

**A theological-historical investigation of the reception of the Church Order
of Dort (1619) and the General Regulation (1816) in the church orders of
reformed churches in South Africa**

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Petrus Jacobus Nel

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Nel', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

27/01/2019

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INTRODUCTION: DEMARCATION OF THE RESEARCH

I. The Church Order of Dort (1619): a formidable orthodox-reformed format for ecclesiastical life

The Church Order of Dort represents the culmination and consolidation of a theological-ecclesiastical line of thinking on the formation of the ministry of the church. This trajectory was incepted in the Low Countries at the Synod of Emden in 1571 and carried to conclusion at the Synod of Dort during 1618/19. In her recent and thorough doctoral thesis *De Dordtse Kerkorde 1619. Ontwikkeling, context en theologie*, Van Harten-Tip offers a clear exposition in terms of a compilation of all relevant church orders representing this trajectory (or, as she prefers, “de voorgeschiedenis van de kerkorde van Dordrecht 1619”¹) between 1571 and 1619. It epitomizes a typical development in and for the reformed churches of the region. Characteristic of the Church Order of Dort (1619) is that its articles are short and few in number. The Church order testifies to clarity and simplicity.

Studies of and reflection on the Church Order of Dort (1619) made it clear that the rationale in the formulation and structure of the Order is founded upon the conviction that the church of Christ cannot frame or articulate an order for its life and existence beyond the reach and appeal of the Word of God. My own independent analysis of the Church Order of Dort (1619) and the underpinning intellectual tradition since the outbreak of the Eighty Year’s War (1568), indicated that the Order is embedded in Scripture, and proceeded from Scripture. Its articles resonate the rule of Christ in terms of the Word. It includes no regulations, provisions or ordinances, but rather provides freedom for the Word of God to rule in the congregations. It

¹ A. Van Harten-Tip, ‘De Dordtse Kerkorde 1619. Ontwikkeling, Context en Theologie’ (Theologische Universiteit van de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland, 2018), 49–75.

confesses the authority of the Word, the rule of Christ through the Word and neither adds nor deducts from the order of the church what the Word does not advocate. Its authority is founded in the Word of God, and its actuality and effectiveness rest on the Word of God.²

Post-Dort scholarship, especially during the 19th and 20th centuries, stressed its intention to order the church's existence as a life together under the rule of the Word of God.³ It did not shape the formation of the church in terms of the articulation of an ecclesial regulation in its own right, in terms of rules and stipulations, but based its articles on the recognition of the order that the church received from Christ through his Word. The articles, it is pointed out, have a Christological distinctiveness as it "stands as a sign of thanksgiving towards Christ our Saviour."⁴ Accordingly, the Church Order of Dort (1619) evokes that congregations enter into common life as thankful recipients of Christ's saving work of grace.

Avis observed that "the Reformers approach the theology of the Church Christologically. The person and work of Christ are very important for understanding the Church. To reform and purify the Church is to reveal Christ in his saving power and love. The central insight of Reformation ecclesiology is that the Church is about Christ..."⁵ Van Harten-Tip underlines that

² P.J. Nel, 'The Rule of Christ in the Church Order of Dortrecht (1618/19): A Historical-Theological Study' (University of the Free State, 2015), 105–7.

³ See F.L. Rutgers, *Bespreking der hoofpunten van het Kerkrecht naar aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 1892, <http://www.reformed-digital.net/node/1278>; H Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1928); Joh. Jansen, *Korte verklaring van de Kerkorde der Gereformeerde Kerken* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1952); W.D. Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk* (Pretoria: Universiteit van Suid Afrika, 1965); E.P. Kleynhans, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg* (Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 1982); K. De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: een Praktische Verklaring* (Houten: Den Hertog B.V., 1989); G.P.L. Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroomse Teologiese Publikasies, 1983); A.D. Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergronde van ons Kerklike Reg*, vol. 1 (Pretoria: HAUM, 1981); B. Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering* (Pretoria: V&R Drukkery, 1989), http://www.enigstetroos.org/SpoelstraB_KO.pdf; R.M. Britz and S.A. Strauss, *Dordt na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, vol. 8, UV Teologiese Studies (Bloemfontein: Pro Christo-Publikasies, 1995); G. Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dortrecht Commented on, 2005*, New Series 21 (Secret Harbour: The Reformed Guardian); <http://www.kerkrecht.nl/main.asp?pagetype=onderdeel&item=153>; P.J. Strauss, *Kerk en Orde Vandag: met die Klem op die NG Kerk* (Bloemfontein: Sun Press, 2010).

⁴ Britz and Strauss, *Dordt na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:61.

⁵ Paul Avis, 'The Church and Ministry', in *Companion to Reformation Theology*, ed. David M Whitford (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 149.

the Church Order's anti-hierarchical and the ensuing presbyterial-synodical, anti-independentistic principles indicate its fundamental conviction: "There is one, and only one Head of the Church: Jesus Christ. Therefore, no office-bearer, church or assembly is of more importance than the other."⁶

The scholarly award of status and lasting authoritative merit are, however, characteristic of the interpretation and following the Church Order of Dort (1619) gained during the early 19th century *Afscheiding* (Secession) and subsequent *Doleantie* (Doleance) during the 1880's. As an identifying document, the Church Order of Dort was utilized in an apologetical and polemical way to justify the establishment of *de novo* organized reformed churches, separate from the old historical church, i.e. the "Hervormde Kerk". For these church formations, the stumbling-block occurred to be the renowned early 19th century *Algemeen Reglement voor het Bestuur der Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (1816). In their view, the *General Regulation* (1816) could theologially and ecclesiologically not countervail the Church Order of Dort (1619).

The Church Order of Dort (1619), based upon its contents is therefore "considered to be an almost unalterable monument".⁷ This categorical appreciation was not limited to the Netherlands. In parts of the world where Dutch Reformed churches were established, the Church Order of Dort (1619) also received indisputable status. This is equally not only based on its clear theological comprehension, intention and appreciation, but also deeply influenced by the Dutch apologetical scholarship. It became elevated as the model for reformed church polity and order. In some cases it is even regarded as a mark of the true orthodox-reformed church. This was, for example, much the case for a Cape-Dutch church of reformed belief that came into existence in

⁶ Van Harten-Tip, 246.

⁷ Van Harten-Tip, 248

1859. Identifying itself as the Reformed Church in the South African Republic,⁸ this church appealed to the Church Order of Dort (1619) as a conclusive document justifying its existence and separation from the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church).

During the 20th century (keeping to the South African context), the Afrikaans reformed churches⁹, i.e. the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, (Dutch Reformed Church, henceforth NGK), the Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk in Afrika, (Niederduch Reformed Church in Africa, henceforth NHKA), the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika (The Reformed Churches in South Africa, henceforth GKSA) and the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (Afrikaans Protestant Church, henceforth APK) all claimed, with regard to their current church orders, indebtedness to the Church Order of Dort (1619).¹⁰ This is considered an expression of their reformed orthodoxy.

The obvious question is whether this South African appreciation of Dort is based on the theology and ecclesiology of the 1619 Church Order, or whether it is indeed inspired and guided by the apologetic positioning of 19th century Dutch church history and historiography? A supplementary question rises: is the Dort association valid and consistent with the church history and ecclesiastical development at the Cape of Good Hope? Is this Church Order indeed the foundation for reformed church polity and formation in South Africa? Or, could it be quite the

⁸ Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, 323; B. Spoelstra, *Die Doppers in Suid-Afrika 1760-1899* (Johannesburg: Naionale boekhandel, 1963), 170; Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 7; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 20; P.A. Coetzee, *Ontstaan van die eerste Gereformeerde Kerke in die Suid-Afrikaanse Republiek: 1859-1861* (Pretoria: V&R Drukkers, 2010), 18.

⁹ These four churches occasionally came together in a council, the “Tussen kerklike Raad” (TKR) of Afrikaanse Reformed Churches and are therefore chosen for this study. For the same distinction see P.J. Strauss, *Gereformeerdes onder die Suiderkruis 1652-2011: die Verhaal van vier Afrikaanse Kerke* (Bloemfontein: SUN MeDIA, 2015), 1.

¹⁰ Strauss, *Kerk en Orde Vandag: met die klem op die NG Kerk*, 7,21; J.D. Vorster, ‘Die Kerkorde vir die Ned Geref Kerke: besware daarteen en betekenis daarvan’, *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Tydskrif (NGTT)*, September 1960, 13; E.P. Kleynhans, *Die Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika: 1795-1962* (Bloemfontein: N.G. Sendinguitgewers, 1973), 150; S.J. Botha, ‘Totstandkoming van Twee Kerkordes’, in *20ste eeu Hervormde Teologie*, ed. D.J.C. Van Wyk (Pretoria: Sentik, 1999), 217; Pont, *Die Historiese Agergronde van ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:3–5; A.S. Van Jaarsveld, ‘Noodsaaklikheid en Betekenis van ’n Kerkorde vir ’n Gereformeerde Kerk van Christus’, *Die Boodskapper*, no. 95 (September 1996); F.A.H. Van Staden, ‘Ons in die A.P. Kerkverband en die Kerkorde’, *Die Boodskapper*, no. 166 (November 2003); C.L. Van Heerden, ‘Prof. F.A.H. van Staden: 50 Jaar in die Bediening’, *Die Boodskapper*, no. 156 (November 2002); Strauss, *Gereformeerdes onder die Suiderkruis 1652-2011: die Verhaal van vier Afrikaanse Kerke*, 87.

opposite, namely, that the 1816 “stumbling-block” indeed shaped the ecclesiological trajectory in South African reformed church history? Should this be the case, the traditional Dort paradigm to disclose Afrikaans reformed church polity, would have to be reconsidered.

This research seriously considered these questions and intends to answer them. The Dort paradigm in South African scholarship will thus be outlined in the next paragraph of the introduction to the study.

II. The Dort paradigm in South African scholarship

This exposition on the Dort paradigm in South African reformed scholarship does not pretend to offer an in-depth analysis and critical discussion. The aim is rather to provide an outline of the intellectual interpretation of and appeal to the Church Order of Dort (1619) in Afrikaans reformed scholarship. Lines of thinking and argumentation in the four Afrikaans reformed churches will thus be identified in order to serve the purpose of the study. The NGK is first in line, then follow the NHKA, the APK and the GKSA.

a) The Dort paradigm in the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK)

Our sketch does not include an earlier controversy between the NGK and the GKSA, to which both Brown and Britz refer.¹¹ This mainly involved the alleged “kollegialisme” of the NGK and was incepted by J. du Plessis’s (1868–1935) *De Kerkbode* articles in 1912. This resulted in a dispute between the two churches and gave rise to initial reflection on the Church Order of Dort as the benchmark of orthodoxy.

¹¹ E. Brown, ‘Die Hervertolking van die Paradigma in verband met die Kollegialisme om die Afrikaanse Kerke Kerkregtelik te verstaan’, *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 3&4, no. 48 (1992): 691–715; R.M. Britz, ‘The Formularies of Unity and the Dutch Reformed Church: A Preliminary Survey’, *In die Skriflig* 27, no. 4 (1993): 519–36.

This outline concentrates on the extensive studies and discussions provoked by the initiative in the 1950's to replace the Laws and Stipulations with a Church Order for the NGK.¹² This coincided with the national urge to unite the four provincial NG Churches in one General Synod, in terms of a new church order.¹³

In 1962 Vorster suggested that the proposed NGK Church Order of 1962 – which forms the basis of the current NGK Church Order - was essentially the Church Order of Dort (1619), though changed and adapted to address the situation and current state of affairs of the NGK in the 1960's.¹⁴ In his published 1956 thesis, *Die Kerkregtelike ontwikkeling van die Kaapse Kerk onder die Kompanjie 1652-1795*,¹⁵ Vorster contended that the Church Order of Dort (1619), as a matter of fact, has always been the *de facto* Church Order of the NGK. Van der Watt, by the way, shares this view in his compiled history of *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 1652-1905*. Based on a few secondary sources, he claims that research has abundantly brought to light that the Church Order of Dort (1619) was always *de facto* the Church Order of the NGK.¹⁶

Kleynhans, echoing Vorster's assumption that the 1962 NGK Church Order is based on the Church Order of Dort, asserts in his exposition of *Die Kerkregtelike ontwikkeling van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika 1795-1962*, that the 1962 Church Order of the NGK not only portrayed the classifications or divisions of the Church Order of Dort (1619), but also conveyed the clear imprint of Dort (1619). Kleynhans moreover notes that the confessional

¹² For an overview see G.J. Duursema, "Communio Sanctorum – Gereformeerde Kerkreg versus Kerklike Geskiedenis. 'n Biografiese Bibliografie van W.D. Jonker, 1955 – 1968" (University of the Free State, 2017), 195–237, <http://scholar.ufs.ac.za:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11660/6529/DuursemaGJ.pdf?sequence=1>.

¹³ See P. Coertzen, *Gepas en Ordelik. 'n Teologiese verantwoording van die Orde vir en in die Kerk*, RGN - Studies in Metodologie (Pretoria: RGN-Uitgewers, 1991), 246–47.

¹⁴ The General Synod of the NGK was formed in 1962. See J.D. Vorster, "Die Kerkorde vir die Ned Geref Kerke: besware daarteen en betekenis daarvan," *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Tydskrif (NGTT)*, September 1960, 13.

¹⁵ J.D. Vorster, *Die Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling van Die Kaapse Kerk onder die Kompanjie 1652-1795* (Kaapstad: NG Kerk-Uitgewers, 1956), 79–89, 135–36.

¹⁶ P.B. Van der Watt, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 1652-1905*, 2nd ed. (Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 1988), 42.

standards as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity – the Belgic Confession of faith (1561), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563) and the Canons of Dort (1618/19) – are properly protected in the NGK Church Order.¹⁷ He concludes that, although the NGK Church Order is based on Dort (1619), the Church Order of Dort (1619) cannot be elevated as the exclusive model for reformed church polity and order, since it is the product of a particular context. In the same way as the Church Order of Dort (1619) was changed and adapted, the NGK Church Order adjusts to address the contemporary practical situation of its day, while still adhering to the principles set out by the Church Order of Dort (1619). Church polity is thus always unfinished and hence provisional. Dynamic one might even say.

In this regard Kleynhans distinguished between the *jus constituendum* and the *jus constitutum*. In appraising the theological merits and standards of a church order, he wrote, this distinction is of importance as church polity deals with the law as it is (*jus constituendum*), but this can never be realized in practice and therefore an additional focus on the law as it should be in practice is needed (*jus constitutum*).¹⁸ When church polity is practiced in the latter way the present situation of the church takes precedent and is elevated to a position of utmost importance. Therefore Kleynhans argues that a church cannot be labelled unreformed on the grounds of its system of polity, but the principles underpinning a particular polity should be evaluated. Or, to put it in other words: church polity should be pursuing the principles behind the ideal order (*jus constituendum*) and adapt it to practical circumstances (*jus constitutum*).

In this definition and departure point of his polity, Kleynhans leans on Bouwman, quoting him in length.¹⁹ This was underscored, Kleynhans argues, by the Synod of Dort 1618/19 that was

¹⁷ Kleynhans, *Die Kerkregtelike ontwikkeling van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika: 1795-1962*, 150.

¹⁸ Kleynhans, 152.

¹⁹ Kleynhans, 152–53.

willing to compromise on polity, but not in doctrine.²⁰ In this regard he did not cite the Acts of the Synod of Dort 1618/19, but quoted Vorster, who argued that the reformed never demanded the same purity in polity as in doctrine.²¹ In this view Kleynhans also followed Hanekom, his preceptor and professor of church polity in the Faculty of Theology, University of Stellenbosch. Hanekom's class notes for church polity (in manuscript form) inaugurates by distinguishing between the *jus constituendum* and the *jus constitutum*.²² This distinction is thus employed by Kleynhans to assume that the Church Order of Dort indeed determined the church polity and ecclesiastical laws and provisions of the NGK during its entire history. Secondly, the distinction also provides the mechanism to explain deviations from the Church Order of Dort in the current NGK Church order, without compromising its orthodoxy, and thus the Dort paradigm in NGK thinking.

In *Kerk en orde vandag: met die klem op die NG Kerk*, Strauss – in the footsteps of Vorster and Kleynhans (as he himself admits)²³ – affirms that the current NGK Church Order is a contemporary version of the Church Order of Dort (1619),²⁴ and therefore is seated “in the line of Dort.”²⁵ Like Kleynhans, Strauss argues that not only the Church Order of Dort (1619), but also the standards of belief, as expressed in the Three Forms of Unity, mentioned as the confessional platform or foundation on which the NGK stands, are pre-eminently the fundamental weight-bearing basis of - and thus determinative - the Church Order of the NGK.²⁶ Strauss also contends that the Church Order of the NGK is focussed on adjusting to, and meeting the “demands of the

²⁰ Kleynhans, 152–53.

²¹ Kleynhans, 153.

²² T.N. Hanekom, “Gereformeerde Kerkreg” (n.d.), 1.

²³ Strauss, *Kerk en Orde vandag: met die klem op die NG Kerk*, i.

²⁴ Strauss, 7,21.

²⁵ Strauss, 6.

²⁶ Strauss, 5, 81–83.

day”²⁷ as it should be contemporary, relevant and functional.²⁸ Strauss thus arrives at the same conclusion as Vorster and Kleynhans, namely that the Church Order of Dort (1619) is indeed the root of, the original source, that informed the NGK Church Order. However, its formulation and articles should not be raised as the standard-bearer for reformed church polity and order, because it is the product of a particular context. The principles underpinning the structure and articles of the Church Order of Dort (1619) should rather be followed and, as in the case of the NGK, adjusted to be effective, practical and contemporary. The distinction between doctrine and polity that Kleynhans made is thus ensued by Strauss, as he indicates that doctrine is always relevant, but polity is a matter of compromise in practice (*jus constitutum*).²⁹

This distinction seems to have earlier roots in the NGK, as Keet, a predecessor of Vorster, Kleynhans and Strauss, denoted that there is a difference between the practice and theory of church polity.³⁰ In his book *Orde in die kerk* he argued that polity is a matter of well-being, not a matter of the essence of the church.³¹ Coertzen notes that *Orde in die kerk* was a summary of Keet’s church polity lectures, published in 1963.³² It can thus be accepted that the contents of this book since 1919 (the year of Keet’s inauguration as a professor at the Stellenbosch Seminary) played a pivotal role in NGK thinking. Keet was also an apologist for the NGK during the early dispute between his church and the GKSA. In his 1924 year-end lecture, he admitted that certain “kollegiale” residues continue to play a role in NGK church polity, but, on the whole, that these

²⁷ Strauss, *Gereformeerdes onder die Suiderkruis 1652-2011: die Verhaal van vier Afrikaanse Kerke*, 21.

²⁸ See Strauss, *Kerk en Orde vandag: met die klem op die NG Kerk*, 17.

²⁹ Strauss, 15.

³⁰ B.B. Keet, *Na honderd jaar. Die Regeringsvorm van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke aan de Gereformeerde beginselen getoets*. (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia-Drukkerij, 1925), 22.

³¹ B.B. Keet, *Orde in die Kerk. Handleiding vir Ouderlinge, Diakens, en Lidmate* (Kaapstad: NG Kerk-Uitgewers, 1963), 5.

³² Coertzen, *Gepas en Ordelik. 'n Teologiese verantwoording van die Orde vir en in die Kerk*, 248.

do not contradict the principles of reformed church polity.³³ Geldenhuys, a contemporary of Keet, makes the same distinction, noting that church polity does not belong to the essence of the church and that there should be a distinction between the *jus constituendum and jus constitutum*.³⁴

In NGK scholarship it is argued that the indebtedness to the Church Order of Dort (1619), thus, exceeds its mere structural approbation. It is a matter of utilizing the underpinning principles, without verbal inclusion and embodiment of the Dort articles. The NGK accommodates an expansive vision and comprehension of the Church Order of Dort (1619), whereby the core principles underlying Dort is pursued, rather than the verbal text. This vision provides for contemporary relevance. Underlying these views in the NGK is of course the denial that the Church Order of the NGK in any way deviates from the principles of Dort.

b) The Dort paradigm in the Nederdutch Reformed Church of Africa (NHKA)

Keeping the NGK Dort trajectory in mind, scholarship within the ambit of the NHKA is subsequently delineated. Pont identifies two periods of significance: the first from 1921-1956 when S.P. Engelbrecht lectured in church polity. He asserts that during that time the emphasis was on apologetically defending the polity of the NHKA as it was traditionally inherited from the Netherlands (especially in the form of the *General Regulation* of 1816) without critically scrutinizing its principles and historical trajectory.³⁵ Botha is in agreement, noting the influence of the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* was such, that the situation in the Netherlands was often viewed uncritically as valid also for South Africa. Therefore the NHKA followed the

³³ Keet, *Na honderd jaar. Die Regeringsvorm van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke aan de Gereformeerde beginselen getoets*.

³⁴ F.E. o'B Geldenhuys, *Die Regsposisie van Kerkraad, Ring en Sinode onder die Gereformeerde stelsel van Kerkregering soos toegepas in die Gefedereerde Ned. Ger. Kerke in Suid-Afrika* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1951), 23.

³⁵ A.D. Pont, 'Vyf en twintig jaar kerkreg binne die ruimte van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika', 1982, 19.

Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk in its *General Regulation* of 1816 and shifted away from the theology of Dort by making the Church Order more of a law book than an ecclesiology that displays the Word and Confessions.³⁶

The second period according to Pont is from 1957 and onwards when he succeeded Engelbrecht and accordingly focussed more on the underpinning roots of the polity in the NHKA. It is during this time that a shift in polity occurs in the NHKA and the Dutch tradition and Church Order of Dort (1619) accordingly elevated to a position of importance.³⁷ Botha also understands developments in church political thinking during this ensuing time as an attempt to re-orientate towards the reformed church polity principles, as informed and guided by that of Dort (1619).³⁸ This was accompanied, though, by a contextualization where the demarcation of membership of the NGKA, based on race, became an issue.

The historical (Dutch) heritage and the interpretation of Dutch theologians (and their interpretation of the 1619 Church Order of Dort) were now used to defend the ethnically based ministry.³⁹ Britz also indicates the period between 1938 and 1950 to be of significance in the history of the formation of the theology in this church. He depicts the theology of the NHKA as embodied in especially influential ecclesiastical publications, namely *Die Hervormer*, the *Almanak van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika* and the *Hervormde Teologiese Studies*.

The memorial dates in 1938, 1939 and 1942 offered the church the opportunity to shape its historical existence theologically. This was done along clear-cut ecclesiastical lines. As the Voortrekkerkerk, the Hervormde Kerk was in fact a Christ confessing church of the (Afrikaner) people. By 1950 a shift in this theological image occurred: from historical identity to a contextual insistence: the racial issue. The traditional theology of the Church

³⁶ See Botha, 'Totstandkoming van twee Kerkordes', 215–16.

³⁷ Pont, 'Vyf en twintig jaar Kerkreg binne die ruimte van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika', 20–23.

³⁸ Botha, 'Totstandkoming van twee Kerkordes', 217.

³⁹ See W.A. Dreyer, 'Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika as Volkskerk: Oorsig en Herbesinning', *HTS Teologiese Studies* 4, no. 62 (2006): 1348.

*was accordingly adapted and contextualized in a praxis of separate development and separate churches. From its own ranks this theology was also critically questioned.*⁴⁰

Despite this ecclesiological re-orientation, Pont noted, not much research in church polity surfaced in the NHKA: “’n paar geskrifte, ’n klompie artikels en ’n aantal memoranda en rapporte” was the product.⁴¹ Botha is in agreement, lamenting the fact that scholarship on church polity was evidently limited during the past 100 years in the NHKA. He notes that except for debates, meetings, articles and books on Article 3 of the Church Order of NHKA, there was little to no reflection on church government and polity, creating the impression that the entire Church Order of the NHKA was built on this one central issue.⁴² Before it was revoked in 1998 Article 3 in the Church Law of 1951 stated:

*Die Kerk, bewus van die gevare wat vermenging van blank en nie-blank vir altwee groepe inhou, wil geen gelykstelling in sy midde toelaat nie, maar beoog die stigting van eie volkskerke onder die verskillende volksgroepe, in die oortuiging dat aldus die bevel van die Here – “Maak dissipels van al die nasies”, Mattheus 28:19, die beste tot sy reg sal kom en dat die eenheid in Christus deur so ’n werkverdeling nie geskaad sal word nie. Tot die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika behoort daarom slegs blanke persone.*⁴³

Pont (in particular) saw to it that the utilization of the Dutch tradition and, therefore, the Church Order of Dort (1619), became an important part in the contextual thinking regarding church polity in and of the NHKA. In *Die Historiese Agtergronde van ons Kerklike Reg*, he indicated that, even though a church order should be conform to and based on Scripture, it does not have the status of a confession. Pont argued that doctrine is normative, but polity is a matter of adapting to modern circumstances while using the principles set forth in, to his mind, the

⁴⁰ R.M. Britz, ‘Van Buite Bekyk: die Teologie van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika tussen 1938 en 1950’, *HTS Teologiese Studies* 1, no. 73 (2017): 1.

⁴¹ Pont, ‘Vyf en twintig jaar Kerkreg binne die Ruimte van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika’, 29.

⁴² Botha, ‘Totstandkoming van twee Kerkordes’, 213. He suggests that only after 1990 studies on church polity in the NHKA received some attention.

⁴³ Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk, *Kerkwet van die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika*, 1951, 1–2.

Scriptures, Confessions and also in the tradition like the Church Order of Dort (1619).⁴⁴ Botha moreover echoes the sentiments of Vorster, Kleynhans and Strauss on church polity, asserting that the NHKA Church Order of 1998 was a church order for its “own time and circumstances.”⁴⁵ Of significance is that Article 3 was revoked in this Church Order. Van Wyk, following Pont, also describes the church polity of the NHKA as a “confessional polity”⁴⁶ and further asserts that the function of this Church Order manifests the confession.⁴⁷ He furthermore makes the same distinction as the scholars in the NGK (also referencing Bouwman) between the *jus constituendum* and *jus constitutum*, noting that this distinction is a latent departure point for the practice of church polity.⁴⁸

Scholars in the NHKA thus draw to the same conclusion as their NGK colleagues Vorster, Kleynhans and Strauss argued for in the NGK: a church order should be contemporary fitting. The NHKA scholars do this with a slightly different focus than in the NGK. In the NHKA, the Church Order of Dort (1619) as such is not the main focus when reference is made to reformed polity principles (as in the NGK), but they do see their Church Order as a re-orientation to reformed church polity which the Church Order of Dort (1619) represents. The claim to be a modern version of the Church Order of Dort (1619) is thus not made in the NHKA, as in the NGK. In the NHKA’s understanding, the Church Order of Dort (1619) is historically important, but cannot be elevated as the model for reformed church polity and order because it is the product of a particular context. As in the NGK, the core principles underlying Dort is pursued, rather than the verbal text. Contemporary relevance is thus of importance. Underlying this slightly different

⁴⁴ Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergronde van ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:16.

⁴⁵ Botha, ‘Totstandkoming van twee Kerkordes’, 224.

⁴⁶ B.J. Van Wyk, “Die Kerkorde en die Kerklike Reg in die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika aan die hand van die Presbiteriaal-Sinodale Kerkbegrip” (unpublished, 2005), 154, <http://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/24756/05chapter5.pdf?sequence=6>.

⁴⁷ Van Wyk, 163.

⁴⁸ Van Wyk, 148.

focus in the NHKA is of course the recognition (NGK scholars deny this influence) that their Church Order was indeed been influenced by the *General Regulation* (1816) and in many ways deviated from the principles of Dort (1619) until the re-orientation began in die 1950's. In the early 21st century the theological re-orientation was guided by the intention to inform the church order in such a way that the missional character of the church would clearly come to a right of its own.

c) The Dort paradigm in the Afrikaans Protestant Church (APK)

Shortly after separating from the NGK in 1987, the APK Synod decided that its Church Order should be brought in accordance with Reformed church government.⁴⁹ It has moreover been referred to as a model reformed church order,⁵⁰ which polity is grounded in Scripture and the confessions.⁵¹ But, as in the NHKA, these reformed principles of church government have not received much attention in scholarly literature from within the APK itself. Instead, Article 3 of the Church Order of the APK stood, just as the controversial Article 3 in the Church Order of the NHKA, in the centre of attention and is thus basic to the church polity of the APK. The main part of Article 3 states:

*3.2 Net blanke Afrikaners, asook ander blankes wat hulle met blanke Afrikaners vereenselwig, wat die saligmakende geloof in Christus het (Rom. 10:9–10), wat die belydenis, leer en die Kerkorde van die Afrikaanse Protestantse kerke in kerkverband (kyk Artikel 66) onderskryf, kan saam met hulle kinders lidmaatskap van 'n plaaslike kerk (gemeente) verkry.*⁵²

⁴⁹ Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, “Register van Sinodebesluite” (unpublished, 2015), 94.

⁵⁰ C.L. Van Heerden, “Prof. F.A.H. van Staden: 50 Jaar in die Bediening,” *Die Boodskapper*, no. 156 (November 2002): 12.

⁵¹ J.L. Schütte, ‘Die Ekklesiologiese begrippe “Sigbare en Onsigbare Kerk” in die Drie Formuliere van Enigheid teen die agtergrond van die AP Kerk se Kerkbegrip’ (Magister Artium (Teologie), Universiteit van Pretoria, 2006), 132, <https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/29132/dissertation.pdf;sequence=1>.

⁵² Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereels vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite* (Hatfield: Lig in Duisternis, 2014), 3.

The dominance of Article 3 (the limitation of membership) in the church polity of the APK is evident in the APK's official publication *Die Boodskapper*. The principle of the indigenization of the church under the Afrikaner-Boerevolk is consistently profiled and defended.

Between 1992 and 2018 only a few articles concerning church polity and government were published, e.g. F.A.H. Van Staden's *Die Rol en Betekenis van die Ring volgens die Kerkorde*; A.S. Van Jaarsveld's *Noodsaaklikheid en betekenis van 'n Kerkorde vir 'n Gereformeerde Kerk van Christus*; F.A.H. Van Staden's *Ons in die A.P. Kerkverband en die Kerkorde*, C.L. Van Heerden's *Prof. F.A.H. van Staden: 50 Jaar in die Bediening*.⁵³ In 2006 the current chairman of the APK's church polity commission, JL Schütte, wrote a thesis entitled, *Die ekklesiologiese begrippe "sigbare en onsigbare kerk" in die Drie Formuliere van Enigheid teen die agtergrond van die AP Kerk se kerkbegrip*.⁵⁴ Schütte is also Professor in Ecclesiology at the *Afrikaanse Protestantse Akademie*, and as such this dissertation serves as an important framework for understanding the ecclesiological thinking in the APK. Despite the lack of scholarly work, the APK does have its own paradigm for polity wherein the Church Order of Dort (1619) is held in high esteem.⁵⁵

It is not surprising that Schütte focuses in his dissertation on the distinction between the visible and invisible church.⁵⁶ He moreover argues that the denial of the existence of an invisible church is contrary to Holy Scripture,⁵⁷ and that Article 27 of the the Belgic Confession (1561)

⁵³ F.A.H. Van Staden, 'Die rol en betekenis van die ring volgens die Kerkorde', *Die Boodskapper*, no. 54 (October 1992); Van Jaarsveld, 'Noodsaaklikheid en betekenis van 'n Kerkorde vir 'n Gereformeerde Kerk van Christus'; Van Staden, 'Ons in die A.P. Kerkverband en die Kerkorde'; Van Heerden, 'Prof. F.A.H. van Staden: 50 Jaar in die bediening'.

⁵⁴ Schütte, 'Die Ekklesiologiese begrippe "Sigbare en Onsigbare Kerk" in die Drie Formuliere van Enigheid teen die agtergrond van die AP Kerk se Kerkbegrip'.

⁵⁵ See Strauss, *Gereformeerdes onder die Suiderkruis 1652-2011: die verhaal van vier Afrikaanse kerke*, 87.

⁵⁶ Schütte, 'Die Ekklesiologiese begrippe "Sigbare en Onsigbare Kerk" in die Drie Formuliere van Enigheid teen die Agtergrond van die AP Kerk se Kerkbegrip', 21.

⁵⁷ Schütte, 29.

should be understood as only referring to the invisible church.⁵⁸ Commenting on Article 27 of the Belgic Confession, Schütte says: “Hier is geen sprake van sigbaarheid, van `n organisasie, `n instelling of instituut met strukture nie. Dit is daarom ook onmoontlik dat daar ooit sprake kan wees van enige verdeeldheid of verskeurdheid ten opsigte van die onsigbare kerk, soos wat die geval by die sigbare kerk is.”⁵⁹ He also argues that the Heidelberg Catechism (1563) and the Canons of Dort (1618/19) stayed true to this distinction.⁶⁰ “Confusion arises,” he notes, “when it is assumed that whatever the Bible and confessions state as indicative of the invisible church is necessarily indicative of the church’s visible side as well.”⁶¹ The distinction between the visible and invisible church is of the utmost importance since it underlines the racial demarcation in the polity of the APK.

Schütte furthermore follows the NGK scholars in imposing a division between the *jus constituendum*, and the *jus constitutum*.⁶² The principles, he states, of the *jus constituendum* should be identified in order to formulate a practical ordering, the *jus constitutum*, in a church order. Polity is then only a matter of wellbeing for the church and should never displace the essence.⁶³ As in the NGK and NHKA, the so-called principles of the Word and Confessions are then identified (*jus constituendum*) and adjusted to fit the need of the church (*jus constitutum*). This is underscored by the foreword to the Church Order of the APK, which states that the Church Order does not determine the essence of the church, but serves the wellbeing of the

⁵⁸ Schütte, 30.

⁵⁹ Schütte, 38.

⁶⁰ Schütte, 128.

⁶¹ My translation. See Schütte, 133.

⁶² Schütte, 88.

⁶³ Schütte, 91–92.

denomination.⁶⁴ The core principles underlying Dort (1619) is therefore pursued, rather than the verbal text.

d) The Dort paradigm in the Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA)

The GKSA came into existence in 1859. Although the discussion of the polity of this church should have preceded that of the APK, I have opted otherwise. The reason is that the Dort paradigm in the GKSA constitutes a profile that differs from the three reformed churches already discussed. Van der Linde, Spoelstra, Du Plooy and Smit are taken as contemporary representatives of the GKSA's approximation of what this study characterizes as the Dort paradigm in their church. In contrast to the NGK, the NHKA and the APK, Van der Linde and Spoelstra do not see church polity as serving practical interests. According to their argument, the Church Order of the GKSA adheres to the polity set by Scripture.⁶⁵ Unlike their colleagues in the NGK, the NHKA and the APK, Van der Linde and Spoelstra do not comprehend church polity as a matter of compromise or practicality. It should be determined by Scripture. For them, in other words, the *jus constituendum* and the *jus constitutum* should always align.

In his '*n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, Van der Linde asserted that the Church Order of the GKSA is based on the Church Order of Dort (1619) and (therefore) on Scripture. It is in fact, the Church Order of Dort (1619), adapted to local state of affairs. It should thus be subjected to change only when Scripture clearly necessitates change.⁶⁶ It was, by the way, during Van der Linde's time as a professor at the Theological School that church polity became

⁶⁴ Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereels vir vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite* (Hatfield: Lig in Duisternis, 2014), iii.

⁶⁵ Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 7; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 20.

⁶⁶ Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 6, 277–78.

an independent discipline in the GKSA.⁶⁷ In *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, Spoelstra follows Van der Linde's view, noting that a Scriptural Church Order would not need to be adapted regularly, but only certain principles in the Church Order that are not necessarily Scriptural may be adapted to circumstances.⁶⁸

Du Plooy is in agreement with them, noting that the *jus constitutum* should thus correspond with the *jus constituendum*.⁶⁹ Smit, another scholar in the GKSA, argues in his critique on Jonker, for an a-historic acceptance of the Church Order of Dort (1619),⁷⁰ criticizing Jonker for his point of view that the Church Order of Dort (1619) cannot be accepted a-historically.⁷¹ However, in this same study, *God se orde vir Sy Kerk*, Smit also argued that the Church Order of Dort (1619) should be open for adaption, as not all principles in the Church Order are necessarily Scriptural.⁷²

The above citations and views make it clear that scholars in the GKSA, like those in the NGK and APK argue that the Church Order of Dort (1619) forms the basis of their Church Order. Where the NGK, NHKA and APK are open for the persuasion that modern church orders should be adapted according to practical circumstances, scholars in the GKSA only allows for adaption in so far as Scripture permits. For the GKSA scholars thus the Church Order of Dort (1619) is elevated as the orthodox (and only) authoritative model for reformed church polity and order because of its Scriptural grounding.

In the above paragraphs, the Dort paradigm in Afrikaans reformed ecclesiology and church polity have been briefly in an overview characterized. Three of the churches emphasize

⁶⁷ Coertzen, *Gepas en Ordelik. 'n Teologiese verantwoording van die Orde vir en in die Kerk*, 252.

⁶⁸ Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 474.

⁶⁹ A. le R. Du Plooy, 'Die Grondslag en Relevansie van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg as Teologiese Wetenskap', *In die Skriflig* 29, no. 1 & 2 (1995): 151.

⁷⁰ C.J. Smit, *God se Orde vir Sy Kerk* (Pretoria: NG Kerk boekhandel Transvaal, 1984), 129.

⁷¹ Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*.

⁷² Smit, *God se Orde vir Sy Kerk*, 95.

adherence to the theological principles underpinning the Church Order of Dort (1619), while the fourth, the GKSA sustain a verbal acceptance of Church Order, which is indeed adapted to local circumstances.

Was this paradigm ever questioned? And, should it be questioned? The next paragraph deals with the matter.

III. Was the Dort paradigm questioned?

The direct answer to the question is no. On the contrary, the paradigm was (and is) simply accepted since the second half of the 20th century. Within the ranks of the GKSA, the Dort paradigm may not be questioned. It seems that South African scholars, in their commitment to the Dort paradigm, predominantly expand on the nature and character of the Church Order of their respective denominations. In their expositions a historical-theological consultation of the primary sources pertaining to the Church Order of Dort (1619) in its original context, lack. No attention is given to the interesting complexity of the reception and adoption of the Dort paradigm in the different churches. The Church Order of Dort (1619) is mentioned by name, referred to, used, acclaimed, but only, it appears, to serve purposes supporting the theological soundness of the particular church orders.

Notwithstanding, in the work of some theologians the foundation of questioning the paradigm is implied. Pont could be seen as an example in this regard. In his *Die Historiese Agtergronde van ons Kerklike Reg*, he offers a historical-theological explication of both the Church Order of Dort (1619) and the *General Regulation* (1816).⁷³ He does not defend the church order of his denomination. In his approach history makes the point. However, Pont relies

⁷³ Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergronde van ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981; A.D. Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergronde van ons Kerklike Reg*, vol. 2 (Pretoria: KITAL, 1991).

on Hooijer's *Oude Kerkordeningen der Nederlandsche Hervormde Gemeenten (1563-1638) en het Conceptreglement op de Organisatie van het Hervormd Kerkgenootschap in het Koninkrijk Holland (1809), verzameld en met inleidingen voorzien*.⁷⁴ This secondary source informed him. Church historical knowledge of most of the South African scholars (after 1981) was and is shaped by Pont's work. Although it does not represent original primary research that indeed guided and inspired questioning of the Dort paradigm, Pont's historical method sets the course for interrogation.

Jonker is another example in this regard. A thoroughly laboured manuscript on the history of reformed church polity surfaced when Gert Duursema designed a digital platform of his published theological legacy.⁷⁵ This manuscript, edited and published by Duursema in 2017, and dated around 1962, Jonker, in sharp contrast to the traditional scholarship in the Afrikaans reformed churches, explicated the church polity tendencies of Dort (1619) and the *General Regulation* (1816) in research-based historical-theological perspective. He carefully consulted the primary sources in their original context.⁷⁶

The manuscript of Jonker scrutinized the origin and development of reformed polity in the 16th and 17th century, then covers the 19th century, before (lastly) focussing on recent (at the time) polity developments in Switzerland, Scotland, France, Germany and the Netherlands. Based on his study of the primary sources, Jonker concluded that Christ is the living Head of His Church and rules directly and actually through His Word and Spirit. He indicated that there cannot be a separation between church polity and doctrine, as confession and Scripture are adequate for the

⁷⁴ Cornelis Hooijer, ed., *Oude Kerkordeningen der Nederlandsche Hervormde Gemeenten (1563-1638) en het Conceptreglement op de Organisatie van het Hervormd Kerkgenootschap in het Koninkrijk Holland (1809), Verzameld en met inleidingen voorzien* (Zalt-Bommel: Joh. Noman en zoon, 1865), <http://www.prdl.org/genres.php?genre=Church%20Order>.

⁷⁵ See "Willie Jonker Digitale Argief," Willie Jonker, accessed December 16, 2018, <http://williejonker.co.za/>.

⁷⁶ W.D. Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geskiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, ed. G.J. Duursema (Stellenbosch: Willie Jonker digitale argief, 2017).

governing of the church.⁷⁷ The rule of Christ, Jonker asserted, is not an ideal to be pursued but a reality. It is not merely principles of the Church Order of Dort (1619) that have to be made contemporary; it is about the direct and actual rule of Christ in His church.⁷⁸ He explains that when polity is merely a matter of sentiment, the rule in the church is placed in the hands of people and not founded in Scripture.⁷⁹

It is clear that Jonker is much more nuanced about the influence of the Church Order of Dort (1619) than his contemporary peers. His research is not motivated by or argued in terms of an apologetic trend. He thoroughly interrogated the church polity practices of the NGK. In this regard, he made an important contribution that did include consequences for the other reformed churches. Yet, it remained unpublished and was never pursued in further academic research.

While Jonker is the only NGK scholar who extensively researched the roots of the Church Order of Dort (1619) and *General Regulation* (1816), Brown also displayed independent thinking and critical assessment of the primary sources, while Britz and Duursema continue to do so.⁸⁰ Brown argued that church polity is not a matter of indifference but stands in direct relation with

⁷⁷ My translation. See W.D. Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk* (Pretoria: Universiteit van Suid Afrika, 1965), 16. “Daar kom onvermydelik ‘n kloof tussen die kerkregering en die belydenis van die kerk. Nog die belydenis nog die Skrif hoef op enige direkte wyse by die regering van die kerk in aanmerking geneem te word, want die reglemente skryf immers voor hoe daar opgetree moet word om die orde te handhaaf.”

⁷⁸ See. W.D. Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk* (Pretoria: Universiteit van Suid Afrika, 1965), 16. “So word die regering van Christus in die kerk misken en aan die kerk ‘n vorm opgelê wat met sy wese in direkte botsing is.”

⁷⁹ Jonker, 14.

