The synod produced a point-for-point response to the Remonstrant articles: the Canons of Dordt.



# The CANONS of DORDT

- A point-for-point response to the articles of the Remonstrance
- Each main point of doctrine includes a delineation of errors rejected.
- These five articles have been helpfully rearranged to fit the catchy acronym TULIP.



# FIRST MAIN POINT of DOCTRINE

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**Article 1** As all men have sinned in Adam, lie under the curse, and are deserving of eternal death, God would have done no injustice by leaving them all to perish, and delivering them over to condemnation on account of sin, according to the words of the apostle, “that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Rom. 3:19). And verse 23: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” And Romans 6:23: “For the wages of sin is death.”



**Article 7** Election is the unchangeable purpose of God, whereby, before the foundation of the world, He hath out of mere grace, according to the sovereign good pleasure of His own will, chosen, from the whole human race, which had fallen through their own fault from their primitive state of rectitude into sin and destruction, a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ, whom He from eternity appointed the Mediator and Head of the elect, and the foundation of salvation. This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by Him, and effectually to call and draw them to His communion by His Word and Spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of His Son, finally, to glorify them for the demonstration of His mercy and for the praise of His glorious grace, as it is written: “According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved” (Eph. 1:4–6). And elsewhere: “Whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified them He also glorified” (Rom. 8:30).

**Article 9** This election was not founded upon foreseen faith, and the obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality or disposition in man, as the prerequisite, cause or condition on which it depended; but men are chosen to faith and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc.; therefore election is the fountain of every saving good, from which proceeds faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects, according to that of the apostle: “He hath chosen us [not because we were but] that we should be holy, and without blame, before Him in love” (Eph. 1:4).

# SECOND MAIN POINT of DOCTRINE

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**Article 1** God is not only supremely merciful, but also supremely just. And His justice requires (as He hath revealed Himself in His Word), that our sins committed against His infinite majesty should be punished, not only with temporal, but with eternal punishment, both in body and soul; which we cannot escape unless satisfaction be made to the justice of God.

**Article 2** Since therefore we are unable to make that satisfaction in our own persons or to deliver ourselves from the wrath of God, He hath been pleased in His infinite mercy to give His only begotten Son, for our surety, who was made sin, and became a curse for us and in our stead, that He might make satisfaction to divine justice on our behalf.

The true doctrine (concerning redemption) having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those who teach:

**Rejection 1** That God the Father has ordained His Son to the death of the cross without a certain and definite decree to save any, so that the necessity, profitableness and worth of what Christ merited by His death might have existed, and might remain in all its parts complete, perfect and intact, even if the merited redemption had never in fact been applied to any person. For this doctrine tends to the despising of the wisdom of the Father and of the merits of Jesus Christ, and is contrary to Scripture. For thus saith our Savior: “I lay down My life for the sheep, and I know them” (John 10:15, 27). And the prophet Isaiah saith concerning the Savior: “When thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand” (Is. 53:10).

# THIRD and FOURTH MAIN POINTS of DOCTRINE

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**Article 3** Therefore all men are conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, incapable of saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto, and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, or to dispose themselves to reformation.

The true doctrine (concerning corruption and conversion) having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those who teach:

**Rejection 7** That the grace whereby we are converted to God is only a gentle advising, or (as others explain it), that this is the noblest manner of working in the conversion of man, and that this manner of working, which consists in advising, is most in harmony with man's nature; and that there is no reason why this advising grace alone should not be sufficient to make the natural man spiritual, indeed, that God does not produce the consent of the will except through this manner of advising; and that the power of the divine working, whereby it surpasses the working of Satan, consists in this, that God promises eternal, while Satan promises only temporal goods. But this is altogether Pelagian and contrary to the whole Scripture which, besides this, teaches yet another and far more powerful and divine manner of the Holy Spirit's working in the conversion of man, as in Ezekiel: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26).

# FIFTH MAIN POINT of DOCTRINE

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**Article 1** Whom God calls, according to His purpose, to the communion of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and regenerates by the Holy Spirit, He delivers also from the dominion and slavery of sin in this life; though not altogether from the body of sin and from the infirmities of the flesh, so long as they continue in this world.

The true doctrine (concerning perseverance) having been explained, the Synod rejects the errors of those who teach:

**Rejection 3** That the true believers and regenerate not only can fall from justifying faith and likewise from grace and salvation wholly and to the end, but indeed often do fall from this and are lost forever. For this conception makes powerless the grace, justification, regeneration, and continued keeping by Christ, contrary to the expressed words of the apostle Paul: “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” (Rom. 5:8, 9). And contrary to the apostle John: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 John 3:9). And also contrary to the words of Jesus Christ: “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand. My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of My Father's hand” (John 10:28, 29).



# The CANONS of DORDT

- The Canons of Dordt were used as a basis for “bitter persecution” of Remonstrance supporters.
- To this day, the Canons of Dordt (together with the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism) are part of the Three Forms of Unity, the three-fold doctrinal standard of many Reformed churches.
- The Canons, and their abbreviated TULIP, express simply and concisely Calvin’s doctrine of salvation.



# The CANONS of DORDT

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May Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who, seated at the Father's right hand, gives gifts to men, sanctify us in the truth, bring to the truth those who err, shut the mouths of the calumniators of sound doctrine, and endue the faithful minister of His Word with the spirit of wisdom and discretion, that all their discourses may tend to the glory of God and the edification of those who hear them.  
Amen.