

A LETTER FROM DR. SEAN LUCAS

April 4, 2019

My dear Friends:

You may not know this, but 2019 is the four hundredth anniversary of the Synod of Dort. What's that, you ask? The Synod of Dort was an international gathering of Calvinists, hosted in Dordrecht in the Netherlands. Its purpose was to deal with the challenge to Calvinism represented by followers of Jacob Arminius, who taught theology at Leiden until his untimely death in 1609. His followers, calling themselves the Remonstrants, issued a five-point document that raised questions about the Reformed theology that typified the Dutch churches in that time period.

It was to answer this five-point "Remonstrance" that the States-General of the Netherlands called for this gathering. The formal sessions began in November 1618 and extended through May 1619. In the end, the synod produced a document that meant to serve as a standard for teaching in the Dutch Reformed Churches (the word for "standard" is "canon"—hence, this document is called the "Canons of Dort"). While the Canons answered the five points of the Remonstrants, they did so in four sections. But their answer was later summarized in the helpful mnemonic (complete with a Dutch flower) TULIP—so, total depravity; unconditional election; limited atonement; irresistible grace; and perseverance of the saints.

There are a couple of new books in our IPC Bookstore on the Synod of Dort and its work: W. Robert Godfrey's excellent *Saving the Reformation: The Pastoral Theology of the Canons of Dort* (Reformation Trust, 2019) and Kevin DeYoung's *Grace Defined and Defended: What a 400-Year-Old Confession Teaches Us about Sin, Salvation, and the Sovereignty of God* (Crossway, 2019). I would encourage you to check one of those out and learn more about the Synod of Dort and its important contribution to the Reformed Faith.

I mention all of this because today (Thursday) I'm heading to Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, to participate in a conference on the Synod of Dort. Called "The Prodigal Love of God," it has a range of plenary speakers, including the author Marilynne Robinson, theologian James K. A. Smith, and my friend Jemar Tisby. I'll be participating on a panel with former Fuller Seminary president Richard Mouw on "The Missional Implications of the Canons of Dort." There are some! It should be a good time and I'm looking forward to hearing some of these folks present their work; above all, it is a humbling honor to participate in a panel with Mouw, someone after whom I've consciously patterned myself for years in terms of his "convicted civility."

But I will be back for Sunday, DV, and am so looking forward to being around Word and table, hearing the good news of Jesus once again. As we draw closer to Golgotha, we meditate ever more deeply on what Jesus has done for us. May God transform us into new people seeking to live for the welfare of our city and for God's glory!

In the grip of God's grace,



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