⁸⁰ E. Brown, “‘Die Spoor wat die Ned. Geref. Kerk in sy Kerkregering en Kerkreg gedurende die 20ste eeu gevolg het’”, *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* xx, no. 4 (1979): 277–304; E. Brown, ‘Amp en Belydenis’, in *Gereformeerde Ampsbediening*, ed. P.J. Rossouw (Pretoria: NG Kerk boekhandel, 1988), 153–56; R.M. Britz, ‘Oor die Kerkbegrip en die Ordening van die Kerklike lewe by die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk’, *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* xxvi, no. 4 (1985): 432–51; Britz and Strauss, *Dordt na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*; R.M. Britz, “‘As Adjusted to Our State of Affairs...’. The Church Order of Dordt at the Cape of Good Hope: Restrictive Influence - Augmented Ecclesiastical Identity”, in *Keynote Paper Read at the International Conference 400 Years Synod of Dordt* (the International Conference 400 Years Synod of Dordt, Dortrecht, the Netherlands, 14-16 November); Duursema, ‘Communio Sanctorum – Gereformeerde Kerkreg versus Kerklike Geskeidenheid. ’n Biografiese Bibliografie van W.D. Jonker, 1955 – 1968’.

the confession of the church. He indicated that there is a striking resemblance between the Belgic Confession of faith and the Church Order of Dort (1619).⁸¹

Concurring with Brown's conclusion, and in light of the above mentioned scholarship, there seem to be two approaches to church polity in South African scholarship:

*For the one approach, the confession is a version of the Scriptural faith, even if it is historically dated. In a qualified sense, it is normative, fundamental and binding for the view and practice of the offices of the church. For the other approach the confession, the church order and the offices of the church are first of all historical in origin, even though they contain Scriptural principles and insights. The confession and offices are thought off in functional-Scriptural terms. The problem is that in these ranks also the Scripture is thought of first of all in historical terms.*⁸²

Britz is in agreement with Brown. He observed that the concept church government that developed since the 19th century in the NGK - and if I may add also in the other Afrikaans churches - is seated in and defined by a legalized understanding, which is thoroughly church centrically.⁸³ The church order has become a functional matter, Britz critically explained, and is therefore more located in the field of practical theology than in ecclesiology. The governance of Christ in the Church Order have been separated from each other.⁸⁴ Recently, Duursema also argued that the church polity practiced in the NGK – and I may add by inference the other Afrikaans churches – is, in fact, collegial/hierarchical theology and does not reflect the theological trajectory of the Church Order of Dort (1619).⁸⁵ Concurring with Britz on this matter:

⁸¹ Brown, 'Amp en Belydenis', 157, 159.

⁸² My translation. See Brown, 163.

⁸³ Britz, 'Oor die Kerkbegrip en die Ordening van die Kerklike lewe by die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk', 448.

⁸⁴ See R.M. Britz and S.A. Strauss, eds., *Dordt na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, vol. 8, UV Teologiese Studies (Bloemfontein: Pro Christo-Publikasies, 1995), 7.

⁸⁵ G.J. Duursema, "The Distinctive Character of Ecclesiastical Decisions within the Dortian Church Order. Ecclesiastical Authority." (The International Conference 400 Years Synod of Dordt, Dordrecht, the Netherlands, 2018).

“We must be careful to unlock the reception of the Church Order of Dort (1619) in South Africa as a document that presupposes church reformation and orthodox theology.”⁸⁶

It thus seems that the interrogation of the Dort paradigm in the Afrikaans churches of reformed confession and polity has been incepted. However, this interrogation is neither yet deliberately focused nor purposeful. This study is carried by the intention to deliberately question the Dort paradigm. In order to do so, the way in which the Church Order of Dort is used, and why, is profiled in the next paragraph.

IV. The characteristic use of the Church Order of Dort (1619) in South African reformed church polity

Careful analysis to what extent the assertion that the Afrikaans Reformed church orders are indebted to and (even) determined by the Church Order of Dort (1619), is true, or whether the claim, in fact, leans more toward assumptions and postulations, has been discussed in a previous study.⁸⁷ The result disclosed that, despite a formal commitment to and recognition of the Church Order of Dort (1619) in current thinking and formulation, the South African church orders do not portray the theological content or intention of the Church Order of Dort (1619). The exception is the Church Order of the Reformed Churches in South Africa, which depicts a closer affiliation and connection, but obviously adapted to the South African state of affairs.⁸⁸

In dealing with these church orders, it was also observed that each of the Afrikaans reformed churches employed a distinctive way in the application of the church order. The NGK understands its Church Order as focussed on the contemporary needs of the church as institute;

⁸⁶ Britz, “‘As Adjusted to Our State of Affairs...’. The Church Order of Dordt at the Cape of Good Hope: Restrictive Influence - Augmented Ecclesiastical Identity,” 7.

⁸⁷ See Nel, “The Rule of Christ in the Church Order of Dordrecht (1618/19): A Historical-Theological Study.”

⁸⁸ See Nel.

the NHKA focuses on their Church Order as an embodiment of the confessional documents, and the APK comprehends their Church Order as a form of the local congregation's expression as the body of Christ. In the GKSA the Church Order inspired a theological-judicial discipline Church Polity that gave rise to a theoretical-disciplinary predominated application of its Dort-based church order. The consequence is that the ministerial character of the "original" 1619 Dort Church Order is overshadowed by a modern institutionalized re-interpretation and theoretical exegesis and hermeneutic, deployed in an authoritarian way to govern ecclesial life.

The investigation concluded that the Church Order of Dort's (1619) reception has been guided by ecclesiastical distinction and motivation, steered by assumptions and the (normative) adaption to the regional state of affairs. It is clear that the context, the particular ecclesiastical situation, played a determining role in the understanding and application of the different church orders. Opposed to this view, the articles on the offices, assemblies, doctrine, sacraments, ceremonies, and discipline of the Church Order of Dort (1619), reflect and imitate the life that Christ, as Head of the church, gives to and maintains through his Spirit and Word in his congregation. This theological presupposition determines the application of the Church Order as part and parcel of the ministry to and in the church and its assemblies. The shift towards an ecclesiastical implementation and theoretical judicial-appropriate execution of the 1619 Church Order would necessarily erode its theological foundation and ministerial intention. In this way the Church Order of Dort (1619) receives an authority of its own.⁸⁹

In the Afrikaans reformed church polity this shift towards an *ecclesiocentric* appraisal and understanding of a church order, as a fundamental and formal ecclesiastical document with a pragmatic and judicial purpose, is noticeable in the undisputed rule granted to the effective

⁸⁹ See Britz, "'As Adjusted to Our State of Affairs...'. The Church Order of Dordt at the Cape of Good Hope: Restrictive Influence - Augmented Ecclesiastical Identity".

application of the perceived intention of articles of the Church Order of Dort (1619), as well as the supreme authority given to the Synod. The shift is evident in the supplementary regulations, stipulations, ordinances and decisions in the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA, APK and GKSA as well. The emphasis is on effective management and governance of the church.

This conclusion of course provides the opportunity - and need - for further inquiry and investigation.

V. Demarcation of research and statement of the central question

The current research is inspired by the remark at the end of the previous paragraph. The key issue that surfaces, given the appeal to and the particular ecclesiological interpretation of the Dort paradigm (as indicated above) in the Afrikaans churches of reformed confession, is: what then did inform and determine this particular use and comprehension of the Church Order? Could it be – this is the question – that that other great, and also long-lasting, influential document on the order and governance of the Dutch Reformed church, drafted at the beginning of the 19th century, as a matter of fact, played a pivotal role in the structure, the interpretation and application of the Afrikaans reformed church orders? The ‘other great document’ refers to the renowned *Algemeen Reglement voor het Bestuur der Hervormde Kerk in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* (1816) (henceforth *General Regulation* 1816). The central question thus is: did this *General Regulation* (1816) shape the Afrikaans reformed church polity practice and church order application more than that is expected or conceded?

The legacy of the *General Regulation* (1816) is indeed entitled to thorough consideration. It not only represents a constitutive document and source of information (besides the 1619 Church Order of Dort) for reformed trajectory of theological thinking in the Netherlands, but also

had a profound influence and reception in South Africa, as Britz recently established.⁹⁰ Stepping into the gap, the current research intents, in answering the question, to focus on this source and its reception in the Afrikaans reformed church orders. In the next paragraphs of our introduction, a condensed overview of the significant profile the *General Regulation* received in Dutch scholarship is offered. And, subsequently, how this scholarship was followed in the South African reformed churches.

VI. The *General Regulation* (1816) in Dutch scholarship

The historical reformed church in the Netherlands received the *General Regulation* (Algemeen Reglement) in 1816. The Church Order of Dort was formally replaced. The *General Regulation* (1816) brought a welcome solution and an end to the consequences of total separation of state and church at the time. Within the ranks of the *Hervormde Kerk* the *General Regulation* as the rule that governed the church was welcomed.

Historically, and Church politically, Roijaards was the *Hervormde* theologian that paved the way for the acceptance of *General Regulation* (1816). His work on church polity, *Hedendaagsch Kerkregt bij de Hervormden in Nederland*, offers an explication of the consequences of the *General Regulation* pertaining to church polity and its setting in the Dutch intellectual, political and ecclesial context.⁹¹ Roijaards embedded the *Regulation* and its church polity consequences in the ambit of what he identified as the visible church.⁹² His interpretation had a profound influence on subsequent thinking.

⁹⁰ See Britz.

⁹¹ H.J. Roijaards, *Hedendaagsch Kerkregt bij de Hervormden in Nederland*, vol. 1 (Utrecht, 1834).

⁹² See Roijaards, 1:33; W.D. Jonker, 'Die liberale Kerkreg en die veelheid van Kerke', *Ned. Geref. Teologiese Tydskrif* 1, no. 5 (January 1964): 3–9.

Two church historical events of consequence during the 19th century questioned the theological character and suppositions of the *General Regulation*. In the 1830s the *Afscheiding* rejected the *Regulation* and re-introduced the Church Order of Dort. In the 1880s the *Doleantie* in the Netherlands did the same and attempted to return to the reformed polity of the Church Order of Dort (1619). The *Doleantie* gave birth to fruitful reformed church polity thinking and discussion. In particular, Kuyper and Rutgers laid the foundation of *Doleantie* ecclesiology. In this regard, the confession is utilized as the agreement of association between individual believers, which institutes a congregation.⁹³

Jonker points out that Kuyper, therefore, takes the individual, and not Christ, as point of departure for his ecclesiology. For him, the church is the consequence of individual and free believers. The church is therefore associated because they share the same views and beliefs. Believers can thus come together in different institutes (denominations), without influencing the essence of the church. Rutgers echoes Kuyper in this, as he also understands the church as the free association of believers. The consequence of the interpretation of Kuyper and Rutgers is that the independence of the local congregation is elevated, as the local congregation is understood as complete and to a certain sense, the only true church. This meant that a local congregation could separate from the denomination (institute) and still remain a true church. Van den Heuvel is in agreement with Jonker's interpretation of the *Doleantie*, noting that Kuyper wanted to return to Reformed church polity by casting off the yoke of the synod.⁹⁴

This interpretation was a reaction against the (alleged) hierarchical polity of the *General Regulation* (1816) which disregarded and ruled over the local congregations. Jansen, Bouwman

⁹³ For an overview of Jonker on this matter, see Duursema, "Communio Sanctorum – Gereformeerde Kerkreg versus Kerklike Geskeidenheid. 'n Biografiese Bibliografie van W.D. Jonker, 1955 – 1968," 345–57.

⁹⁴ P. Van den Heuvel, ed., *De Hervormde Kerkorde. Een Praktische Toelichting*. (Zoetemeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum B.V., 2001), 38.

and Biesterveld later followed Rutgers and Kuyper in this interpretation.⁹⁵ Bouwman for instance defines church polity as the science which describes the right that should prevail in the visible, institutionalized church,⁹⁶ while Jansen notes that polity is about the visible church as institute.⁹⁷

Bavinck, the successor of Kuyper and stemming from the tradition of the *Afscheiding* (1834), stands in contrast to the views of Kuyper and Rutgers. He condemns the separation between the organism and Institute of the church. Christ gathers His church, according to Bavinck, and therefore the faith of believers is not the basis of their association.⁹⁸ Jonker indicates that the *Afscheiding* continued in the polity of the Church Order of Dort (1619), and did not follow the *Doleantie* in their interpretation. Therefore, for Bavinck, Jonker notes, the church, invisible and visible, is one. For Kuyper and the *Doleantie* though, a synod is merely constituted by delegates, not by the offices that Christ instituted for his church. Only the consistory of a local congregation has authority to rule the church. The consistory is then the ‘highest’ assembly in the church.

In contrast to this interpretation, Nauta follows Bavinck, arguing that the assemblies (vergaderingen)⁹⁹ of the church all have the same authority.¹⁰⁰ Where the *Doleantie* interprets the Church Order of Dort (1619) as an anti-hierarchical polity that rules from the bottom up (in contrast to the *General Regulation* of 1816’s top to bottom approach), Bavinck, Nauta and Jonker argue that this is not the case. The Church Order of Dort (1619) does not think with the anti-

⁹⁵ Jansen, *Korte verklaring van de Kerkorde der Gereformeerde Kerken*; Joh. Jansen, ‘Iets over het Gereformeerd Kerkverband’, *Gereformeerd Theologisch Tijdschrift*, 2 January 1923, <http://www.reformed-digital.net/literatuur-artikelen->; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*; H. Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht: het Recht der Kerken in de Practijk*, vol. 2 (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1934); P. Biesterveld and H.H. Kuyper, *Kerkelijk Handboekje : Bevattende de Bepalingen der Nederlandsche Synoden en andere stukken van beteekenis voor de Regeering der Kerken* (Kampen: J.H. Bos, 1905).

⁹⁶ Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 10.

⁹⁷ Joh. Jansen, *Handeleiding Gereformeerd Kerkrecht* (J.H. Kok, 1947), 3.

⁹⁸ See H. Bavinck, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, 4th ed., vol. 4 (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1930), 258–421.

⁹⁹ In lack of a better translation I use Westminster terminology here.

¹⁰⁰ D. Nauta, *Verklaring van de Kerkorde van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (Kampen: Kok, 1971), 125.

hierarchical lense of the *Doleantie* as it did not originate in reaction against the polity embodied in the *General Regulation* (1816). Britz underscores this by noting that the Church Order of Dort (1619) had a different origin and therefore should not be understood as merely a defender of anti-hierarchical principles. Commenting on Article 84 of the Church Order of Dort (1619) he notes that a different conviction is present here:

*...one discovers a space wherein the Scriptural direction and proclamation of Christ's Kingship in the congregation, unfolds...indeed therein we do not in the first place hear an 'anti-hierarchical principle' of which so much was made in later reformed church polity. Nor is it an indication of the equality of the offices. It also does not represent a strong guard that was implemented for the independence, or completeness, or the right of the local church/congregation. It simply wants to say that in the practical situation of being church, there is only one Lord and King. No other is there too, and no other can rule. Even the slightest desire or pursuit thereof is smothered. Christ tolerates no competitors. He alone is the King that determines and creates the order. From this conviction, the church order grows and has to be understood as such.*¹⁰¹

In summary, it can be stated that the criticism against and rejection of the *General Regulation* during the 19th and 20th centuries were more an attempt to restore the old Church Order of Dort than to substantially scrutinise the *Regulation*. From within the *Hervormde Kerk*, questioning also surfaced, especially in the 20th century.

In this regard theologians like Van Loon, Rasker and De Groot mainly focused on the deficits of the *General Regulation* (1816). It was pointed out that the *Regulation* (1816) had no conspicuous connection to in particular Articles 27-32 of the Belgic Confession, where a clear

¹⁰¹ My translation. See Britz, *Dordt na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:60. “ontdek ‘n mens daarin ‘n ruimte waarin die Skriftuurlike aanwysing en verkondiging van Christus se Koningskap in die gemeente, ontplooi...Immers, daarin hoor ons nie in die eerste plek ‘n ‘anti-hiërargiese beginsel’ waarvan so veel in die latere gereformeerde kerkregering gemaak is nie. Nog is dit ‘n aanduiding van die gelykheid van die ampte. Dit verteenwoordig ook nie ‘n sterk wag wat betrek is by die selfstandigheid, of kompleetheid van die plaaslike kerk/gemeente nie. Dit wil maar eintlik net sê dat in die praktiese situasie van kerkwees, daar net een Here en Koning is. Geen ander is daar om, en kan daar, heerskappy voer nie. Selfs die heimlike begeerte of strewe daarna word in die kiem gesmoor. Christus duld geen medestanders nie. Hy alleen is die Koning wat die orde skep en bepaal. Uit hierdie oortuiging groei die kerkorde en moet dit begryp word.”

indication of the essence and order of the church are given.¹⁰² Recent Dutch scholarship tends to offer a more balanced view of the *General Regulation* (1816). Van den Boogaard, for instance, sees it as a new phase in the history of the Reformed church,¹⁰³ while Roelevink points to a certain continuity between the *Regulation* (1816) and the Church Order of Dort (1619).¹⁰⁴

This confronts us with the resulting question: how did South African reformed church polity adjudicate the *General Regulation*? What happened in this regard?

VII. The *General Regulation* (1816) in South African scholarship

The *General Regulation* (1816) as an object of research by South African scholars, is not highly ranked and as a matter of fact, limited. In general, scholars from the ranks of the NGK, GKSA and APK, in their adjudication of the *General Regulation* are deeply influenced by and confined to the *Doleantie* evaluation of the document.¹⁰⁵ Coertzen therefore asserts that the views of Bouwman and Jansen profoundly affected the NGK.¹⁰⁶ In this regard Keet, Vorster, Hanekom, Kleynhans and Strauss follow the *Doleantie* and its negative estimation of the *General Regulation*.¹⁰⁷ Schütte, a scholar in the APK, also shares this interpretation.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² Johannes Christiaan Adrianus Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816* (Wageningen: N.V. Gebr. Zomer & Keuning's Uitgevers Mij., 1942), 188, 222; A.J. Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795: haar Geschiedenis en Theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1974), 29; A. De Groot, 'Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816', in *Theologie en Kerk in het Tijdperk van de Camera Obscura. Studies over het Nederlandse Protestantisme in de eerste helft van de Negentiende Eeuw*, ed. J.H. Van de Bank, Theologie en Kerk in het tijdperk van de Camera Obscura. Studies over het Nederlandse Protestantisme in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw 18 (Utrecht, 1993), 112, <http://kerkrecht.nl/content/bank-jh-van-de-ea-1993-h4>.

¹⁰³ P.D. Van den Boogaard, 'Een Reglementaire Kerk? Een evaluatie van het Concept-Reglement van 1809 en het Algemeen Reglement van 1816', *NTKR, Tijdschrift Voor Recht en Religie* 2, no. 1 (2017), <http://www.uitgeverijparis.nl/reader/199533/1001321237>.

¹⁰⁴ Roelevink, 'Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816: een hekgolf in de rivier of een steen in de vijver?'

¹⁰⁵ Duursema, "The Distinctive Character of Ecclesiastical Decisions within the Dortian Church Order. Ecclesiastic Authority.," 366.

¹⁰⁶ Coertzen, *Gepas en Ordelyk. 'n Teologiese verantwoording van die Orde vir en in die Kerk*, 66.

¹⁰⁷ See paragraph II: a. Schütte, 'Die Ekklesiologiese begrippe "Sigbare en Onsigbare Kerk" in die Drie Formuliere van Enigheid teen die agtergrond van die AP Kerk se Kerkbegrip'.

The mentioned contributions of Jonker and Britz contradict the *Doleantie* interpretation.¹⁰⁹ Both asked for the *Regulation* to be adjudicated in its own right. Concurring with them, Duursema notes that the first professors of the Theological Seminary in Stellenbosch, proff. John Murray and J. H. Hofmeyr, studied under Roijaards in Utrecht, as also rev. Andrew Murray, rev. J. H. Neethling and rev. G. W. A. van der Lingen – who all played a pivotal role in the founding of the Seminary and its theological curriculum. He furthermore remarks that in the period 1843 to 1859, thirty-eight students from South Africa studied theology at the University of Utrecht where Roijaards lectured.¹¹⁰ The influence of Roijaards in South African scholarship and the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA, APK and GKSA should therefore not be underestimated.

Despite the clear influence of Roijaards – and *ipso facto* the *General Regulation* (1816) - in the South African scholarly trajectory, most South African scholars ignore the *General Regulation* (1816) altogether. Those who do make an effort to consider the *General Regulation*, as indicated above, without ado follow the interpretation of the *Doleantie*. The current research responds to the Jonker-Britz-Duursema¹¹¹ acumen that the legacy of the *General Regulation* in South African reformed church polity should be scrutinized *an sich*.

Engelbrecht, a theologian in the NHKA, asserted that the *Regulation* of 1824 accepted by the Cape reformed church was an adaption of the *General Regulation* of 1816. He furthermore argues that it was collegial in essence and made the local congregation subservient to the

¹⁰⁸ See paragraph II: c. Schütte, 'Die Ekklesiologiese begrippe "Sigbare en Onsigbare Kerk" in die Drie Formuliere van Enigheid teen die agtergrond van die AP Kerk se Kerkbegrip'.

¹⁰⁹ Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geskiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*; Britz, "'As Adjusted to Our State of Affairs...'. The Church Order of Dordt at the Cape of Good Hope: Restrictive Influence - Augmented Ecclesiastical Identity"'.

¹¹⁰ Duursema, "The Distinctive Character of Ecclesiastical Decisions within the Dortian Church Order. Ecclesiastic Authority.," 366.

¹¹¹ Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geskiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*; Britz, "'As Adjusted to Our State of Affairs...'. The Church Order of Dordt at the Cape of Good Hope: Restrictive Influence - Augmented Ecclesiastical Identity"; Duursema, 'The Distinctive Character of Ecclesiastical Decisions within the Dortian Church Order. Ecclesiastic Authority.'

denomination.¹¹² Pont, another scholar in the NHKA, echoed Engelbrecht's views in his critique on the 1824 *Regulation*.¹¹³ In the NHKA there is therefore different appreciation for the *General Regulation* than in the NGK, the GKSA and the APK.

South African reformed scholarship is predominantly framed by the *Doleantie* reaction against the *General Regulation* (1816). The Dutch *Doleantie* scholarship is followed uncritically without scrutinizing the sources or context. Except for Jonker's unpublished manuscript,¹¹⁴ no detailed effort was made to trace the trajectory of sources concerning the development of church polity in the Netherlands and no interest was shown in the *General Regulation* (1816). Jonker's work, although thorough, is incomplete. He never finished it and therefore the reception of the Church Order of Dort (1619) and the *General Regulation* (1816) in South African Church Order's – which he intended to scrutinize – was never done. This research aims to step into the gap.

VIII. Method and outline of research

Methodologically, the research boils down to a historical approach. The research excavates the church political trajectory in the Netherlands from 1619 to 1816, i.e. from the Church Order of Dort (1619) to the *General Regulation* (1816). The *General Regulation* as a constitutive document in the Dutch reformed church polity and tradition thus receives in-depth scrutiny, before the current Afrikaans reformed church orders are investigated, obviously with the central question of the study in mind. This question is primarily interested the extent the NGK, NHKA, APK and GKSA is indebted to the church political development after the Synod of Dort 1618/19,

¹¹² S.P. Engelbrecht, *Geskiedenis van die Nerderduits Hervormde Kerk van Afrika* (Pretoria: J.H. de Bussy, 1953), 11, 26–27.

¹¹³ A.D. Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergronde van ons Kerklike Reg*, vol. 2 (Pretoria: KITAL, 1991), 129.

¹¹⁴ Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geskiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*.

and especially to the *General Regulation* (1816), which replaced the Church Order of Dort (1619).

The research deliberately did not limit itself to South African sources, as did Brown and Britz. They, in particular, interrogated the NGK tradition within the range of South African sources.¹¹⁵ Recently, Britz did it again.¹¹⁶ In this study the central question is answered from a different angle. Of crucial importance is not the corpus of South African sources, but those of the Dutch origin. The study of these will constitute the platform for assessing the South African church polity development, related to the influence of the *General Regulation*. The research thus concurs with the approach of Duursema. He recently highlighted the reception and adaptation of Article 31 of the Church Order of Dort (1619) in the Afrikaans churches, from the perspective of its original pre-history 1571-1619.¹¹⁷

The first chapter discusses the historical context and underlying theological and ecclesiological trajectories in Dutch reformed church polity during the time of high orthodoxy (c.a. 1620-1700). The second chapter aims to trace the context and trajectories during the time of late orthodoxy (c.a. 1700-1790)¹¹⁸ and transition into the 19th century. This will pave the way for an in-depth analysis of the church polity underpinning the *General Regulation* (1816). This third chapter accordingly deals with the seven divisions of the *General Regulation* (1816) – general provisions, the synod, the provincial ecclesiastical directions, the classical direction, the Walloon, English – and Scottish Presbyterian churches, the rings, the congregation – and concludes with a

¹¹⁵ Brown, “Die spoor wat die Ned. Geref. Kerk in sy Kerkregering en Kerkreg gedurende die 20ste eeu gevolg het”; Britz, ‘Oor die Kerkbegrip en die Ordening van die Kerklike lewe by die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk’.

¹¹⁶ Britz, “As Adjusted to Our State of Affairs...”. The Church Order of Dordt at the Cape of Good Hope: Restrictive Influence - Augmented Ecclesiastical Identity”.

¹¹⁷ Duursema, “The Distinctive Character of Ecclesiastical Decisions within the Dortian Church Order. Ecclesiastic Authority.”

¹¹⁸ This division is followed by Richard Muller, see Richard A Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, vol. 1–4 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003); Andreas J. Beck, “Reformed Confessions and Scholasticism. Diversity and Harmony.,” ed. Gijsbert Van den Brink and Aza Goudriaan, *Perichoresis* 14, no. 3 (December 2016): 19.

summary. The final chapter compares the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA, APK and GKSA with the *General Regulation*. In an ultimate conclusion, the findings of the study are summarised.

In meeting the requirements of the Jonathan Edwards Centre Africa, all citations and references in footnotes, as well as the compilation of the bibliography are formatted and formulated according to the *Chicago Manuel of Style*, 17th Edition (full note). Except when otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. In this regard, it was decided to translate as directly as possible. Obviously this brought challenges.

IX. Value of the study

Sources of Reformed and Dutch church polity, like the Church Order of Dort (1619) and the *General Regulation* (1816), are often neglected and not studied from its original text and context. Concurring with De Groot: “Maar voor de vraag, hoe zich nu het kerkelijk leven in het algemeen in deze jaren ontwikkelde, bestaat doorgaans geen belangstelling. Alsof men over de handhaving van kerkordelijke en confessionele principes in het verleden zou kunnen oordelen, zonder de historische kontekst erbij te betrekken!”¹¹⁹ This evidently raised the need for a thorough study of Dutch reformed church polity as such, and then from its primary sources in terms of its original context and its theological intention.

The scientific study of church government and polity in South Africa has not received substantial attention in the past. Botha contends that the principles of church polity were never really debated or questioned in the NHKA.¹²⁰ In the APK there has also not been much reflection

¹¹⁹ De Groot, “Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816,” 125.

¹²⁰ Botha, ‘Totstandkoming van twee Kerkordes’, 219.

on church polity and government during the past 20 years.¹²¹ Even in the NGK and GKSA, where studies in church polity have been more prominent than in the NHKA and APK, research is often done in an uncritical way by merely repristinating the thoughts of other scholars, without the study of primary sources.

Thoughtful and deep reflection on the historical roots of church polity is therefore not only necessary but also relevant. Researching the historical context and ecclesiological trajectories after the Synod of Dort 1618/19 will therefore contribute to the reflection on ecclesiological roots of the church today.

The gap in existing research is clearly outlined above. The legacy of the *General Regulation* in the South African Church Orders of reformed confession is an aspect of the appropriate scholarship peculiar to the NGK, the NHKA, the APK and the GKSA, which scientifically, theologically and church-historically suffered defeat at the hands the unscathed acceptance of the assumptions of the *Dolentie* church polity. The value of the research therefore lies in the fact that, with regard to the influence of the *General Regulation*, the sources are studied and thus an informed conclusion is made. In this respect, the contribution is unique.

¹²¹ Except for reflections on church government and polity by F.A.H. van Staden, this topic did not receive any attention inside the APK itself.

CHAPTER 1: DUTCH REFORMED THEOLOGY AND ECCLESIOLOGY DURING THE TIME OF HIGH ORTHODOXY (C.A. 1620-1700)

1.1 Introduction

The first chapter of our study is devoted to an overview of the context, the theology and ecclesiology during the century that followed the Synod of Dort 1618/19. It intends to offer an outline of the times, the intellectual trajectories, historical and ecclesiastical developments that constituted what has scholarly been identified as the high orthodoxy (c.a. 1620-1700).¹

Concurrently the chapter will reflect on the transition from the period of early orthodoxy to that of high orthodoxy.

The chapter starts with the legacy of the Synod of Dort 1618/19. The so-called Golden Age and its public religion are then sketched, followed by the relation between church and state, the Remonstrance, the development of a polemical input, structure and characterisation of and in theology, Reformed scholasticism and lastly, a summary of the *Nadere Reformatie* and its particular theological and ecclesiological accentuation. The chapter concludes with a summary.

1.2 The legacy of the Synod of Dort in the new era

In general, scholarship profiles the Synod of Dort 1618/19 as a noticeable event of theological and ecclesiastical consequence. The Synod and its decisions, Selderhuis remarks in the

¹ The definition of orthodoxy that Van Asselt and Rouwendal provide is also followed here: “The term “orthodoxy” is used first of all to refer to a certain period in the history of Protestantism after the Reformation and pertains to both Lutheran and Reformed developments. This period extends into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries...The term orthodoxy can also establish a close connection between systematic theology and the church’s confessional documents...we use the term orthodoxy as the description of a certain period in the history of theology that stretches from the sixteenth into the eighteenth century. When we speak of Reformed orthodoxy, we refer to that stream within orthodoxy connected to the Reformed confessions. In using this term, we do not make a statement as to whether or not a particular theologian himself was convinced that his views were in line with Reformed confessions.” See Willem J. Van Asselt and P.L. Rouwendal, “Introduction: What Is Reformed Scholasticism?,” in *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism*, ed. Willem J. Van Asselt (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2001), chap. 9.3.1.

introduction to the standard and text-critical edition *Acta et Documenta Synodi Nationalis Dordrechtanae (1618-1619)*, “have been decisive for the developments of international Calvinism, not least because it represented the first, and, to the present, only international Reformed synod. ... This meant that Dordt became the unifying force for generations of Calvinist Reformed churches worldwide that accepted the canons as their confessional basis and norm.”²

The Synod indeed became renowned – even legendary - for the three documents it has produced. Firstly, the Canons, with the Belgic Confession and the Heidelberg Catechism, as the indubitable standards of the Reformed church of the Netherlands. Secondly, the Church Order, that remained the rule for church polity in the Netherlands and abroad, and still is in many churches, albeit often in an adapted form, to fit the state of local affairs. Both these documents, in particular during the 19th century among reformed churches that separated themselves from mainstream traditions, were bestowed the status of the authentic expression of true reformed orthodoxy. The third document was the new Dutch translation of the Bible, published in 1637 as the “*Statenvertaling*”. With its marginal notes, it shaped reformed spirituality for centuries and served theology as a primary source of information. Its translation of the Psalms in metrical form was the backbone of congregational singing.

Jonker noted a different perspective on the renowned Synod as well. He pointed out that the Canons were not only received negatively in Germany and England, but in the Netherlands there was never the same enthusiasm in the church for the Canons as for the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism. He furthermore asserts that the Synod did not intend the Canons to be a new confession, but rather to serve the accountability, defence and further clarification of what

² Christian Moser, *Acta of the Synod of Dordt*, ed. Herman Selderhuis and Donald Sinnema, Bilingual edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 15.

was confessed in the other two existing (Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism) confessions on the points of theological discontent.³

De Boer also pointed out that the research of Donald Sinnema in the volume *Revisiting the Synod of Dordt*,⁴ indicated that it was the requirement of subscription by pastors and other office bearers in the churches that, as a matter of fact, instigated the development of the Canons to be recognised as a *new* confessional standard for the churches.⁵ He furthermore remarks that, whenever the Catechism (Heidelberg) and Confession (Belgic) were published as one document during the 17th and 18th century, the title implied that the Catechism and Confession were revisited, clarified and reconsidered by the Synod of Dort 1618/19 pertaining to the issues brought before the Synod.⁶ According to De Boer it was during the 19th century that the Canons of Dort increasingly became an accepted confessional document, on par with the Catechism and Confession. This was not the original intent of the Synod.⁷

It can be agreed with Littlejohn and Roberts that “the early 17th century is generally considered to have marked the height of the process of confessionalization, a great sorting out in which the different doctrinal trajectories emerging from the Reformation defined themselves with greater precision and rigor.”⁸ However, the Synod of Dort 1618/19 should not be viewed as a synod which aimed to produce a confession or set new standards in terms of doctrine or polity. As the Catechism and Confession were revisited by the Synod of Dort in respect to the Canons,

³ See W.D. Jonker, ‘n Eresuil vir Dordt’, in *Dordt na 375 Jaar: 1619–1994.*, ed. R.M. Britz and S.A. Strauss, UV Teologiese Studies 8 (Bloemfontein: Pro Christo-Publikasies, n.d.).

⁴ Aza Goudriaan and Fred van Lieburg, eds., *Revisiting the Synod of Dordt (1618-1619)*, vol. 49, Brill’s Series in Church History (Leiden: Brill, 2011).

⁵ Erik A. De Boer, “The Career of the Canones. An Inventory of Editions of the Canons of Dordt during the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Century,” in *The Doctrine of Election in Reformed Perspective: Historical and Theological Investigations of the Synod of Dordt 1618-1619*, ed. Frank Van Der Pol (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht GmbH & Co, 2018), 236.

⁶ De Boer, 240.

⁷ De Boer, 246.

⁸ Bradford Littlejohn and Jonathan Roberts, eds., *Reformation Theology: A Reader of Primary Sources with Introductions* (Davenant Press, 2017), 708.

the Synod also revisited the Church Order as it pertains to the Catechism and Confession and the revisions on polity since the Synod of Emden (1571). The Church Order of Dort (1619) may then be regarded as the interpretation of what was confessed in the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism. The Synod of Dort 1618/19 did not create a new Church Order or a new confession.

Although this was not new doctrine or polity, the Synod's Canons and Church Order, however, formed the hinges on which a new era of theological thinking inaugurated. Van Asselt convincingly has shown that the Synod of Dort 1618/19 should be considered as a transition from the period of early orthodoxy to that of high orthodoxy. He offers two reasons for this statement. First, the Synod was and remains the only Reformed synod with an international character.⁹ Secondly, a theological consensus was reached at the Synod. "The increasing diffusion of Reformed theology internationally and definition of the Reformed orthodox position on the doctrine of predestination at the Synod of Dort (1618/19)," Van Asselt earlier observed, "serves as markers for the beginning of high orthodoxy."¹⁰ While the definition of the Reformed orthodox position on the doctrine of predestination at the Synod was clarified and brought consensus, the same applies in terms of polity, at least for the Reformed church in the Netherlands.

On the 13th of May 1619 the Church Order came under discussion at the Synod of Dort, thus after the international delegates had left who had attended primarily to resolve the Remonstrant and Contra-Remonstrant controversy. These were all closed sessions which were

⁹ Not only Dutch delegates attended the Synod, but "Delegates from Great Britain, the Electoral Palatinate, Hesse, Switzerland, Wetteraw, the Republic and Church of Geneva, the Republic and Church of Bremen, the Republic and Church of Emden, the Duchy of Gelderland, and of Zutphen, South Holland, North Holland, Zealand, the Province of Utrecht, Friesland, Transisalanania, the State of Groningen, and Omland, Drent, and the French Churches." See Littlejohn and Roberts, 731–32.

¹⁰ Willem J. Van Asselt, ed., "Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism," in *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism*, trans. Albert Gootjes (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2001), chap. 9.1.

not open for public attendance like most of the preceding sessions.¹¹ Even though church polity was only discussed in these so-called Post-Acta sessions of the Synod of Dort 1618/19, the Synod was called together for two reasons: to settle the difference in doctrine and to provide clarity on polity for the Netherland churches. Selderhuis is of opinion that church polity was therefore a significant matter at the Synod of Dort 1618/19, noting that “although the main focus of the synod – and that of literature on the synod – was on the dispute on predestination, decisions made on other topics were very important and influential as well.”¹² Not only the Canons then, but the Church Order formed part of the hinges on which a new era of theological thinking inaugurated.

It is thus apparent from the above that the “status” of the Canons and Church Order of the Synod of Dort 1618/19 should in a way be tempered. It never aimed to serve as either a new confession or begin a new polity, but to clarify the doctrine and polity established and confessed in the Catechism and Confession. These two formularies are then of primary importance in understanding and interpreting the Canons and Church Order.

No national synod convened after 1619. Nearly two hundred years later, in 1816, a national synod took place on the invitation of the king of the Netherlands. The Church Order of Dort (1619) thus remained unchanged for two centuries. However, the theology and ecclesiology of the Dutch Reformed church inevitably underwent development and changes. The next paragraphs will trace and reflect on the immediate context of the Church Order of Dort (1619). We begin with the Golden Age and public religion.

1.3 The Golden Age and public religion

¹¹ Selderhuis, *Acta of the Synod of Dordt*, 1:xxv; Glasius, *Geschiedenis der Nationale Synode, in 1618 en 1619 Gehouden te Dordrecht, in hare Voorgeschiedenis, Handelingen en Gevolgen.*, 292.

¹² Selderhuis, *Acta of the Synod of Dordt*, 1:xv.

In contrast to the 16th century, the 17th century is described as the Golden Age of the Netherlands.¹³ Prince Maurice (1567 – 1625) of Orange achieved successful military campaigns in the late 16th century and the Lands Advocate Johan van Oldenbernevelt (1547 – 1619) ensured that the “Republic”¹⁴ of the seven united provinces of the Netherlands was *de facto* acknowledged. These developments led to the ceasefire of 1607 and the Twelve Years Truce (1609-1621), which conceded to and accepted the sovereignty of the Republic officially.¹⁵ Through her chartered companies, Holland controlled the coast and stimulated economic development even in foreign countries.¹⁶

The United East Indian Company (*Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*), founded in 1602, held the power of the Republic, established and ruled a global trade enterprise, and in taking responsibility for maintaining the public religion, appointed sick comforters and ministers to serve on ships and in the various colonies and its churches.¹⁷ The United East Indian Company was mainly active in Greater India, the Asia-Pacific region and in South Africa, where a refreshment post was established in 1652. The Dutch West India Company (*Geocroyeerde Westindische Compagnie*) established several colonies in the West Indies, Portuguese territory in northeast Brazil and in North America. The Dutch West India Company (1621) and the United East Indian Company became the most powerful expression of the international engagement (and enterprise) of the Dutch Republic.

¹³ Willem J Van Asselt and Paul H.A.M. Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” in *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, ed. H.J. Selderhuis (Kampen: Kok, 2006), 363.

¹⁴ See Van Asselt and Abels, 371, 373. Van Asselt and Abels note that the term Republic may cause confusion. This was not a republic in the sense of a well administered government and it was never officially proclaimed a republic. “Het gewest was feitelijk een losse versameling rivaliserende stadsstaten, die uit eigenbelang in een bepaalde situatie op elkaar aangewezen waren en compromissen moesten zoeken.”

¹⁵ H. Selderhuis, ed., *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis* (Kampen: Kok, 2006), 330–31. Maurice was the son of prince William of Orange that died in 1584. After the departure of Robert Dudley count of Leicester, Maurice at only 20 years of age took over the military command.

¹⁶ See Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 369. The Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie is known in English as the Dutch East-Indian Company.

¹⁷ O.J. De Jong, *Nederlandse Kerk Geschiedenis* (Utrecht: Callenbach, 1985), 204.

The particular Synod of Rotterdam (1621) recognised the opportunity to spread the Gospel through the chartered companies and requested that the United East India Company, the States General and the Prince arrange a collection for the accomplishment of this Christian work.¹⁸ The Reformed church in the Netherlands thus attended to the regular Christian ministry among the employees of the two companies. In addition, its foreign ministry became instrumental in missionary work. All ecclesiastical affairs were regulated in terms of instructions and official provisions.

In the paper read at the international Dordt Conference during November 2018, Britz e.g. pointed out (with reference to the situation at the Cape of Good Hope), that in “the colonial set-up, the official and thus public structure of the reformed church as a recognized (colonial) institution in and for the colony (refreshment post) was ... determined by a variety of political, ecclesial and official documents.” He listed the following:¹⁹

- Instructions of the DEIC, the Political Council, the Cape Governors, etc.
- Directives of visiting commissioners, e.g. Simons, Van Hoorn, Von Imhoff
- Statutes and ordinances, e.g. for deacons and the management of the poor funds
- Batavian regulations and church orders
- Classis of Amsterdam and its deputies for foreign ecclesiastical matters
- Ecclesiastical acts, formularies, protocols and regulations for ministers, sick comforters, etc., on the ships and East India
- Decisions of the Combined meeting of congregations at the Cape 1745-1759

¹⁸ See Article 62. Knuttel, *Acta der Particuliere Synoden van Zuid-Holand: 1621-1633*, 1:29–30.

¹⁹ R.M. Britz, “‘As Adjusted to Our State of Affairs...’. The Church Order of Dordt at the Cape of Good Hope: Restrictive Influence - Augmented Ecclesiastical Identity”, in *Keynote Paper Read at the International Conference 400 Years Synod of Dordt* (the International Conference 400 Years Synod of Dordt, Dortrecht, the Netherlands, 14-16 November), 2.

- Official letters to and from Cape churches
- Published Cape sermons.

There was no reason to appeal to the reformed confession, nor to deliberately call on the Church Order of Dort (1619). In the Christian cohesion (colonial) state-church at the Cape, the basic configuration of the ministry of congregations corresponded with the reformed tradition as incorporated in the Church Order of Dort (1619), in accordance or conformity, as often is indicated in primary sources, with the customs in the fatherland. This did not necessarily contradict the Dortian Church Order. However, the Church Order was not utilised to determine the structure and regulation of churches abroad. It was not necessary in the Golden Age.

