

# DAILY ORAL THEOLOGY

## Canons of Dort

### The Canons of Dort n.

1. Confession. The third part of the Three Forms of Unity for many Reformed Churches of Continental descent.
2. History. The Decision of the Synod of Dort on the “Five Main Points of Doctrine in Dispute” is popularly known as the Canons of Dort. This Great Synod met in the city of Dordrecht in the Netherlands during the years 1618–19 to settle a serious controversy in the Dutch churches initiated by the rise of Arminianism. Jacob Arminius, a theological professor at Leiden University, questioned the teaching of the Reformed churches on a number of important points and advocated a revision of the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism. After Arminius’s death, his followers presented their views on five of these points in the Remonstrance of 1610. The Arminians taught election based on foreseen faith, universal atonement, partial depravity, resistible grace, and the possibility of a lapse from grace. Convened by the States-General of the Netherlands on November 13, 1618, as a national synod of the Reformed churches of the Netherlands, it became an international council as with twenty-seven representatives of foreign churches being invited to participate. There were 154 sessions, the last of which was held May 9, 1619. When the Canons were completed, both the foreign and Dutch delegates affirmed them by their signatures, and a service of thanksgiving to God followed. Because the Canons are an answer to the specific Five Points of the Remonstrance, they do not treat the whole of theology, but focus on the central doctrines of salvation which comprise the gospel. Although in form there are only four Heads of Doctrine, we speak properly of five points, because points three and four were combined into one Head. —Taken from RCUS’ *The Three Forms of Unity*.

### 2. Structure.

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| <b>I. Unconditional Election</b>     | Election is based solely on the good pleasure and will of God (Eph. 1:5, 11).                        |
| <b>II. Limited Atonement</b>         | Christ died for all the elect and makes salvation efficient (John 10).                               |
| <b>III. Total Depravity</b>          | All of man is tainted and corrupted by sin (Romans 5).   |
| <b>IV. Irresistible Grace</b>        | Once the Holy Spirit works in one’s heart, the person will respond to God in true faith (John 6:37). |
| <b>V. Perseverance of the Saints</b> | All believers will endure until the end because of the grace of God (Romans 8:38, 39).               |