



The **Doctrine** of the
Covenant in the
Canons of Dordt

Protestant Reformed Seminary

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Doctrines Embodied in the Canons

1. Explicitly Controverted Doctrines:
2. Imbedded Doctrines: Divine Revelation, Preaching of the Gospel, Common grace (rejected), Assurance, Covenant



What is God's covenant?

1. Bond of friendship and fellowship b/t God and His ppl in Christ.
2. Established and maintained by God alone; He empowers us to live as friends.



What is the rel. of “covenant”
to the five primary doctrines?

1. Survey the use of “covenant.”
2. Show four ways in which “covenant” is related to the five primary doctrines.



What is the rel. of “covenant”
to the five primary doctrines?

3. Explain why the Canons refer to the covenant in these ways.
4. See the significance of the Canons’ doctrine of the covenant.

I. The Canons' Use of Cov: 2 words (1) *Testamentum*

- Last will and testament.
- Christ's death the basis: Matthew 26:28 ("This is my blood of the new testament"), Hebrews 7, Hebrews 9.
- I:8, II-RE:2, III/IV:6, 7; V-RE:6.

I. The Canons' Use of Cov: 2 words: (2) *Foedus*

- Refers to a treaty among men
- THE Latin word referring to the cov. of gr. as a bond of God with men.
- I:17 II:8 II-RE:2,4,5 V-RE:1

I. The Canons' Use of "Cov:" *Testamentum* and *Foedus*

Canons II-RE:2: Christ "hath become the surety and mediator of a better, that is, the new covenant," and "a testament is of force where there hath death."



I. The Canons' Use of Cov: 2 Observations

1. Every reference to the cov. is to the cov. of grace that God established with His elect in Christ, and revealed after man's fall into sin.
 - “covenant of grace” (I:17)
 - “new covenant” (II:8, II-RE:2, V-RE:1)
 - “new covenant of grace” (II-RE:2, 4)



I. The Canons' Use of Cov: 2 Observations

2. Some features of the doctrine of the covenant, although imbedded in the Canons, are not immediately relevant for our purpose.



II. 4 ways in which “cov” is rel:
1. ELECTION GOVERNS COV.

- I:17
- II:8



1. ELECTION GOVERNS COV.

1:17: Since we are to judge of the will of God from His Word, which testifies that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they together with the parents are comprehended, godly parents ought not to doubt the election and salvation of their children whom it pleases God to call out of this life in their infancy (Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:39; 1 Cor. 7:14).



1. ELECTION GOVERNS COV.

II:8: . . . it was the will of God that Christ by the blood of the cross, whereby He confirmed the new covenant, should effectually redeem out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation and given to Him by the Father;

II. 4 ways in which “cov” is rel:
2. CHRIST IS THE HEAD AND
MEDIATOR OF THE COV.

1. I:7

2. II-RE:2 (explaining the error)



2. CHRIST: Cov. Head/Mediator

1:7: God . . . hath . . . chosen . . . 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.



2. CHRIST: Cov. Head/Mediator

II-RE:2: Christ has become the Surety and Mediator of a better, that is, the new covenant.

II. 4 ways in which “cov” is rel:
3. CHRIST’S DEATH CONFIRMED
THE COVENANT.

II:8: . . . it was the will of God that Christ by
the blood of the cross, whereby He
confirmed the new covenant, should
effectually redeem . . .

II. 4 ways in which “cov” is rel:
4. GOD’S COVENANT OF
GRACE IS UNCONDITIONAL

- I:9
- I-RE:3, 4, 5
- V-RE:1



4. GOD'S COVENANT OF GRACE IS UNCONDITIONAL

1:9: "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."



4. GOD'S COVENANT OF GRACE IS UNCONDITIONAL

I-RE:3: faith and incomplete obedience are not conditions of election.

I-RE:4: the right use of the light of nature, as well as piety, humility, and meekness, are not conditions of election.



4. GOD'S COVENANT OF GRACE IS UNCONDITIONAL

I-RE:5: perseverance in faith and holiness are not conditions of a complete and decisive election.

V-RE:1: The perseverance of true believers is not a condition of the new covenant, which . . . man . . . must fulfill through his free will.



III. Why do the Canons use the doctrine of the covenant?

1. NOT to develop the doctrine of the cov.
2. BUT to respond to the Arminian idea of covenant.



III. The Arminian idea:

1. Cov. identical to election.

- Graafland, 3:209: (sum)covenant took such a central place that election did not receive its own place. Covenant is conditional, so election was also.
- Gunter, 179.

III. The Arminian idea:


2. Christ's death did not confirm the covenant.

- II-RE:2
- "Opinions of the Remonstrants," II:2



III. 2. Christ's death did not confirm the covenant.

II-RE:2: Who teach: That it was not the purpose of the death of Christ that He should confirm the new c.o.g through His blood, but only that He should acquire for the Father the mere right to establish with man such a cov as He might please, whether of G or of W



Opinions of the Remonstrants, II:2. (VOOF 105)

“Christ, through the merit of His death, has so far reconciled the entire human race to God the Father, that the Father, because of that merit, without prejudice to His righteousness and truth, might make and was willing to make and to establish a new covenant of grace with sinners and damnworthy men.”

III. The Arminian idea:

3. Covenant is conditional.

- II-RE:3, 4: faith, obedience, piety
- V-RE:1: perseverance
- “Opinions of the Remonstrants,” I:7
- “Opinions of the Remonstrants,” II:3




Opinions of the Remonstrants, 1:7

“The election of particular persons is with regard to the end (i.e. is decisive, HCH) out of consideration of faith in Jesus Christ and perseverance; but not apart from consideration of faith and of perseverance in the true faith, as a condition required beforehand in the electing.”




Opinions of the Remonstrants, II:3

“Although Christ has merited reconciliation with God . . . for all men and every man, nevertheless, according to the new covenant of grace, . . . sins are [not] forgiven to sinners before they actually and truly believe in Christ.”




IV. Significance of the Canons' doctrine of an uncondl. cov.

1. Demonstrates that a right understanding of sovereign grace and a right understanding of covenant must go together. To go wrong in one will be to go wrong in the other.



IV. Significance of the Canons' doctrine of an uncondl. cov.

2. Refd. churches creedally confess the doctrine of the cov. in rel. to sov. gr. Condl. cov is unReformed. DJE, Cov. and Election in the Refd. Tradition, 72.



IV. Significance of the Canons' doctrine of the covenant.

3. Arminianism does NOT present an orthodox covenant theology.
 - Some scholars emphasize Arminius was a covenantal theologian
 - But his covenant theology, and that of his followers, was wrong.