The Peace of Westphalia (1648) brought closure to the Thirty Year's War and with that the conflict in the Netherlands also came to an end. The negotiated Peace accord confirmed the Treaty of Augsburg (1555), with Calvinistic princes now accepted as equals within the legal framework of the Holy Roman Empire.²⁰ On the 30th of January 1648 the Peace of Westphalia was signed in Münster and on the 15th of May that same year the peace was officially acknowledged. The King of Spain accepted the United Netherlands as free and sovereign.²¹ The era of religious wars at last came to an end.²²

Aland is of the opinion that the reason for the final peace is to be found in the fact that everyone was tired of war and their forces were exhausted.²³ The consolidation of Protestant states in post-1648 Europe should be seen as a process that helped Protestant powers to stabilise

²⁰ See Hartmut Lehmann, "Continental Protestant Europe: The Rise and Decline of Pietism," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution: 1660-1815*, ed. Stewart J Brown and Timothy Tackett, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 43.

²¹ See Van Asselt and Abels, "De Zeventiende Eeuw," 371.

²² See J.W. Hofmeyr, *Die Nederlandse Nadere Reformasie en sy invloed op twee kontinente: 'n vergelyking van die invloed en deurwerking van enkele aspekte van die Nederlandse Nadere Reformasie in die Suid-Afrikaanse en Noord-Amerikaanse kontekste* (Pretoria: Universiteit van Suid Afrika, 1989), 9.

²³ See Kurt Aland, *A History of Christianity: From the Reformation to the Present*, trans. James L Schaaf, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 216.

Protestantism as a whole and establish it as an undisputed way of life.²⁴ Littlejohn notes that “many historians have seen the Reformation (or the Reformations, plural) as an on-going process that continued at least until the Peace of Westphalia in 1648.”²⁵

Although it is called the Golden Age, the 17th century in the Netherlands remained a difficult time with many challenges and calamities. The deaths among infants, epidemics, war, piracy and immigration to the foreign colonies caused the mortality rate to be higher than the birth rate. Poverty, criminality, gambling and prostitution were also prominent and high taxes broaden the gap between rich and poor.²⁶ Moreover, the cold winters, wet and dry summers, storms and flooding, fires, plagues and pest caused much uncertainty among the people. Despite the mortality rate, the population growth in the cities escalated.²⁷ Urbanisation into the western Netherlands gradually increased during the 17th century, especially in Holland.²⁸

The Netherlands became a refuge state not only for the Jews, but also for other population groups.²⁹ Many Germans sought harbour in the Netherlands because of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). Scandinavians, Poles and English also moved to the Republic, seeking protection, especially in Amsterdam and a number of cities in South Holland and Zeeland.³⁰

The French Huguenots also sought asylum in the states. More than a century ago, on 24 August 1572, most of the leaders of the French Huguenots were murdered on St. Bartholomew’s Day in Paris.³¹ Although French Protestantism had lost its leadership, Aland asseverates that its power of resistance had not been broken as it continued its struggle until 13 April 1598 when,

²⁴ See Lehmann, “Continental Protestant Europe: The Rise and Decline of Pietism,” 47.

²⁵ Bradford Littlejohn, “Introduction,” in *Reformation Theology: A Reader of Primary Sources with Introductions*, ed. Bradford Littlejohn and Jonathan Roberts (Davenant Press, 2017), viii.

²⁶ See Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 377.

²⁷ See Van Asselt and Abels, 368–69.

²⁸ See Van Asselt and Abels, 367.

²⁹ See Van Asselt and Abels, 367; O.J. De Jong, *Geschiedenis der Kerk* (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1992), 260.

³⁰ See Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 368.

³¹ Aland, *A History of Christianity: From the Reformation to the Present*, 2:203; Ncik Needham, *2000 Years of Christ’s Power*, vol. 3 (London: Grace Publications Trust, 2016), 343.

through the Edict of Nantes, freedom of conscience and religion was granted.³² This freedom did not last long as their political rights were restricted by the Edict of Nîmes in 1629.³³ In 1677 the *bureaux de conversion* was instituted where every Huguenot who returned to the Catholic Church was compensated by financial incentives.³⁴ Eventually, the Huguenots would lose all their religious rights when the Edict of Nantes was revoked in 1685 and the reformed ‘religion’ became illegal.³⁵

The Huguenots, who left France rather than converting to Catholicism, formed close confessional communities and congregations in the Dutch states that offered them shelter. They remained loyal to their confessions rather than accepting the faith of their rulers, in contrast with the common practice of the time.³⁶ The Huguenots were welcomed in the states they fled to, as they were talented and productive artisans: “Political authorities far preferred men and women who recognized and internalized values such as duty and hard work as opposed to the restive and less socially integrated medieval peasants and artisans,” Mentzer notes.³⁷

Well over 200,000 French Protestants left France.³⁸ In this regard, Aland stated that “People who leave their property and their homeland for their faith’s sake are always among the most valuable citizens.”³⁹ Lehmann, however, asserts that the princes “were pursuing their own economic interest when they permitted the Huguenots to settle in their territories and retain their

³² Aland, *A History of Christianity: From the Reformation to the Present*, 2:204.

³³ See Aland, 2:204; De Jong, *Geschiedenis der Kerk*, 229.

³⁴ Praamsma, *De Kerk van alle Tijden: Verkenningen in het landschap van de Kerkgeschiedenis*, 2:305.

³⁵ Aland, *A History of Christianity: From the Reformation to the Present*, 2:204; Praamsma, *De Kerk van alle Tijden: Verkenningen in het Landschap van de Kerkgeschiedenis*, 2:296, 306.

³⁶ Lehmann, “Continental Protestant Europe: The Rise and Decline of Pietism,” 44.

³⁷ Raymond A Mentzer, “Church Discipline and Order,” in *Companion to Reformation Theology*, ed. David M Whitford (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 215.

³⁸ Margaret Jacob, “Continental Protestant Europe: The Rise and Decline of Pietism,” in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution: 1660-1815*, ed. Stewart J Brown and Timothy Tackett, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 266.

³⁹ Aland, *A History of Christianity: From the Reformation to the Present*, 2:219.

own reformed traditions. The prince's position was marked by economic pragmatism ... not by a deliberate policy of toleration."⁴⁰

The influx of all these refugees stimulated new economic - and religious – developments in the Netherlands. Amsterdam became a centre for Jewish life and the metropolis for Lutherans. Jewish refugees that fled from Spain and Portugal because of the Inquisition and those who were forced to be baptised, could now return to the Jewish religion in the Netherlands. Economically and culturally the Jews in the Republic were one of the most influential societies in Western Europe.⁴¹ The Lutheran Bible translation was translated to Dutch in 1648 to accommodate the growing number of immigrants,⁴² and Dutch also gradually replaced German as the language for preaching in Lutheran churches.⁴³ There were even three Portuguese congregations in Amsterdam after 1618. The Scottish church in Rotterdam was also acknowledged by the Reformed church as a sister church.⁴⁴

Thus, in the midst of all the religious and political disputes, the Netherlands emerged as a tolerant and flexible society in the 17th century, receiving many refugees and allowing religious freedom.⁴⁵ Despite the general reformed view that heresy should be punished by the magistrate, the United Provinces proved to be an international centre of religious toleration. The Netherlands became a haven of liberty.⁴⁶

The Reformed church formed part of this dynamic and differentiated society and contained the organising capacity to give stability in a time of political disruption and dissolution. Would these changes in society influence the theology of the Reformed church and her relation to

⁴⁰ Lehmann, "Continental Protestant Europe: The Rise and Decline of Pietism," 45.

⁴¹ Van Asselt and Abels, "De Zeventiende Eeuw," 407.

⁴² De Jong, *Nederlandse Kerk Geschiedenis*, 205; De Jong, *Geschiedenis der Kerk*, 265.

⁴³ See Van Asselt and Abels, "De Zeventiende Eeuw," 397.

⁴⁴ See Van Asselt and Abels, 368.

⁴⁵ See Van Asselt and Abels, 374–75.

⁴⁶ Nick Needham, *2000 Years of Christ's Power*, vol. 3 (London: Grace Publications Trust, 2016), 350.

the state? What would be the ecclesiastical and political implications for the church in the Golden age?

1.4 The public and recognised reformed church

With the successful conclusion of the Synod of Dort 1618/19, the image of the Republic of the seven united provinces as a reformed unified *corpus christianum* or commonwealth was enhanced. Although the region did not have a state church, the government formally acknowledged the Reformed 'religion' and favoured the Reformed church by calling assemblies, providing church buildings for worship, remunerating the ministers and supporting the theological faculties.⁴⁷

The future of the Reformed church after the Synod of Dort 1618/19 looked thus encouraging. "Since emerging in the 1580s from a successful war of rebellion against persecuting Catholic Spain, the Dutch Provinces and the Dutch Reformed church had a difficult question of identity to resolve,"⁴⁸ Littlejohn and Roberts write, but, with the Synod of Dort 1618/19, the church's confession and order was clarified. The Synod of Dort 1618/19 thus strengthened the reformed position and made the identity of this church clear.

The economic enterprises made the Republic an international power of significance, which had an influence on the church as well. Reformed theology developed an international character. Exchange of students, pastors and lecturers were now possible and foreign theological books were read in the Netherlands, in many cases, as translated editions.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ De Jong, *Nederlandse Kerk Geschiedenis*, 202; Nikolaj Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de Negentiende eeuw* (Delft: Eburon, 2007), 12.

⁴⁸ Littlejohn and Roberts, *Reformation Theology: A Reader of Primary Sources with Introductions*, 709.

⁴⁹ Selderhuis, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 357.

Despite the international correspondence profile, communication within the Reformed church proved difficult. In the absence of a national synod, correspondence between the various provincial or particular synods⁵⁰ was an important platform for mutual engagement and commitments. The Particular Synod of South Holland had a functional network with most particular synods, but it took years before other synods corresponded with each other. The Particular Synod of Friesland only corresponded for the first time in 1654 with Groningen, in 1672 with Overijssel and in 1676 with Gelderland.⁵¹ These contacts became essential for the unity of the church and the development of its theology.

With the Peace of Westphalia, the Catholic Church lost property and estate in the Netherlands.⁵² Reformed ministers were appointed in the conquered cities and reformed congregations became more permanent as these areas were now officially part of the United Netherlands.⁵³ Prince Frederik came to his death just before the Peace of Westphalia and was succeeded as Stadtholder⁵⁴ by William II. After the death of William II, a ‘great’ meeting was held in The Hague to approve and sanction government without a Stadtholder. On 27 January 1651 the meeting declared that the respective states would continue to maintain its support for the Christian Reformed religion as was laid down by the Synod of Dort 1618/19.⁵⁵ The relation between Christian church and Christian state was now consolidated as the Reformed church was

⁵⁰ The designation provincial synod is not exactly correct, but is nevertheless used. Provincial synods were called particular synods by the Church Order of Dort because it was the gathering of a number of classes. Where the classes gathered in a particular province, the synod was also referred to as the provincial synod. See Knuttel, *Acta der Particuliere Synoden van Zuid-Holand: 1621-1633*, 1:iv,v.

⁵¹ Knuttel, 1:xi, 3.

⁵² Aland, *A History of Christianity: From the Reformation to the Present*, 2:217.

⁵³ J. Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland* (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1899), 266.

⁵⁴ Translation of the Dutch term “stadshouer” See Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes*, vol. 1–3 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1878), 511.

⁵⁵ Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 392; B.J. Van Wyk, “Die Kerkorde en die Kerklike reg in die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika aan die hand van die Presbiteriaal-Sinodale kerkbegrip” (University of Pretoria, 2005), 32, <https://repository.up.ac.za/handle/2263/24756>.

officially acknowledged as the only church favoured by the government. Many new church buildings were erected for the Reformed church, all on state cost.⁵⁶ In this way, the Republic now officially became a reformed commonwealth as the government promoted and favoured the reformed church.⁵⁷

This was not a new dispensation for the Reformed church though. This only implied that the new government now put its seal on what was already *de facto* the case.⁵⁸ The favourable relation that existed between the government and Reformed church did not only mean that the government had an influence in the church, but that the church could also exercise effect on the government. Bijleveld indicates that the bond between church and state was of consequence for both. Ecclesiastical and theological disputes obviously had social and political implications. This was already the case when the dispute over predestination escalated into social and political strife.⁵⁹ Political events, Whitford asserts, were simultaneously understood as religious events.⁶⁰ The Particular Synod of Rotterdam (1621) did, therefore, request that the government continue to reform the positions of civil servants in order to remove the Catholic and Remonstrant officials that opposed the Reformed church.⁶¹ They also expressed gratitude towards the Commissioner for attending the Synod and wished that he favourably recommended the decisions of the Synod regarding the Church Order to the government.⁶²

Reitsma pointed out that the consequence of this ecclesial prosperity, authority and recognition was that the Reformed church remained subject to the sovereignty of the state. The

⁵⁶ De Jong, *Nederlandse Kerk Geschiedenis*, 217,218.

⁵⁷ De Jong, 224; Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 269.

⁵⁸ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 269.

⁵⁹ Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de plaats van de Hervormde predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de Negentiende eeuw*, 12.

⁶⁰ David M Whitford, "Studying and Writing about the Reformation," in *Companion to Reformation Theology*, ed. David M Whitford (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 3.

⁶¹ See Article 39. Knuttel, *Acta der Particuliere Synoden van Zuid-Holand: 1621-1633*, 1:17.

⁶² See Article 70. Knuttel, 1:33.

government still had a controlling influence in the church. Church politically it appears that the church gradually became more subject to government oversight after the Synod of Dort 1618/19. The Commissioners of the government attended the various particular synods to practice oversight and guard the interests of the state.⁶³ This practice brought occasionally tension between state and church.

Reitsma argues that the churches continued to oppose church orders that the various provincial states laid upon them, while Pont, in contrast, asserts that the church gradually accepted this superiority of the government.⁶⁴ A consultation of the acts of the various Particular Synods underscores the argument of Reitsma. The Synod of Rotterdam (1621), for instance, opposed the changes made to the Church Order of Dort (1619) by the States General and stated that these changes had no foundation in the Word of God, neither in the practice of the first Christians or the Reformed church and were contrary to the confessions of the church and would lead to new disputes in the church.⁶⁵ The subsequent (Particular) Synod of Gorichem (1622) also emphasised that the proposed changes to the Church Order was not based in the Word of God and did not serve the church.⁶⁶ Praamsma, like Reitsma, indicated that the churches continued to protest against the government's influence in ecclesiastical affairs. In Friesland there was objection from all the classes when the States of Friesland decided in 1645 that only landowners had the right to vote in cases of calling a minister.⁶⁷

⁶³ See article 3: Knuttel, *Acta der Particuliere Synoden van Zuid-Holand: 1621-1633*, 1:2, 3.

⁶⁴ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 256; Pont, *Die historische achtergrond van ons Kerklike reg*, 2:2.

⁶⁵ See Article 38. Knuttel, *Acta der Particuliere Synoden van Zuid-Holand: 1621-1633*, 1:15–16.

⁶⁶ See Article 6. Knuttel, 1:42.

⁶⁷ L Praamsma, *De Kerk van Alle Tijden: Verkenningen in het landschap van de Kerkgeschiedenis*, vol. 2 (Franeker: T.Weaver, 1980), 350.

The government moreover opposed the calls of the churches to convene in a national synod.⁶⁸ As said, the Synod of Dort 1618/19 was the last national synod for almost 200 years. The particular synods could not, like a national synod, clarify doctrinal disputes, the order of the church or the confessions. In the absence of a national synod, the unity in doctrine and order of the church would be compromised, had the classes or particular synods not vigorously warranted the unity. To this end the acts of many classes and particular synod meetings testify. The particular synods of the Reformed church were therefore of significance during the 17th and 18th centuries. They typically convened much shorter than a national synod, fluctuating between 10 days and 3 months.⁶⁹

Not only did the Reformed church gain influence in the 17th century, it also multiplied significantly. When the foundation of the Republic was laid with the Union of Utrecht on 23 January 1579, the majority of the population was Catholic. At the end of the Eighty Years War (1648), only about 40 percent of the population in the Republic was Catholic. This percentage decreased with the inflow of French Reformed ‘Huguenots’ when the Edict of Nantes was annulled by Louis XIV in 1685. The Huguenots, moreover, contributed to a diverse situation in the Reformed church as they did not use Dutch as primary language. The diversity of one Reformed church that consisted of Dutch and Walloon (French) congregations thus emerged. This confronted the Reformed church with the question whether it was now a Dutch church that accommodated the Walloon church or a reformed church that consisted of Dutch and French-speaking members? The influx of the French and other refugees, therefore, contributed to the emergence of a dynamic, differentiated and also a tolerant society in the Netherlands. Religious and theological tradition had to adapt to these principles.

⁶⁸ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 263.

⁶⁹ Knuttel, *Acta Der Particuliere Synoden van Zuid-Holand: 1621-1633*, 1:xviii.

In conclusion, it is clear that the Reformed church was in a favourable position after the Synod of Dort 1618/19. The doctrine and order of the church were clarified at the Synod and the unity of the church strengthened. The Reformed church moreover participated in an international network of correspondence and its particular synods communicated mutually on a regular basis. Through the East and West India Companies, the church ministered in various colonies and conducted missionary work. The Peace of Westphalia brought stability to Europe and the Netherlands and also to the Reformed church. Shortly after the Peace it was confirmed that the Reformed church officially was favoured by the government. The occasional tension between state and church continued to surface, and the government refused another national synod to convene after Dort 1618/19.

The influx of refugees into the Netherlands contributed to the changing context. The Reformed church enjoyed prosperity, authority and recognition through its relation with the state. It embodied the tolerance and structure that ushered in this new period. But, in an emerging tolerant society and in the absence of a national synod, how would the church clarify disputes arising over doctrine and polity? Would the government intervene on behalf of the church, or step in for the church, or would the new political tolerance also become religious in tone?

1.5 The Remonstrance

Tolerance was embraced in the Netherlands. This became apparent not only in its politics, but also in religious matters, as observed above. This is best illustrated in the treatment of the Remonstrants. After the Synod of Dort 1618/19 ended in 1619, almost two hundred ministers were dismissed by the Reformed church and state.⁷⁰ It was a precarious time for the

⁷⁰ Some of these ministers did return to the Reformed church after confessing their guilt before the Classes and signing the Forms of Unity. See Article 44. Knuttel, *Acta der Particuliere Synoden van Zuid-Holand: 1621-1633*, 1:59; Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes*, 1–3:513.

Remonstrants, not only were their political leaders arrested and Van Oldenbarneveldt (1547-1619) condemned for high-treason, and beheaded in The Hague, but Remonstrant ministers were also banned from their congregations and had no financial means and income. The Synod of Gorinchem (1621) referred to them as the “hartneckighe Remonstranten”⁷¹, reflecting something of the general attitude towards them. Reitsma underlines that the Remonstrants were treated harshly and their perseverance should be admired.⁷²

The Synod of Dort 1618/19, thus, did not mean the end of the Remonstrants, despite being opposed by the government and the Reformed church.⁷³ After the condemnation of the Remonstrant position by the Synod of Dort 1618/19, adherents came to a right of their own and identified (and organised) themselves as an independent movement. As early as the 5th of March 1619 ten Remonstrant ministers and a few consistory members decided to structure and coordinate their theological position and conviction.⁷⁴ A Remonstrant congregation emerged in Amsterdam through the preaching of Jacobus Watelier (1593-1672), a student at the Walloon College of Theology in Leyden. He preached in the houses of Timmerman, Houtkoper and Sweersen, without prohibition by the magistrate. This was the beginning of what would rise as a congregation for Remonstrants.⁷⁵

These initiatives gained momentum. From 30 September to 4 October 1619, a meeting was held in Antwerpen, invented by Johannes Wtenbogaert (1557-1644), where 38 ministers gathered to unite the Remonstrants and decide on the way forward. Here it was also determined that a confession would be drafted, and Simon Episcopius (1583-1643) was appointed for this

⁷¹ See Article 36. Knuttel, *Acta der Particuliere Synoden van Zuid-Holand: 1621-1633*, 1:55.

⁷² Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 242.

⁷³ See Article 50, Article 26, Article 33. Knuttel, *Acta der Particuliere Synoden van Zuid-Holand: 1621-1633*, 1:23. 52. 45-55.

⁷⁴ Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 439.

⁷⁵ D. Nauta, *Documenta Reformatoria: Teksten uit de Geschiedenis van Kerk en Theologie in de Nederlanden sedert Hervorming*, ed. J.N. Bakhuizen van den Brink et al., vol. 1 (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1960), 352.

task. This confession was approved at the second meeting of the Remonstrants in Antwerpen in February 1621.

In the year 1623 an attack was made on Prince Maurice (1567-1625) where some Remonstrants were involved, which in turn led to many returning to the Reformed church.⁷⁶ Until the death of Prince Maurice on 23 April 1625, life remained difficult for the Remonstrants.⁷⁷ His brother, Frederik Hendrik (1584-1647), succeeded him. The Remonstrants' position now improved as the oppression against them stopped.⁷⁸ "They were allowed to return and to establish churches and schools in every town of Holland,"⁷⁹ though with caution, as they were still legally banned.⁸⁰

The Remonstrants gradually gained more freedom and on the 30th of April 1630 a general meeting could be held in Rotterdam.⁸¹ Even though Remonstrants did not hold offices in government, they continued to influence the economic and cultural life.⁸² Against much strife and suppression, the Remonstrants remained a strong force. The Remonstrant position was also more in line with the emerging tolerance of the Netherlands. They held that their position in society was always one of tolerance, in contrast to the Reformed church that was opposed to the influence of the government in ecclesiastical affairs and quarrelled over the doctrine in their confessions.⁸³ How would the Reformed church respond to a movement like the Remonstrance in

⁷⁶ Van Asselt and Abels, "De Zeventiende Eeuw," 440.

⁷⁷ Van Asselt and Abels, 439.

⁷⁸ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 243; De Jong, *Geschiedenis der Kerk*, 264, 440.

⁷⁹ Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes*, 1-3:515.

⁸⁰ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 247.

⁸¹ Reitsma, 248; Van Asselt and Abels, "De Zeventiende Eeuw," 440. According to Van Asselt and Abels 15 percent of the population in Rotterdam were Remonstrants.

⁸² De Jong, *Nederlandse Kerk Geschiedenis*, 221.

⁸³ Van Asselt and Abels, "De Zeventiende Eeuw," 414.

a dynamic society that is emerging to be tolerant? Van Asselt notes that “the rise of alternative Remonstrant systems ensured the expansion of Reformed polemics....”⁸⁴

1.6 The rise of a polemical structure in theology

The rise and proliferation of theological polemics is a notable difference between (and therefore, characterisation of) the periods of early – and high orthodoxy.⁸⁵ Even though the Netherlands was a very tolerable society that welcomed many refugees and even endured the Remonstrants, polemic disputes became the order of the day.⁸⁶ There were persistent controversies in academic circles and students were trained by way of disputes. This was the cause of many disagreements in the church.⁸⁷ The absence of a national synod to bring clarity on disputed issues contributed to this.

The pulpit also fuelled polemics. Society did not know newspapers or magazines and the many sermons published had a profound public effect. Disturbances, upheavals and tension often caused by this, cautioned the government, which frowned upon these theological developments.⁸⁸ Groups, like the Socinians and Chiliasts, emerged and disrupted peace to such an extent that the government had to prohibit them from gathering. In Leiden, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Leeuwarden, Socinian books were confiscated and burned.⁸⁹ The civil war in England, the Thirty Years War in Germany and the persecution of French Huguenots in France before and after the Edict of Nantes (1685) was revoked, led to a rise in end-time expectations. It was believed by many that the coming of the millennial reign before the return of Christ would be preceded by a

⁸⁴ Willem J. Van Asselt, “Scholasticism in the Time of High Orthodoxy (1620-1700),” in *Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism*, ed. Willem J. Van Asselt, trans. Albert Gootjes (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2001), chap. 9.2.3.

⁸⁵ Van Asselt, chap. 9.1.

⁸⁶ Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 374.

⁸⁷ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 271.

⁸⁸ De Jong, *Nederlandse Kerk Geschiedenis*, 213.

⁸⁹ Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 486.

general repentance of the Jews.⁹⁰ These expectations were reflected in pamphlets and publications and propagated various and differentiating opinions.

The increasing academic interest in the exegesis of prophetic texts of the Old and New Testament and the emergence of the Cocceian covenant theology with an emphasis on biblical future expectation contributed to the reviving of millennial views and thoughts. Millennialism became an important factor in the Republic as numerous theologians published in this field and also contested it, like Antonius Walaeus (1573-1693) in Leiden and Samuel Maresius (1599-1673) in Groningen.⁹¹ Aland goes as far as to argue that “Protestantism was afflicted with so many controversies that we can almost say that theological and ecclesiastical controversies were the hallmark of the age of orthodoxy.”⁹²

The next paragraph, in the light of these controversies and theological tension, is devoted to an exposition of the reformed theology and the trajectories along which it expressed itself in the age of high orthodoxy in the context of the Netherlands.

1.7 Reformed scholasticism

At the Synod of Dort 1618/19 the confessional foundation of the church was reaffirmed. The Reformed church was now challenged with the task to convey the meaning of the Reformation in a new academic context. For this purpose it made use of the scholastic method in order to do so effectively.⁹³ Van Asselt and Abels observe in their overview that almost every textbook on Dutch church history provides a critical assessment of Reformed scholasticism.⁹⁴ Schaff negatively assesses the use of the scholastic method, noting that the Synod of Dort 1618/19

⁹⁰ Van Asselt and Abels, 486.

⁹¹ Van Asselt and Abels, 487.

⁹² Aland, *A History of Christianity: From the Reformation to the Present*, 2:223.

⁹³ Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 379–80.

⁹⁴ Van Asselt and Abels, 466.

“prepared the way for a dry scholasticism which runs into subtle abstractions, and resolves the living soul of divinity into a skeleton of formulas and distinctions.”⁹⁵ De Jong, Pont and Van Wyk, is in agreement with Schaff, asserting that the theology of the church “waned” during this period because of the scholastic system. Scholasticism is seen by them as a change in the fundamental message of the Reformation.⁹⁶ Pont furthermore blames the ominous ecclesiological situation, in which the church found herself theologically after the Synod of Dort 1618/19, on the “scholastic theology” of the Synod and the adoption of scholastic methods in reaction against the Council of Trent (1545-1565).⁹⁷ Van Wyk asserts that the theology was imprisoned and extradited by scholasticism and therefore impotent to the forces of rationalism and secularism.⁹⁸

In contrast, recent scholarship refuted this negative assessment of scholasticism, arguing that Reformed scholasticism is in continuity with the theology of the Reformers and with medieval theology. Beck is of the opinion that “there is no conflict but harmony between Reformed confessions and scholasticism, nor are the confessions necessarily less ‘rigid’ than scholastic theology.”⁹⁹ Not only is scholasticism evaluated positively, but also the theology of this period that made use of the scholastic method,¹⁰⁰ as Beeke notes that “orthodox Reformed

⁹⁵ Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes*, 1–3:515.

⁹⁶ De Jong, *Geschiedenis Der Kerk*, 266; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergronde van ons Kerklike Reg*, 2:4; A.D. Pont, *Algemene Kerkgeskiedenis: 'n inleiding tot die Nederlandse Kerkgeskiedenis: van die beginjare tot 1795*, ed. A.G. Van Aarde, *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 6 (Pretoria: Fakulteit Teologie Universiteit van Pretoria, 1994), 122; Van Wyk, ‘Die Kerkorde en die Kerklike Reg in die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika aan die hand van die Presbiteriaal-Sinodale Kerkbegrip’, 45.

⁹⁷ Pont, *Algemene Kerkgeskiedenis: 'n Inleiding tot die Nederlandse Kerkgeskiedenis: van die beginjare tot 1795*, 125.

⁹⁸ Van Wyk, “Die Kerkorde en die Kerklike reg in die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika aan die hand van die Presbiteriaal-Sinodale Kerkbegrip,” 45.

⁹⁹ Beck, “Reformed Confessions and Scholasticism. Diversity and Harmony.,” 35.

¹⁰⁰ Van Asselt, “Introduction to Reformed Scholasticism”; Beck, “Reformed Confessions and Scholasticism. Diversity and Harmony.”

theologians used scholasticism as a methodology which, contrary to the oft-repeated caricature, promoted neither a departure from Calvin's theology nor a dead orthodoxy."¹⁰¹

Pont's assertion seems not to take into account the great diversity of Reformed theology during this time, as he identifies the scholastic method with a certain content that is not substantiated by any primary sources. Praamsma, in acknowledgment of the diversity of scholastic theology, states that "the tree of Reformed theology stood in full blossom during the 17th century."¹⁰² Van Asselt also emphasises that the period of high orthodoxy saw comprehensive dogmatic works that were marked by precision.¹⁰³

Muller, moreover, emphasised that post-Reformation orthodoxy often disagreed with the content of medieval scholasticism. Seventeenth-century Reformed scholastics, he wrote, discussed issues which at times moved beyond the Reformation principle of sola scriptura, but it is an error to disregard the progress of the 17th seventeenth-century Reformed theologians who advantageously used the effective organizational structure of scholasticism.¹⁰⁴ "If Reformed orthodox theologians used the scholastic method for their academic work at the universities and academies", Beck underlines, "this surely does not mean that all their writings were scholastic."¹⁰⁵

Van Asselt places this in perspective, noting that in order to give a proper characterization of the period of high orthodoxy, it is necessary to consider it in light of the preceding period of early orthodoxy. These two periods, he observes, are separated by formal rather than substantial

¹⁰¹ Joel R. Beeke, *Gisbertus Voetius Toward a Reformed Marriage of Knowledge and Piety*, vol. 2, Guidance from Church History (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1999), 7.

¹⁰² Praamsma, *De Kerk van alle tijden: Verkenningen in het landschap van de Kerkgeschiedenis*, 2:241.

¹⁰³ Pont, *Algemene Kerkgeschiedenis: 'n inleiding tot die Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis: van die beginjare tot 1795*, 123.

¹⁰⁴ Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*; Richard A Muller, "Directions in the Study of Early Modern Reformed Thought," ed. Gijsbert Van den Brink and Aza Goudriaan, *Perichoresis* 14, no. 3 (December 2016): 4; Beeke, *Gisbertus Voetius Toward a Reformed Marriage of Knowledge and Piety*, 2:34.

¹⁰⁵ Beck, "Reformed Confessions and Scholasticism. Diversity and Harmony.," 22.

differences. Theology in the time of early orthodoxy was in the first place developed and worked out primarily from the basis of reformed confessions. Beck notes that the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession and Canons of Dort were much in line with the scholastic theology of Reformed orthodoxy.¹⁰⁶

My own research indicated that the Church Order of Dort (1619) corresponded with the ecclesiology of the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism.¹⁰⁷ By inference and in light of the above paragraph on the legacy of the Synod of Dort 1618/19 and my own research, we may, therefore, also add that the Church Order of Dort (1619) was in line with the scholastic theology of Reformed orthodoxy.

Not only academically, but also culturally and artistically the Netherlands blossomed in the 17th century. This is remarkable as the Republic was constantly at war with other European countries through the course of the 17th century. The war with Spain continued until 1609 before a truce was signed that lasted only twelve years. Thereafter the war with Spain continued again until 1648 when the Peace of Westphalia was signed. Between 1652 and 1654 the first of a series of wars on sea with England broke out and in 1658 the Republic intervened in the conflict between Sweden and Denmark. From 1672 to 1678 there was continued war with France, England, Münster and Keulen, and from 1668 until 1697 there was a war against France.¹⁰⁸

Despite these wars, the Reformed church had a profound influence on Dutch culture through the course of time, “more Reformed theological books were printed in the 17th century Netherlands than in all other countries combined.”¹⁰⁹ The church even took upon itself – with the

¹⁰⁶ Beck, 25.

¹⁰⁷ P.J. Nel, ‘The Rule of Christ in the Church Order of Dortrecht (1618/19): A Historical-Theological Study’ (University of the Free State, 2015).

¹⁰⁸ Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 383.

¹⁰⁹ Joel R. Beeke, “The Dutch Second Reformation (‘Nadere Reformatie’),” in *The Christian’s Reasonable Service* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1992), lxxxvii.

financial support of the government – the task of translating the entire Bible into the Dutch language. The first meeting of the translators took place on the 23rd of May 1625 and the *Statenvertaling* with annotations was published in 1637.¹¹⁰ This translation was an important landmark that influenced Dutch language and culture.¹¹¹

Theological study flourished at the different universities and an international academic network was created in the 17th century as Protestant universities broadly shared the same vision.¹¹² The numerous academic schools that were established in the Netherlands during this time testify to the importance of scholarship. Illustre schools were founded in Deventer (1630), Amsterdam (1632), Utrecht (1634), Dordrecht (1635), Den Bosch (1637), Breda (1646) and Maastricht (1685). Utrecht became a university in 1636, with the help of the State of Utrecht, which took the cost upon themselves. The gymnasium in Hardewijk also became a university in 1648.¹¹³ Transition from one university to the other was not uncommon.

As Latin was the language of instruction, students from abroad could also study at the five universities - and students from the Netherlands could study abroad.¹¹⁴ During disputes, examinations and even in conversations the medium used was Latin.¹¹⁵ The universities in the Netherlands were held in high esteem and promoted the Reformed faith.¹¹⁶ In the northern Netherlands the education of Reformed ministers was of importance at the universities. With the establishment of these universities, the faculty of theology was the main focus.¹¹⁷ At the theological faculties the same programmes were followed, the same scholastic method applied

¹¹⁰ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 261.

¹¹¹ Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 433; De Jong, *Geschiedenis der Kerk*, 263.

¹¹² Praamsma, *De Kerk van alle Tijden: verkenningen in het landschap van de Kerkgeschiedenis*, 2:241.

¹¹³ De Jong, *Nederlandse Kerk Geschiedenis*, 214, 215.

¹¹⁴ De Jong, 215.

¹¹⁵ Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 378.

¹¹⁶ De Jong, *Nederlandse Kerk Geschiedenis*, 244; Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 254, 255.

¹¹⁷ Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 378.

and the same textbooks were used.¹¹⁸ The scholastic theology of reformed orthodoxy thus blossomed during the 17th century.

Van Asselt identifies the *Synopsis Purioris Theologia* as the expression par excellence of the mainline theological direction in the Netherlands at the time. He furthermore distinguishes three more currents during the period of high orthodoxy: the *theologia traditiva*, the school of Voetius and the federal theology of Cocceius.¹¹⁹

The publication of the Leiden *Synopsis Puriores Theologiae* in 1625 can be seen as the beginning of the theological processing of the Synod of Dort 1618/19. This became the standard work of Reformed theology in the 17th century. The popularity that the *Synopsis* enjoyed is clear as it was printed six times in 1625, 1632, 1652, 1658, 1881 and even translated into Dutch in 1964 and into English in 2014.¹²⁰

The term *theologia traditiva* refers to a direction within reformed theology that is grounded in the tradition of 16th century Calvinism as it was developed in the period of Theodorus Beza.¹²¹ A Representative of this direction was Samuel Maresius (1599-1673). Though there were similarities, the *theologia traditiva* had clear differences with the school of Voetius.

Gijbertus Voetius (1589-1676) is identified as the doyen of church polity in the Netherlands during the 17th century. Beeke notes that “Voetius was to the Nadere Reformatie

¹¹⁸ Van Asselt and Abels, 381.

¹¹⁹ Van Asselt, “Scholasticism in the Time of High Orthodoxy (1620-1700),” chap. 9.3.1; Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 466–70.

¹²⁰ See H. Bavinck, ed., *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* (Leiden: Didericum Donner, 1881); D. Van Dijk, trans., *Synopsis of Overzicht van de Zuiverste Theologie*, vol. 1 (J. Boersma Enschede, 1964); D. Van Dijk, trans., *Synopsis of Overzicht van de Zuiverste Theologie*, vol. 2 (J. Boersma Enschede, 1966); R.T. Te Velde, ed., *Synopsis of a Purer Theology: Latin Text and English Translation: Volume 1, Disputations 1-23*, vol. 187/5, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Traditions (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

¹²¹ Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 467.

what John Owen, often called the prince of the Puritans, was to English Puritanism.”¹²² His major work *Politica Ecclesiastica* was the most influential work concerning church polity during the time of high orthodoxy. The development of church polity as an independent discipline in theology often is to be attributed to Voetius.¹²³ Pont – in continuation of his negative assessment of scholasticism – argues that the theology of Voetius is as an example of how the reformed orthodoxy (which Voetius represents) differs from reformed theology like that of the Heidelberg Catechism.¹²⁴ In contrast, Beeke emphasises that “As the seventeenth century wore on, many Reformed theologians, including Voetius, increasingly relied on scholastic methodology to sustain the vigorous polemics in which they were engaged against Roman Catholicism, Arminianism, and the new philosophical challenges of Cartesianism.”¹²⁵ While the *theologia traditiva* allowed much influence of the government in ecclesiastical affairs, the school of Voetius opposed this.¹²⁶

Reformed scholastics like Voetius and his school were also convinced that theology should have a practical aim. Science should be in service of the *pietas*, the piety or “de praktijk der godzaligheid.”¹²⁷ Van Asselt and Abels assert that, because of this practical character of Voetius’ theology, he may be seen as one of the founders of the direction in the 17th century known as the *Nadere Reformatie*.¹²⁸

In the second half of the seventeen century, the dispute between the Voetians and Cocceians would be the cause of much strife in Reformed circles. Johannes Cocceius (1603-

¹²² Beeke, *Gisbertus Voetius Toward a Reformed Marriage of Knowledge and Piety*, 2:7.

¹²³ Coertzen, *Gepas en Ordelik. 'n Teologiese verantwoording van die Orde vir en in die Kerk*, 235; Pont, *Algemene Kerkgeskiedenis: 'n Inleiding tot die Nederlandse Kerkgeskiedenis: van die beginjare tot 1795*, 128.

¹²⁴ Pont, *Algemene Kerkgeskiedenis: 'n inleiding tot die Nederlandse Kerkgeskiedenis: van die beginjare tot 1795*, 128.

¹²⁵ Beeke, *Gisbertus Voetius Toward a Reformed Marriage of Knowledge and Piety*, 2:34.

¹²⁶ Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 467, 468.

¹²⁷ Van Asselt and Abels, 470.

¹²⁸ Van Asselt and Abels, 470.

1669) was born in Bremen on the 3rd of August 1603 and later became Professor in Bremen. After teaching in Franeker for 14 years, he was called to Leiden in 1650. At this time he was still viewed as an orthodox theologian, but in 1658 a dispute occurred between Cocceius and his colleague Heidanus on the interpretation of the 4th Commandment. Cocceius was of the opinion that the Sabbath was only ceremonially instituted, and not morally. This was the beginning of an 80-year strife in the church and among theologians in the Netherlands.¹²⁹ Pont positively evaluates the views of Cocceius, noting that he wanted to place the Bible in the centre of theology again, against the orthodox reformed-scholastic dogmatic system.¹³⁰ Van Asselt and Abels is in opposition to this view, contending that such a contrast is historically unsound, as the term ‘biblical theology’ only emerged in the 18th century whereas both Cocceius and the reformed orthodoxy made use of scholastic terms in their practice of theology.¹³¹

This was then not only an issue over the Sabbath or between covenant and scholastic theology; “The conflict between Cocceius and the Orthodox,” Van Asselt and Abels write, “is rather about the redemptive-historical view on the relation between Old and New Testament and the consequences of this view for Christian ethics, than it is about the fundamental *loci* of classical theology.”¹³² This was also not only a dogmatic dispute, but pervaded society more broadly, on social and political level.¹³³ Concurring with Reitsma, the controversy did not remain a dispute on the Sabbath only, but steadily permeated the whole system of reformed theology and is therefore of importance in understanding scholasticism.¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 286.

¹³⁰ Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergronde van ons Kerklike Reg*, 2:4; Pont, *Algemene Kerkgeskiedenis: 'n inleiding tot die Nederlandse Kerkgeskiedenis: van die beginjare tot 1795*, 129.

¹³¹ Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 475.

¹³² My translation. See Van Asselt and Abels, 475.

¹³³ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 287; Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 476.

¹³⁴ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 288.

To understand the importance of the dispute one has to realise how unsettling the emergence of the new philosophy of Descartes was for reformed groups and that many viewed the Cocceians as allies of the Cartesians.¹³⁵ René Descartes (1596-1650) distinguished between the spheres of faith and reason: “Where faith owed nothing to reason, being illuminated by divine revelation, reason owed nothing to faith: therefore, philosophy ought to be radically separated from revealed theology.”¹³⁶ Mout asserts that this philosophy had direct consequences for religious toleration, as emphasis shifted from freedom of religion to freedom of thought.¹³⁷ Revealed truth was no longer the point of departure for Descartes, but a person’s own ability and thoughts. Of significance was not the revelation of God through His Word, but rather: “I think”.¹³⁸

Even before the discord between Voetius and Cocceius began, there was conflict at numerous universities concerning the philosophy of Descartes that led to ecclesiastical and social unrest.¹³⁹ Not only in Utrecht, where Voetius lectured, but also in Leiden this caused discord. The opposition against Cocceius gained momentum as Voetius and Maresius made peace and united against the Cocceians.¹⁴⁰ But Cocceius himself only had a foretaste of the bitter ecclesiological dispute that would follow, as he was one of the victims of an epidemic in Leiden and died on 5 November 1669.¹⁴¹

The political situation in the Netherlands furthermore gave prominence to the theological dispute. As promoters of tolerance the Cocceians were in goodwill with the government. After

¹³⁵ Reitsma, 288; Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 476.

¹³⁶ Nicolette Mout, “Peace without Concord: Religious Toleration in Theory and Practice,” in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Reform and Expansion: 1500-1660*, ed. R Po-Chia Hsia, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 227.

¹³⁷ Mout, 227.

¹³⁸ Praamsma, *De Kerk van alle Tijden: Verkenningen in het landschap van de Kerkgeschiedenis*, 2:323; G.P Van Itterzon and D Nauta, eds., *Geschiedenis van de Kerk*, vol. 7 (Kampen: J.H. Kok, n.d.), 8.

¹³⁹ Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 477.

¹⁴⁰ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 290.

¹⁴¹ Reitsma, 291.

the deaths of Hoornbeek (1666), Maresius (1673) Voetius (1676) and Essenius (1677), a more accommodating spirit prevailed between the two parties, although the dispute was long but over.¹⁴² The churches called for a national synod in order facilitate peace and end the dispute, but Prince William III refused.¹⁴³

At the end of the 17th century the Coccesian position in the church was firmly established and even strong. This, of course, would have theological consequences for the Reformed church. The emergence of Cartesianism challenged the national consensus that the government pursued and threatened to disrupt the already unstable consensus.

In conclusion, the above overview pointed out that the identification of the reformed scholasticism that followed after the Synod of Dort 1618/19, was not a ‘dry’ or ‘rigid’ practice of theology, but a necessary polemical reaction, situated and contextualised, culturally and intellectually, in the 17th century. It is impossible to understand any of the ecclesiological development of this time, without taking reformed scholasticism into account. At this point, it is clear that as the 17th century draw to an end, the unity and clarity brought by the Synod of Dort 1618/19 was not so firm anymore, and polemics made way for tolerance. Reaction would not stay away.

1.8 The *Nadere Reformatie*

Against the decline and tolerance of religious life in the 17th century church, a movement that aimed to revive and deepen religious life known as the *Nadere Reformatie*, emerged.¹⁴⁴ Beeke notes that “at the end of the 17th century more than sixty percent of Dutch population were

¹⁴² Reitsma, 293.

¹⁴³ Reitsma, 294.

¹⁴⁴ This is commonly referred to in English as the Dutch Second Reformation. See Van Asselt and Abels, “De Zeventiende Eeuw,” 470; Paul H.A.M. Abels and Aart De Groot, “De Achttiende Eeuw,” in *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, ed. H.J. Selderhuis (Kampen: Kok, 2006), 517.

members of the Reformed Church which possessed a “preferred status” with the government.”¹⁴⁵ However, “nominal church membership and loose living became fashionably acceptable” and “spiritual and ethical sterility grew rampantly, particularly combined with newfound prosperity.”¹⁴⁶

The *Nadere Reformatie*, Beeke asserts, intensified the sprouts of Dutch Calvinism initiated by the Synod of Dort 1618/19.¹⁴⁷ In the midst of religious decline it “sought to apply Reformation truths to daily life and “heart” experience.”¹⁴⁸ Concurring with Beeke this reaction against the theological tolerance and secularisation of public life was indeed an intensification of the sprouts of the Synod of Dort 1618/19. But, it also deviated from Dort, as this intensification meant an abandonment of the reformed scholastic vision for reforming all of society; instead, they focused largely on his emphasis on internal piety.¹⁴⁹

The *Nadere Reformatie* had close parallels with English Puritanism, as English Puritanism provided a rich source of edifying literature that that was brought to central Europe via the Netherlands.¹⁵⁰ It is notable that the most Reformed opponents of Descartes associated with the movement of the *Nadere Reformatie*. This emerging reaction of the *Nadere Reformatie* would continue and intensify during the 18th century.

1.9 Conclusion

¹⁴⁵ Beeke, “The Dutch Second Reformation (‘Nadere Reformatie’),” lxxxix.

¹⁴⁶ Beeke, lxxxix.

¹⁴⁷ Beeke, “The Dutch Second Reformation (‘Nadere Reformatie’),” lxxxv.

¹⁴⁸ Beeke, lxxxvi.

¹⁴⁹ Beeke, *Gisbertus Voetius Toward a Reformed Marriage of Knowledge and Piety*, 2:35.

¹⁵⁰ Lehmann, “Continental Protestant Europe: The Rise and Decline of Pietism,” 47; Beeke, “The Dutch Second Reformation (‘Nadere Reformatie’),” lxxxvi.

This first chapter provided an overview of the context the Reformed church in the Netherlands had to contend with after the Synod of Dort 1618/19. It also reflected on the theological transition from the period of early orthodoxy to that of high orthodoxy.

The era of religious wars at last came to an end during this period. This, in turn, stimulated new economic growth, a successful international trade enterprise, with cultural and religious consequences. The Netherlands became a haven of liberty. The Reformed church formed part of a now dynamic, differentiated and increasingly tolerant society. Reformed theologians participated in a network beyond the borders of the Republic. The Reformed church had an international orientation and gained much influence in society.

It is furthermore clear that reformed theology in the 17th century was not unambiguous and that different ecclesial trajectories emerged after the Synod of Dort 1618/19. The 17th century marked the height of the process of confessionalisation. The rise and proliferation of polemics are therefore notable. The orthodox reformed theologians used scholasticism as a methodology to engage in these polemical disputes. The identification of the Reformed scholasticism that followed after the Synod of Dort 1618/19 was not a 'dry' or 'rigid' practice of theology, but a needed polemical reaction. The different emerging trajectories did not only polemically cause strife in the church, but also had a political and social impact.

Although the authority of the Word still ordered public life, at the end of the 17th century the decline of religious life is already evident, and the clarity and unity that was established at the Synod of Dort 1618/19 became vague. There was reaction from within the Reformed church against this decline in the form of the *Nadere Reformatie*.

The next chapter comprises an outline of theological and ecclesiological developments after 1700, i.e. during the time of the so-called late orthodoxy and the period of transition into the 19th century. These developments played a key role in the formulation and structure of the

General Regulation of 1816 and therefore knowledge and understanding of these are essential to identify the distinctive theological character of the *Regulation*. The following chapter will make the different ecclesial trajectories more clear and enable a comparison of the Church Order of Dort (1619) with the *General Regulation* (1816). Apparently, the theological landscape and its interaction with society as it developed after the Synod of Dort 1618/19, contained the seeds which eventually would cultivate the formulation and acceptance of the second major ecclesiastical document on the order and governance of the national church in 1816, viz. the *General Regulation* (1816).

CHAPTER 2: DUTCH REFORMED THEOLOGY AND ECCLESIOLOGY DURING THE TIME OF LATE ORTHODOXY (C.A. 1700-1790) AND TRANSITION (C.A. 1791 - 1816)

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair...It was the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five.¹

Schaduwen, schaduwen zonder tal; tijden van duisternis waarin de mensen als schimmen rondtastten. Daarna ineens het gouden morgengloren, het doorbreken van het klare daglicht.²

2.1 Introduction

Whereas the previous chapter overviewed and explicated developments in the Netherlands during the 17th century with reference to the structured and systematised theology typical of the high orthodoxy, our attention now shifts to the subsequent period, which has been identified by Muller as the era of late orthodoxy. This identification is also followed by Beck.³ Roughly speaking, this period is dated between c.a. 1700 and 1790. The second chapter of our research thus considers the theological and ecclesiological trajectories typical of this time, obviously taking account of the historical context, which instigated and shaped them.

Historically, the transition to the theology of the late orthodoxy was accompanied by what is generally referred to as the dawn and momentum of the Enlightenment, which Muller argues

¹ Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1859), 21.

² L. Praamsma, *De Kerk van Alle Tijden*, vol. 3 (Franeker: T.Weaver, 1980), 7.

³ See Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*; Beck, "Reformed Confessions and Scholasticism. Diversity and Harmony.," 19.

“remains one of the topics in greatest need of investigation.”⁴ Leading citations above indicate how Charles Dickens and Louis Praamsma epitomized the 18th century. The transferal towards the authority of a scientific understanding and interpretation of reality (the Enlightenment) had a profound influence on theological thinking, the role of the church as an association of believers, political views and the structure of society.

The crisis brought about by the Batavian Revolution in the middle of the 1790s in the Netherlands challenged not only the historical position and traditional seat of the recognised Reformed church, but also its identity and authority. A transformation was unavoidable. And yet, in 1816 the Reformed church received public recognition in terms of the *Algemeen Reglement voor het bestuur der Hervormde Kerk* of 1816 (*General Regulation*). A transition occurred. Hence the chapter heading. This period, between 1795 and 1816 is thus included in the historical-theological outline offered by the chapter. It culminates in the formation of the *General Regulation* (1816), which is the key document of the current research.

The rationale of the chapter is to provide a platform that would serve the purposes of an informed comparison between die 17th and 18th centuries, indicating the transition from the seeds of tolerance that were sown in the 17th century to the eventual cultivation in 1816 in the form of the *General Regulation*. In this way the distinctive trajectories that shaped the lines of thinking on the order, government, structure and authority of the church in the Netherlands can be identified, understood and assessed. This offers a profile, or horizon, against which the 1816 *General Regulation* should be appreciated.

The second chapter begins with an exposition of the dawn of a new age, a new time, and reviewed thinking. It discusses the critique and response of the representatives and theology of the *Nadere Reformatie*. In the second section of the chapter, the attention is turned to the

⁴ Muller, “Directions in the Study of Early Modern Reformed Thought,” 11.

historical and political developments since the 1790s, until 1816, when a *General Regulation for the governance of the Reformed Church* was officially accepted by state and church. An ultimate paragraph concludes the chapter.

2.2 The dawn of the age of human reason and scientific experience

The 18th century should not be compelled to a historically defined period of time, demarcated between two definite dates. Beck reminds of the fact “that periodization is generally the activity of historians who divide history into different epochs, and not a feature of history itself.”⁵ Abels and De Groot, like Van Itterzon and Nauta, underline that it is impossible to determine the exact beginning and end of this period.⁶ Nevertheless, the 18th century does have its own differentiated profile, delineated in social, economic, political developments and intellectual trajectories that had a profound impact on society, theology and the recognised church.

According to the image carried in general by scholarship and reformed historical interpretation in particular,⁷ the 18th century is marked by a lack of progress and the decline of the Republic’s Golden Age. It emerged as a time of unrest and transition in the Netherlands. Already at the end of the 17th century economic stagnation indicated that a challenging time lie ahead.

⁵ Beck, “Reformed Confessions and Scholasticism. Diversity and Harmony.,” 18.

⁶ Van Itterzon and Nauta, *Geschiedenis van de Kerk*, 7:11; Abels and De Groot, “De Achttiende Eeuw,” 501.

⁷ See J. Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland* (Groningen: J.B. Wolters, 1899); Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes*, vol. 1–3 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1878); A.J. Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795: Haar Geschiedenis en Theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1974); L. Praamsma, *De Kerk van Alle Tijden: verkenningen in het landschap van de Kerkgeschiedenis*, vol. 2 (Franeker: T. Wever, 1980); W.D. Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geschiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, ed. G.J. Duursema (Stellenbosch: Willie Jonker digitale argief, 2017); A.D. Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergronde van Ons Kerklike Reg*, vol. 2 (Pretoria: KITAL, 1991); Hartmut Lehmann, ‘Continental Protestant Europe: The Rise and Decline of Pietism’, in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution: 1660-1815*, ed. Stewart J Brown and Timothy Tackett, vol. 6 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Abels and De Groot, ‘De Achttiende Eeuw’.

Moreover, the appreciation and admiration for the ruling Orange family were challenged as the Patriotic Party gained momentum in opposition.⁸

Dutch and Calvinistic culture was also no longer identical or apparent. The refugee and foreigner influx to the Netherlands brought with them their own culture and ideas, which unavoidably influenced the Republic. In France, the monarchy became so strong that the necessary “evil” of toleration could be done away with. Many Huguenots had to seek refuge in the Netherlands after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. This migration had a significant footprint in the Netherlands, affecting the social and political structure of the Republic.⁹ These were the events that form the essential background to understand the Enlightened critique of traditional Christianity.¹⁰

The 18th century is called the Enlightenment: “Siccle des lumieres”¹¹ and known as the age of reason: “saeculum rationalisticum.”¹² It was a period in the culture, society, church and philosophy wherein scientific reason gained overwhelming authority and in the process revelation and ecclesiological tradition lost its authoritative position in intellectual thinking.¹³ Reason was elevated to judge all truth, which inevitably meant that the authority of the church had to be challenged and demolished.¹⁴ Religious and theological tradition also had to stand the test of reason and adhere to the principle of tolerance.¹⁵ It was a shift to the belief that simply being reasonable holds the key to virtuous living, an optimistic belief that the light had now finally

⁸ Abels and De Groot, “De Achttiende Eeuw,” 502.

⁹ Abels and De Groot, 502, 503; Mout, “Peace without Concord: Religious Toleration in Theory and Practice,” 236.

¹⁰ Jacob, “Continental Protestant Europe: The Rise and Decline of Pietism,” 266; Beeke, “The Dutch Second Reformation (‘Nadere Reformatie’),” xc.

¹¹ Abels and De Groot, “De Achttiende Eeuw,” 504.

¹² Abels and De Groot, 504; Praamsma, *De Kerk van Alle Tijden*, 3:9.

¹³ Abels and De Groot, “De Achttiende Eeuw,” 504; Van Itterzon and Nauta, *Geschiedenis van de Kerk*, 7:5.

¹⁴ Aland, *A History of Christianity: From the Reformation to the Present*, 2:272; Van Itterzon and Nauta, *Geschiedenis van de Kerk*, 7:6.

¹⁵ Lehmann, ‘Continental Protestant Europe: The Rise and Decline of Pietism’, 49.

broken through.¹⁶ Through the course of the 18th century the enlightened culture became immanent in all the large cities of Europe.¹⁷ This age brought with it a particular interest in science.¹⁸ New metaphysical assumptions emerged that adjusted the western understanding of nature.¹⁹ This was the threshold of a new enlightened age that steamrolled over the Netherlands.²⁰

However, the Enlightenment did not come from nowhere. Many factors contributed to the rise of scientific reason and the decline of the authority of the church. The emergence of tolerance and highly valued reason were already present in the previous century, as was shown in the first chapter. Moreover, during the Renaissance and in the science of Humanism, man stood at the centre and the Enlightenment consorted with these movements. Where the Renaissance and Humanism reverted to the ancient ideals of Greece and Rome, the Enlightenment reached forward to radically transform the future through reason alone.²¹

The Reformed church was slowly but surely losing its preferred status. In the preceding century tolerance was practiced, mostly because of political reasons and therefore enforced by the government. Tolerance now also became ecclesiastical practice.²² Praamsma notes that moderation and temperance was the “magic word” in the church.²³ This is underscored by Abels and De Groot, asserting that reformed orthodoxy was not defended with the zeal that was so often present in the previous century.²⁴ The church focused more on pragmatism than on Christ’s perseverance of his church. À Brakel wrote that during this time:

¹⁶ Jacob, “Continental Protestant Europe: The Rise and Decline of Pietism,” 268; Van Itterzon and Nauta, *Geschiedenis van de Kerk*, 7:6.

¹⁷ Abels and De Groot, “De Achttiende Eeuw,” 509.

¹⁸ Abels and De Groot, 508.

¹⁹ Jacob, “Continental Protestant Europe: The Rise and Decline of Pietism,” 266.

²⁰ Jacob, 268.

²¹ Van Itterzon and Nauta, *Geschiedenis van de Kerk*, 7:7.

²² Abels and De Groot, “De Achttiende Eeuw,” 507.

²³ Praamsma, *De Kerk van Alle Tijden*, 3:18.

²⁴ Abels and De Groot, “De Achttiende Eeuw,” 517, 524.

*the exercise of church discipline is almost entirely neglected. There is no longer a model of what the church ought to be. Men are therefore satisfied if many people come to church, and if many members are accepted. Such churches are then referred to as flourishing churches... If there is a minister who seeks to initiate some reformation, he has good reason to fear that he will be in danger of being expelled. In one word, the church is incorrigible and cannot be brought to repentance. Simply stated, it is a hopeless situation.*²⁵

Polemics thus made room for tolerance and in 1738 the last polemic writing was published.²⁶ Interest in the old disputed questions of theology faded.²⁷ The task of the church was now to promote enlightenment and virtue.²⁸ Mout notes that it should be remembered that the debate about toleration was shaped by the revolt against Spain in the previous century.²⁹ During the revolt Catholicism was associated with Spanish oppression and, therefore, “The Dutch Republic developed into a religiously pluralist society in which a limited amount of religious freedom seemed to be perfectly compatible with a well-ordered state.”³⁰

In contrast, the 18th century was a new age of tolerance. The contradiction to the traditional reformed orthodoxy that began to emerge during the late 17th century was now becoming evident. The authority of the church and standing of theology as a discipline and the role of the Christian faith in society were challenged. Where the authority of the Word ordered public life in the previous century, society was now directed by human reason. This was the beginning of the secularisation of public life.³¹ Among the Reformed clergy, the confessional standards that were clarified at the Synod of Dort 1618/19, were officially maintained, but as a

²⁵ Wilhelmus à Brakel, *The Christian's Reasonable Service*, ed. Joel R. Beeke, trans. Bartel Elshout, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1992), 72.

²⁶ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 321.

²⁷ Van Iterzon and Nauta, *Geschiedenis van de Kerk*, 7:21.

²⁸ Van Iterzon and Nauta, 7:34.

²⁹ Mout, ‘Peace without Concord: Religious Toleration in Theory and Practice’, 236.

³⁰ Mout, 237.

³¹ Pont, *Algemene Kerkgeschiedenis: 'n Inleiding tot die Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis: van die Beginjare tot 1795*, 149.

matter of fact, lost their position as a rule of life, thinking and preaching and were indeed disregarded in practice.³² Not all candidates for the ministry were e.g. familiar with the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort anymore.³³

Reformed ministers were trained in terms of the increasing influence of rationalism, particularly the philosophy of Descartes and Spinoza.³⁴ Herman Venema (1679-1787), professor at Franeker from 1724-1774, even placed reason before revelation in his systemic theology.³⁵ À Brakel expressed his concern for, what he saw as the corrupt state of the ministry of the Word during this time, which testifies of the Enlightened training that ministers received:

*... the ministers ... manifest themselves conformed to the world, and seek the things which are upon earth, such as wealth, honor, and respect among men, while at the same time soliciting their praise and love. Their speech is vain, and one hears from them nothing but worldly conversation. They pride themselves in their homes and the clothing of their families. They associate much with those of social status, delighting in a good glass of wine and a delectable meal. At the same time they hold in contempt those of lower social rank, hate the righteous, and even oppose them. They are ignorant of the spiritual state of souls, and many of them are in need of learning the most fundamental principles of theology. They are lazy, sleep late, and waste their time with trifles. They are not committed to the care of their flocks, but allow to perish whatever may perish. When they preach they engage in intellectual speculation — which frequently ought rather to be referred to as a darkening of counsel — under pretense of expositing the Holy Scriptures. They manifest that they aspire after the reputation of a scholar, and solicit the praise and attendance of the masses. They grieve the hearts of the righteous with their insincerity and harden the hearts of the ungodly. Yes, some are even drunkards, living in such sin that their behavior cannot even match that of the common citizen. They are consequently despised by great and small both within and outside of the church. In one word, profaneness is gone forth from the prophets of Jerusalem. In consistories, Classes, and Synods, there is nothing resembling holiness.*³⁶

³² Abels and De Groot, “De Achttiende Eeuw,” 525; Praamsma, *De Kerk van Alle Tijden*, 3:16.

³³ Praamsma, *De Kerk van Alle Tijden*, 3:100–102.

³⁴ Beeke, “The Dutch Second Reformation (‘Nadere Reformatie’),” xc; Van Itterzon and Nauta, *Geschiedenis van de Kerk*, 7:21.

³⁵ Van Itterzon and Nauta, *Geschiedenis van de Kerk*, 7:21.

³⁶ À Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 2:71.

Jonker gives a similar explication, noting that the church became weak during this time. He remarks that little theological work was done and therefore theology gradually became superficial.³⁷ The new approach and methodology of understanding reality, therefore, also surfaced in the preaching and ministry of the church. It formed a sharp contradiction to the traditional reformed orthodoxy which made use of the scholastic method. Jonker relates this weakening of reformed orthodoxy to the deepening of the current of the spirit of the Enlightenment and Pietism that were accommodated and thus present in the church. According to him, it made the theology of the church careless and disordered and the new ecclesiastical regulations would embody this.³⁸ During this time some congregations, Jonker observes, did not even have a consistory, only deacons. Church discipline was relaxed, ministers overpowered the ‘higher’ assemblies, church visitation was neglected and a tendency to make laws on everything emerged in the classes meetings.³⁹ Beeke is in agreement with Jonker, asserting that “the Calvinism of the Canons of Dort stood in marked contrast to the spirit of the age.”⁴⁰

Above observations, when kept in mind how the 17th century and its theology were characterised in chapter one, are significant enough to denote that intellectually, theologically and politically, fundamental shifts occurred and incepted new thinking in a new age. Reaction would not stay out.

2.3 The response of the *Nadere Reformatie*

It was against this spiritual, social and intellectual setting that the *Nadere Reformatie* responded. As indicated in the first chapter, the *Nadere Reformatie* already took shape in the late 17th

³⁷ Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geskiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, 217.

³⁸ Jonker, 217.

³⁹ Jonker, 216.

⁴⁰ Beeke, “The Dutch Second Reformation (‘Nadere Reformatie’),” xc.

century. This would continue and intensify during the 18th century. Scholarship raised the question whether the *Nadere Reformatie* was a contemporary expression and form of ministry, based on and embedded in the orthodoxy of the previous century, or, whether it theologically constituted a deviation from these roots and should in essence be seen as an expression of the spirit of the Enlightenment.⁴¹

Pont, like Reitsma, asserts that, because the *Nadere Reformatie* placed spiritual and theological emphasis on regeneration in and sanctification of man, it fundamentally moved away from the basic presumptions of the traditional theology as shaped and stimulated by Reformed orthodoxy.⁴² This line of thinking accepts that the way the Synod of Dort 1618/19 defended the position of the orthodox doctrine,⁴³ defined faith in terms of an intellectual ecclesiastical system,⁴⁴ against which the *Nadere Reformatie* reacted. The core of thinking of the *Nadere Reformatie*, according to Pont, was thus that human piety was placed in the centre of theology and doctrine as such was abandoned.⁴⁵

In contrast to this, Beeke argues that the *Nadere Reformatie* does not represent a decline in doctrine, but rather succumbs to the amalgamation of doctrine and daily life. Its emphasis was never non- or anti-dogmatical:⁴⁶ “Every Second Reformation divine was convinced he was

⁴¹ C.J. Malan, *Die Nadere Reformasie* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir CHO, 1981); J.W. Hofmeyer, *Die Nederlandse Nadere Reformasie en sy invloed op twee Kontinente : 'n vergelyking van die invloed en deurwerking van enkele aspekte van die Nederlandse Nadere Reformasie in die Suid-Afrikaanse en Noord-Amerikaanse kontekste* (Pretoria: Universiteit van Suid Afrika, 1989); Joel.R Beeke, *Gisbertus Voetius Toward a Reformed Marriage of Knowledge and Piety*, vol. 2, Guidance from Church History (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1999), 35.

⁴² Pont, *Algemene Kerkgeskiedenis: 'n Inleiding tot die Nederlandse Kerkgeskiedenis: van die beginjare tot 1795*, 146; Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 300.

⁴³ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 298.

⁴⁴ Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergronde van ons Kerklike Reg*, 2:4; Pont, *Algemene Kerkgeskiedenis: 'n inleiding tot die Nederlandse Kerkgeskiedenis: van die beginjare tot 1795*, 126, 142.

⁴⁵ Pont, *Algemene Kerkgeskiedenis: 'n inleiding tot die Nederlandse Kerkgeskiedenis: van die beginjare tot 1795*, 146.

⁴⁶ Beeke, “The Dutch Second Reformation (‘Nadere Reformatie’),” xci.

following his Reformed forebearers and upholding Reformed orthodoxy.”⁴⁷ Beeke argues that the *Nadere Reformatie* is judged too often by the Reformation proper as norm, with any differences from the norm being considered negative.⁴⁸ The complexity of the *Nadere Reformatie* should not be underestimated, as it had no organisational structure beyond a strong feeling of spiritual kinship existing among its divines.⁴⁹ It is, however, vital to distinguish the *Nadere Reformatie* from radical pietistic groups and sects that separated from the Reformed church. Such a group was the Labadists, led by the Walloon Minister Jean de Labadie (1610-1674).⁵⁰ The Labadists tended to withdraw from civil and church affairs. The *Nadere Reformatie* never aimed to be separatist.⁵¹

Beeke asserts that the *Nadere Reformatie* strongly opposed a state-dominated church and worked strenuously for the church’s independence.⁵² Ecclesiologically, it is, therefore, in continuance with the reformed orthodoxy of the previous century. In this regard the Dutch minister Wilhelmus à Brakel’s conflict with the government regarding its influence in ecclesiastical matters is noteworthy. In Rotterdam the consistory, over which à Brakel presided, extended a call to a minister. But, the local authorities did not approve. The calling procedure had to be re-implemented. À Brakel, however, would not yield to the government as he was convinced that it had no authority to rescind the call of a minister. Several Sundays later he preached from Psalm 2:6, which caused the magistrate to be agitated as the sermon opposed the government’s involvement in ecclesiastical affairs. À Brakel was asked to submit the sermon in written form, which he did.

⁴⁷ Beeke, xcii.

⁴⁸ Beeke, ic.

⁴⁹ Beeke, xciii.

⁵⁰ Van Asselt and Abels, ‘De Zeventiende Eeuw’, 472.

⁵¹ Beeke, “The Dutch Second Reformation (‘Nadere Reformatie’),” xciv.

⁵² Beeke, xciii.

The authorities took measures against à Brakel: he was prohibited to preach and his salary was withheld.⁵³ The government demanded that à Brakel make emendations in order for the conflict to be resolved. He did not comply to this request. “On Wednesday, July 28, à Brakel simply continued – not due to stubbornness, as he said, but in obedience to the commandment of his King.”⁵⁴ The consistory now mediated and requested their minister to be silent, while the matter was being resolved. A peace accord was signed at last.⁵⁵ “In reality,” Fieret notes, “à Brakel was able to maintain his position that the government has no right to forbid the extension of a call.”⁵⁶

However, the controversy did not end there. À Brakel now printed his sermon, with a title, which Fieret notes to be pregnant with meaning: “De Heere Jesus Christus Voor de Alleene ende Souveraine Koninck Over sijne Kercke uytgeroepen.”⁵⁷ This engendered the anger of the magistrate. A protector acted on behalf of à Brakel, Governor William III - later king -, and requested the mayor of the city to let the matter rest until he discussed it with the magistrate himself. The relationship between church and state had become tense and the vacancy was only filled in 1690.⁵⁸ After these events à Brakel devoted himself to the book which would become his main work *De Redelijke Godsdienst*.⁵⁹ This publication became one of the major works of the *Nadere Reformatie*.

In. Wilhemus à Brakel’s *De Redelijke Godsdienst* ecclesiology follows his Christology, a departure from the sequence in which the six loci of Reformed theology were traditionally

⁵³ See W. Fieret, “Wilhelmus à Brakel,” in *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, ed. Joel R. Beeke, trans. Bartel Elshout (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1992), lxxi–lxxiii.

⁵⁴ Fieret, lxxiii.

⁵⁵ See Fieret, lxxiii.

⁵⁶ Fieret, lxxiii.

⁵⁷ Fieret, lxxiii. Translated: The Lord Jesus Declared to be the Only Sovereign King of His Church.

⁵⁸ Fieret, lxxiv.

⁵⁹ Fieret, lxxiv.

represented (theology, anthropology, Christology, soteriology, ecclesiology, eschatology).⁶⁰ As for the reason behind this structure, Beeke and Elshout propose that it may be worthy of further study and investigation.⁶¹ The structure of his systematic theology, and the historical context wherein it originated may suggest that à Brakel had a Christological understanding of ecclesiology, like the Church Order of Dort (1619).⁶² The structure therefore underlines the continuance of the ecclesiology of the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism. It can be inferred that à Brakel was arguing for the rule of Christ in this work, by placing the chapters on ecclesiology subsequent to those on Christology. This is a strong indication that the ecclesiological thinking in the *Nadere Reformatie* in fact rooted in the orthodox theology, thus against the contemporary trends in this regard.

This is underscored by the fact that à Brakel made use of articles 27-29 of the Belgic Confession in his explication of the church in *De Redelijke Godsdienst*, quoting these articles in full and expounding them for his readers.⁶³ He thus revisits the Confession in order to clarify his ecclesiology. He wrote: “the church is therefore vested with authority. Such authority does not originate with the civil government. Thus the elders, in the use of this authority, are not servants of the government. Rather, this authority originates with the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of His church, and the elders of the church exercise this authority as servants of Christ.”⁶⁴

Wilhelmus à Brakel’s work is one example of the adherence there still was to the Reformed confessions at the beginning of the 18th century. This Christological ecclesiology contested the popular and growing view of the church as a human community of believers. In the

⁶⁰ Joel.R Beeke and Bartel Elshout, “Preface,” in *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 1993).

⁶¹ Beeke and Elshout.

⁶² P.J. Nel, ‘The Rule of Christ in the Church Order of Dortrecht (1618/19): A Historical-Theological Study’ (University of the Free State, 2015).

⁶³ À Brakel, *The Christian’s Reasonable Service*, 2:9.

⁶⁴ À Brakel, 2:165.

modern view, the only way for the church to maintain its position in society, and to be received as a relevant participating institution, was to argue its role in terms of human reason, reflection and experience. The church is thus a human association, which should devoutly serve the benefit of human beings in society and communities. An organization with a striking purpose. In the thinking of à Brakel (and the *Nadere Reformatie*) a different line surfaces. Its emphasis is on the church of Christ, or rather the Christ of the church. The emphasis is therefore on the Head of the Church, the Christian confession and daily life, in which orthodox faith is central.

The shift away from the frame of reformed orthodoxy among ministers necessarily had an impact on the congregations of the Reformed church. À Brakel noted:

the members of the church neither distinguish themselves by their behavior nor live any better than others outside of the church. The sins which are committed by those who are estranged from the truth are found in abundance within the church, such as fancy hairdos, exposed breasts, and extravagant clothing. The world is evident in the church to the extreme. Sabbath desecration, new doctrines, ignorance, hatred, envy, and bitterness are rampant within the church. In the event that a godly person is to be found here and there — or if there are some who gather to engage in godly conversation or to pray together — they will be the object of hatred, ridicule, and oppression ... Family worship and the instruction of one's children and servants are unknown practices ... ”⁶⁵

The Christological ecclesiology of the *Nadere Reformatie* motivated the spiritual restoration of the church. In this regard the *Nadere Reformatie* was a contemporary expression and form of ministry, based on and embedded in the orthodoxy of the previous century. Although the ecclesiology of the *Nadere Reformatie* was a reorientation to the ecclesiology clarified at the Synod of Dort 1618/19, its method to restoring the church was not focussed on scholasticism anymore, but largely internal piety.

This is underscored by the fact that those associated with the *Nadere Reformatie*, participated in an international network of like-minded theologians, preachers and groups. Not

⁶⁵ À Brakel, 2:71–72.

only in the Netherlands but also abroad efforts towards spiritual awakening were made. The preaching of George Whitfield (1714-1770), John Wesley (1703-1791) and others in England and that of Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) in America during the Great Awakening also had an influence on the *Nadere Reformatie* in the Netherlands.⁶⁶ This was a new effect with an emphasis on spiritual awakening that came to the Netherlands; and emphasis, one has to note, not in line with the method of Reformed scholasticism as practised in the preceding century.

Between 1749 and 1752 the Netherlands town of Nijkerk was the centre of such an awakening. In Nijkerk the Reverend Gerard Kuypers was ordained in 1749. The religious and moral decline in the city was evident. Like many linked to the *Nadere Reformatie*, his preaching was aimed at the practice of godliness and he exhorted his listeners directly. On Sunday the 16th of December 1749 an awakening or revival occurred. Reverend Kuypers was preaching on Psalm 72:16. The revival would reach a climax in May 1750, with many people experiencing intense emotions.⁶⁷ News about the events in Nijkerk soon spread and many people came to the city. Other ministers also preached on Psalm 72:16, hoping to stimulate a similar revival among their flock.⁶⁸

Characteristic of the revivals was the emergence and mushrooming of conventicles - clandestine unauthorized meetings for religious worship.⁶⁹ There were ministers that were at first in favor of conventicles. Even Wilhelmus à Brakel at first felt that they could result in the revival of the life of faith as well as of the entire church. In practice this often led to a church within a church.⁷⁰ The revivals, conventicles, etc. should however not be seen as the practical consequences of theological position of the *Nadere Reformatie* which was still orthodox. This is a

⁶⁶ Praamsma, *De Kerk van Alle Tijden*, 3:156–57.

⁶⁷ Praamsma, 3:157.

⁶⁸ Praamsma, 3:160.

⁶⁹ Praamsma, 3:160.

⁷⁰ Fieret, “Wilhelmus à Brakel,” lv.

later development, more closely linked to the presuppositions of the 18th century. Representatives of the *Nadere Reformatie* like Nicolaus Holtius (1693-1773) and Alexander Comrie (1706-1775) endeavored against the rationalism and false-tolerance of their age.⁷¹ The Dutch divines of the *Nadere Reformatie* stand as proof of the continuance of reformed orthodoxy in the 18th century. They could, however, not counter the tide of rationalism that swept into the church and theology. The *Nadere Reformatie* was a witness against the tide, but the tide also deviated the movement from the roots of reformed scholasticism towards a new focus on internal piety.

2.4 The dawn of a new political and ecclesial order

The Netherlands was not only challenged politically and ecclesiastically during the 18th century. Politically it lost its standing in Europe.⁷² After a long absence of a stadtholder that governed all the provinces of the Netherlands, Prince William IV (1711-1751) filled this position in 1747 and led the Netherlands in a defensive war against France. William's wife was the daughter of the British monarch.⁷³ Even though the Peace of Aken (1748) brought some cessation for the Netherlands, there remained internal unrest in forms of protests against corruption and unjust taxes. The Republic thus lost much of its military and political influence in the first half of the 18th century.⁷⁴

By the late 1740s, a new instability appeared in Europe and rivalry between Britain and France became pronounced and more dangerous.⁷⁵ In 1751 William IV died and his son William V succeeded him as Lands Advocate. Because William was at that time too young, his mother

⁷¹ Van Itterzon and Nauta, *Geschiedenis van de Kerk*, 7:35.

⁷² Praamsma, *De Kerk van Alle Tijden*, 3:89; Van Itterzon and Nauta, *Geschiedenis van de Kerk*, 7:20.

⁷³ Jacob, "Continental Protestant Europe: The Rise and Decline of Pietism," 274.

⁷⁴ O.J. De Jong, *Nederlandse Kerk Geschiedenis* (Utrecht: Callenbach, 1985), 246.

⁷⁵ Jacob, "Continental Protestant Europe: The Rise and Decline of Pietism," 274.

Anna, ruled in his place from 1751-1759 and the Duke of Brunswijk from 1759-1766. In 1778 war broke out between the Netherlands and England. The war ended in 1784 and the Netherlands lost its position as an influential world power. Moreover, there was tension between the supporters of William V and the democratic groups that wanted co-partnership in the government.

The American Revolution (1775-1783) and the French Revolution (1789) also influenced the Netherlands and threatened to activate a civil war.⁷⁶ Through the French Revolution, the ideas of the Enlightenment blossomed in political consequences.⁷⁷ The government of France declared war against the Netherlands in 1793 and invaded the country in 1795, which signalled the beginning of the Batavian ‘revolution’.⁷⁸ Prince William V fled to England and the Patriots took over the government with little resistance.⁷⁹ The Republic of the Netherlands that was established in 1588⁸⁰ had fallen and the Batavian Republic was incepted with the constitution accepted on the 23rd of April 1798. The historical and traditional federal structure of the Republic was replaced by a government of unity, embodied in a National Assembly.⁸¹ The stadtholder was abolished.

The conventional Dutch *corpus Christianum* now became out-dated. The historic Reformed church lost its favourable position.⁸² Although the Netherlands never had a state church, the Reformed church was officially acknowledged and a significant tie and relationship

⁷⁶ De Jong, *Nederlandse Kerk Geschiedenis*, 271.

⁷⁷ Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795: haar Geschiedenis en Theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, 19.

⁷⁸ Concurring with Rasker, the word revolution might create the wrong impression, as this was not a revolution brought about by the people, but rather a freedom that was accepted without any strife. “Het was een fluweelen revolutie, in alle orde, bedardheid en stilte.” See Rasker, 19.

⁷⁹ Abels and De Groot, “De Achttiende Eeuw,” 571.

⁸⁰ See Van Asselt and Abels, ‘De Zeventiende Eeuw’, 330.

⁸¹ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 353; Pont, *Algemene Kerkgeschiedenis: 'n inleiding tot die Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis: van die beginjare tot 1795*, 175,176; Abels and De Groot, ‘De Achttiende Eeuw’, 571.

⁸² Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergronde van ons Kerklike Reg*, 2:5; De Groot, “Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816,” 117.

existed between church and state. The separation of church and state was a cornerstone of the Batavian dispensation. It could not be reconciled with the revolutionary credo of freedom, equality and fraternity.⁸³ On 5 August 1796 the separation of church and state was decreed by the National Assembly: “Er kan of zal gene bevoorregte of heerschende kerk meer in de Nederlanden geduld worden.”⁸⁴

A church favoured by the government was thus in conflict with the principles of the revolution.⁸⁵ The Batavian rule had no intention to minimise the influence of religion on society, nor to disregard the church(es) as institutions of society. The separation of state and official church was rather aimed at the termination of the preferred status some citizens, like the members of the Reformed church, enjoyed in public.⁸⁶ This led to public dispute over the church’s buildings, parishes, finances and the salaries of ministers that were all managed and controlled by the government.

This legislation and decrees came as an unpleasant surprise to and embarrassment for the Reformed church as it enjoyed the status of privileged church for almost 200 years.⁸⁷ Jonker describes this as a sensitive blow.⁸⁸ A sensitive blow it was indeed, but was it not also an opportunity? Roelevink notes that the church was now free to take initiative towards reorganisation and to convene again in a national synod for the first time since the Synod of Dort 1618/19. Abraham Rutgers (1751-1809), minister in Haarlem, proposed that the provincial

⁸³ Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 12, 16.

⁸⁴ Abels and De Groot, “De Achttiende Eeuw,” 572.

⁸⁵ Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795: haar Geschiedenis en Theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, 20.

⁸⁶ Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 17.

⁸⁷ Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 22; De Groot, “Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816,” 117.

⁸⁸ Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geschiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, 217.

synods be obliterated and that the church should unite in a national synod.⁸⁹ But the church did not want to convene without the consent of the government. This was an opportunity missed.

The Reformed church consequently lost her public monopoly and experienced this as a threatening to her existence. In reaction to the decision of the National Assembly, a nationwide protest erupted and thousands signed a petition.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the constitution of 1798 confirmed the separation between church and state: “Elk kerkgenootschap zorgt voor het onderhoud van zijnen Eredienst, deszelfs Bedienaaren en Gestigten.”⁹¹ This resolution contributed to the weakening of the traditional position of the Reformed church, as it lost its exclusive relation with the state, although not in any way its public influence and presence.⁹² It was proposed that the salaries of ministers would only be paid for an additional three years. Some church buildings and parishes would be transferred by the state to other ‘denominations’ and education would become a function of the government, not the church.⁹³ The theological faculties at the five universities would no longer be financed by the government and the professors had to sign an oath of allegiance to the new government, which some refused.⁹⁴

The new political and ecclesial order therefore challenged the church to its core. It paved the way for the church to willingly accept the *General Regulation* (1816), which brought stability and security in a time of uncertainty.

2.5 The period of transition: 1801-1815

⁸⁹ J. Roelevink, ‘Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816: een hekgolf in de rivier of een steen in de vijver?’, in *Ramp of Redding? 200 Jaar Algemeen Reglement voor het Bestuur der Hervormde Kerk in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden (1816-2016)*, ed. Fred Van Lieburg and J. Roelevink (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Boekecentrum, 2018), 27.

⁹⁰ De Groot, ‘Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816’, 117.

⁹¹ Abels and De Groot, “De Achttiende Eeuw,” 573.

⁹² Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 16, 21.

⁹³ Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795: haar Geschiedenis en Theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, 20; Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 22.

⁹⁴ See Abels and De Groot, “De Achttiende Eeuw,” 576.

The separation between church and state that the new government proposed never realised, as the political situation changed in 1801, when a new constitution under Napoleon Bonaparte's (1769-1821) influence was accepted.⁹⁵ The church's role was now seen in a more positive, but different light. The church should serve the interests of the government and citizens, as it was an institution that strengthened the authority of the state and educated the people. It now received the status of an associated partner of the state apparatus.⁹⁶ The Sunday as a day of rest was instituted again, the theological faculties were re-established and the government attended the provincial synod's meetings.⁹⁷

Bijleveld comments that the *raison d'être* of the church was now, according to the government, to help build a strong nation.⁹⁸ As a rule all persons of 14 years and older had to join a church and yearly contribute to its finances. The Reformed church was thus now seen as a church association among many others, to choose from.⁹⁹ This turn of events, Jonker wrote, was accepted with gratitude as state subsidies returned and the church enjoyed the protection of the political commissioner.¹⁰⁰ However, the central and secular influence of Napoleon now prevailed

⁹⁵ Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 24.

⁹⁶ Van Itterzon and Nauta, *Geschiedenis van de Kerk*, 7:41; De Groot, "Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816," 117; Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 23.

⁹⁷ Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795: haar Geschiedenis en Theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, 21; Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 24; Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant ninnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 24.

⁹⁸ Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 25.

⁹⁹ Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geschiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, 217.

¹⁰⁰ Jonker, 217.

and determined.¹⁰¹ The view of what a church is was now instigated by the principles of French post-revolution views.¹⁰²

After Napoleon became emperor in 1804, he appointed Rutger Jan Schimmelpenninck (1761-1825) on 29 April 1805 as Head of the Batavian Republic and to unite the Reformed, Remonstrant and Lutheran churches. This again brought a new constitution, which gave Schimmelpenninck the power of what Jonker describes as a ‘political bishop’. The government’s intervention in church affairs did now no longer occur because it had a calling according to God’s Word to protect the church as Article 28 of the Church Order of Dort (1619) noted, but because the church was an association over which the government had authority just like any other association. The worst, according to Jonker, is that the church just accepted the state of affairs.¹⁰³ Roelevink is more careful in her judgment. “De kerk kon en wilde niet zonder steun van de overheid.”¹⁰⁴

Schimmelpenninck remained in office until the brother of Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821), Louis Napoleon Bonaparte (1778-1846), was appointed king of the Netherlands.¹⁰⁵ There were fears that the new king would favour the Roman Catholic Church at the expense of the Reformed, but he maintained tolerance towards both these churches. Louis still desired unity and

¹⁰¹ Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 24.

¹⁰² Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geschiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, 218.

¹⁰³ Jonker, 218.

¹⁰⁴ Roelevink, ‘Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816: een hekgolf in de rivier of een steen in de vijver?’, 28.

¹⁰⁵ Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795: haar Geschiedenis en Theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, 21; Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 48; Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 26.

sought a new bond between the government and all the churches, including the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁰⁶

Louis Napoleon acted as Head of the Kingdom Holland from 1806-1810, until the Netherlands was incorporated into the French empire on 9 July 1810, without much protest.¹⁰⁷ Napoleon Bonaparte now ruled over the Netherlands.

2.6 The Reformed church and transition

The transition from the 18th century to the 19th century occurred amid above mentioned political events.¹⁰⁸ In contrast to the organised political structures that emerged in the Netherlands, the Reformed church still lacked national order, as the last national synod was held in Dort in 1618/19.¹⁰⁹ The church political consequences of the Batavian Revolution were that the Baptists, Lutherans, Remonstrants and Catholics were now regarded as equal to the Reformed church.¹¹⁰ Catholic seminaries were in addition established in Warmond and 's-Heerenberg in 1799.¹¹¹ Although still seen as the historic church, and favoured, the Reformed church's influence further declined.

In the midst of this political and ecclesiastical situation, the church continued with its work and mission. The *Nederlands Zendelinggenootschap* was established in 1797,¹¹² and a new hymnbook was received (1807), which now included not only the Psalms as the Church Order of Dort (1619) stipulated, but also evangelical hymns. Abels and De Groot, like Van Itterzon and

¹⁰⁶ Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk Vanaf 1795: Haar Geschiedenis en Theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, 21; Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 26.

¹⁰⁷ Abels and De Groot, "De Achttiende Eeuw," 586, 594; George Harinck and Lodewijk Winkeler, "De Twintigste Eeuw," in *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, ed. H.J. Selderhuis (Kampen: Kok, 2006), 613.

¹⁰⁸ O.J. De Jong, *Geschiedenis der Kerk* (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1992), 272.

¹⁰⁹ Abels and De Groot, "De Achttiende Eeuw," 575.

¹¹⁰ Abels and De Groot, 578.

¹¹¹ Abels and De Groot, 583.

¹¹² Abels and De Groot, 580.

Nauta, assert that this hymnbook was a typical reflection of the theology of the enlightened Christendom which the church embraced. The Bible does not determine the content (as with the Psalms), but rather the (religious) spirit of the age.¹¹³ The acceptance of the hymns signifies that the theological principles of the Synod Dort 1618/19 were not prevalent anymore. Praamsma as well as Abels and De Groot, argue that the Reformed church was no longer orthodox, but became rather liberal or “vrijzinnig.”¹¹⁴

An important church political figure, who would be instrumental in designing and implementing the *General Regulation* (1816), J.D. Janssen, emerges during this time. Janssen not only served as a key figure in Louis Napoleon’s ministry department but earlier during the government of Schimmelpennick, he (Janssen) was engaged in designing his new order for the Reformed church.¹¹⁵ In 1808 a Ministry of “Eredienst” was established which exercised detailed control over the church.¹¹⁶ The king entrusted Minister J.H. Mollerus with regulating the church, who appointed a commission of nine, led by J.D. Janssen, consisting of ministers and legal advisors, which would unite the churches under one Regulation.

Hooijer evaluated their 1809 *Concept-Regulation* in a positive sense, indicating that this *Regulation* did not provide for the hierarchical structure that embodied the later 1816 *General Regulation*:¹¹⁷ “het concept van 1809 heeft de vrije ontwikkeling der kerk krachtig

¹¹³ Abels and De Groot, 592; Van Iterzon and Nauta, *Geschiedenis van de Kerk*, 7:22.

¹¹⁴ Praamsma, *De Kerk van alle Tijden*, 3:91.

¹¹⁵ Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 26.

¹¹⁶ This refers to a church service. See Abels and De Groot, “De Achttiende Eeuw,” 587; Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795: haar Geschiedenis en Theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, 21; Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 50.

¹¹⁷ Hooijer, *Oude Kerkordeningen der Nederlandsche Hervormde Gemeenten (1563-1638) en het Conceptreglement op de Organisatie van het Hervormd Kerkgenootschap in het Koninkrijk Holland (1809), Verzameld en met Inleidingen voorzien*, 491, 495; P.D. Van den Boogaard, “Een Reglementaire Kerk? Een Evaluatie van het Concept-Reglement van 1809 en het Algemeen Reglement van 1816,” *NTKR, Tijdschrift voor Recht en Religie* 2, no. 1 (2017), <http://www.uitgeverijparis.nl/reader/199533/1001321237>.

gehandhaafd.”¹¹⁸ Jonker is in agreement with Hooijer, noting that the *Concept Regulation* of 1809 retained many Reformed elements. Even Janssen was disappointed. The *Regulation* kept in place the consistory, classes and General Synod as assemblies and the calling of those in office was formulated in Reformed terms. Church discipline was moreover emphasized and the consistory still entrusted with this.¹¹⁹

On the 18th October 1809 this *Regulation* was handed over to the king, but when the Netherlands was incorporated into France and Louis recalled, the *Regulation* was not implemented and eventually forgotten.¹²⁰ Notwithstanding, as Hooijer observed, the significance and influence of the *Concept Regulation* should not be underestimated as “het algemeen reglement voor de Hervormde kerk van 1816 uit het concept-reglement van 1809 zou gegroeid zijn.” Van Loon and Jonker also echo this argument.¹²¹ The *Concept Regulation* therefore contained the principles that would flourish in the *General Regulation* (1816). But for now, formally, the Reformed church still ordered itself according to the Church Order of Dort (1619) and the confessional standards clarified there.¹²² This foundation was beginning to collapse and make way for a new ecclesiastical order.

2.7 The Kingdom of the Netherlands 1813

¹¹⁸ Hooijer, *Oude Kerkordeningen der Nederlandsche Hervormde Gemeenten (1563-1638) en het Conceptreglement op de Organisatie van het Hervormd Kerkgenootschap in het Koninkrijk Holland (1809), Verzameld en met Inleidingen Voorzien*, 496.

¹¹⁹ Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geschiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, 220.

¹²⁰ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 357; Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795: Haar Geschiedenis en Theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, 22; Hooijer, *Oude Kerkordeningen der Nederlandsche Hervormde Gemeenten (1563-1638) en het Conceptreglement op de Organisatie van het Hervormd Kerkgenootschap in het Koninkrijk Holland (1809), Verzameld en met Inleidingen Voorzien*, 493.

¹²¹ Hooijer, *Oude Kerkordeningen der Nederlandsche Hervormde Gemeenten (1563-1638) en het Conceptreglement op de Organisatie van het Hervormd Kerkgenootschap in het Koninkrijk Holland (1809), Verzameld en met Inleidingen voorzien*, 495; Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 66; Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geschiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, 220.

¹²² Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 29.

Even before the battle of Leipzig (1813), Karel van Hogendorp drafted a constitution to provide for a government under the sovereign rule of Orange. In October 1813 Napoleon came to a fall at Leipzig.¹²³ One month later the Netherlands were liberated from France and on 30 November 1813 the Prince of Orange, William V - who fled to England in 1813 -, was crowned as King William I (1815-1840),¹²⁴ although this was only officially confirmed at the Congress of Vienna (1815). The king was praised as the redeemer of the Netherlands.¹²⁵ But the freedom that William brought did not bring an immediate ecclesiastical restoration for the Reformed church.¹²⁶

At this moment in time, the suggestion that the Netherlands could unite with Belgium, depending on the possible defeat of France in these parts, was raised. After its liberation in 1814, Belgium was occupied by the Prussians, but the lobbying of William was crowned with success at the Congress of Vienna (1815) as Austria and Prussia now had little interest in Belgium. The unification of north and south was hesitantly accepted by Belgium, but when Napoleon escaped from Elba in 1815 and quickly marched north, Belgium faced the threat of falling into French hands again. Napoleon's hundred-day march came to an end at Waterloo and because of this, Belgium provisionally accepted its incorporation into the new state of the Netherlands.¹²⁷

William I wanted to establish a liberated state that was enlightened and unified, where moderation, harmony and virtue ruled.¹²⁸ His policy may be described as nationalism, as he urged the people to accept typical Dutch values and vowed to remove any foreign elements from the

¹²³ Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795: haar Geschiedenis en Theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, 24.

¹²⁴ Harinck and Winkeler, "De Negentiende Eeuw," 601; Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk Vanaf 1795: haar Geschiedenis en Theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, 25.

¹²⁵ See Abels and De Groot, "De Achttiende Eeuw," 596.

¹²⁶ Van Itterzon and Nauta, *Geschiedenis van de Kerk*, 7:43.

¹²⁷ Harinck and Winkeler, "De Twintigste Eeuw," 601.

¹²⁸ Harinck and Winkeler, 606.

Netherlands.¹²⁹ The sentiment towards Dutch values, history and language, Roelevink observes, fostered cohesion in the Netherlands.¹³⁰ A new education act (of consequence for universities as well), designed in 1806 and promulgated in 1815, ensured that all be educated in terms of Dutch ideals and virtues.¹³¹ The state also accepted various days of prayer where the churches served an important role to unify the nation into a general Christendom in service of the national ideology.¹³² Roelevink asserts that since the 16th century the reformed church was the key unifying factor in the Netherlands, and therefore played an important role in William's unification plans.¹³³

The fall of Napoleon and rise of William resulted in the fact that the Reformed church was now reinstated in a public recognised position.¹³⁴ Article 133 of the Constitution of 1814 made it clear that the Christian reformed religion is that of the Sovereign Ruler: "De christelijke hervormde Godsdienst is die van den Souvereinen Vorst".¹³⁵ Article 136 furthermore assured the Reformed church that the government would pay the ministers' salaries:

*"Aan de christelijke hervormde kerk wordt bij voortdoring verzekerd de voldoening uit 's Lands kasse van alle zoodanige tractementen, pensioenen, weduwen- kinder- school- en academie-gelden, als voormaals aan derzelver leeraren, het zij directelijk uit 's Lands kas of uit de daartoe bestemde inkomsten van geestelijke en kerkelijke goederen of eenige plaatselijke inkomsten, zijn betaald geworden."*¹³⁶

¹²⁹ Translated as "nationalism." Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: De Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 28.

¹³⁰ Roelevink, 'Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816: een hekgolf in de tivier of een steen in de vijver?', 11.

¹³¹ Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 32.

¹³² Bijleveld, 33–35.

¹³³ Roelevink, 'Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816: een hekgolf in de rivier of een steen in de vijver?', 16.

¹³⁴ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 372.

¹³⁵ "Grondwet Voor de Vereenigde Nederlanden," wikisource, accessed July 14, 2017, https://nl.wikisource.org/wiki/Grondwet_voor_de_Vereenigde_Nederlanden.

¹³⁶ 'Grondwet voor de Vereenigde Nederlanden'.

Bijleveld observes that the Catholic Church and her priests were classified as being “on-Nederlands”, as measured against the Protestant norms of useful, civilized and enlightened.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, Article 133 should not be interpreted as an article of exclusion - freedom of religion is rather confirmed by it. The fact that the reformed ‘religion’ is that of the king did not automatically place the Reformed church in a preferred position, but was inserted as a compromise between the supporters and opponents of a preferred church.¹³⁸ It can be said that the new constitution had a conservative character, as there was now no separation between church and state, but religious freedom was allowed.¹³⁹ All these benefits and advantages came with conditions, as it gave the king authority over the church,¹⁴⁰ as Article 139 states:

*Onverminderd het regt en de gehoudenis van den Souvereinen Vorst, om zoodanig toezigt over alle de godsdienstige gezindheden uitte oefenen, als voor de belangen van den Staat dienstig zal bevonden worden, heeft Dezelve bovendien in het bijzonder het regt van inzage en beschikking omtrent de inrigtingen van die gczindheden, welke, volgens een der voorgaande artikelen, eenige betaling of toelage uit 's Lands kas genieten.*¹⁴¹

On 24 August 1815 the new constitution was accepted, in which the Reformed church was not favoured above any other religion.¹⁴² The first article on religion only states that freedom of religion is guaranteed to all. The Reformed church is not mentioned once in this constitution. Article 192 simply states that all religions enjoy equal protection: “Aan alle godsdienstige

¹³⁷ On-Nederlands means un-Netherlands or not being truly Dutch. Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 26.

¹³⁸ Bijleveld, 30.

¹³⁹ De Groot, ‘Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816’, 119.

¹⁴⁰ Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 29.

¹⁴¹ ‘Grondwet voor de Vereenigde Nederlanden’.

¹⁴² De Jong, *Nederlandse Kerk Geschiedenis*, 307; Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795: haar Geschiedenis en Theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, 25.

gezindheden in het Koninkrijk bestaande, wordt gelijke bescherming verleend.”¹⁴³ The changed political situation was the reason for this amendment, as Belgium was mostly Catholic. The constitution was welcomed in the northern Netherlands, but in the south there was protest from some, which wanted the Catholic character of Belgium to be reflected in the constitution. Despite this protest, William I established his reign without much contention and the constitution was accepted.¹⁴⁴

The king was seeking political stability by trying to resolve religious conflicts that threatened the unity of the young kingdom.¹⁴⁵ The reality forced William to abandon the apparent favour he bestowed upon the Reformed church by stating in the constitution that he was a member of that church. The idea of the Reformed church as the preferred religion for the whole of the Netherlands was now lost,¹⁴⁶ but the ideal of one national church, a civil religion free from doctrine as part of a general Christendom, was born.¹⁴⁷ This is underscored by the fact that the word church is never mentioned in the constitution, reference is only made of religious minded and religious confessors.¹⁴⁸ The *General Regulation* (1816) would embody this ideal.

2.8 The *General Regulation* for the Reformed Church

¹⁴³ “Grondwet voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden (1815),” wikisource, July 14, 2017, [https://nl.wikisource.org/wiki/Grondwet_voor_het_Koninkrijk_der_Nederlanden_\(1815\)#ZESDE_HOOFDSTUK._Van_den_Godsdienst](https://nl.wikisource.org/wiki/Grondwet_voor_het_Koninkrijk_der_Nederlanden_(1815)#ZESDE_HOOFDSTUK._Van_den_Godsdienst).

¹⁴⁴ Harinck and Winkeler, “De Negentiende Eeuw,” 602; A.J. Bronkhorst, “De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk en het Algemeen Reglement van 1816,” in *Inleiding tot de Studie van het Kerkrecht*, ed. W. Spijker and L.C. Van ’t Drimmelen, 2nd ed. (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1992), 121, <http://www.kerkrecht.nl/node/5202>.

¹⁴⁵ Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 32.

¹⁴⁶ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 373; Harinck and Winkeler, “De Negentiende Eeuw,” 609; Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 31.

¹⁴⁷ Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 39.

¹⁴⁸ “godsdienstige gezindheden” and “belijders der onderscheiden godsdiensten.” See Bijleveld, 33; “Grondwet voor het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden (1815),” chap. 6.

The *Algemeen Reglement voor het bestuur der Hervormde Kerk* was intended to define the status and jurisdiction of the church. It thus would stipulate the rules, the governance and the reasonable application of its directions. To this end, and on the initiative of king William I, a commission was appointed to design and submit a general regulation for the Reformed Church in the Netherlands.¹⁴⁹ The Reformed church would not review or formulate a church order by way of a general synod in its own right. The government through an appointed and thus official commission did this.¹⁵⁰

The appointed commission had no official relation with the church or any church assembly. It did not report to the church assemblies or inform them of any work that was done. It was a cluster comprising religious ministers that were selected by the state Minister and his officials, who devised the *Regulation* under the strict observance of the government.¹⁵¹ As a matter of fact, Janssen designed a concept and presented it to the commission as a work document. This was subjected to discussion and commentary. After concluding their task, the draft *Regulation* was again amended, without any inputs from the commission or its members. Jonker pointed out that this extraordinary procedure was aimed at finalising the *Regulation* without hitches or queries raised by either the State Council or the church, or both.¹⁵² Any delay in the process would have been contra-productive.

In his dealings with the church, William I continued the course set by the interim Batavian and French dispensations. He retained the ministry department and most of its members.

¹⁴⁹ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 359; Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 46.

¹⁵⁰ For a detailed description of the work of the commission, see Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 71–153.

¹⁵¹ Van Loon, 209; Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 46.

¹⁵² Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geschiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, 223.

Moreover, the first steps in drafting a new ecclesiastical order were already undertaken during the Batavian Republic (1796-1806), the Kingdom of Holland (1806-1810) and during the incorporation into the French empire (1810-1813).¹⁵³ After the king called in additional advisors and made some changes, the *Algemeen Reglement voor het bestuur der Hervormde kerk van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* was decreed and sanctioned by him on Sunday 7 January 1816.¹⁵⁴ The king now confronted the Reformed church with a *fait accompli*.¹⁵⁵

Van Loon, as a key interpreter of the events, and followed in subsequent scholarship, asserted that on this fatal date the freedom and joy of the church of the Lord was sealed with slavery.¹⁵⁶ In his adjudication of the process, Bijleveld is of the opinion that it boils down to the nationalisation of the church.¹⁵⁷ Recently Van Lieburg and Roelevink revisited the events and offer a reviewed perspective. Their evaluation provides for a positive inclination, noting that, after disaster almost struck the church down, Janssen, through the *General Regulation* (1816) rescued the church.¹⁵⁸ The church moreover accepted the *Regulation* willingly, with only a few objections.

An objection was raised by the Classis Amsterdam. It convened on the 9th of January 1816 and as such did not have much time to scrutinize the *Regulation*. Its next meeting, that should have taken place in April, was advanced to the 4th March to discuss the *General*

¹⁵³ Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 30–31.

¹⁵⁴ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 374; Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795: haar Geschiedenis en Theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, 27; Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 153.

¹⁵⁵ Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 46.

¹⁵⁶ Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 153.

¹⁵⁷ Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 36.

¹⁵⁸ Fred Van Lieburg, 'Inleiding: Vogelvlucht', in *Ramp of Redding? 200 Jaar Algemeen Reglement Voor Het Bestuur der Hervormde Kerk in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden (1816-2016)*, ed. Fred Van Lieburg and J. Roelevink (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Boekecentrum, 2018), 12; Roelevink, 'Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816: een heggolf in de rivier of een steen in de vijver?', 57.

Regulation. The Classes decided to object to the king and recessed the meeting to personally hand over their objection on the 7th of March.¹⁵⁹ They motivated their objections by stating that a new order should originate in and from the church's assemblies. It could not be incepted by the government. They were worried that this *Regulation* would lead to hierarchy in the church and that the Protestant freedom and confession would be lost.¹⁶⁰ The objection of the Classes Amsterdam posed a risk for the government as this could be a catalyst for further protest. A few other objections followed:¹⁶¹ the Classes of Tiel on the 18th of March, Haarlem 19 March, Utrecht 21 March, Delft and Delftland 25 March, Tielewaard 26 March and Gorinchem 11 April.¹⁶² The Walloon church of Dordrecht also objected.¹⁶³

According to Hooijer, Tydeman and Van Loon, the decree of 7 January 1816, sanctioning the *General Regulation*, was, in fact, unconstitutional as Article 139 of the constitution of 1814 only gave the king the right over the financial matters.¹⁶⁴

*Onverminderd het regt en de gehoudenis van den Souvereinen Vorst, om zoodanig toezigt over alle de godsdienstige gezindheden uitte oefenen, als voor de belangen van den Staat dienstig zal bevonden worden, heeft Dezelve bovendien in het bijzonder het regt van inzage en beschikking omtrent de inrigtingen van die gezindheden, welke, volgens een der voorgaande artikelen, eenige betaling of toelage uit 's Lands kas genieten.*¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 156.

¹⁶⁰ Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795: haar Geschiedenis en Theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, 30; Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 157–58.

¹⁶¹ Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 190.

¹⁶² Van Loon, 163, 236–71.

¹⁶³ Van Loon, 215, 221, 257–62.

¹⁶⁴ Van Loon, n. stellingen; Hooijer, *Oude Kerkordeningen der Nederlandsche Hervormde Gemeenten (1563-1638) en het Conceptreglement op de Organisatie van het Hervormd Kerkgenootschap in het Koninkrijk Holland (1809), Verzameld en met Inleidingen Voorzien*, 495; Johan Willem Tydeman, *Het Ontwerp van Gerevideerd Algemeen Reglement voor het Bestuur der Hervormde Kerk in het Koninkrijk Der Nerderlanden, aan Beginselen Getoetst* (Amsterdam: Joh. van der Hey en Zoon, 1849), 3, https://books.google.co.za/books?hl=en&lr=&id=efxbAAAaAAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=Algemeen+Reglement+1816&ots=jIH_12V_q3&sig=RDRvZhnHunFGyElnyoeaN5F-wDc#v=onepage&q=Algemeen%20Reglement%201816&f=false.

¹⁶⁵ “Grondwet Voor de Vereenigde Nederlanden.”

Roelevink, however, contests this view, asserting that the *Regulation* was incorporated in a regular manner and the constitution applied correctly.¹⁶⁶ Van Lieburg moreover notes that the independence of the consistories was still in tack in the *Regulation*, the confessions still served as guidelines and that the church in general gladly and willingly accepted the *Regulation* that rescued. The *Regulation* was not forced upon the church.¹⁶⁷ De Groot, however, argues that the *Regulation* was enforced upon the church¹⁶⁸ while Van Loon echoes this: “het Reglement bleek een dwangbuis te zijn, waarin het leven der kerk het niet houden kon.”¹⁶⁹

Roelevink notes that most scholars share an associated view of the *Regulation* where it is negatively typified as an order forced on the church and hierarchical in essence. This view, she continues, does not deal with the *Regulation* in its original context as the *Regulation* was accepted, was thorough, balanced and brought much-needed continuity. Therefore, it is better, she concludes, to not negatively typify the *Regulation* as a disaster or break, but as a wake, as the aftermath of the continuation of the church on the cluttered way of political, cultural and social development of the time.¹⁷⁰

The last opportunity to protest would be at the National Synod, which now consisted of a small number of representatives appointed by the king.¹⁷¹ The church was now (willingly) disempowered and legally seated under the management of the Synod and government. Apart from the few objections at the National Synod on 3 July 1816,¹⁷² the church praised the king and a spirit of optimism prevailed for the future of the church. The love and pride for king and

¹⁶⁶ Roelevink, ‘Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816: een hekgolf in de rivier of een steen in de vijver?’, 19.

¹⁶⁷ Van Lieburg, “Inleiding: Vogelvlucht,” 12–13.

¹⁶⁸ De Groot, ‘Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816’, 111.

¹⁶⁹ Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 194.

¹⁷⁰ Roelevink, ‘Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816: een hekgolf in de rivier of een steen in de vijver?’, 23.

¹⁷¹ Harinck and Winkeler, ‘De Twintigste Eeuw’, 609.

¹⁷² De Groot, ‘Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816’, 111.

country at the time made any protest unpopular.¹⁷³ Those who did protest were accused of “redeloos gemor” and “gebrom” and branded as “bekrompene lieden.”¹⁷⁴ The *General Regulation* was therefore also exalted as an order far better than the old Church Order of Dort (1619).¹⁷⁵ Roelevink asserts that those who wanted the Church Order of Dort (1619) to remain intact were not realistic, as it was an Order bound to a specific time that did not take the political and judicial developments of the new era into consideration.¹⁷⁶ The *General Regulation*, therefore, provided the needed continuance for polity in the new era.

In assessing the positive reception of the *General Regulation* (1816), the crisis brought about by the Batavian revolution onto the church and its historical position in the Netherlands should be apprehended. During the revolution, the church had no financial security, as the remuneration of ministers suddenly became the responsibility of the churches. Church buildings were submitted to a process of alienation and transfer to the state. The *General Regulation* (1816) brought a welcome solution and an end to the consequences of total separation of state and church. The king was therefore not only seen as the liberator of the Dutch people, but also of the Reformed Church.

De Groot notes: “Met de bevrijding van het vaderland kwam er een einde aan al deze angsten.”¹⁷⁷ In a time where there was at last “Licht en liefde, hartelijkheid en verdraagzaamheid”¹⁷⁸ any protest against the *Regulation* would seem revolutionary. Whitford reminds that “Because the early-modern world was not yet a secular world, the theological

¹⁷³ De Groot, 116.

¹⁷⁴ *Vijf Brieven, ter Verdediging van het Plan van Organisatie der Hervormde Kerken, in de Noordelijke Provinciën van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* (Amsterdam: W. Brave, Boekverkoper op den Nieuwendijk, bij de Ramskooy, 1816), 40, <http://kerkrecht.nl/content/anoniem-1816>.

¹⁷⁵ *Vijf Brieven, ter Verdediging van het Plan van Organisatie der Hervormde Kerken, in de Noordelijke Provinciën van het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*; Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 183–84.

¹⁷⁶ Roelevink, ‘Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816: een hekgolf in de rivier of een steen in de vijver?’, 31.

¹⁷⁷ De Groot, ‘Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816’, 118.

¹⁷⁸ Translated as “light and love, sincerity and tolerance.” De Groot, 124.

affected the social and political just as much and sometimes more than the narrowly defined ecclesiastical.”¹⁷⁹ The *General Regulation* offered the church a guarantee that it would be protected against all revolutionary forces, a guarantee, De Groot asserts, that could only be given based on a legalised association between church and state.¹⁸⁰ “Het Algemeen Reglement is voortaan de hechte verdediging tegen alle revolutionaire woelzucht. Het bondgenootschap tussen troon en altaar garandeert die zekerheid.”¹⁸¹

Vos also provides a positive evaluation of the *General Regulation* (1816), asserting that a new church was not established in 1816, only a new church order. This new order did amend the management part and other forms of the church, he stated, and partly the task and source of church polity, but the purpose and guiding principles remained the same.¹⁸² Van Lieburg and Roelevink also evaluate the *Regulation* positively, as a form of rescue for the church in the 19th century.¹⁸³ It is significant that there is no period in the history of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands where the cooperation and unity between church and state prevailed as closely as it did during this time.¹⁸⁴ This was the result of the *General Regulation* (1816).

In existing scholarship, the acceptance of the 1816 *Regulation* is also negatively assessed. Van Loon, De Groot and Pont are of opinion that even though the Regulation brought a welcome solution, the developments in church polity during the late 18th and early 19th century implicates, in fact, a revolutionising of the theology and ecclesiology in the Netherlands.¹⁸⁵ The ideas and consequences of the French revolution steamrolled the European Protestant churches and church

¹⁷⁹ Whitford, “Studying and Writing about the Reformation,” 3.

¹⁸⁰ De Groot, ‘Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816’, 119.

¹⁸¹ De Groot, 120.

¹⁸² G.J. Vos, *Hoe men zich in de Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk heeft te gedragen: systematische Uiteenzetting van het Tegenwoordig Nederlandsch-Hervormd Kerkrecht*, Praktische Theologie (Utrecht: Kemink & Zoon, 1896), 25.

¹⁸³ Van Lieburg, ‘Inleiding: Vogelvlucht’; Roelevink, ‘Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816: een hekgolf in de rivier of een steen in de vijver?’

¹⁸⁴ De Groot, ‘Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816’, 120.

¹⁸⁵ Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 206; De Groot, ‘Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816’, 116; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergronde van ons Kerklike Reg*, 1991, 2:1.

politically paved the way in France, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland for the same “enlightened” ideas that were formulated by the German Collegialism in the 18th century. The governmental revolutions at the end of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th century created the situation for the changes in church governance that brought the ideas of Enlightenment into practice and demarcated the church to a public legalised institution. In fact, the government revolution and church liberation supported each other and displayed the same spirit of the day.¹⁸⁶ The *General Regulation* (1816) would inevitably embody these principles.¹⁸⁷

On the 3rd of July 1816 the first National Synod after almost 200 years gathered in The Hague. The Synod of 1816 was opened with a church service in the Kloosterkerk followed by a speech by the director-general O. Repelaer van Driel. He called on the assembly not to quarrel over doctrinal issues, but to manage the church appropriately.¹⁸⁸ At the Synod in The Hague the *General Regulation* (1816) was officially approved. The Church Order of Dort (1619), which origins can be traced back to the Church Order of Emden 1571, Dortrecht 1578, Middelburg 1581 and The Hague 1586, was now officially discarded. The Synod closed on the 30th of July that same year.¹⁸⁹

2.9 Conclusion

During the 18th century the orthodox theology of Reformed scholasticism embodied in the Church Order of Dort (1619) had to contest the popular and growing view of the church as a

¹⁸⁶ Spoelstra notes: “het Nederland met volle teue die denkbeelde van die nuwe tyd ingedrink.” See Van Loon, *Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816*, 41; B. Spoelstra, *Beknopte Kerkgeskiedenis vir Katkisasie*, 2nd ed. (Deur Christus alleen, 1960), 45, <http://www.enigstetroos.org/pdf/BeknopteKerkgeskiedenisvirKatkisasie.pdf>.

¹⁸⁷ Dursema, “Communio Sanctorum – Gereformeerde Kerkreg versus Kerklike Geskeidenheid. ’n Biografiese Bibliografie van W. D. Jonker, 1955 – 1968,” 345.

¹⁸⁸ Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795: haar Geschiedenis en Theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, 31; De Groot, “Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816,” 111; Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: De Plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 54.

¹⁸⁹ Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederland*, 376–77.

human community of (faithful and religious) believers. The tide of rationalism swept into the country to such an extent that the authority of the Word did not order public life anymore. This tide was already present at the end of the 17th century where the confessional standards and polity of the Reformed church that was clarified at the Synod of Dort 1618/19, began to lose ground as a rule of life, thinking and preaching. The reaction of the *Nadere Refomatie* in the 18th century against this tide proved unsuccessful as Reformed scholasticism was gradually abandoned and emphasis placed on internal piety, revival and practical theology. The seeds of rationalism and tolerance of the 17th century now took root and cultivated in the formulation and willing acceptance of the *General Regulation* (1816).

The willing acceptance of the *Regulation* (1816) has much to do with the fact that it was a modern document which ensured the authority and identity of the church in governance, polity and practice. It was moreover scientifically grounded and judicially formulated, which removed all uncertainties for the church. Through the *Regulation* (1816) the position of the church in a dynamic society was thus strengthened. At a precarious time the lifeline of the *General Regulation* (1816) was thrown to the church and it was more than willing to subject to it in order to be saved from drowning.

Historically the *General Regulation* (1816) stands in relation to the political rejection of the French Republic and the ecclesiastical break between Christian church and Christian state. The period of transition from 1791 and following years, moulded the church to such an extent that it was theologically ready and willing to accommodate and accept the *Regulation*. The *Regulation* thus rather represents continuity than discontinuity. It was a period of transition, not one of transformation.

This interpretation of Dutch church history is crucial for this research, its method and eventual conclusion. During the historical period between about 1790 and 1816, there was an

insistence on transformation, on revolution, which, among other things, would result in the separation of the church and state. However, this did not happen. In fact, at the end of the period, the traditional thinking and its trajectories on the relationship between church and (Christian) state was preserved. It was, however, contextually re-interpreted, and in this sense, a *transition* occurred. It culminated in the 1816 *General Regulation*. This transition is the main reason why the history of theology since the Synod of Dordt 1618/9 has been considered relevant for this study. To assume a break in history, a revolution is historically accounted for.

With this being said, the study can now continue with an in-depth exposition of the *General Regulation* (1816) and a comparison with the Church Order of Dort (1619) which follows in chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: THE RULE OF THE CHURCH IN THE *GENERAL REGULATION* (1816)

3.1 Introduction

As indicated at the end of chapter two, chapter three will concentrate on the subject matter, the contents, of the 1816 *General Regulation* as such. This key document stipulated the identity and management of the historical recognised Reformed church of the Netherlands in terms of general provisions and articles pertaining specifically to the differentiated ecclesiastical meetings. In its analysis of the *General Regulation*, the chapter's main intention is to profile the rule of the church, as depicted by the *Regulation* according to its provisions and articles. Chapter three thus represents a significant step towards the ultimate goal of the research, that is, to evaluate four current South African reformed church orders against the background of their Dutch and reformed historical tradition.

The chapter starts with an overview of the reception of the *General Regulation* in history and scholarship. This overview creates the necessary framework to offer an informed analysis of the *Regulation*. The consideration and evaluation of the *General Provisions and Articles* follow thereafter as the second main section of the chapter. The *General Regulation* comprises seven sections. The first contains the General Stipulations (Algemeene Beplangen), Articles 1- 15. The second section is devoted to the Synod (Van het Synode), Articles 16-30. The next section deals with the governance of the church on Provincial level (Van het Provinciaal Kerkbestuur), Articles 31-48. The fourth section focuses on the governance carried out by the Classical (Van het Classikaal Bestuur), Articles 49-67. Then follows the fifth section. It comprises stipulations related to the Walloon, Presbyterian English and Scottish churches (Over de Waalsche, Presbyteriaansche Engelsche en Schotsche Kerken), Articles 68-77. The sixth section entails "Van de Ringen en derzelve bijeenkomsten." *Ringen* referred to the scheduled meetings of

ministers in a district or area, Articles 78-83. The last section encompasses the articles that regulated the ecclesial governance in congregations, Articles 84-93.

3.2 The *General Regulation* in history and scholarship

As indicated in the previous chapter, the *General Regulation* (1816) brought a welcome solution and an end to the consequences of total separation of state and church at the time. It was the result of a new approach and methodology of understanding of the status and role of the church (and religion) in society. In short, intellectually, theologically, and politically the new dispensation guaranteed the accepted and recognised position of the historic Reformed church. In their overview, Harinck and Winkeler note that the *Regulation* was accepted without protest.¹ The propensity amongst contemporary theologians was one of appreciation and acknowledgement.

The positive reception of the *General Regulation* was not limited to the Netherlands. In Scotland William Steven offered an encouraging assessment of the *Regulation* in *A Brief View of the Dutch Ecclesiastical Establishment: Showing the Past and Present Organization of Its Several Judicatories with an Appendix, Containing the General Regulations for the Government of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands*.² “Without ever having obtained a fixed and limited form of ecclesiastical regulation,” he contended, “the meetings of the courts were dependent on the States of the several Provinces. Now, the Reformed Church, in its General Regulations,

¹ George Harinck and Lodewijk Winkeler, ‘De Twintigste Eeuw’, in *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, ed. H.J. Selderhuis (Kampen: Kok, 2006), 609.

² William Steven, *A Brief View of the Dutch Ecclesiastical Establishment: Showing the Past and Present Organization of Its Several Judicatories with an Appendix, Containing the General Regulations for the Government of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: John Johnstone, 1839), <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=ri1dAAAACAAJ&printsec=frontcover&output=reader&hl=af&pg=GBS.PR3>.

possesses a definite code and fundamental law, sanctioned by the king.”³ In this view, he communicated a sentiment that many shared, as most in the church willingly accepted the *Regulation* and welcomed the ecclesiastical well-being it brought.

The Utrecht theologian, H.J. Roijaards, more than anyone else in the Netherlands, esteemed the *General Regulation* (1816). In his scholarly work on church polity, *Hedendaagsch Kerkregt bij de Hervormden in Nederland*,⁴ he treasured the ecclesial value of the *General Regulation*. His argument is based on the traditional theological distinction in reformed thinking between the visible and the invisible church. However, the meaning he attributes to these concepts, differs significantly from traditional differentiation. This is sharply underlined by Jonker. He explains that the invisible church in the views of Roijaards becomes the true church, while the visible church merely constitutes the form in which the church practically takes shape and has no direct relation with the invisible or true church of Christ.⁵ Roijaards’ insistence that the *General Regulation* operates exclusively within the ambit of the visible church, consequently erodes the original theological and given cohesion between the “visible” and “invisible” church. While the reformed understanding acknowledges that there is an invisible church, it was never separated from the visible, only distinguished.

However, Roijaards’ interpretation underpinned the positive reception of the *Regulation* during the early 19th century. Recognised as a Protestant ecclesial association, the church in terms of the *Regulation* has its own rights and freedoms, governs itself and is its own legislator under the state.⁶

³ Steven, 17.

⁴ H.J. Roijaards, *Hedendaagsch Kerkregt bij de Hervormden in Nederland*, vol. 1 (Utrecht, 1834).

⁵ See Roijaards, 1:33; W.D. Jonker, ‘Die Liberale Kerkregt en die veelheid van Kerke’, *Ned. Geref. Theologische Tydskrif* 1, no. 5 (January 1964): 3–9.

⁶ J. Roelevink, ‘Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816: een hekgolf in de rivier of een steen in de vijver?’, in *Ramp of Redding? 200 jaar Algemeen Reglement voor het bestuur der Hervormde Kerk in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden (1816-2016)*, ed. Fred Van Lieburg and J. Roelevink (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Boekecentrum, 2018), 43.

The first critical rejection of the *General Regulation* surfaced in the *Afscheiding* of 1834 (*Secession*). Theologically uncomfortable with the prevalent supranaturalism of the early 19th century, groups of members, under the leadership of a number of ministers, left the *Hervormde Kerk*. An alternative church community came into being and organised itself in congregations and official assemblies, based on the 1619 Church Order of Dort.⁷ According to Harinck and Winkeler the *Afscheiding* was a reaction against, what was seen as the deterioration of the reformed character of the church. Therefore, when the state gave recognition to the ‘new’ church as a religious association in terms of the 1816 *Regulation*, the *Afgescheidenen* rejected the new ruling, as they considered themselves to be the continuation of the rightful reformed church from before 1795.⁸ The *Afscheiding* did not understand itself as a new church association among many others, but as the true church. It, therefore, condemned the *Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk* as a false church. It is apparent that the *Afscheiding* did not degrade the true church to only being invisible.

The *Afscheiding*, however, was not immune to the influences and effects of its time. Jonker notes that the Church Order of Dort (1619) was reviewed in 1837. In this reviewed Church Order, the church is defined from the perspective of its members, as in the *Regulation*.⁹ The 1837 Church Order was abjured in 1840 when the Church Order of Dort (1619) was restored. However, the *General Regulation* (1816) would surface again, Jonker notes, as the *Afscheiding* sought recognition from the government and used the terminology of the *General Regulation*

⁷ W.D. Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geskiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, ed. G.J. Duursema (Stellenbosch: Willie Jonker digitale argief, 2017), 260–70.

⁸ Harinck and Winkeler, ‘De Twintigste Eeuw’, 633–34.

⁹ Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geskiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, 257.

(1816) to achieve this.¹⁰ A definite break with the *General Regulation* (1816) could therefore not be achieved.

From the perspective of the *Hervormde Kerk*, the *Afscheiding* was unacceptable and an illegal way to end membership of the recognised church. It created a break and violated the ideal of national unity. The *Hervormde Kerk*, therefore, urged the government to force those separating to return to the reformed church. The church was, after all - thus was assumed - , a legally protected key role association in, for and of the Netherlands. The government did not concede to this call, but rather wanted to offer the *Afscheiding* official recognition as a religious association.¹¹

In the course of events the bond between church and state weakened and the Reformed church felt more and more uncertain and insecure about the very foundations of its preferred position and status in the Netherlands.¹² Despite this ambiguity, the Church still had an influence on society, with each of the 1500 (more or less) ministers having on average 160 catechumens. Harinck and Winkeler observe that this influence was strong enough to endure both the Roman Catholic Church and the *Afscheiding*.

These events stimulated a mode of thinking in the *Hervormde Kerk* away from the idea of an ecclesial association linked to government recognition and protection as a kind of *prima inter pares*, towards the awareness of an association of the Dutch nation (*volk*). This opened the door to accommodate modalities of theological and ecclesial thinking. Moreover, ‘unions’ like the *Confessionele Vereniging* en die *Vereniging Vrienden der Waarheid* were organised and worked to strengthen the orthodox element in the church. These advanced a shift towards orthodoxy, away from the consequences of being a mere religious association to the benefit and service of

¹⁰ Jonker, 264–70.

¹¹ Harinck and Winkeler, ‘De Twintigste Eeuw’, 634.

¹² Harinck and Winkeler, 642.

the state and nation. When William II became king in 1840 the breach between church and state widened. Since 1843 the church was free to independently adjust, modify and review its *Regulations* and inner order, but did not – significantly - wish to do so. The Synod opted to rather review the *Regulation* than to replace it. She received in 1852 a redacted version.

Jonker indicated that the adapted articles in the 1852 *Regulation* did aim to be more reformed in polity, but that the idea of the church as an association still permeated the *Regulation*.¹³ From 1843 until the abandonment of the *Regulation* in 1950 the church continued to adapt the articles of the *Regulation*. Apparently, the *General Regulation* succeeded excellently in serving the *Hervormde Kerk* in her management. Even the different directions in the church could adapt to and accept the *Regulation* as the way in which the church should be effectively managed as an institution.

Towards the end of the 19th century the Netherlands was becoming more democratic with all men receiving the right to vote. The country also stood on the verge of the second industrial revolution. Accordingly, this was the matrix which stimulated a democratic impulse in the church in the form of the *Doleantie*. Advocates pleaded for a free and independent church.¹⁴ A reaction against the *General Regulation*, as a Church Order which does not stand the test of time, followed. The *Doleantie* figures like Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) and F. L. Rutgers (1836-1917) attempted to return to the polity of Dort (1619). This movement was strengthened when part of the church formed by the *Afscheiding*, merged with the *Doleantie* churches to form the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (GKN) in 1892. In their scholarship of Reformed ecclesiastical polity the *Doleantie* by far surpassed that of the *Afscheiding*, Jonker indicated. And,

¹³ Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geskiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, 243–49.

¹⁴ Harinck and Winkeler, 'De Twintigste Eeuw', 680–81.

therefore, during this union, Jonker notes, the *Doleantie* polity prevailed over that of the *Afscheiding*.¹⁵

The *Doleantie* though employed a specific contextually motivated interpretation of the Church Order of Dort (1619) as indicated in the introduction. Through the democratic impulses of the day, the individual, and not Christ, was now taken as point of departure. In the process the confession of the church became the agreement of association. The Church Order now only stood in relation with the wellbeing of the church, and not its essence.

The democratic spirit continued and intensified at the beginning of the 20th century, with women also receiving the right to vote (1919). The *Hervormde Kerk* was split into many 'directions', each group aspiring for their position to prosper. The church was thus restrained by internal issues.¹⁶ But, a shift did occur: from the individual to the group. Faith was experienced "groepsgewijs."¹⁷ After the First World War (1914-1918) and especially after the Second World War (1939-1945) a new appeal to replace the *General Regulation* with a contemporary church order gained momentum. The context was different. Society has been secularized, the church's public position was under pressure, and theologically the belief grew that the church had to address its context in a new way, which should be formulated in its church order.

In 1951 the *Hervormde Kerk* thus received a new church order which replaced the *General Regulation*. In this Church Order, Harinck and Winkeler assert, the managing institute of the *Regulation* disappeared and a Presbyterian form of church governance took shape.¹⁸ The question is whether the 1951 Church Order, with its clear theological impact, really dismantled the decision-making structure and the line of thought that had been embodied by the *General*

¹⁵ Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geskiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, 289.

¹⁶ Harinck and Winkeler, 'De Twintigste Eeuw', 761.

¹⁷ Harinck and Winkeler, 766.

¹⁸ Harinck and Winkeler, 795.

Regulation for over 150 years. In my estimation, this Church Order was a blend of the Church Order of Dort (1619) and the *General Regulation* (1816). Concurring with Jonker, through all its stipulations this Church Order was still more a regulation than a Christ-rule for the life of the church.¹⁹

The merged church of the *Afscheiding* and *Doleantie* was also not untouched by the influences of the Second World War. A new polemical debate surfaced, related to the interpretation of Article 31 of the Church Order of Dort (1619) which resulted in the *Vrijmaking* – another schism. Subsequently, twentieth-century *Vrijgemaakten* scholars, as reported in the introduction, mostly focused on the deficits of the *General Regulation* (1816) in light of the Church Order of Dort (1619).

The latter part of the 20th century saw efforts to unite the various reformed churches in the Netherlands. In 1961 the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* and the *Hervormde Kerk* began conversations on ending the schism.²⁰ Harinck and Winkeler observe that in this period the *GKN* drastically transformed, from orthodox to liberal.²¹ In 1973 the *GKN* and *Hervormde Kerk* met in a joint synod and in 1986 both churches declared a state of unity. In 1990 the Evangelical Lutheran Church joined the *path to unity* and the work on a new church order commenced. In this regard practical solutions were sought, Winkeler and Harinck note.²² On 1 May 2004 the merger was completed and the ‘new’ church known as the *Protestantse Kerk in Nederland* established.

How is the *Regulation (1816)* evaluated in recent times? Recent Dutch scholarship tends to offer a historical interpretation of the *General Regulation* (1816). Van den Boogaard, for

¹⁹ Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geskiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, 345.

²⁰ Harinck and Winkeler, ‘De Twintigste Eeuw’, 835.

²¹ Harinck and Winkeler, 869.

²² Harinck and Winkeler, 884.

instance, sees it as a new phase in the history of the Reformed church,²³ while Roelevink points to a certain continuity of the *Regulation* (1816) with the Church Order of Dort (1619) and emphasises that the French law of 1802 was the real disaster that was averted by the fall of Napoleon.²⁴ It is better to, she asserts, not negatively typify the *Regulation* as a disaster or break, but as a wake, as the aftermath of the continuation of the church on the cluttered way of political, cultural and social development of the time.²⁵ Van Lieburg shares this view.²⁶ Roelevink moreover argues that in order to place the *General Regulation* (1816) in the right context, it is necessary to first temper the ideal projected on the Church Order of Dort (1619).²⁷ This ideal of Dort (1619) is especially clear in South African scholarship, but as indicated in the introduction, South African scholars mostly ignore the *General Regulation* (1816). Those who do make the effort to engage the *General Regulation* (1816), follow an associated negative interpretation.

In conclusion, the contentiously and contextually interpretation of the *Regulation* indicated that during the 19th century in the Netherlands the evaluation and reception of the *Regulation* was positive. The *Afscheiding* of 1834 reacted critically on the *Regulation*, which moreover stimulated orthodox reaction within the Reformed church. The impact of democracy and its popular beliefs at the end of the century, stimulated *Doleantie* thinking. It reacted negatively towards the *Regulation*. This created the platform for the rejection of the *Regulation* in the 20th century, especially after the Second World War. The emphasis then shifted from the individual towards the group. Various groups and organisations were established and new

²³ P.D. Van den Boogaard, 'Een Reglementaire Kerk? Een evaluatie van het Concept-Reglement van 1809 en het Algemeen Reglement van 1816', *NTKR, Tijdschrift voor Recht en Religie* 2, no. 1 (2017), <http://www.uitgeverijparis.nl/reader/199533/1001321237>.

²⁴ Roelevink, 'Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816: een hekgolf in de rivier of een steen in de vijver?'

²⁵ Roelevink, 23.

²⁶ Fred Van Lieburg, 'Inleiding: Vogelvlucht', in *Ramp of Redding? 200 jaar Algemeen Reglement voor het bestuur der Hervormde Kerk in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden (1816-2016)*, ed. Fred Van Lieburg and J Roelevink (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Boekecentrum, 2018).

²⁷ Roelevink, 'Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816: een hekgolf in de rivier of een steen in de vijver?', 42.

schisms emerged. Subsequently, a new Church Order was accepted in 1951 by the *Hevormde Kerk* which replaced the *Regulation* and embodied a polity reflecting certain principles of the Church Order of Dort (1619) and the *General Regulation* (1816). The GKN accepted a reviewed Church Order in 1956.

From 1961 onwards there was a movement to unite the various reformed churches. The Evangelic Lutheran Church joined the process in 1990 and in 2004 the *Hervormde Kerk, GKN and Lutheran Church* accepted a new Church Order and united to form the *Protestantse Kerk in Nederland*. From my own analysis of this Church Order it seems to contain elements of the Church Order of Dort (1816) and the *General Regulation* (1816). It may also consist of other source material beyond the scope of this study. In recent scholarship positive evaluation and appreciation of the *Regulation* began to emerge. South African scholarship on the *Regulation* remains limited.

With the outline of the history and associated scholarship on the *General Regulation* now completed, the attention can shift to the second main part of the chapter. The ensuing analysis of the *General Regulation* is obviously informed by the outline.

3.3 Critical assessment of the *General Regulation*

This assessment explores the *General Regulation*, focusing on the continuities and discontinuities with the Church Order of Dort (1619). It should be mentioned that comparisons drawn between the *Regulation* (1816) and Church Order of Dort (1619) are not done in order to idealise Dort, neither to serve an apologetical purpose on behalf of its polity, nor to project it onto the *Regulation*. It will rather serve to evaluate the reception of the *Regulation* and the Church Order of Dort (1619) in the South African Church Orders. This will be done in the last chapter. It was indicated in the introduction that the South African reformed church orders all idealise and claim

adherence to the Church Order of Dort (1619), but ignores the *General Regulation*.²⁸ The Church Order of Dort (1619) has already been scrutinized in my own research, therefore, this (third) chapter rather aims to scrutinize the *Regulation* and compare it with regards to certain aspects to the Church Order of Dort (1619) in order to establish the assumed reception of both these ecclesial documents in the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA, APK and GKSA.

The assessment inaugurates with the entitlement of the *Regulation*. Indeed, there is much hidden in the name of this ecclesial document. Subsequently, the contents of the *Regulation* as such is critically considered. The chapter will end with a conclusion.

3.3.1 The entitlement of the *General Regulation*.

The mere entitlement of the *Regulation* gives reason for inquiry. The title, “Algemeen Reglement voor het bestuur der Hervormde Kerk in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden,”²⁹ indicates a fundamental shift in the nature and practise of the order in the church of Christ from “order” to regulated and stipulated “governance”. The *Regulation* hosts a different conceptualisation of what the church and its decent order are and how the church should officially and respectfully act in society. In contradiction, the Synod of Dort 1618/19 denoted the articles by which the church was ordered as “Kercken-orderinge.” The indication “Kercken-orderinge” dates back to the Synod of Middelburg (1581).³⁰ Before that, the agreed upon formation of the church(es) was expressed in “Capita seu articuli”³¹ or contained and published in the “Acta ofte handelinghe” of

²⁸ P.J. Nel, ‘The Rule of Christ in the Church Order of Dordrecht (1618/19): A Historical-Theological Study’ (University of the Free State, 2015).

²⁹ Cornelis Hooijer, *Kerkelijke Wetten voor de Hervormden in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* (Zalt-Bommel: Joh. Noman en zoon, 1846), <http://www.reformed-digital.net/node/3383>.

³⁰ F.L. Rutgers, ed., *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden der Zestiende eeuw* (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1889), 376, [http://www.kerkrecht.nl/main.asp?pagetype=onderdeel&item=138&subitem=4266&page=.](http://www.kerkrecht.nl/main.asp?pagetype=onderdeel&item=138&subitem=4266&page=)

³¹ Rutgers, 10.

synods.³² It should be noted that elsewhere in Protestant Europe the concept of a comprehensive church order or “Kirchenordnung” was well established. The distinguished series *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts* collected and edited by Emil Sehling provides substantial evidence.³³ These represent a theological-ecclesial genre and corpus of literature that differ from the later (post-1571) Dutch development.

Consolidating the development of church polity since the Synod of Emden 1571, the Synod of Middelburg, after ten years, in 1581 drafted what was then called a ‘kerckenordeninghe’ comprising a number of articles. The following Synod, at its meeting in The Hague (1586), opted for “Kercken-ordeninghe der Nederlandtsche Ghereformeerde Kercken”;³⁴ thereby clearly stated that it was the Church Order of the Reformed churches of Dutch origin. This addition would fall away at the Synod of Dort 1618/19 that followed Middelburg and not The Hague in its title.³⁵ The title “Kercken-ordeninghe” evidently signposted that the Church Order was not a state or civil directive but an ecclesiastical order.

The rationale for and purpose of the 1816-*Regulation* was quite the opposite. The carefully articulated title implies that the origin of the “General Regulation for the *management* (or governance) of the Reformed Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands” is seated in civil legislation to publicly regulate the recognised church, serving the functional role of the church as a public (and welcomed) association in society. This is in contrast with the Church Order of Dort (1619) which nature and means of articulation did not have its origin in civil jurisdiction and

³² Rutgers, 234.

³³ See Emil Sehling, Institut für Evangelisches Kirchenrecht, and Lutheran Church. Liturgy and ritual, *Die evangelischen Kirchenordnungen des XVI. Jahrhunderts* (Leipzig, O. R. Reisland, 1902), <http://archive.org/details/dieevangelische00churgoog>.

³⁴ Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden der zestiende eeuw*, 487.

³⁵ Synod of Dort (1618/19), ‘Kercken-Ordeninghe; Ghestelt In den Nationalen Synode der Ghereformeerde Kercken, te samen beroepen, ende ghehouden door ordre van de Hooghe Moghende Heeren Staten Generael Der Vereenichde Nederlanden, binnen Dordrecht, in de Iaren 1618 ende 1619.’ (Jansz, 1620), 2, http://www.prld.org/author_view.php?a_id=2355. The full title reads: “Kercken-ordeninghe; Gestelt indê Nationalen Synode der Ghereformeerde Kercken.”

legislature, but were shaped by the conviction that it served to maintain the good order that Christ has instituted.

The new name of the church is also significant. Until that time the public church was known as “de Nederlandsche Ghereformeerde Kercken”.³⁶ The *Nederlandsche Ghereformeerde Kercken* (plural) comprised of Dutch, Walloon, English and Scottish churches. By the way, the extent to which churches in the regions of the trading enterprises of the Companies (e.g. the Cape of Good Hope, or Batavia) were also included, is disregarded for the purposes of the study. This is a complicated matter. Due to the different languages, the synods initially communicated in Latin to accommodate all the churches.³⁷ The Walloon churches convened in a particular synod in Dordrecht on 25 June 1577 to address this language barrier.³⁸ This would lead to the Synod of Dordrecht (1578) recognising this language arrangement in Article 46 of the Church Order.³⁹ From thereon Dutch would be the language used in the Synods

³⁶ Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden der zestiende eeuw*, 487.

³⁷ See Rutgers, 42–119.

³⁸ F.R.J. Knetsch, “De Positie Der Waalse Kerken,” in *De Nationale Synode van Dordrecht 1578*, ed. D Nauta and J.P. Van Dooren (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1978), 57–59, 67. Knetsch notes on page 67: “Na tot het besef gekomen te zijn dat de gereformeerde kerken in de Nederlanden in overweldigende meerderheid ‘nederduits’ geworden waren, trokken zij de conclusie dat het Franse element, wilde het een rol kunnen blijven spelen, zich afzonderlijk moest organiseren.”

³⁹ Article 46: “Overmidts in de Nederlanden tweederley sprake ghebruyckt wordt, de duytsche ende de walsche, so is goetgevonden dat de ghemeynten deser beyder spraken hare bijzondere kerckenraden, classicale vergaderinghen ende particuliere synoden hebben ende houden, dogh soo de ghemeynten van d’eene ofte d’andere sprake alle hare particuliere synoden willen tesamen roepen, dat sullen sij moghen doen. Wel verstaende dat in sulcke versamelinghen van de eene sprake alleene niet van hetghene dat in den handel der ceremonien kerckelicker regeringhe ende ander swaren saken in desen synode besloten is, verandert en worde, maer, soo men acht datter eenighe veranderinghe van nooden is, deselve sal in den nationali synodo beyder spraken gheschieden. Ende soo het ghevele dat de nationalis synodus van wegghen der noot voor den ghewoonlicken tijt moeste beroepen sijn, soo sullen twee classen, van elcker spraken eene, aen twee particuliere synoden schrijven, opdatse verordineren moghen wanneer ende waer de generale synodus ghehouden sal worden.”

of Dordrecht (1578),⁴⁰ Middelburg (1581),⁴¹ and The Hague (1586),⁴² until the Synod of Dort 1618/1619 returned to (commonly understood) Latin again as the medium of communication.⁴³

However, in the *Regulation* of 1816 the *Nederlandsche Ghereformeerde Kercken* was now identified as the *Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk*.⁴⁴ “Church,” in singular form. Was this now a Reformed church, which happened to be Dutch, or a Dutch church, which happened to be reformed?⁴⁵ Bijleveld notes: “Nu vormt het eerste lid een adjectief bij het woord kerk dat in het enkelvoud is gesteld. Hieruit blijkt dat de hervormde kerk werd gedacht als een eenheid met een Nederlands karakter.”⁴⁶ Within this unitarian church the Walloon, English and Scottish churches were accommodated and received particular regulations and rules. The Church Order of Dort (1619), however, did not portray the Reformed church as a particular church association or a “vaderlandsche Kerk”, but as part of the true universal church of Christ.

From the preceding it is clear that the name change already represented a new form of ecclesiastical polity. It may be inferred that the name *Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk* in the *General Regulation* (1816) testifies that the departure point for the *Regulation* was, in fact, different than that of the Church Order of Dort (1619). Does this then permeate in the articles of the *Regulation*? For the purposes of our study, we start with the Articles of the *General Regulation* (1816) pertaining to the General Provisions in the next paragraph.

⁴⁰ Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden der sestiende eeuw*, 221–338.

⁴¹ Rutgers, 339–480.

⁴² Rutgers, 481–643.

⁴³ See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Acta Synodi Nationalis, In Nomine Domini Nostri Iesu. Christi” (Isaaci Elzevirii, 1620), http://www.prdl.org/user_edit.php?a_id=2316&bk_id=88278. Selderhuis notes that it is clear that the Dutch Acta is only a translation.

⁴⁴ Van den Boogaard, ‘Een Reglementaire Kerk? Een evaluatie van het Concept-Reglement van 1809 en het Algemeen Reglement van 1816’.

⁴⁵ Littlejohn and Roberts ask this question prior to the Synod of Dort (1618/19), but it is also applicable here. Bradford Littlejohn and Jonathan Roberts, eds., *Reformation Theology: A Reader of Primary Sources with Introductions* (Davenant Press, 2017), 709.

⁴⁶ Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland: de plaats van de Hervormde Predikant binnen de Nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, 50.

3.3.2 Articles of the *General Regulation* (1816) pertaining to the General Provisions (algemeene bepalingen)

What is immediately noteworthy of the first article of the *General Regulation* is not what it says, but what it does not say. The four headings which the Church Order of Dort (1619) and the Church Orders preceding it deemed necessary for the maintenance of the good order in the church,⁴⁷ as it related to the Belgic Confession's three marks of the true church,⁴⁸ are absent. These headings are host to much more than a practical and formal division. Each one of them, Britz observed, has a Scriptural definiteness and a confessional character and, therefore, structured the Church Order and directed its task and effect.⁴⁹

The first and leading article of the *General Regulation* (1816), in contrast to the Church Order of Dort, identifies the church as an association consisting of its members. Here the true church and church order do not intersect anymore. Visible and invisible church is not associated, but separated. Not Christ, but membership is the determining point of departure. The article reads:

*Tot het Hervormd Kerkgenootschap behooren allen, die, op belijdenis des geloofs, tot ledematen zijn aangenomen, dezulken, die in de Hervormde kerken gedoopt zijn, en die gene, welke in andere landen, als tot het Hervormd Kerkgenootschap behoorende, erkend, zich hier te lande ter neder zetten, mits door behoorlijke bewijzen of attestatiën van hunnen doop of lidmaatschap buiten 's lands hebbende doen blijken.*⁵⁰

Since this article had a profound influence on South African ecclesial laws, regulations, stipulations and church orders – which will be addressed later – close attention should be paid to

⁴⁷ That is offices; assemblies; supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies; and Christian discipline.

⁴⁸ That being the true preaching of the Word, administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them and practice of church discipline.

⁴⁹ R.M. Britz, *Dordt na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, ed. S.A. Strauss and R.M. Britz, vol. 8, UV Theologiese Studies (Bloemfontein: Pro Christo-Publikasies, 1995), 63.

⁵⁰ "Hooijer, *Kerkelijke Wetten voor de Hervormden in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, Article 1.

its formulation. It states that those who, on confession of faith, receive membership or are incorporated or adopted as members of the church, (legally) belong to the Reformed church association. This includes those who are baptised in the Reformed church association and those who, with proper attestation of their baptism or membership, join the church.

The second article builds on the assumptions that underscore the first. This article regulates legitimate exit or retirement from the church as association. Members are free to associate with the church, and they are free to disassociate themselves and withdraw on condition that it is conducted in an acceptable and proper way. One thus remains a member of the association “zoo lang zij niet vrijwillig en duidelijk verklaard hebben, zich daarvan af te scheiden of om wettige redenen daarvan afgescheiden zijn.”⁵¹ The church is thus a voluntary association of members.

A distinction between the visible and invisible church is again implicit here. The church is understood as merely the form, an association among others, and not the true church of Christ. Both articles, from a theological point of view, do not make room to indicate (or confess) that it is Christ that gathers his church. Full emphasis is instead placed on members freely deciding to associate with the church. Concurring with Jonker:

It is a human invention, limited, accidental, a product of place and time, tied to itself, an ordinary human association or organisation that has to be managed with a regulation like any other human organisation. It is an altercation, a group-movement founded by people that is owned, used, protected and expanded by people and which others can also, and even better, establish a similar organisation if they want to. Such an organisation does not want to understand itself as the body of Christ, and therefore it does not contain in itself anything that is mandatory: it is but one possibly besides others. It is therefore not the church of which the articles of our universal, undoubted Christian faith speak. It is

⁵¹ Hooijer, Article 2.

*also not the church of which article 28 of the Belgic confession of faith declares that everyone is obligated to join it.*⁵²

The member and her/his faith, therefore, precede the church in the *Regulation*. By this the church is predestined to be nothing more than a human association which anyone can decide to join and where the identity rests not in Christ, but in the membership. Not the covenant, but the individual's faith is now the point of departure. The church is therefore constituted by the competence of its members. It is not ruled by Christ – as He only rules the invisible church - but it rules itself.

The Church Order of Dort (1619) nowhere determined or defined membership of the church, because this matter is clearly addressed in the confessions of the church. It is articulated within a range of theological and scriptural considerations. It is also significant that it is the first two articles of the *Regulation* that define membership of the church. The *Regulation* defines the prerequisites and rights of membership. However, it neither confines itself to the care of members, nor does any interest in the support and protection of Christian life surface in its articles, as the Church Order of Dort (1619) did.⁵³

The consequence of this point of departure is unblemished in the subsequent articles. The next article (three) explicates the governance of the church. It is clear that, because Christ does not truly rule in the visible church, the ruling assemblies are merely part of the management apparatus of the church and not constituted by official delegates (or officials) that gather under the authority of the Word. The management is moreover exercised through synodical, provincial, classical and congregational “collegien”. This is not a random sequence, but the exposition of a hierarchical structure that is regulated in the successive articles. These provide for the relation

⁵² My translation. See Jonker, ‘Die Liberale Kerkreg en die veelheid van Kerke’.

⁵³ Nel, ‘The Rule of Christ in the Church Order of Dortrecht (1618/19): A Historical-Theological Study’.

between higher and lesser constituted meetings, in terms of their rights and responsibilities and authority. In rising gradations, the assemblies or ‘besturen’ existed as follows: *Kerkenraden*, *Klassikale Besturen*, *Provinciale Kerkbesturen*, and the *Algemeene Synode*. The Synod held the highest authority in the church and the consistory the lowest. The ultimate court of appeal is the state, and thus the king.

The chief aim of all serving in the *collegien* responsible for the governance of the church is formulated in Article 9:

*De zorg voor de belangen, zoo van het Christendom in het algemeen, als van de Hervormde kerk in het bijzonder, de handhaving harer leer, de vermeerdering van Godsdiensige kennis, de bevordering van Christelijke zeden, de bewaring van orde en eendragt, en de aankweeking van liefde voor Koning en Vaderland, moeten steeds het hoofddoel zijn van allen, die in onderscheidene betrekkingen met het Kerkelijk bestuur belast zijn.*⁵⁴

The doctrinal reference in this article provoked discussion and stimulated the negative sentiments towards the *Regulation*, in particular among the ranks of the *Doleantie* and their admirers. At the time of its inception the formulation did not offend members or clergy. According to Van Lieburg, the negative sentiments towards this sentence: “de handhaving harer leer,” is a later development, as the *Regulation* was willingly accepted at the time.⁵⁵

Was the article clear enough on what the doctrine is that should be maintained? This has to be answered positively. The general description of doctrine was in line with the spirit of the age. This sentence is therefore broadly formulated, because the doctrine was broadly comprehended. It was implicitly understood that the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism, which were clarified by the Synod of Dort 1618/19 through its Canons, were actually

⁵⁴ Hooijer, *Kerkelijke Wetten voor de Hervormden in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, Article 9.

⁵⁵ Van Lieburg, ‘Inleiding: Vogelvlucht’, 13.

meant by this reference. The Confession and Catechism had been the accepted standards of the Reformed church in the Netherlands for more than three centuries and Article 9 of the *Regulation* did not in any way aim to amend this. There is thus no ambiguity here: the doctrine is defined broadly with intent. Given the enlightened culture and tolerance that were prevalent, any attempt to enact the doctrine of the church would, in any case, be ineffectual.

One should be reminded, that the Church Order of Dort (1619) was interpreted by the *Doleantie* in such a manner that the confessional standards (*de leer*) provided for and formed the accord of association. In its views, the church order “credited” the confessional standards with a status and role that were lacking in the original intention of the Church Order of Dort (1619). Initially, they were not seen as the accord of association. Concurring with Jonker, the confessional standards may never judicially be protected (in a church order). The church should not be a confessional, but a confessing church. The confession should be the heart of the church (not the accord).⁵⁶

Britz is in agreement with Jonker on this matter. Commenting on the development of the confessional standards in the Dutch Reformed Church, he argues that the Formularies (Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dort) should not be involved for the sake of the church itself, and therefore be used and understood as an *ecclesiastical* confession. This emphasis and practice, according to him, pushes the Christocratic notion and service unnoticed into the background. The confession of the church is more than an ecclesiastic matter, “The confession is open to the King of the church, and therefore also to His service as He effectuates it by the Word and the Spirit.”⁵⁷ It may therefore prove that the *Regulation* embodies principles that are not in

⁵⁶ W.D. Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geskiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, ed. G.J. Duursema (Stellenbosch: Willie Jonker digitale argief, 2017), 253.

⁵⁷ Britz, “The Formularies of Unity and the Dutch Reformed Church: A Preliminary Survey,” 531.

accordance with the Reformed confessions, but this should not be read into Article 9 of the *Regulation* as yet. The ecclesial disclosure and function of the doctrine is a later development.

The conservation (or upholding, or maintaining) of the doctrine as formulated in Article 9 of the *General Regulation* should therefore not be critiqued in terms of the *Doleantie's* accord-interpretation. Neither Dort nor the *Regulation* thought of the confessional standards in judicial terms. In the *Regulation* the confessional standards rather gained in ecclesiological emphasis and value. Article 9 rather embodies the emphasis of the era which shifted from the doctrine stressed by reformed orthodoxy to the proliferation of religious knowledge and Christian morals in civil society. The preservation of allegiance and order, as well as the cultivation of love for king and fatherland, is a significant indication of how that church as a recognised and useful and expedient association in society was seen. One senses the outline of a public theology on behalf of the civil order and goodwill of society.

Article 9 also uses the concept of “het Kerkelijk bestuur” as mentioned in the title of the *Regulation*. This is indeed a pivotal concept in the *Regulation*. Governing or managing the church is language nowhere to be found in previous church orders. Both Jonker and Britz argued that the Church Order of Dort (1619) and the Church Orders preceding it, were not inclined towards a functional arrangement for the management or government of the church's life, but they portrayed an underlying conviction that Christ alone rules his church.⁵⁸ The *General Regulation* (1816) rather, in terms of its character as a regulation, depicts the church is a voluntary association, that demands a set of appropriate rules and stipulations to guarantee its formal management and acceptable governance. In the *Regulation* it is not about the rule of Christ, but the rule in the church. Hence the title of this chapter!

⁵⁸ Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*, 1; Britz and Strauss, *Dordt na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:61.

This line of thought contradicts the Christological ecclesiology emblematic of the Church Order of Dort (1619).⁵⁹ It lacks any form of articulation that it is Christ who directly and actually rules his church. That He is the Head of the church, that the order is framed according to His Word, that the offices speak through His voice and bind through His decisions. The purpose of the *Regulation* is not to order the church in terms of the Word, but to regulate the church as a voluntary religious society effective and acceptable. The *Regulation* therefore embodied the spirit of its age.

The last article pertaining to the general provisions does not only have a commanding tone, but states the highest source of authority for the *General Regulation*:

*Geene veranderingen kunnen in dit Reglement gemaakt worden, dan door Zijne Majesteit, op voorstel, of immers na voorafgaande overweging bij het Synode, hetwelk echter, vóór en alee ten dezen besluit te nemen, daarop de consideratiën zal inwinnen van de Provinciale Kerkbesturen.*⁶⁰

The criteria for ordering the church is not Christ's command, but the king's confirmation. In contrast to the Church Order of Dort (1619), it is clear that the Word of God is not the only and the all-sufficient rule of duty and direction for the church.

These remarks conclude the investigation of the general provisions of the *Regulation*. In the next paragraph the articles pertaining to the Synod, its significance, purpose and function are discussed.

3.3.3 Articles of the *General Regulation* (1816) pertaining to the Synod (van het synode)

It is remarkable that the *General Regulation* (1816) does not commence with articles pertaining to the consistory in its exposition of the structure of the church's assemblies, but rather with the

⁵⁹ Nel, 'The Rule of Christ in the Church Order of Dortrecht (1618/19): A Historical-Theological Study'.

⁶⁰ Hooijer, *Kerkelijke wetten voor de Hervormden in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, Article 15.

Synod. The governance (or management) hierarchy is at once obvious in the *Regulation*. This differs with the structure of the Church Order of Dort (1619) that was organised in terms of the offices as point of departure. Dort made it clear that in the church no rulers and subordinates can reside. Not the rich, not the large, not the powerful congregations in their delegates of elders or ministers rule here, but there is equality. Article 84 of the Church Order of Dort (1619) – which was adapted from the first article of the Church Order of Emden (1571) - articulated this as follows: “Geen Kercke sal over andere Kercken / geen Dienaer over andere Dienaren / geen Ouderlingh noch Diaken over andere Ouderlingen ofte Diakenen eenighe heerschappye voeren.”⁶¹

In the new structure of the *Regulation* the Synod has the highest legislative, executive and judicial authority. Article 16 communicates this in no unclear terms: “Het hoogste Kerkelijk Bestuur is opgedragen aan het Synode.” The Synod (not the offices), who answers to the king, is the organ that represents the church and manages all her functions.

The term “opgedragen” is moreover characteristic of the *Regulation*. Who assigned the Synod with this competence, Jonker asks. It is the members of the association and the king, he answers.⁶² Thus, again it is not Christ, but people who delegate the order, as Christ only rules the invisible church. This is accentuated by Article 4, which states that the members of the church vote always freely, without being in any way bound by letters of instructions from assemblies or churches which they may consider to represent. The assemblies are not the gathering of the offices confined to the local church (as Dort), and, therefore, not bound by any decisions other

⁶¹ Article 84 is translated: “No church shall in any way lord over another church, no minister over other ministers, no elder or deacon over other elders or deacons.” See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), ‘Kercken-Ordeninghe; Ghestelt in den Nationalen Synode der Ghereformeerde Kercken, te samen beroepen, ende Ghehouden door ordre van de Hooghe Moghende Heeren Staten Generael der Vereenichde Nederlanden, binnen Dordrecht, in de Iaren 1618 ende 1619.’, 24.

⁶² Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geskiedenis van die ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, 227.

than those of the Synod, being the highest management authority. The Synod in the *General Regulation* holds the highest power in the church and the consistory the lowest. The Church Order of Dort (1619), in contrast, does not speak of lower and higher assemblies, but of minor (*mindere*) and major (*meerdere*) assemblies. One assembly is not superior to any other, but major assemblies consisted of a broader representation of the offices. A major assembly moreover did not have the entitlement to act and decide in its own right, but only considered those matters that the minor assemblies instructed them to discuss.

This synod in the *Regulation* should not be confused to be seen as a continuation of previous national synods. Previous synods, like the Synod of Dort 1618/19, were convoked by the States-General, and composed of ministers and elders commissioned from the particular synods, and professors from the Theological Faculties of the Universities. The States-General also sent representatives; and deputies from reformed churches from other countries were also invited to attend. The synod portrayed by the *General Regulation* (1816) has a rather different nature and composition. Where the Church Order of Dort (1619) referred to the assemblies of the church as “t’Samencomsten” (gathering), the *General Regulation* (1816) now speaks of “bestuur” (management or governance).

Britz distinguishes between a meeting and a gathering. A meeting is constituted by a civil law according to the stipulations of a constitution or rules. It occurs through provisions and agendas wherein the majority make binding decisions for the sake of the good order. A gathering is constituted by the Word of God and therefore by Christ through his Spirit. At an assembly (or gathering) the Word of God has authority and is held in reverence.⁶³ The synodical meetings that the *General Regulation* (1816) denotes are, therefore, rather embedded in a legal-directed framework, and are not constituted by the Word. It is a management meeting, not a gathering

⁶³ See Britz and Strauss, *Dordt na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:64.

under the Word. This is underscored by Article 6 of the *Regulation*, which does not limit the binding nature of the decisions of assemblies to the Word of God as the Church Order of Dort (1619) did.

The Synod convened annually on the first Wednesday of July, and sat fourteen days (Article 20). Each Provincial Direction, including the Walloon churches, had to nominate one minister to attend the Synod and one elder, in rotation. The three theological Faculties of Leiden, Utrecht and Groningen each nominated one theological professor to attend the Synod in an advisory capacity. Furthermore, the Synod consisted of a permanent clerk or secretary, chosen from the ministers of The Hague, and a permanent treasurer (quaestor), selected from the elders or former elders from the city of Amsterdam (Article 19). A president and vice-president for the Synod would be named by the King (Article 17). The Synod would also be attended by the Minister of State, charged with the General Direction of the Affairs of the Reformed Church, with his Secretary (Article 18). The king could also nominate a political commissioner to attend. Because the Synod consisted of a small group of people under the watchful eye of the king, it almost goes without saying that the assembly could develop into an oligarchy that held all the authority in the church.

The Synod discussed matters pertaining to the Reformed Church in the Netherlands and public religion; it furthermore made and altered general ecclesiastical regulations and orders, and had a final say in those cases where sentence has already been passed by any of the Provincial Ecclesiastical Directions (Article 21-22). The government's intervention in church affairs as formulated and allowed for in Article 28 of the Church Order of Dort (1619), was theologically motivated in terms of its calling according to God's Word to protect the church. In the *General Regulation*, the intervention is based on the fact that the church was an association over which the government had authority just like any other association.

It is furthermore clear that the purpose of the assemblies was not to order the congregational life under the Word as was the case with Dort (1619), but rather to administratively manage the church. The assemblies still formally had the same structure and names, but the content thereof was secularised. Article 21 underscores this, stating that the Synod had the last say in disputes. The Synod now stood as the highest authority, not the Word (Article 22), and above the Synod stood the king who had to approve all the provisions of the Synod (Article 30).

The authority of the Synod was synonymous with the authority of the king and his government. The king moreover had to give permission for churches to correspond with foreign churches (Article 12). The Synod consisted of a small number of people under the observant eye of the king (Article 17). He appointed almost all the members of the directions at the first Synod in 1816, he appointed the permanent secretary and treasurer of the provincial directions and the classical moderators (Article's 19, 38, 57). He also appointed the Head of the Ministerial Department who attended the Synodal meetings and it was in the power of the king to name one or more political commissaries to attend the same (Article 18). The time and date of the stipulated meeting of Synod could not be altered, or an extraordinary meeting convoked, without the approbation of the king (Article 20). Even though the king was vested with this authority, it is noted by Roelevink that William I was no radical lawmaker but, where possible, linked up with existing traditions and practices of the time.⁶⁴ This is a fair assessment because in a complex and difficult time William tried to provide the church with a solution - a solution which gave him the highest authority in church affairs, but nevertheless a solution the church willingly accepted.

Was this in contrast to the Church Order of Dort (1619) where the commissioners of the government had a veto right at all the major assemblies of the Reformed church and the

⁶⁴ Roelevink, 'Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816: een hekgolf in de rivier of een steen in de vijver?', 20–21.

magistrates a right in approbation in the calling of ministers? The Church Order of Dort (1619) does indicate similarity with the *Regulation* in this matter, but the extent of the government's influence was less at the Synod of Dort 1618/19. The *General Regulation* (1816) rather regulates the church not by the Word, but by Synodal, Provincial, Classical, and Consistorial governments. Moreover, all the inferior church directions were bound to comply with the mandates of the higher assemblies, even when conceiving itself aggrieved and appealing to a higher collegiate, its obedience in the meantime to the orders received was required (Article 5-6). When a sentence was pronounced in this second tribunal, no further appeal was granted even when one deemed the decision contrary to the Word of God (Article 7). The Synod furthermore definitively determined disputes which may have arisen in and between provincial church directions (Article 22).

In conclusion: the Church Order of Dort (1619) did give the government much authority in church affairs, but in the *Regulation*, the church is tributary to the Synod and therefore to the king and his government. The Synod and by association the king, therefore, ruled the church and all the lower assemblies, which follow in our analysis.

3.3.4 Articles of the *General Regulation* (1816) pertaining to the Provincial Ecclesiastical Directions (van het provinciaal kerkbestuur)

Second in line of authority is placed the Provincial Ecclesiastical Directions. This assembly replaced the particular synod of the Church Order of Dort (1619), where ministers and elders, chosen by the classes and commissioners from other particular synods, gathered (Article 47). The 1816 directions provided for one minister from each classical in the province and one elder from all the classicals belonging to the region. The elder and one-third of the other members of the directions retired annually. The king then selected the next direction from a list of six, named by the classical, and reduced to three by the provincial directions. The king annually nominated one

of the members as president and also appointed the secretary every third year, from a list of three, prepared by the directions (Article 31 – 32).

The *General Regulation* understands the provincial direction to be a higher (superior) assembly and therefore broad representation was deemed not necessary, while the Church Order of Dort (1619) rather views the particular synod as a major (*meerdere*) assembly, that is, an assembly made up of a more broader representation than the minor (*mindere*) assembly. The higher assemblies in the *Regulation*, are moreover, permanent bodies, where the Church Order of Dort (1619) provides for continuity, and not for permanent management structures. In the *General Regulation* each provincial direction has a president, named by the king, which is appointed for a year (Article 37) and has the authority to call together a special assembly (Article 39). In contrast, the office of president of assemblies in the Church Order of Dort (1619), ceased when the assembly adjourns.

The provincial ecclesiastical directions received the following responsibilities:

*De Provinciale Kerkbesturen zijn belast met de zorg voor de belangen van den Godsdienst, de bewaring der goede orde, en de handhaving der Kerkelijke wetten, in hun ressort; zij corresponderen deswegens zoo met de bevoegde magten, als met de classikale Moderatoren, en in zaken de ringen betreffende, met derzelve praetor.*⁶⁵

Articles 42 – 46 explicated in detail the assignment of this management structure. It was fairly simple: to manage the respective classicals in the province. It is noteworthy that the *General Regulation* prescribes in detail to the Synod and each direction its duties and jurisdiction. In the Church Order of Dort (1619), however, the major assemblies are commissioned to deal only with matters that could not be concluded in the minor ecclesial meetings, or those issues that

⁶⁵ Hooijer, *Kerkelijke Wetten voor de Hervormden in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, Article 41.

concerned the churches of the major assembly in conjoint. Article 8 of the *Regulation* does correspond in mentioning that a higher assembly may not transact on matters except what is beyond the jurisdiction of an inferior assembly and is conducive to the general good of the churches, and properly belongs to the higher assembly, but this article bears no effect in the rest of the *General Regulation*. The idea that major assemblies receive their agenda on instruction from the minor ones, is foreign to the *Regulation* as it is an association that needs to be effectually managed from above.

What the *Regulation* rather means with Article 8 is that each assembly had a stipulated task and jurisdiction. The jurisdiction of the provincial direction in the *General Regulation* (1816) is consequently much broader than the task given to the major assemblies of the Church Order of Dort (1619). The provincial direction's charge entailed to decide on matters of differences and appeals in which the classical have given judgment, to examine candidates for ministry and to give written authority for the confirming and the ordination of ministers to vacant charges and, ultimately, to dismiss ministers, candidates for ministry and members of the consistory (Articles 42-46). The supervision of the provincial direction stipulated in the *General Regulation* denoted, in fact, that it could interfere in the calling and disposing of ministers (Article 45). The provincial directions were allowed to (furthermore) devise rules of ecclesial government in terms of their own jurisdiction, conform to the *General Regulation*. The effective management of the association becomes apparent.

These rules of government, once decreed, could not be altered except by a decision of Synod (Article 42). The directions do not only devise rules, but make decisions in all differences which may occur in the government and meetings of the classical direction (Article 43). The authority of the provincial direction is lastly emphasised by Article 47, which states that any

minister or candidate for ministry that is dismissed, may never again be inveterated. Noteworthy is that the dismissal for doctrinal matters is not mentioned.

In conclusion, it is clear that the provincial direction's task was not only broad, but that the directions as such were vested with much power and authority to ensure effective management. This trajectory of thinking continued in the articles pertaining to the classical direction. The next paragraph deals with the management seated in the classical direction.

3.3.5 Articles of the *General Regulation* (1816) pertaining to the Classical Direction (van het classikaal bestuur)

Subservient to the Synod and Provincial Direction, the *General Regulation* provides for Classical Directions, the "Classikaal bestuur." The classical direction replaced the former classes assembly of the Church Order of Dort (1619) in which every minister and elder within the particular region had a seat. The classes (Dort) examined candidates for the ministry and chose members to represent the churches in the particular synod. It emphasised the care for purity in doctrine and therefore also functioned as a type of homiletic school for ministers. In contrast to the previously known classes, the proceedings of the classical direction, stipulated by the *Regulation*, were confined to listing nominations of a secretary for the classical, nominations to the committee of ministers who served on the classical (as moderators), the approval of accounts of the classical widows' and other funds, and also for the appointing of treasurers (Article 67).

The church was (in 1816) divided into 43 classical directions, structured institutions with a minimal ministerial character. It consisted of one presiding officer, one assessor, one clerk and between two and four ministers - depending on the size of the classical district – and one elder (Article 55). The members of the classical were known as the commission of moderators. The minister of the classical, appointed by the king to serve in the provincial direction, automatically

became the presiding officer of the classical and his secundus served as assessor (Article 56). The classical moreover was not an assembly of delegated offices and therefore did not need credential letters and instructions from the consistory where they serve. They constitute the meeting as individuals, who are part of the voluntary association, not as offices ordained in the local congregations.

Article 4 already made this clear, stating that the members of the courts vote always freely, without being in any way compromised by letters of instructions from assemblies or churches which they represent. The need for credential letters and instruction was rather emphasised by the Church Order of Dort (1619), as the major assemblies had no agenda of their own and therefore delegates needed credential letters and instructions to meaningfully participate in major assemblies. The major assemblies are understood not as higher management structures, but as assemblies of the church through its office bearers. The visible church is consequently not understood as merely representing the local congregation. The church is visible when it gathers through the offices under the Word, be it at the local consistory or major assemblies.

The main task of the 1816 classical was to supervise over the churches within their district. Annually a report of each congregation had to be submitted to the provincial direction under which jurisdiction it fell. It therefore has nothing in common with an assembly that is constituted by delegated offices under the Word. Article 60 stipulates this:

*De Moderatoren zorgen voor de belangen der kerken in hun ressort, en houden toezicht over de gemeenten, Kerkenraden en Predikanten daartoe behoorende. Zij corresponderen, zoo met de Provinciale Kerkbesturen, als met de Kerkenraden der onderscheidene gemeenten.*⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Hooijer, Article 60.

Moreover, the classical was imposed the responsibility to supervise over the calling, ordination and demission of ministers, to fill vacant positions, to examine the subordinate teachers of religion, to care for the interests of the widows of deceased ministers, to arbitrate in disputes of consistories, to deliver a verdict in cases of appeal brought before them and to suspend ministers, candidates for ministry and members of the consistory, if necessary.

As such it served the interest of ministers to be elected to serve on the classical where they, among other things, held significant influence over the “promotion” of ministers from small to larger congregations. This is because the classical – as a higher assembly than the consistory - held all the authority for placing, displacing or exchanging ministers in congregations (Article 60). The Church Order of Dort (1619), on the contrary, instructed ministers, elders and deacons to exercise Christian censure among themselves and to not lord over one another. The Church Order of Dort (1619) dealt with ministry, not in terms of advancing a ‘career’ but serving in the local body of Christ. A minister could not even willfully, by own choice, leave a congregation and take up a call elsewhere; this decision was made by the consistory. In the 1816 *Regulation*, the classical (which consisted mostly of ministers) now decided on this, ensuring effective management from above.

The supervision of the classical thus implied that it could interfere (and intervene) in the calling and disposing of ministers. The classical also had the authority to monitor the election of members of the consistory – and to intercede if elected members are deemed not to represent the most respectable, knowledgeable and estimable members of the congregation. The *General Regulation* (1816) thus aims to regulate the classical in such a manner that the examinations, religious instruction, the practice of managing church affairs, ecclesiastical inspection and discipline, the calling of ministers and the entire task the classical was involved in, could be addressed in the most effective way. The polity is thus reduced to the practical. The visible

church is separated from the invisible as Christ does not rule through his Word and the use of those in office anymore.

Annually, on the last Wednesday in June, a meeting of all the ministers and a number of elders⁶⁷ or former elders resorting in the classical, had to convene in order to nominate a secretary as well as the moderating commission (known as the classical), who was invested with the power of nominating members to the provincial direction. A report was given of the finances and fund for widows and treasurers (quaestors) were nominated to manage the finances (Article 65-67). Unique in this meeting was that it provided for elders to participate, as the other directions comprised only one elder, the rest being ordained ministers. This is in contrast to the Church Order of Dort (1619), which stipulated that the same amount of elders and ministers should be delegated to the major assemblies.⁶⁸ As elders could not always attend the meetings, the stipulations of the *Regulation* in this regards should again be seen on the one side as a practical matter to ensure efficiency, but also as the portrayal of a conviction that ministers were better equipped to be entrusted with the governance of the church.

The classical, in conclusion, functioned more locally, but corresponded in terms of its structure and function to the provincial direction. Our analysis of the *General Regulation* next focuses on the articles pertaining to the Walloon, Presbyterian English and Scottish churches.

3.3.6 Articles of the *General Regulation* (1816) pertaining to the Walloon, Presbyterian English and Scottish Churches (over de waalsche, presbyteriaansche engelsche en schotsche kerken)

⁶⁷ Article 65 states that such a number of elders or old-elders as is now customary went to this meeting. The exact number of elders which went to this meeting is thus unsure. See Hooijer, Article 65.

⁶⁸ See article 41 and 47. Synod of Dordt (1618/19), 'Kercken-Ordeninghe; ghestelt in den Nationalen Synode der Ghereformeerde Kercken, te samen beroepen, ende ghehouden door ordre van de Hooghe Moghende Heeren Staten Generael der Vereenichde Nederlanden, binnen Dordrecht, in de Iaren 1618 ende 1619.', 13,15.

The *General Regulation* (1816) did not only stipulate provisions for the Dutch-speaking Reformed Church in the Netherlands, but also contained regulations for the management of the Walloon, Presbyterian English and Scottish churches. Historically, language was a challenge for the Reformed churches in the Netherlands from its very beginning. In the southern regions French was spoken and in other parts, Flemish and Dutch. This did not prevent the churches to convene. The different Walloon synods under the cross (1563-1566) used French as primary language.⁶⁹ The Synod of Emden (1571),⁷⁰ communicated in Latin to accommodate all the churches. The difference in language was practically challenging as the Dutch-speaking pastors formed the majority and were not always willing to accommodate the Walloon pastors who understood little Dutch.

The Walloon churches convened a particular synod in Dortrecht on 25 June 1577 to address this language issue.⁷¹ Language remained a problem as the Classis of Keulen would later protest that only those speaking Dutch were invited to the Synod of Dortrecht (1578) and in the process, the stipulations of Emden (1571) were being ignored.⁷² This paved the way for the Walloon churches to meet in their own classes and provincial meetings as the Synod of Dortrecht (1578) recognised this arrangement in Article 46 of the Church Order.⁷³

⁶⁹ See Cornelis Hooijer, ed., *Oude Kerkordeningen der Nederlandsche Hervormde gemeenten (1563-1638) en het Conceptreglement op de Organisatie van het Hervormd Kerkgenootschap in het Koninkrijk Holland (1809), verzameld en met inleidingen voorzien* (Zalt-Bommel: Joh. Noman en zoon, 1865), 7–23, <http://www.prdl.org/genres.php?genre=Church%20Order>; A.D. Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergronde van ons Kerklike Reg*, vol. 1 (Pretoria: HAUM, 1981), 58.

⁷⁰ See Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden der zestiende eeuw*, 42–119.

⁷¹ Knetsch, 'De Positie der Waalse Kerken', 57–59, 67. Knetsch notes on page 67: "Na tot het besef gekomen te zijn dat de gereformeerde kerken in de Nederlanden in overweldigende meerderheid 'nederduits' geworden waren, trokken zij de conclusie dat het Franse element, wilde het een rol kunnen blijven spelen, zich afzonderlijk moest organiseren."

⁷² See Knetsch, 55; W. Van't Spijker, "De Kerkorde van Dordrecht (1578)," in *De Nationale Synode van Dordrecht 1578*, ed. D Nauta and J.P. Van Dooren (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1978), 130.

⁷³ Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden der zestiende eeuw*, 245; D Nauta, 'De Nationale Synode van Dordrecht (1578)', in *De Nationale Synode van Dordrecht 1578*, ed. D Nauta and J.P. Van Dooren (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1978), 11. Article 46: "Overmidts in de Nederlanden tweederley sprake ghebruyckt wordt, de duytsche ende de walsche, so is goetgevonden dat de ghemeeynten deser beyder spraken hare bijzondere

The *General Regulation* (1816) also allowed the Walloon churches to gather separately, but not in as an official synod or direction. This is stipulated in Article 68:

*De Waalsche kerken behouden de vrijheid om zoodanige afzonderlijke verbindtenissen en betrekkingen met elkander te bewaren, als door derzelver financiële belangen, en het verschil van taal gevorderd worden, zonder echter daar door op te houden van onder het algemeen Kerkbestuur begrepen te zijn.*⁷⁴

A commission of five Walloon ministers and one elder was instead selected by the king to take care for the interest of the Walloon churches. At the expiration of twelve months, the elder had to resign, as also one of the ministers. The latter was allowed to be re-elected. This commission was given the task to administrate the finances of the Walloon church and to examine candidates for the ministry (Article 72). The Walloon commission was allowed to convene annually at The Hague as a distinct body, in the same way the meetings of the respective classical's convoked.

Of significance is that the Walloon churches were not allowed to convene separately in an own Synod anymore, but were granted a "bijeenkomst" (gathering) annually (Article 74). The *General Regulation* (1816) thus terminated their synodical meetings that convened since 1577. The Walloon ministers furthermore also had to be members of the district ring meetings. In this restriction the *Regulation* again ensures effective management. In the *Regulation*, the General Synod is the only synod in the reformed church and holds the highest authority. A separate Walloon synod would not serve the hierarchical management structure and efficiency thereof.

kerckenraden, classicale vergaderinghen ende particuliere synoden hebben ende houden, dogh soo de ghemeynen van d'eene ofte d'andere sprake alle hare particuliere synoden willen tesamen roepen, dat sullen sij moghen doen. Wel verstaende dat in sulcke versamelinghen van de eene sprake alleene niet van hetghene dat in den handel der ceremonien kerckelicker regeringhe ende ander swaren saken in desen synode besloten is, verandert en worde, maer, soo men acht datter eenighe veranderinghe van nooden is, deselve sal in den nationali synodo beyder spraken gheschieden. Ende soo het ghevele dat de nationali synodus van weggen der noot voor den ghewoonlicken tijt moeste beroepen sijn, soo sullen twee classen, van elcker spraken eene, aen twee particuliere synoden schrijven, opdatse verordineren moghen wanneer ende waer de generale synodus ghehouden sal worden."

⁷⁴ Hooijer, *Kerkelijke Wetten voor de Hervormden in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, Article 68.

The English – and Scottish Presbyterian churches did not gather separately like the Walloon churches but were incorporated into the classical of the city where its congregations were seated. The incorporation, however, allowed for the retaining of the separate and peculiar regulations and rights which particularly and privately belong to them.

Dutch, Walloon, English and Scottish churches could thus, without discord, gather separately, with no disputes over language, doctrine or traditions, as they all formed part of the voluntary church association in the Netherlands rule by the Synod and king. The *Regulation* opened the door for the multiplication of churches: every group could form their own suitable church. The principles of individualism are embodied. By inference, it may be argued that the underlying trajectory here is that because the invisible church is understood as being one, holy and catholic, the visible church therefore does not have to portray these characteristics. The church is only an association of members and therefore everyone is entitled to join a church of their liking.

The penultimate articles pertaining to the meetings of the “ringen” are discussed in the next paragraph.

3.3.7 Articles of the *General Regulation* (1816) pertaining to the Rings and the meetings thereof (van de ringen en derzelver bijeenkomsten)

In the Dutch-speaking churches, each classical district was subdivided into two, three or four distinct bodies, called “ringen.” These were a gathering of ministers. “Ringen” was not aimed at managing the church like the other meetings, but rather for mutual resurgence and the strengthening of the bond between them (Article 80). Steven noted that “In large towns, the ministers of a Ring periodically assemble at each-others houses (or in some convenient place,) by

rotation; and at this friendly meeting, an essay on a theological or literary subject is sometimes read by one of the members, and upon which those present deliver their sentiments.”⁷⁵

The ministers were allowed to gather in these meetings as often as they saw necessary and could elect their own presiding officer and secretary, but any management function was emphatically prohibited. Article 80 clearly stipulates that ministers should gather “niet ter uitoefening van eenig Kerkelijk Bestuur.”⁷⁶ While the rings are in a way outside the scope of the management structure of the *General Regulation* (1816), they are truly focussed on the inner life of the church and this need to be appreciated. This is the closest the *General Regulation* (1816) come to any spiritual and religious assertions like the Church Order of Dort (1619), as Article 82 articulated:

*Hunne werkzaamheden bestaan in de overweging en behandeling van onderwerpen den Godsdienst, en den bloei des Christendoms, de bevordering van bijbelkennis en de waarneming van hunne bedieningen betreffende.*⁷⁷

The secretary had to take notes of the meeting and each ring annually submitted an account of its transactions with possible suggestions to the classical, which again added some considerations before forwarding a report to the provincial direction. From here it was sent to the Synod, by which a committee was appointed to draw up a general report. This report was printed and send to the Ministerial Department (Article 83). Despite a certain spiritual character, the rings thus remain in service of the hierarchy and were moderated by the higher assemblies to ensure practical efficiency and order.

⁷⁵ Steven, *A Brief View of the Dutch Ecclesiastical Establishment: Showing the Past and Present Organization of Its Several Judicatories with an Appendix, Containing the General Regulations for the Government of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands.*, 6.

⁷⁶ Hooijer, *Kerkelijke Wetten voor de Hervormden in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, Article 80.

⁷⁷ Hooijer, Article 82.

Some aspects typical of the Church Order of Dort's (1619) classes meetings were incorporated in the "ringen". The discussion and critiquing of sermons and other theological matters were part of the classes meetings. This tradition would continue in the rings. But the rings only consulted and discussed, the classes in the Church Order of Dort (1619) had ecclesial authority as an assembly constituted through delegated office bearers under the Word. This was the difference.

The last section of the *General Regulation* (1816) contained articles pertaining to the government in the congregation. These are now discussed.

3.3.8 Articles of the *General Regulation* (1816) pertaining to the Congregation (over het kerkelijk bestuur in de gemeenten)

At the lowermost end of the hierarchical ecclesiastical governance structure - from the king, the Synod, the provincial direction, the classical and the ring - the congregation received its seat. Literally and figuratively this was a reversal of the classical Reformed church polity. It is no coincidence that the heading of Articles 84-86 of the *General Regulation* is formulated as "The Church Governance in Congregations." The *General Regulation* (1816) makes a clear distinction between the church and the congregations of the church. Concurring with Britz, the Church Order of Dort's (1619) approach was rather one wherein the relation between the congregations of Christ was not stipulated and expressed in terms of a church governmental system, but embodied in and related to Christ.⁷⁸ Effective management was not in its scope.

The consistory is seen in the *Regulation* as the management organ that represents the congregation. The concern is not linked to offices in service of the Word. The consistory is

⁷⁸ Britz and Strauss, *Dordt na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:64.

merely an administrative management body. Therefore Article 85 states that the consistory had to be chosen from the most respectable, knowledgeable and estimable members of the congregation:

Dezelve bestaat uit den Predikant of de Predikanten der plaatsen, en uit Ouderlingen, gekozen uit de achttingwaardigste, kundigste en voornaamste leden der gemeente. De pligten van de Leeraren, de Ouderlingen, de Diakenen en de betrekking van Diakenen tot den Kerkenraad, worden door het Synode bij het Reglement op de Kerkenraden omschreven en bepaald.⁷⁹

Limited to the most respectable, knowledgeable and estimable members of the congregation, would inevitably lead to a “klikjesgeest”⁸⁰ in the consistory.

Positively, the *Regulation* did keep the congregations intact, Jonker notes, even though in a mutilated form.⁸¹ Van Lieburg goes even further, asserting that, despite the authority of the higher assemblies, the local congregations retained their independence.⁸² This assertion seems implausible in light of the text and context of the *Regulation* which indicates a hierarchical structure that understood the church as consisting of individuals who voluntarily join the association, not in terms of the local independence of the congregation. In fact, the local congregations did not retain independence because they never thought in terms of such a framework. As indicated in the introduction, the Church Order of Dort (1619) did not comprehend the local congregation in terms of independence. This is a later development, an interpretation which surfaced in the *Doleantie* church polity, in reaction against the *General*

⁷⁹ Hooijer, *Kerkelijke Wetten voor de Hervormden in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, Article 85.

⁸⁰ This means a click or closed circle is formed. See A De Groot, ‘Het Algemeen Reglement van 1816’, in *Theologie en Kerk in het Tijdperk van de Camera Obscura. Studies over het Nederlandse Protestantisme in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw*, ed. J.H. Van de Bank, *Theologie en Kerk in het Tijdperk van de Camera Obscura. Studies over het Nederlandse Protestantisme in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw* 18 (Utrecht, 1993), 122, <http://kerkrecht.nl/content/bank-jh-van-de-ea-1993-h4>.

⁸¹ Jonker, *Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk: Geschiedenis van die Ontwikkeling van die Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, 234.

⁸² Van Lieburg, ‘Inleiding: Vogelvlucht’, 12.

Regulation (1816). The Church Order of Dort (1619) rather thought of the congregation as constituted through office bearers under the rule of Scripture.

The major assembly's authority was not delegated by the local congregations, but by the Word, through the office bearers. The Church Order of Dort (1619) thus leans more towards an anti-independent polity. Not even the local congregation rules in the Church Order of Dort (1619), only the Word. Therefore, keeping the independence of the local congregation intact, would not be implicit in the *Regulation*. What is of significance, is rather to effectively manage the local congregation. Not through independence, but through dependence on the higher directions, Synod and king. At least the three offices (minister, elder, deacon) were still recognised and could perform their calling in the local congregation, even though their function in the major assemblies was constrained.

In the *General Regulation* the requirements that the Word of God explicates the service and ministry for ministers, elders and deacons do not surface. The offices manage, they do not serve. This is underscored by Article 85 that stipulates the duties of the minister, elders and deacons to be determined by the Synod. The Synod, that rules from above, indeed effectively controlled all aspects of the church, right down to the duties of elders and deacons and the whole life of the local congregation.

Where the Church Order of Dort (1619) referred to the offices as services (*diensten*), the *General Regulation* acervated these in terms of duties (*pligten*). The offices are therefore understood as ecclesial *positions*. The *General Regulation* (1816) does not describe the offices in the church as offices in service of Christ's Word. The offices, in particular that of minister, merely have a managing function, in service of the Synod and king.

The *General Regulation* (1816) relates the charge of the consistory to public worship, Christian instruction, and the superintendence of the members of the congregation:

*Aan den Kerkenraad behoort de zorg voor hetgeen den openbaren Godsdienst, het Christelijk onderwijs en het opzigt over de leden van de gemeente betreft.*⁸³

The local consistories are regulated by the Synod in such a way to be most advantageous for religion, and the interests of the communities and the king, and not for the members of the church. Moreover, in Article 88 on the discipline or censure of members of the church, no mention is made of reconciling the sinner with Christ. However, the administering of the disciplinary procedures are substantially formulated. It is significant that Article 75 of the Church Order of Dort (1619) concerning the repentance and reconciliation of the sinner precedes the articles describing the discipline procedure. For Dort (1619), Christian discipline is ministry of reconciliation and not punishment. To ensure the effective management of the association, the *General Regulation* (1816) rather stipulated procedures for discipline as in civil law and, therefore, portrayed a different spirit than the Church Order of Dort (1619). Again the separation of the visible and invisible church surfaces. Because the true church is invisible, there is no need for church discipline in a ministerial sense, aimed towards reconciliation with Christ. Exclusion from the visible church therefore does not imply exclusion from the invisible church.

3.4 Conclusion

The main object of the third chapter was to offer an in-depth and critical analysis of the *General Regulation* of 1816. It commenced with an argued outline of the immediate positive reception of the *Regulation*. The significance of the *Regulation* was linked to the fact that the historical Reformed church (or *Hervormde Kerk* as it was named in the *Regulation*) in 1816 received a definite code of conduct, a fundamental structure for its effective governance, sanctioned by the

⁸³ Hooijer, *Kerkelijke Wetten voor de Hervormden in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, Article 87.

king and in harmony with the values of the dispensation that inaugurated with the restoration of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The *General Regulation* was contextually challenged by the theology of the early 19th century *Afscheiding*, the ecclesiology of the later 19th century *Doleantie* and in the 20th century after the First and Second World Wars, by a new secularised context, that demanded theological and ecclesiological review and re-positioning. In this regard the *Vrijmaking* (1944) influenced evaluation of the *General Regulation*. In addition the *Hervormde Kerk* in 1951 replaced the *Regulation* with a new church order, to engage a decade or so later with a unifying enterprise with the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. These events determined and qualified scholarship related to the 1816 *Regulation*, as was argued in the chapter. It was also indicated that in South Africa, reformed theology in adjudicating the *Regulation*, tended to follow trajectories incepted by especially the *Doleantie*. An objective, unbiased original study of the *General Regulation* lacks in South African scholarship.

Stepping into the gap, the second part of the chapter offered a modest attempt to comply with the requirements in this regard. Our analysis revealed that the *Regulation* not only shaped the church as a free religious association, recognised in society and by the government, but also provided for a very effective governance apparatus. It lasted for more than 130 years and was able to accommodate differentiated theological orientations and convictions in the *Hervormde Kerk*. Our analysis was conducted with reference to scholarship, as well as with consideration of the Church Order of Dort (1619). There is, therefore, a significant contrast between the Church Order of Dort (1619) and the *General Regulation* (1816): The assemblies in the Church Order of Dort (1619) are not called together or instituted to dominate, but rather to persuade as the assembly had a spiritual and not worldly character, is not hierarchical but ministerial, not

advisory but authoritative, not infallible but binding, it does not command, nor force, but convinces, admonish, and rules according to God's Word.

Up to this point in our research, we have concentrated substantially on a Dutch historical-theological development. It did have an impact on South African church history, as has been suggested throughout. Given the Netherlands-South African connection in this regard, it must be asked whether the *General Regulation* did not play a more significant role in South African church polity and church orders of reformed impact than is generally accepted. After all, in our scholarship the 1816 *Regulation* is without more ado rejected. In chapter four this question will be discussed in detail. The study can thus conclude with a comparison between the *General Regulation* (1816) and the modern South African church orders, in order to evaluate to what extent the Church Orders of the NHK, NHKA, APK and GKSA are indeed influenced by the *General Regulation* (1816)

CHAPTER 4: THE RECEPTION OF THE *GENERAL REGULATION* (1816) IN THE CHURCH ORDERS OF THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH OF SOUTH AFRICA, THE NIEDERDUTCH REFORMED CHURCH OF AFRICA, THE AFRIKAANS PROTESTANT CHURCH AND THE REFORMED CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this final chapter is to establish and evaluate the reception of the *General Regulation* (1816) in the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA, APK and GKSA. The purpose, the utilisation and principles underlying these Church Orders were investigated in previous research. This research, *The rule of Christ in the Church Order of Dordrecht* concluded that Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA, APK and GKSA, despite their acknowledged adherence to the Church Order of Dort (1619), are documents in their own right. Except for the GKSA, the direct indebtedness to the Church Order of Dort and its theology, is less obvious than assumed. In addition, it was resolved that the South African reformed church orders, in terms of their ecclesial status and application, are characterised by a strong element of *ecclesial* structure and functionality rather than a *Christological* orientation and direction. In this sense they differ from the Church Order of Dort (1619).¹

The ultimate chapter of the current research considers the question whether, and to what extent, the Afrikaans reformed church orders are rather indebted to the *General Regulation* of 1816 instead of to the Church Order of Dort 1619. As the Church Order of Dort (1619) was replaced by the *General Regulation* in 1816, the *Regulation* may hold the key to offer a historical-theological perspective on the character, disposition and compilation of South African reformed church orders hitherto lacking in the relevant scholarship. The relation and extent of

¹ See P.J. Nel, 'The Rule of Christ in the Church Order of Dordrecht (1618/19): A Historical-Theological Study' (University of the Free State, 2015).

influence of the *General Regulation* (1816) in the Church Orders of the NGK, NGKA, APK and GKSA will therefore be subsequently evaluated.

The first paragraph offers an outline of the history and scholarship related to the South African reformed church orders. Then follows the critical assessment of the different Church Orders in view of their assumed indebtedness to the *General Regulation* of 1816. A conclusion closes the chapter.

4.2 Outline of the South African Church Orders in history and scholarship

All four South African reformed churches under discussion trace their origins to the establishment of a refreshment post at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652.² Until the beginning of the 19th century the Dutch establishment recognised and supported the Cape-Dutch Reformed church. This Dutch Reformed church met in synod for the first time in 1824. The main purpose was to design and accept *Reglementen voor het Bestuur der Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk*, in Zuid-Afrika.³ (Regulations for the governance of *Niederdutch Reformed Church*, in South Africa). A *General Regulation* was thus drafted.⁴ Additionally, a *Regulation* for the non-formal religious exercises was also accepted (*Reglement op het Oefening Houden*). The unitary church was divided in three presbyteries: The first, Cape Town; the second, Tulbach and the third, Graaff-Reinet. The governance of the church was stipulated to be congregational, presbyterial and synodical.

² See J.W. Hofmeyr, *A History of Christianity in South Africa*, ed. J. W. Hofmeyr and G.J. Pilay, 1st edition, vol. 1 (Pretoria: HAUM Tertiary, 1994), 11.

³ *Reglementen voor het Bestuur der Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk*, in Zuid-Afrika, ontworpen en genomen in de Algemeene Kerkvergadering, gehouden binnen de Kaapstad, op den 2 November, en volgende dagen van het jaar 1824 (Kaapstad: Gedrukt by W. Bridekirk, Jun. voor Kerken-rekening, en te bekomen by P. Keeve, Heerengracht. Prys twee Ryksdaalders, 1824).

⁴ *Algemeen Reglement voor het Bestuur der Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk, in Zuid-Afrika*. Eerste Afdeling: Algemeene Bepalingen. Tweede Afdeling: belapingen betreffende de Algemeene kerkvergadering, in het Byzonder. Derde Afdeeling, Over het Kerkelijke Bestuur in het gemeenten. Vierde Adeeling, Over het Godsdienstig onderwys; Vyfde Afdeeling: behelzende een Reglement op het uitoefen van kerkelijke Opzicht en tucht.

Britz is of the opinion that these *Regulations*, adjusted to the “state of our affairs”, were fundamentally informed by the *Algemeen Reglement voor het Bestuur der Hervormde kerk in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* (1816).⁵ This also applies to supplementary regulations accepted, e.g. the *Rules for the Execution of Ecclesial Discipline and Censure*.⁶ The striking difference is that the 1824 *General Regulation* lacks the definition of *membership* of the particular church association.

In 1843 the 1804 *De Mist Kerken-Ordre* was replaced by an *Ordinance*. This provided a new legal framework for the *Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa*. As such, the *Ordinance* was conforming to and aligned with the British colonial administration of justice. It provided the Dutch Reformed Church (as it was henceforth called) with the capability to determine its internal affairs. The General Assembly or Synod is designated as the natural and proficient authority to make such laws and regulations for the administration of the Church. The laws and regulations are however limited to the legitimacy of merely a "voluntary society". The *Ordinance* also protected the legal liability of persons, as well as the Church, and its assemblies, especially where the Church would administer justice (in terms of procedures and verdicts) by a properly composed and competent ecclesial court of law.

The *Schedule* attached to the *Ordinance* (7/1843) comprised – hence - *Wetten en Bepalinge voor het bestuur der Nederduitsche Gerefomeerde Kerk in Zuid-Afrika*⁷ (Laws/Rules

⁵ R.M. Britz, “‘As Adjusted to Our State of Affairs...’. The Church Order of Dordt at the Cape of Good Hope: Restrictive Influence - Augmented Ecclesiastical Identity”, in *Keynote Paper Read at the International Conference 400 Years Synod of Dordt* (the International Conference 400 Years Synod of Dordt, Dordrecht, the Netherlands, 14-16 November), 4.

⁶ *Reglementen voor het Bestuur der Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk, in Zuid-Afrika, ontworpen en genomen in de Algemeene Kerkvergadering, Gehouden binnen de Kaapstad, op den 2 November, en volgende dagen van het jaar 1824*, 122 ff.

⁷ *Wetten en Bepalingen voor het Bestuur der Nederduitsche Gereformeerde kerk in Zuid-Afrika, gerevideerd in de Algemeene Kerkvergadering, Gehouden in de Kaapstad op den 1 sten November en volgende dagen van het jaar 1842 en bekrachtigd door eene Ordonnantie van den Wetgevenden Raad, op den 8sten November 1843 (Kaapstad: Gedrukt by Saul Solomon, “Gazette” kantoor, 1844).*

and Stipulation/Regulations for the governance of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa). Although the *Ordinance*, which was embedded in British legislature, provided correspondingly for church courts and church laws – concepts that indeed played a pivotal role later in the century when the Dutch Reformed church had to defend its judicature, procedures and jurisdiction in the Cape High Court – the *Laws and Stipulations* were nevertheless fundamentally informed by the Dutch *General Regulation* of 1816. The 1816 article pertaining to membership of the church was also adopted.⁸

By then history and church history were about to change in the region. Since the 1830s the colonisation of Southern Africa was taken steps further. The organised emigration (the so-called Great Trek), the establishment of the British colonial dispensation in South Africa, the founding of two Boer republics, a further formation of a British colony in Natal interplayed to create a new dispensation. The two Boer republics in the interior offered the opportunity for interested Dutch individuals, groups or circles, and ministers, to engage in assistance, support and motivated development. In pioneer circumstances, the historical Cape-Dutch Church now diverged in the establishment of differentiated churches in the interior regions between 1853 and 1866. Obviously the *Ordinance* for the Cape Dutch Reformed Church had no legal status outside of the Colony. However, these established churches adhered to the Cape tradition, as shaped by the 1816 *General Regulation*. Their governance was articulated in Laws/Rules, Stipulations or Regulations, adjusted to the particular state of affairs.⁹

Seven differentiated churches came to be established with their own Laws/Rules, Stipulations or Regulations: The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, Niederdutch Reformed Church in the South African Republic (NHKA), The Dutch Reformed Church of Natal,

⁸ See Britz, “As Adjusted to Our State of Affairs...”. The Church Order of Dordt at the Cape of Good Hope: Restrictive Influence - Augmented Ecclesiastical Identity”, 5.

⁹ Britz, 5.

The Dutch Reformed Church in the Orange Free State, The Dutch Reformed Church of the South African Republic, the Reformed Church in South Africa (GKSA) and the Nederduitsch Hervormde of Gereformeerde Kerk in de Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek (1890).¹⁰

One exception, Britz noted, was not influenced by the Cape-Dutch tradition and thus the *General Regulation* (1816): the Reformed Church in South Africa (GKSA) which came into existence in 1859. It deliberately positioned itself, Britz asserts, in terms of the Church Order of Dort (1619). And it is here that the Church Order of Dort (1619) surfaces for the first time in South Africa's theological history.¹¹

In contrast to the research of Britz, as was indicated in the introduction, 20th century scholars in the NGK and APK argue that the Church Order of Dort (1619) is foundational to the South African reformed church polity and Church Orders. The impact of the *General Regulation* (1816) is either denied or ignored. The Church Order of Dort (1619) is considered as an expression of reformed orthodoxy. This paradigm was (and is) simply accepted during the second half of the 20th century. The *Sitz im Leben* of the particular "Dort profile" in this scholarship links to the awareness and subsequent initiative in the 1950s to provide the South African reformed churches with "proper" church orders. In the NGK the Laws and Stipulations of 1843 was replaced in 1962 by a Church Order for the NGK.¹² This coincided with the national urge to unite the four provincial Dutch Reformed churches (The Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, the Dutch Reformed Church of Natal, the Dutch Reformed Church in the Orange Free

¹⁰ See Britz, 5–7.

¹¹ See Britz, 7.

¹² For an overview see Duursema, "Communio Sanctorum – Gereformeerde Kerkreg versus Kerklike Geskeidenheid. 'n Biografiese Bibliografie van W.D. Jonker, 1955 – 1968," 195–237.

State and the Dutch Reformed Church of the Transvaal) in one General Synod, in terms of a new church order.¹³

During this same period the NHKA also reviewed their Church Law. The awareness and subsequent initiative for a ‘proper’ church order was thus not only confined to the NGK. The reviewed Church Law of the NHKA of 1951 was understood, as an attempt to re-orientate to the reformed church polity principles.¹⁴ But this Church Law remained strongly influenced by the *General Regulation*. In the GKSA minor amendments to its Church Order was also made at this time, but the GKSA maintained the Church Order of Dort (1619) as far as possible. While the NGK Church Order was influenced by the national urge to unite, the APK formulated their polity not in terms of unification, but in terms of its secession from the NGK in 1987. A distinctive conservative (‘behoudende’) polity thus developed, where the Church Order of Dort (1619) and especially the “Kuyper-Bavinck erfenis” of the Dutch secession churches were conceptualised and elevated.¹⁵

The question now arises whether this South African appreciation for the theology and ecclesiology of the 1619 Church Order, can be substantiated by a fundamental influence of the 17th century Church Order, or whether it is inspired and guided by the apologetic positioning of 19th century Dutch church history? The last consideration proved to prevail. My own research concluded that the Church Order of Dort (1619) is not the foundation for reformed church polity and formation in the NGK, APK, but only in the GKSA.¹⁶ The Dort-association is historically not valid and consistent with the church history and ecclesiastical development at the Cape of Good Hope, but is rather a later development associated with the establishment of the Reformed

¹³ See P. Coertzen, *Gepas en Ordelik. 'n Teologiese verantwoording van die Orde vir en in die Kerk*, RGN - Studies in Metodologie (Pretoria: RGN-Uitgewers, 1991), 246–47.

¹⁴ Botha, “Totstandkoming van Twee Kerkordes,” 217.

¹⁵ See Johan Bosman, ‘Ou Putte met Nuwe Water’, *Die Boodskapper*, September 2013.

¹⁶ See Nel, ‘The Rule of Christ in the Church Order of Dortrecht (1618/19): A Historical-Theological Study’.

Church in South Africa (GKSA). This is underscored by the above-mentioned research of Britz, where he indicates that the endorsement of the Church Order of Dort (1619) surfaced during the 1850's for the first time in the theological history of South Africa. He notes that before that the prominence of the 1619 Church Order "is absent in the Cape-Dutch theological and ecclesial corpus of literature."¹⁷

The pivotal issue before us is thus, whether the South African Reformed church orders own much more indebtedness to their own tradition, which was fundamentally influenced by the 1816 *General Regulation*. In the ensuing analyses of the four main church orders, this issue will be addressed and clarified.

4.3 Critical assessment of the South African Reformed church order's

The central question thus is: did the *General Regulation* (1816) shape the Afrikaans reformed church polity practice and church order application more than is expected or conceded? Could it be that not the Church Order of Dort (1619), but the 1816 *General Regulation* indeed moulded this ecclesiological trajectory in South African reformed church history? Should this be the case, the traditional Dort paradigm to disclose Afrikaans reformed church polity, would have to be reconsidered. This will be pursued and outlined in the next paragraph where a critical assessment of the reception of the *General Regulation* in the South African church orders will be considered.

4.3.1 Dutch Reformed Church (NGK)

As mentioned, the NGK received a church order in 1962. In the course of time this document was adapted and reviewed, but kept its basic form. An important development since 1962, that needs

¹⁷ See Britz, "As Adjusted to Our State of Affairs...". The Church Order of Dordt at the Cape of Good Hope: Restrictive Influence - Augmented Ecclesiastical Identity", 1.

to be highlighted, is the changes that have been introduced to manage 'labour relations' in and of the Dutch Reformed Church. Through these changes the church accepted the civil Labour Laws as the regulating laws for labour relations in the Church.¹⁸ In 1998 the church formulated the rules for its labour relations in the Church Order. This consequently led to the formulation and acceptance of the *Bestuursgids vir Diensverhoudinge*; a managerial manual for NGK congregations. The document counts more than 300 pages.¹⁹ The Church Order, on this point, is understood in terms of civil Labour Laws. This subsequently raised the question, Coertzen notes, on the authority of civil legislation in the church on the one hand, and on the other hand the freedom of religion.²⁰ The Church Order of 1962 stipulated its views in this regard in Articles 67.2 and 67.3:

*(67.2) Die kerk as instituut onderwerp hom aan die gesag en wette van die staat, in soverre dit sy deelname aan die regsverkeer en uitoefening van burgerlike regte betref en in soverre genoemde regsverkeer en burgerlike regte nie met die Woord van God in stryd is nie. (67.3) Die kerk aanvaar met dankbaarheid die beskerming deur die owerheid asook die erkenning van sy onvervreembare reg tot die beoefening van vryheid van godsdiens in belydenis en byeenkoms, met dien verstande dat genoemde vryhede nie misbruik word om die fondament van die staatsgesag te ondergrawe of om wanorde op publiekregtelike terrein te veroorsaak nie.*²¹

This clear stipulation that the civil laws only have authority over the church when not contrary to God's Word, Coertzen indicates, was removed in 1998.²² For the purposes of this research, the 2015 edition of the Church Order of the Dutch Reformed Church is utilised. The current Church Order reflects the 1998 adapted Article 67, where no reference is made that the authority of the

¹⁸ See P. Coertzen, 'Kerkorde of Arbeidswet: die posisie van predikante en ander persone wat in die NG Kerk werk', *NGTT | Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* 44, no. 3&4 (31 December 2003), <https://doi.org/10.17570/ngtt.2003.v44n3.a02>.

¹⁹ See "Predikantesake | Algemene Sinode," accessed January 7, 2019, <http://www.ngkerkas.co.za/index.php/taakspanne-vir-staande-werk/predikantesake/>.

²⁰ Coertzen, "Kerkorde of Arbeidswet."

²¹ Coertzen, 3.3.

²² Coertzen, 3.3.

civil law in the church is subject to its accordance with the Word of God.²³ Coertzen warns that the church is now in danger to exclusively think in functional terms and to order herself in terms of the viewpoint of the civil authority or effective management.²⁴ The 1998 accommodation of civil legislation in a functional church order, resembles the same ecclesiological trajectory as in the *General Regulation*. It signals a pragmatic and functional understanding of the church's order, without theological or confessional considerations. Civil legislation determines the ministry and life of the church, which can act and live as nothing more than an association. To rule herself in a Scriptural way of her own, *sui generis*, is sacrificed. The question now is whether this trajectory of thinking is present in more articles of the NGK Church Order.

At first sight it is apparent that, in terms of its format, the Church Order of the NGK follows to some extent the structure of the Church Order of Dort. It is divided as follows: introduction, offices, assemblies, the church's labour, discipline and relation of the church to the "outside world," that is, to institutions of and in society at large.²⁵ While the Church Order of the NGK formally corresponds to the structure and echoes certain articles of the Church Order Dort (1619), this is not in substance the case, as I argued in my previous research.²⁶ The purpose of the NGK Church Order is not, like the Church Order of Dort (1619), focussed on the marks of the true church that should be revealed in the local congregation, exposed to and created by the ministry of the Word, sacraments and discipline, but is instead dedicated to practical provisions demanded by current circumstances. An in-depth analysis suggests that the Church Order of the NGK does reflect substantial influence of the *General Regulation* (1816) in many of its articles.

²³ Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, 'Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funkisionele besluite en Riglyne, en Tussen-Orde', October 2015, 21, <http://ngkerk.org.za/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Kerkorde-2015-Volledig-Finaal.pdf>.

²⁴ Coertzen, "Kerkorde of Arbeidswet," 4.

²⁵ See Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, 'Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funkisionele besluite en Riglyne, en Tussen-Orde', October 2015, <http://ngkerk.org.za/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Kerkorde-2015-Volledig-Finaal.pdf>.

²⁶ See Nel, 'The Rule of Christ in the Church Order of Dortrecht (1618/19): A Historical-Theological Study'.

The typical 1816 terminology used by the NGK Church Order is already a clear indication in this regard. Terms like *algemene bepalinge*, *ring*, *moderamen*, *moderator*, etc. testify to *General Regulation* tradition.

In contrast to the Church Order of Dort (1619) and more in line with the *General Regulation* (1816), the articles that substantiate the divisions of the Church Order of the NGK are long and expanded and stipulated in the greatest details, point for point. The length and structure of this Church Order give the impression of a legal document, carefully judicially laboured. The Church Order and its Regulations cover more than 200 pages, clearly stipulated in a legal directed way. This explains why law commissions and even lawyers have to deal with church polity issues as specialists, as was recently conducted when the NGK was taken to court concerning the interpretation of the appeal procedure in its Church Order.²⁷ The Church Order of the NGK, bound to and by its many Regulations and Stipulations, mirrors the *General Regulation* (1816) which constituted the church in terms of so many statutes and provisions. The NGK Church Order attempts to manage all possible situations in the life of the church.

In consequence, as was the case with the *General Regulation* (1816), the freedom of the Word and its rule, are restrained to a subordinate position. Ecclesiastical law, procedures and the fair application of these, in conformity with civil legislation, determine the ministry and action of the church. The *Regulations* incorporated in the NGK Church Order have become the true “ruler” of the church, as these rules have to be followed in a strict sense. Even the confessional standards are understood in a judicial manner, as reflected in Article 1:

Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk staan gegrond op die Bybel as die heilige en onfeilbare Woord van God. Die leer wat die Kerk in ooreenstemming met die Woord van God bely, staan uitgedruk in die Formuliere van Eenheid soos vasgestel op die Sinode

²⁷ See Neels Jackson, ‘Hofsaak: Uitspraak kom “Voor einde vanjaar”’, *E•Kerkbode*, accessed 27 December 2018, <http://kerkbode.christians.co.za/2018/08/21/hofsaak-uitspraak-kom-voor-einde-vanjaar/>.

*van Dordrecht in 1618-1619, naamlik die sewe en dertig artikels van die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis, die Heidelbergse Kategismus en die vyf Dordtse Leerreëls.*²⁸

In this regard, the NGK accommodates the interpretation of the *Doleantie* as indicated in the introduction and chapter 2 of this study. The confessional standards are thus elevated to the accord of the association. In this there is a certain continuance with the *General Regulation* (1816) as well, since the confession of members now forms the basis of their association. It may be inferred that, similar to the *General Regulation* (1816), the Church Order of the NGK is primarily instigated by the free will of its members, and, therefore, has a different ecclesial departure point than that of the Church Order of Dort (1619). The church is defined in terms of its constituted members, as a voluntary society and not in terms of Christ the Head of his church and his Word through which He gathers his church. This judicial trajectory continues in Article 35.7.1-35.7.5 wherein it becomes clear that the acceptance of any new confessional standards for the church is almost impossible.²⁹

It is apparent that a compounded ecclesiastical concept functions in the Church Order, managed as an association. This is underscored by the title given to this Church Order: “Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk.” In this regard it follows the ecclesiastical polity of the *General Regulation* (1816) which also on purpose utilised the singular “Kerk” (church), and not the plural “Kercken”,³⁰ as in the Church Order of Dort (1619). The name “Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk” testifies that the departure point for this Church Order is conform to the *General Regulation* (1816), not the local congregations, but the

²⁸ Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, ‘Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funkisionele besluite en Riglyne, en Tussen-Orde’, 1.

²⁹ See Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, 11.

³⁰ See F.L. Rutgers, ed., *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden der Zestiende Eeuw* (’s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1889), 487, [http://www.kerkrecht.nl/main.asp?pagetype=onderdeel&item=138&subitem=4266&page=.](http://www.kerkrecht.nl/main.asp?pagetype=onderdeel&item=138&subitem=4266&page=)

institution. A local congregation does not constitute a church by and of itself. Every member is understood as being a member of the whole Dutch Reformed church.

In doing so, the Church Order of the NGK deems to fit the ideas of the 1816 *Regulation* where the congregations are not churches in the full sense of the word, but only departments of the church.³¹ Therefore, throughout the Church Order of the NGK, the local body of Christ is not referred to as churches, but as “gemeentes” (congregations). The local body is understood as a congregation of the Dutch Reformed Church. To use the name of the church in the singular and refer to local churches as congregations may sound meaningless, but, concurring with Duursema’s comments on Jonker, this is consistent with the ecclesiology of the *General Regulation* (1816).³² Duursema noted:

*Van die Ned. Geref. Kerk word ook in die enkelvoud gepraat, maar van die – meervoud – gemeentes (bv. die gemeentes van ’n ring of streeksinode). In die Ned. Geref. Kerk word honderd persent konsekwent van gemeentes – nie kerke nie – gepraat. Aanvanklik is ook van “aanneming” van lidmate gepraat en die oorgrote meerderheid dink aan lidmaatskap as lidmaatskap van die Ned. Geref. Kerk as geheel – nie as lidmaatskap van ’n gemeente nie.*³³

The Church Order of the NGK furthermore does not limit the authority of assemblies to the Word of God but only states (Article 23):

*Die besluite van vergaderinge of hulle gevolmagtigdes is bindend, maar daaroor kan in appèl na ’n meerdere vergadering of die meerdere vergadering se gevolmagtigde gegaan word.*³⁴

³¹ See Duursema, “Communio Sanctorum – Gereformeerde Kerkreg versus Kerklike Geskeidenheid. ’n Biografiese Bibliografie van W. D. Jonker, 1955 – 1968,” 347.

³² Duursema, 347.

³³ Duursema, 349.

³⁴ Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, ‘Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funkionele besluite en Riglyne, en Tussen-Orde’, 7.

Articles 6 and 7 of the *General Regulation* advised the same procedure, where an inferior church direction, conceiving itself aggrieved by the resolutions of a superior direction, has the privilege of bringing its complaint thereupon to a Direction higher positioned. All matters determined by the decision of an ecclesiastical direction are liable to appeal to the next higher ecclesial direction. The Church Order of the NGK, as the *General Regulation* (1816), therefore, does not stipulate, like the Church Order of Dort's Article 31, that a decision is not binding if deemed in conflict with the Word of God. As highest authority, the General Synod's decisions are final and sovereign on appeal. Beyond the General Synod there is no institution to appeal to. No further appeal is possible. The right to appeal is furthermore secondary to the decision of the Synod, and not primary as in Article 31 of the Church Order of Dort (1619).

The Church Order of the NGK undoubtedly is home to a "synodacracy".³⁵ Its Order does not serve the church in terms of Scriptural revelation of Christ's rule in and over his people, but rather focuses on upholding the authority and significance of the Synod, while congregational life progressively declines and shallows.³⁶ This was, by the way, one of the reasons that motivated the APK's secession in 1987.³⁷ Similar to the *General Regulation* (1816), the highest direction and authority is vested in the Synod. Both the *General Regulation* (1816) and the Church Order of the NGK portray the Synod as a permanent body. Commissions and moderating bodies functionally continue the major assemblies, even after these assemblies have ended. Moreover, the Synod as a permanent body owns property, financial investments and has permanent employees in its service.

³⁵ My translation. See Britz, "Oor die Kerkbegrip en die Ordening van die Kerklike lewe by die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk," 450.

³⁶ Britz, 450.

³⁷ See Coertzen, *Gepas en Ordelik. 'n Teologiese Verantwoording van die Orde vir en in die Kerk*, 70.

The Church Order of the NGK makes provision for a moderating body to ensure that the church as institution is managed effectively. The moderator, assessor, scribe and actuary moreover are vested with authority, as they are not only elected for the period of the assembly, but for a whole term which is usually four years.³⁸ Members of the Moderamen are also eligible for re-election whereby their terms can be extended to eight years and if re-elected into another position the same process can go on in perpetuity. Moreover, certain positions, like the “skriba”, are permanent positions on the Moderamen until the person retires, normally at the age of 65. This is a practice adopted from Article 19 of the *General Regulation* (1816), which determines that the Synod should have a permanent secretary and treasurer.³⁹

Furthermore, much like the moderating commissions of the *General Regulation* (1816), the authority and influence of the Moderamen in the Church Order of the NGK are stipulated in numerous points in the Regulations added to the Church Order of the NGK. In contrast to this, the Church Order of Dort (1619) carefully protects the church against all forms of hierarchy as it knows nothing of a permanent praeses, president or moderator.

While Article 22 of the NGK Church Order does stipulate that the major assemblies should only deal with matters that could not be concluded in the minor meetings, the Church Order in its provisions for the business of the General Synod, exceeds this limitation.⁴⁰ Major assemblies do not primarily receive their agenda from the minor assemblies, but in the stipulations, a hierarchical managing structure emerges with rising gradations of authority. The detailed description of the task of the major assemblies is much in line with the *General*

³⁸ See Duursema, “Communio Sanctorum – Gereformeerde Kerkreg versus Kerklike Geskeidenheid. ’n Biografiese Bibliografie van W. D. Jonker, 1955 – 1968,” 78.

³⁹ See Cornelis Hooijer, *Kerkelijke Wetten voor de Hervormden in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* (Zalt-Bommel: Joh. Noman en zoon, 1846), Article 19, <http://www.reformed-digital.net/node/3383>.

⁴⁰ See Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, ‘Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funktionale besluite en Riglyne, en Tussen-Orde’, 7.

Regulation (1816). The *General Regulation* (1816) stipulates this in order to regulate the manner by which church affairs may be managed for and by consistories, classical, provincial directions, and the Synod; and also in regard to ecclesiastical inspection and discipline, thereby taking care to avoid, as much as possible, by strict limitations and precepts, every tendency to what is arbitrary and uncertain. It may be inferred from this that the Church Order of the NGK with its long, detailed and precise regulations, also have in view to limit what is arbitrary and uncertain. The Church Order of Dort (1619) in contrast does not limit, but rather provides liberty for the Word.

This is furthermore clear as the Church Order of the NGK only requires credential letters for delegates to major assemblies and not as the Church Order of Dort (1619), letters of instruction as well.⁴¹ This is because the Moderamen prepares the agenda of the synod and not the local congregations through their instruction letters. This is in line with the *General Regulation* (1816), which states that delegates are not in any way bound by letters of instructions from assemblies or churches which they may be considered to represent (Article 4). In the Church Order of Dort (1619) the delegates to major assemblies were required to submit credential letters and instructions (Article 33).

The General Synod of the NGK moreover comprises, like the Synod of the *General Regulation* (1816), a small group of people (in terms of representation). Article 38.1 of the Church Order of the NGK limits the number of delegates to the General Synod to 200. A small number of the offices serving in the local church are thus present, more or less 20%. Nevertheless, the Synod makes binding decisions for the entire denomination and is the highest assembly in the church.

⁴¹ See Article 30.4 Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, 9.

While the authority of the Synod is not restricted by the Word in the NGK Church Order, it is restricted in a different way. The Church Order of the NGK allows for provincial synods to secede from the General Synod. With the unification of the provincial Dutch Reformed churches in 1962, the provincial synods kept full control over their own property, finances, etc. Each provincial synod moreover has its own Church Order and Regulations, related to the Church Order of the NGK. This position of the provincial synods (or churches) is reflected in Article 36 and 37 of the Church Order of the NGK:

Die samestellende kerke of sinodes behou volle seggenskap oor hul eiendomme, finansies, werksaamhede, ensovoorts, wat hulle voor toetreding tot die algemene sinodale verband gehad het of daarna verwerf, behalwe die wat volgens die Kerkorde aan die Algemene Sinode oorgedra is of sal word, of deur die Algemene Sinode in trust gehou word.

Dit staan die samestellende kerke vry om met behoud van alle regte, voorregte, besittings, naam, ensovoorts, uit die algemene sinodale verband te tree wanneer hulle so 'n stap voor God in die lig van sy Woord kan regverdig.⁴²

Like the above articles, Article 14 of the *General Regulation* (1816) determined that the Walloon, English and Scottish Presbyterian churches will be allowed to adopt their own particular and private regulations, according to their respective exigencies and circumstances. Concurring with Dursema, the Church Order of the NGK is clearly devoted to a functional church polity with a compounded view of unity: “’n Mens mis. ..’n Skriftuurlike, konfessionele kerkbegrip om oor die eenheid van die Gefedereerde Ned. Geref. Kerke te dink.”⁴³ The visible and invisible church does not overlap here, but as in the case with the *Regulation*, there is a clear separation. The unity of

⁴² Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, 11.

⁴³ See Dursema, “Communio Sanctorum – Gereformeerde Kerkreg versus Kerklike Geskeidenheid. ’n Biografiese Bibliografie van W.D. Jonker, 1955 – 1968,” 380.

the NGK can at anytime be separated if a provincial synod sees it fit without in any way affecting the true church as the true church is only invisible.

The authority of the General Synod is moreover restricted in Article 44.1 and 44.2. These are the only two articles in the Church Order of the NGK that may not be changed by the General Synod. It states:

44.1 Die wysiging van die Belydenis kan alleen geskied nadat elke sinode afsonderlik met 'n tweederdemeerderheid én twee derdes van alle kerkrade elk met 'n tweederdemeerderheid ten gunste daarvan besluit het.

44.2 Artikel 44.1 en 44.2 van die Kerkorde word gewysig nadat elke sinode afsonderlik met 'n tweederdemeerderheidstem ten gunste daarvan besluit het en die Algemene Sinode daarna met 'n tweederdemeerderheidstem ten gunste daarvan besluit.⁴⁴

These articles make it clear that major assemblies in the NGK are not constituted by the Word and the offices delegated. If the General Synod was truly a major assembly (where a majority of the offices serving in local congregations were represented and constituted by the Word) then it could and should make binding decisions, even in terms of confessional standards. The underlying scope of these articles is that the major assemblies are actually not major, but higher assemblies. The Church Order has to provide for articles to protect the local congregations from the hierarchy of its own General Synod. Through its protection of the local congregation, the hierarchical structure is revealed. This is underscored by Article 65 that makes it clear that the General Synod is the highest and last body on matters of appeal in discipline procedures.⁴⁵

Similar to the *General Regulation* (1816), the procedure for discipline is carefully formulated. Regulation 18 of the Church Order of the NGK stipulates in over 70 points the procedures to be followed.⁴⁶ It specifies procedures for discipline in terms of civil law and refers

⁴⁴ Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, 'Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funksionele besluite en Riglyne, en Tussen-Orde', 12.

⁴⁵ See Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, 19.

⁴⁶ See Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, 81–86.

to this process as disciplinary measures. Misconduct is also investigated by an investigative body or “ondersoekliggaam.” The legal framework of the Church Order of the NGK, like the *General Regulation* (1816), is apparent in the method of decision making by assemblies, as it thinks of the decisions of major in terms of majority votes and sealed billets, language nowhere to be found in the Church Order of Dort (1619).

To conclude: The underlying scope of the *General Regulation* permeates the Church Order of the NGK. The NGK Church Order adjusts to address the contemporary practical situation of its day, but does not adhere to the principles set out by the Church Order of Dort (1619) as claimed, but rather to the principles of the *General Regulation*. Therefore its polity is always unfinished and provisional. In contrast to the scholarship in the NGK it may be inferred that the *jus constituendum* of the NGK Church Order is thus the *General Regulation*.

4.3.2 Niederdutch Reformed Church of Africa (NHKA)

Throughout its history the NHKA relied much on the church regulations and orders of the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*. The influence of the *General Regulation* (1816) in the polity of the NHKA is thus clear. When the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* adopted a new Church Order in 1951, the NHKA followed. Within the NHKA this was also understood as a return to a Presbyterian form of church governance. As in the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, the question is whether the South African 1951 Church Laws really dismantled the decision-making structure and the line of thought that had been embodied by the Dutch *Regulation* for over 150 years. This was clearly not the case. The NHKA moreover not only ‘adopted’ this Church Order from the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, but amended and added to the Order according to the state of affairs in South Africa. In this way the 1951 Church Law continued with the practice of the ethnical demarcation of membership in the form of Article 3.

The 1951 Church Law with its Article 3 guided the polity of the NHKA until the Church Law was replaced by a Church Order in 1998 and Article 3 abandoned. But this did not mean the end of the racial issue in the NHKA, as the stipulation of the church being a ‘volkskerk’ would remain in the Church Order until its removal in 2016.⁴⁷ Dreyer indicates that since 1995 there has been a movement within the NHKA to do away with Article 3 and the ‘volkskerk’ ecclesiology.⁴⁸ The new political situation in South Africa with the termination of Apartheid and the election of a new democratic government in 1994, thus stimulated an adjustment to the state of affairs within the NHKA. With the dominant racial issue cleared from the polity of the NHKA, the question remains if the *General Regulation* which was i.a. employed to accommodate Article 3, still determines and informs the polity in the NHKA? This question will be addressed in the following paragraphs.

The Church Order of the NHKA is structured in ten headings: the confession; offices; assemblies; congregations and church; proclamation; relation to other churches; marriage, family and education; discipline; property and goods of the church and church order.⁴⁹ This indicates, like the Church Order of the NGK, that the Church Order of the NHKA has a formal familiarity with the structure of the Church Order of Dort (1619). But substantively the Church Order of Dort does not surface as indicated by myself.⁵⁰ While portraying some indebtedness to the Church Order of Dort (1619), the NHKA Church Order does not reflect the Christological distinctiveness and scope of the 1619 Church Order.

⁴⁷ B.J. Van Wyk, “Die verband tussen ekklesiologie en kerkreg: ’n Hervormde perspektief,” *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 73, no. 1 (November 30, 2017): 8, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i1.4608>.

⁴⁸ W.A. Dreyer, ‘Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika as Volkskerk: Oorsig en Herbesinning’, *HTS Teologiese Studies* 4, no. 62 (2006).

⁴⁹ See Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk, “Kerkorde van die Nederduitche Hervormde Kerk van Afrika,” i–vii.

⁵⁰ See Nel, ‘The Rule of Christ in the Church Order of Dortrecht (1618/19): A Historical-Theological Study’.

The first Article of the Church Order of the NHKA comprises the confessional foundation of the Church. In this there is, as in the NGK Church Order, a certain continuance with the *General Regulation* (1816), since the confession of members forms the basis of their association. The departure point is the faith of its members. It constitutes the church (singular) around the faith (confession) of its members as a voluntary society. Local churches are not primarily bound together by Christ, but by the individual free will of its members. This is articulated by the first Article:

Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika bely in gemeenskap met die kerk van alle eeue ons geloof in die drie-enige God, Vader, Seun en Heilige Gees, wat alles wat vir ons verlossing nodig is duidelik en voldoende deur die Woord, die Bybel, bekend maak.

Ons belydenis word in die drie ekumeniese belydenisse verwoord, naamlik die Apostoliese Geloofsbelydenis, die Geloofsbelydenis van Nicea en die Geloofsbelydenis genoem na Atanasius; asook in drie reformatoriese belydenisskrifte, die drie formuliere van eenheid, te wete: die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis, die Heidelbergse Kategismus en die Dordtse Leerreëls.⁵¹

Familiarity with the typical terms of the 1816 *Regulation* is furthermore clear with reference of ‘ringe, moderamen and dagbestuur.’ The Church Order of the NHKA is, moreover, a lengthy document, with hundreds of ordinances that gives the impression of a judicial law rather than a church order centred around the Word. The order, rules and ordinances that are piled up one after the other, stipulate in detail how the church should be managed. Precept after precept ensures that the members, congregations and meetings adhere to the rules of the church. In this regard the Church Order of the NHKA portrays, like the *General Regulation* (1816), a judicial tone. It gives the impression of an authoritative law that aims to regulate the church. The Church

⁵¹ Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk, ‘Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika’, 2016, 1, <http://www.nhka.org/index.php/so-werk-ons-11/amptelike-dokumente.html>.

Order is therefore officially and authoritatively laid out in a number of provisions and rules in terms of a legal directed framework that is only accessible for legal specialists. The first Order Rule is subsequently followed up by 4 pages of precepts detailing what exactly the confessional identity of the NGKA entails.⁵²

The cover page imprints the lawful nature of this Order as it calls those in office and members of the church to adhere to the Church Order.⁵³ Moreover, members of the church who object to a decision made by the General Synod are reminded (Ordinance 1) that the decision of the Synod is binding, and the correct procedures are of importance when appealing against any decision.⁵⁴ Church discipline is also described in terms of detailed proceedings.⁵⁵ This detailed Church Order therefore gives the impression of a law.

The Church is also understood from the singular, where the congregations of the NHKA is seen as branches of the church that should adhere to its rules.⁵⁶ The Church Order is therefore entitled “Kerkorde van die Nederduitsch Hervormde kerk van Afrika.”⁵⁷ where the church as institution takes precedence. This is underscored by Order Rule 2.3 which stipulates that congregations of the church are not allowed to break their bond with the church.⁵⁸ The church is furthermore seen as being a mere figure of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church (Order rule 2).⁵⁹ Order Rule 7 underlines this, stating that the church is the visible form of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church and therefore the church is called to strive towards unity and cooperation with other churches.⁶⁰ The visible and invisible church therefore does not intersect

⁵² See Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk, 1–4.

⁵³ See Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk, ‘Kerkorde van die Nederduitche Hervormde Kerk van Afrika’, 2016.

⁵⁴ See Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk, 3.

⁵⁵ See Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk, 82–92.

⁵⁶ See Ordinance 2.1.1: “Die Kerk bestaan uit gemeentes...” Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk, 6.

⁵⁷ Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk, ‘Kerkorde van die Nederduitche Hervormde Kerk van Afrika’, 2016.

⁵⁸ See Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk, 5.

⁵⁹ See Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk, 5.

⁶⁰ See Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk, 77.

but is separated. In this the Church Order of the NHKA indicates continuance with the *General Regulation* (1816).

In terms of the binding nature of the decisions of assemblies, the Church Order of the NHKA does not, like the Church Order of Dort (1619), limit the authority of the church to the Word of God, but simply communicates that the decisions of the assemblies are binding.⁶¹ Ordinance 10.5 is a portrayal of this, as it stipulates that the NHKA only allows the Word of God freedom to rule in the congregations in emergency situations that in some way are not accounted for by Order rules and Ordinances (Church Order) drafted by the Synod.

*In noodsituasies waarvoor die Kerkorde nie voorsiening maak nie, neem die vergaderings van ampte, ampsdraers en lidmate besluite op grond van die Skrif, in ooreenstemming met die belydenis van die Kerk, getrou aan die Kerkorde en met inagneming van die gebruike van die Kerk (reg van usansie).*⁶²

A hierarchical authority thus emerges with the highest authority seated in the Synod. The Church Order functions consequently as binding laws and stipulations. Candidates for ministry sign a formulary wherein they promise obedience to the Church Order of the NHKA (Ordinance 3.1).⁶³ The Church Order determines the detailed task of each major assembly and the agenda of major assemblies are therefore not truly delegated by minor assemblies (Order rule 4.2).⁶⁴ A striking resemblance to the 1816 *Regulation* thus emerges.

The fact that the NHKA until recently bound its congregations to the idea of a ‘volkskerk’ where congregations had to be ethnically demarcated, also testifies of the

⁶¹ See Ordinance 1. Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk, ‘Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika’, 2013, 3.

⁶² Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk, 98.

⁶³ See Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk, ‘Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika’, 2016, 20.

⁶⁴ See Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk, 42.

influence of the associated understanding of the church and its membership that was adopted from the *General Regulation* (1816). The *General Regulation* did not ethnically demarcate membership, but the defining and demarcating of membership originated in the *Regulation*. The *Regulation* stated in its first article that those who, on confession of faith, receive membership or are incorporated or adopted as members of the church, belong to the Reformed church association. This includes those who were baptised in the Reformed church association and those who, with proper attestation of their baptism or membership, join the church.

This demarcation of membership and separation was apologetically interpreted to ethnically demarcate membership in the NHKA. This is strengthened through the employment of the interpretation of the *Doleantie* polity which also separated the visible from the invisible church. Although the ethnical demarcation has now been abandoned in the Church Order of the NHKA, the Church Order continues in this same trajectory by stipulating who may be a member of the church and how one becomes a member of the church:

*Lidmate van die Kerk is diegene wat kinders van lidmate van die gemeente is, wat deur die doop en belydenis van geloof dooplidmate en belydende lidmate van die Kerk geword het, of andersins deur die kerkraadsvergadering toegelaat is.*⁶⁵

The influence of the *Regulation* is therefore still very much present and the church thus understood as a voluntary association (among many), which one can freely join or leave. These articles, from a theological point of view, does not make room to indicate (or confess) that it is

⁶⁵ Order rule 2.2. See Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk, 5.

Christ that gathers his church, but rather places full emphasis on members freely deciding to associate with the church. The mere structure of the Church Order of the NHKA suggests a formal relation with the *General Regulation* as it begins (just after the judicial binding of the confessions) with membership. It departs from the faith (confession) of its members and then stipulates who may be members.

The polity of the *General Regulation* surfaces again in Ordinance 2.5 that makes it clear that all the members of the church collectively elect elders and deacons and make binding decisions at congregational meetings.⁶⁶ Although this article protects the local congregation from hierarchy, it results in the same association polity of the *Regulation*. In contrast, the Church Order of Dort (1619) confesses that the church is not a group of people that arbitrary gathers as a voluntary society, but the body of Christ that is governed through his Word and Spirit.

Order Rule 10 concludes the Church Order of the NHKA by stipulating that the Church Order of the NHKA is aimed towards the efficient accomplishment of the task of the church.⁶⁷ The *General Regulation* thus permeates the Church Order of the NHKA. This pertains not to the rule of Christ in his church (Dort), but to the effective management of the church. The Church Order of the NHKA demarcates the order of the church to a technical issue that has no relation with the Word and the confessions of the church. The church is understood as a voluntary society and the Church Order aimed at efficiently managing this society. The character of this Church Order consists in law or statute while leaving no room for the Word. The church as an *institutum* takes precedence over the church as *ministra*. For the NHKA the Church Order is therefore a matter of adapting to modern circumstances, while using the principles set forth in the *General Regulation* to accomplish this.

⁶⁶ See Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk, 10.

⁶⁷ See Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk, 98.

4.3.3 Afrikaans Protestant Church (APK)

As mentioned before, the APK originated from a secession from the NGK in 1987. The secession centred on the racial issue and reached a summit with the adoption of the document *Kerk en Samelewing* by the NGK Synod in 1986, in which ethnical demarcation of membership and Apartheid were rejected.⁶⁸ Many members of the NGK disagreed with this decision and this resulted in the statement *Geloof en Protes*, which Strauss notes, reached back to the 1966 statement of the NGK *Ras, volk en nasie en volkeverhoudinge in die lig van die Skrif*, wherein Apartheid and ethnical demarcation of membership were theologically justified.⁶⁹ The rejection of the decision of the 1986 NGK Synod consequently led to the establishment of the APK. Article 3 still stands – just as the controversial Article 3 in the Church Order of the NHKA - in the centre of attention and is thus basic to the church polity of the APK.

But Article 3 did not originate within the APK or the NHKA. Britz traced its source to the *Wetten en Bepalingen voor de Nederduitsch Hervormde of Gereformeerde Kerk in de Zuid Afrikaansche Rrepubliek* of 1894.⁷⁰ This was the church order of the merged church of the Dutch Reformed Church of the South African Republic and the Niederdutch Reformed Church in the South African Republic (NHKA). In this 1894 Order the ethnical limitation of membership of the church surfaces.⁷¹ Article 3 stated:

Tot elke dezer bijzondere gemeenten behooren alleen blanken:
 (1) *Die op belijdenis des geloofs tot lidmaten zijn aangenomen;*
 (2) *Die door den doop in haar gemeenschap staan;*

⁶⁸ P.J. Strauss, *Gereformeerdes onder die Suiderkruis 1652-2011: die Verhaal van vier Afrikaanse Kerke* (Bloemfontein: SUN MeDIA, 2015), 67.

⁶⁹ Strauss, 73–74.

⁷⁰ *Wetten en Bepalingen voor de Nederduitsch Hervormde of Gereformeerde Kerk in de Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek. Hersien en Vastgesteld in de Algemeene Vergadering Gehouden te Pretoria, op den 14den Mei en volgende dagen van het jaar 1894.* (Kaapstad: Hofmeijer en Rechter, 1894).

⁷¹ Britz, “As Adjusted to Our State of Affairs...”. *The Church Order of Dordt at the Cape of Good Hope: Restrictive Influence - Augmented Ecclesiastical Identity*”, 7.

- (3) *Die door geboorte tot haar betrekking staan;*
 (4) *Die tot andere Kerkgenootschappen met Gereformeerde belijdenis behoorende, op bewijs van doop of lidmaatschap worden erkend. Die Kerk laat, echter, geen gelijkstelling toe tusschen blanken en kleurlingen.*⁷²

This article would remain in the Laws and Regulations of the *Nederduitsch Hervormde of Gereformeerde Kerk* in Transvaal until the NGK united in a General Synod in 1962 and accepted its current Church Order. The members in the NHKA which did not unite into the newly merged church in the 1890s, continued as the NHKA.⁷³ The racial demarcation was not present in the Church Laws of 1862 or 1870 of the NHKA. It surfaces for the first time in the Church Law of 1904 and continued in its new Church Law of 1951.⁷⁴ It is thus apparent that Article 3 did not originate within the NHKA, but was adopted from the NGK in the South African Republic.⁷⁵ The General Synod of the NGK did not adopt this article when a new Church Order was accepted in 1962 (although racial demarcation of membership was the norm), but the NHKA continued with Article 3 until the acceptance of their new Church Order in 1998.

The secession of the APK from the NGK was thus 25 years after the unification of the various Dutch Reformed churches and the consequent acceptance of a new Church Order in 1962. The APK thus linked itself to the former Church Laws of *Nederduitsch Hervormde of Gereformeerde Kerk in de Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek* and still continues in this trajectory. As these Church Laws were shaped by the 1816 *General Regulation*,⁷⁶ the question surfaces whether the Church Order of the APK also embodies the same *Regulation*. This will now be investigated.

⁷² *Wetten en Bepalingen voor de Nederduitsch Hervormde of Gereformeerde Kerk in de Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek. Hersien en Vastgesteld in de Algemeene Vergadering Gehouden te Pretoria, op den 14den Mei en volgende dagen van het jaar 1894.*, 2.

⁷³ Strauss, *Gereformeerdes onder die Suiderkruis 1652-2011: die Verhaal van vier Afrikaanse Kerke*, 38.

⁷⁴ Van Wyk, "Die verband tussen ekklesiologie en kerkreg."

⁷⁵ Britz, "As Adjusted to Our State of Affairs...". *The Church Order of Dordt at the Cape of Good Hope: Restrictive Influence - Augmented Ecclesiastical Identity*", 6.

⁷⁶ Britz, 5.

Like the Church Orders of the NGK and NHKA, it is not difficult to see the formal orientation of the Church Order of the APK towards the Church Order of Dort (1619). The Church Order of the APK consists of 10 sections: the identity of the denomination and its confession; purpose; church and membership; offices; church assemblies; major assemblies; the local church; discipline; relations to the outside and administration. It is clear that the APK explicitly tries to follow the structure of the Church Order of Dort (1619) in their church government and –order.⁷⁷ However, as indicated in previous research, the Church Order of Dort (1619) only structurally functions here and do not permeate the APK Church Order.⁷⁸

The influence of the *General Regulation* (1816) reflects in the terminology of the *General Regulation* (1816) used in the Church Order of the APK. Like the Church Orders of the NGK and NHKA, the Church Order of the APK also refers to the classis meeting as the ring,⁷⁹ and allow for permanent commissions.⁸⁰ This is clearly adapted and informed by the *General Regulation*.

What is furthermore apparent in the Church Order of the APK, is the obvious similarities with regard to the departure point of the Church Orders of the NGK and NHKA. Article 1.2.1 accordingly states:

Die Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk is gegrond op die Bybel as die heilige en onfeilbare Woord van God. Die leer wat die kerk bely as betroubare samevatting van die waarhede van die Bybel, is vervat in die Formuliere van Eenheid soos vasgestel deur die Sinode van Dordrecht in 1618–1619, naamlik die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis, die Heidelbergse Kategismus en die vyf Dordtse Leerreëls.⁸¹

⁷⁷ See Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereëls vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite* (Hatfield: Lig in Duisternis, 2014).

⁷⁸ See Nel, 'The Rule of Christ in the Church Order of Dortrecht (1618/19): A Historical-Theological Study'.

⁷⁹ See Article 35. Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereëls vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite*, 38.

⁸⁰ See Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, 76.

⁸¹ Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, 2.

The most fundamental point of reference for the Church Order of the APK comprises the faith of its members (confession). This article thus serves the Church in judicially structuring her polity. A clear comparison with the *Regulation* and the *Doleantie* interpretation thus also surfaces in the APK Church Order. As a church that seceded from the NGK, a close kinship with the “Kuper-Bavinck erfenis” is indeed held in high esteem.⁸²

However, the Church Order deviates from the “erfenis” and the Church Order of Dort (1619) in the clear terms of its ethnical preferences for membership that follows in Article 3. This is in line with the thinking of the *General Regulation* (1816) that also places the articles on membership before the assemblies (or ‘besture’). The Church Order of the APK - as the *General Regulation* (1816) - begins with membership particulars of the church. APK Church Order Article 3 states:

3.1 Kerk van Christus is die vrug van die werk van die Drie-enige God onder die Koningskap van Christus.

3.2 Net blanke Afrikaners, asook ander blankes wat hulle met blanke Afrikaners vereenselwig, wat die saligmakende geloof in Christus het (Rom. 10:9–10), wat die belydenis, leer en die Kerkorde van die Afrikaanse Protestantse kerke in kerkverband (kyk Artikel 66) onderskryf, kan saam met hulle kinders lidmaatskap van ’n plaaslike kerk (gemeente) verkry.

*3.3 Die Here leer ons in Gen. 11, Deut. 32:8, Hand. 2:8, Hand. 17:26, Openb. 7:9, Openb. 21:24 en 26, Openb. 22:2 dat die inheemse kerk sy wil is. Elke AP Kerk wil ’n openbaring van die liggaam van Christus wees en ook die verinheemsing van die kerk van Christus onder die Afrikaner-Boerevolk naas andere volkere, van watter kultuur hulle ook mag wees.*⁸³

In this deliberate (and effective) periphrasis of membership, the APK is without doubt following in the polity of the *Regulation* (1816). The invisible and visible church is separated and the church is merely considered as a revelation of the body of Christ through the indigenization

⁸² Bosman, “Ou putte met nuwe water.”

⁸³ Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereels vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite*, 3.

amongst the white Afrikaner “volk”. This is the most fundamental point of distinction in which the Church Order comes to a right of its own.

It is thus clear that the Church Order of the APK is embedded in the same ecclesiological departure point as that of the *General Regulation* (1816) which views the church as a voluntary society and as a national (Dutch) church. Where the Church Order of Dort (1619) deemed the offices, assemblies, doctrine, sacraments, ceremonies and discipline as necessary elements for good order in the church of Christ - and in that sequence -, the Church Order of the APK indeed includes all these elements, but adds – decisively - membership.⁸⁴ This addition and qualification have theological and ecclesiological implications. Britz asserts e.g. that the elements of the Church Order of Dort (1619) “are indispensable building blocks of the building erected by Christ. It's also his choice. Supplementing them, or own inventions, simply boils down to the contempt of the King of the Church. In the four matters, Christ is taken on his Word and the order He ordained in His Word is received. In terms of these the Church is acknowledged as the Church of the Lord in which the Gospel of grace resounds.”⁸⁵

By considering the articles of membership of primary importance for the good order in the church, the Church Order of the APK communicates, like the *General Regulation* (1816), that the member and her/his faith precedes all other matters. By this the church is demarcated to nothing less than a voluntary association which persons (of particular colour and language) can decide to join or leave. Not the covenant, but the individual's faith is the point of departure. This is stipulated in further detail in Article 4:

⁸⁴ See Article 2. Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, 2–3.

⁸⁵ My translation. See R.M. Britz, *Dordt na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, ed. in S.A. Strauss and R.M. Britz, vol. 8, UV Teologiese Studies (Bloemfontein: Pro Christo-Publikasies, 1995), 63. “Dit is onmisbare boustene van die gebou wat Christus oprig. Dit is ook sy keuse. Aanvulling daarvan, of eie bedinkings, kom gewoon op minagting van die Koning van die Kerk neer. In die vier aangeleenthede word Christus op sy Woord geneem en word die ordening wat Hy in sy woord verordineer, opgevang. Daaraan word die Kerk as Kerk van die Here geken en daarin weerklink die evangelie van genade.”

Lidmaatskap is net aan 'n kerk (gemeente) verbind en word verkry deur:

4.1 aflegging van belydenis van geloof deur 'n dooplidmaat of 'n ongedoopte persoon na verbondsonderrig onder leiding van, toelating deur en toesig van die ouderlingeraad (terwyl die gemeente sy reg tot approbasie kan uitoefen tot voor die finale toestemming deur die ouderlingeraad tot belydenisaflegging);

4.2 opname deur die ouderlingeraad op grond van 'n attestaat of bewys (verklaring) van lidmaatskap deur 'n ander Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (gemeente);

4.3 opname na goedkeuring deur die ouderlingeraad van die attestaat of bewys (verklaring) van lidmaatskap, of op grond van die getuienis van twee lidmate van AP Kerke insake die aansoeker se vorige kerklidmaatskap (na approbasie deur die gemeente) wat deur belydende lidmate vanuit ander erkende Gereformeerde (of Gereformeerdes) kerke as aansoek om lidmaatskap ingelewer is.

*4.4 Indien 'n lidmaat wat, kragtens die vrywillige beginsel en die sinodale besluit oor vloeibare grense, woonagtig is binne die grense van een gemeente, maar lidmaatskap in 'n naburige gemeente wil verkry en hierdie ouderlingeraad bereid is om sy/haar aansoek te oorweeg, stel **hierdie** ouderlingeraad die **huidige** ouderlingeraad in kennis met die versoek da 'n attestaat ten opsigte van die lidmaat uitgereik moet word, tensy 'n moontlike tugondersoek hangende is, wat eers afgehandel moet word.⁸⁶*

The Church Order of the APK furthermore follows the introduction of the *General Regulation* (1816) by not only stating who and how a person can become a member of the church, but also how membership is terminated.⁸⁷ Articles 3 - 6 of the APK Church Order can be interpreted as adapted articles of Article 1 and 2 of the *General Regulation*. The only difference is the judicial protection of the confessional standards in the first Article of the APK Church Order, adopted from the *Doleantie*, but in line with the spirit of the *Regulation* as indicated in chapter 2.

It is significant that the ethnical demarcation of the church was not only the primary focus of church polity of the NGK, NHKA and APK for the most part of the 20th century, but it influenced the existence of these churches and continues to hold a crucial position in the APK.⁸⁸

The prominence that the respective Article 3s had in the Church Order of the NHKA and

⁸⁶ Article 4 and 5. Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereels vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite*, 3–4.

⁸⁷ See Article 6 and 7. Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, 7–8.

⁸⁸ See Strauss, *Gereformeerdes onder die Suiderkruis 1652-2011: die Verhaal van vier Afrikaanse Kerke*, 87.

continues to have in the Church Order of the APK, confirms this observation. This article is so crucial for the APK this particular Article is of such ecclesial weight, that its acceptance, in writing, is compulsory for APK membership.⁸⁹ Addendum 2.2.1 to the Church Order of the APK furthermore requires that, if a member of the NGK, NHKA or GKSA wishes to become a member of the APK, Articles 1, 2 and 3 of the Church Order of the APK (among other points) has to be explained incisively. It must be established whether she/he is convinced to associate with these articles.⁹⁰

The basic elements of the APK's activities, dogmas, and postures of discipline are determined by the same departing principles as that of the *General Regulation* (1816). In the Church Order of the APK, Christ is not the source that creates the *communio sanctorum* through the offices that He has instituted for this purpose. Rather, the member and her/his faith precede Christ. By the stipulation of the membership of the church in terms of the endorsement of Article 3,⁹¹ the Church Order of the APK separates itself in sharp contrast from the Church Order of Dort (1619). Concurring with Duursema, “deur gelowiges van ander rasse uit die kerk uit te sluit, word die grense wat die Skrif en die Gereformeerde Belydenis daarstel, oorskry.”⁹² These fundamental articles of the Church Order of the APK are, therefore, essentially, neither about the Word, nor about the unity in confessional standards, or the Church Order of Dort (1619). They are the expression of irrefutable concerns not to mix with people of colour or different languages. To serve and justify this purpose, the views of the *General Regulation* and the *Doleantie* interpretation of the relation between the visible and invisible church are utilised. The association polity of the *Regulation* suits the purpose.

⁸⁹ See Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereels vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite*, 3.

⁹⁰ See Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, 83.

⁹¹ Along with faith in Christ and the endorsement of the confessional documents of course.

⁹² See Duursema, “Communio Sanctorum – Gereformeerde Kerkreg versus Kerklike Geskeidenheid. ’n Biografiese Bibliografie van W.D. Jonker, 1955 – 1968,” 15.

The judicial tone already present in the first APK articles permeates the Church Order and its stipulations. Every aspect in the life of the Church is judicially regulated, even the discipline (tug) is described in terms of procedures by piling precept upon precept.⁹³ To enforce the Church Order, the authority of the major assemblies and especially the decisions of the Synod emerge as an important theme. Stipulation 18A gives the “Ring” the authority on deciding if a congregation may call a minister when it has fewer than 200 members.⁹⁴ Efficiency is thus ensured by giving the “Ring” authority over small congregations. However, this ruling indicates a hierarchical structure. This is underscored by Article 31 of the Church Order of the APK that discusses - like the Church Order of Dort’s Article 31 - the binding nature of the assemblies’ decisions. Article 31 of the Church Order of the APK allows for an appeal on the decisions of assemblies, but does not put forth the right of appeal first, as in the Church Order of Dort (1619), but rather emphasises the binding nature of the decisions of assemblies:

Die besluit van ‘n vergadering is bindend, maar wanneer ‘n lidmaat of kerkvergadering hom verontreg voel of meen dat ‘n besluit in stryd is met die Skrif en/of Belydenisskrifte en/of Kerkorde en/of ‘n besluit van ‘n kerkvergadering, kan hy appeleer na ‘n meerdere vergadering of ‘n beswaarskrif indien by die betrokke vergadering wat ‘n besluit geneem het, ter motivering vir die verandering van die besluit.⁹⁵

In this the Church Order of the APK fails to fully allow freedom for the Word of God to rule in the congregations. The Church Order of the APK allows for an appeal, but does not create the freedom for this to have any effect and nowhere limits the binding nature of decisions of major assemblies to the Word. An appeal is also only valid if the right judicial procedure is followed

⁹³ See Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereels vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite*, 51–63.

⁹⁴ See Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, 20.

⁹⁵ Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, 30.

(Stipulation 31D).⁹⁶ The Synod is the highest body of appeal (Article 58)⁹⁷ and the member who brings the appeal is responsible for the cost of the appeal (Addendum 4).⁹⁸ From this it is clear that an appeal to any decision is practically impossible.

This hierarchical structure also surfaces in the detailed description of the task of the respective major assemblies. These assemblies do not primarily receive their instructions from the minor assemblies, but the Church Order (drafted by the Synod) determines their task.⁹⁹ In this the Church Order of the APK is in line with the Church Orders of the NGK and NHKA and also in continuance with the *General Regulation*.

This is confirmed by Article 66.2.1, stating in strict terminology that disobedience of the Church Order will not be tolerated and may even result in the excommunication of a congregation from the denomination:

*Gemeentes wat eiewillig of doelbewus enige artikel of bepaling van die Kerkorde of sinodale besluit verander, misken, ignoreer, net as 'n riglyn ag of verwerp, verbreek hul verklaring van onderskrywing van die artikels en bepalings van die Kerkorde en sinodale besluite en verbreek daardeur die band met die Afrikaanse Protestantse kerkverband. Die sinode kan sodanige gemeente buite kerkverband plaas.*¹⁰⁰

Read together with Article 31, it conveys the message that even when the Church Order of the APK and the Synodal decisions of the APK are in conflict with the Word, they would still be held as binding. This commanding tone is not present in the Church Order of Dort (1619), which does not threaten, but provides liberty for the Word of God to rule in the church. This is an interesting aspect of APK thinking, as one of the reasons it seceded from the NGK in 1987 was because it

⁹⁶ See Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, 31.

⁹⁷ See Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, 59.

⁹⁸ See Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, 94.

⁹⁹ See Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, 37–46.

¹⁰⁰ Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, 69.

did not accept the decisions of the NGK Synod at that time as binding for the local congregations.¹⁰¹ It may therefore be asked whether the APK Church Order is not contradicting the very reason for the church's existence. In fact, local congregations are under the same hierarchical authority they seceded from.

It becomes apparent that the underlying tone of the *General Regulation* (1816) pervades this Church Order. Where the Church Order of the APK forbids congregations to consider the Church Order and decisions of Synods only as a guideline, the Church Order of Dort (1619) invites congregations to use the Order as a guideline for the benefit of the service of the Word in the local congregation. This strict tone is rather a caricature of the *General Regulation* (1816), now embodied in the Church Order of the APK.

It may be concluded that as in the NGK and NHKA, the so-called principles identified (*jus constituendum*) in the Church Order of the APK is indeed influenced and determined by the *General Regulation* and adjusted to fit the need of the church (*jus constitutum*). The separation of the visible and invisible church that underlines the *General Regulation* is moreover of importance in the APK in order to justify – through accepted *Doleantie* polity – the ethnical demarcation of membership.

4.3.4 Reformed Churches in South Africa (GKSA)

Britz notes that when the Reformed Church came into existence in the South African Republic in 1859, its ecclesiastical positioning was deliberately steered in terms of the Church Order of Dort. Where the differentiated churches of the NGK and the NHKA were shaped and informed by the 1816 *General Regulation* and governed by Laws/Rules, Stipulations or Regulations, adjusted to

¹⁰¹ See Coertzen, *Gepas en Oordelik. 'n Teologiese Verantwoording van die Orde vir en in die Kerk*, 250.

the particular state of affairs, the Church Order of Dort surfaced in the GKSA.¹⁰² Britz furthermore indicates that Postma drafted the document: *Kerkorde voor de Gereformeerde Kerk in de Zuid Afrikaansche Republiek, zooveel mogelijk gevolgd naar de Kerkorde der Synode, gehouden te Dordrecht, in Nederland, in de jaren 1618 en 1619. Aangenomen en vastgesteld in onze eerste algemeene kerkvergadering van heden den 10 Febr. 1859, gehouden te Rustenburg.* “This document was seen as the church’s regulation.”¹⁰³

The Church Order of the GKSA already makes it clear from its title page that it relates to the Church Order of Dort (1619):

*Die Sinode van Reddersburg het die Dordtse Kerkorde van 1618/1619 vir die kerkregering van die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika aanvaar. Verskillende sinodes het dit ooreenkomstig artikel 86 gewysig om nou soos volg te lui:*¹⁰⁴

Because of this adherence to the Church Order of Dort (1619), the GKSA never compiled a new Church Order like the NGK, NHKA and APK, but rather reviewed the Church Order of Dort (1619). In this regard it stands in contrast with the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK and follows a clear reformed orthodox trajectory. The Church Order makes it clear that it is the Church Order of *die Gereformeerde Kerke* (plural) *in Suid-Afrika*. It is apparent that the GKSA does not think of the church in hierarchical terms, where the congregations are only branches of the denomination. They are churches.

¹⁰² Britz, “As Adjusted to Our State of Affairs...”. The Church Order of Dordt at the Cape of Good Hope: Restrictive Influence - Augmented Ecclesiastical Identity”, 5–7.

¹⁰³ Britz, 7.

¹⁰⁴ Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, “Kerkorde van Die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika,” accessed December 5, 2017, <http://www.cjbf.co.za/kerkorde/kerkorde.html>.

The Church Order of the GKSA is almost the exact 86 articles of the Church Order of Dort (1619) in form and content. Some of the articles, however, have been revised or adapted. It is in these revisions that the possible influence of the *General Regulation* (1816) may be sought. The articles that granted the authorities a say in ecclesiastical matters has been adapted,¹⁰⁵ and Article 9, for instance, does not speak of priests and monks being admitted to the ministry of the Word anymore,¹⁰⁶ and, the classes no longer have to act as a type of homiletic school.¹⁰⁷ The articles that refer to the relation between the Dutch and Walloon churches have also been modified.¹⁰⁸ The signing of the confessional documents now includes the Canons of Dort (1618/19) and does not require the schoolmasters to sign the Confessions.¹⁰⁹ The article on the censure of books has been changed to portray and take care of the principle of sound doctrine.¹¹⁰ The article concerning the evening prayers is employed in relation with the Lord's Supper.¹¹¹

Article 31 of the Church Order of the GKSA is the only revised article that portrays something of the spirit of the *General Regulation* (1816). In contrast to the Church Order of Dort (1619), the 2015 Church Order of the GKSA does not emphasise the right of appeal, but rather the authority of the ecclesiastical meetings. It conveys the message that the Synod in the final instance has the ultimate say and is sovereign in an appeal and not the Word of God:

*Wat op 'n kerklike vergadering met meerderheid van stemme besluit is, moet as vas en bindend beskou word, tensy bewys word dat dit in stryd is met Gods Woord of die artikels van die Kerkorde. As iemand egter 'n klagte het dat hy deur die uitspraak van die mindere vergadering verongelyk is, kan hy hom op 'n meerdere vergadering beroep.*¹¹²

¹⁰⁵ See articles 4, 28. Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, "Kerkorde van die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika."

¹⁰⁶ See Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, 2.

¹⁰⁷ See Article 43. Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, 6.

¹⁰⁸ See Articles 51 and 52. Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, 7.

¹⁰⁹ See Articles 53 and 54. Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, 7, 8.

¹¹⁰ See Article 55. Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, 8.

¹¹¹ See Article 64. Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, 9.

¹¹² Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, 5.

In this the Church Order of the GKSA failed to fully allow freedom for the Word of God to rule in the congregations. The ecclesiastical motive and intention overshadowed the Christological distinctiveness of the historical Church Order (1619). Like the *General Regulation* (1816), the 2015 Church Order of the GKSA made it clear that the majority makes binding decisions for the sake of the good order and that the majority has the final say in the church. Article 31 is therefore embedded in a hierarchical frame, and this inevitably meant that the Synod is not constituted by the Word, but by the majority vote. The language of Article 31 of the 2015 Church Order of the GKSA echoed Article 22 of the *General Regulation* (1816) where the Synod is granted the highest authority.

The 2015 Church Order of the GKSA has since been revised, and Article 31 now corresponds again to Article 31 of the Church Order of Dort (1619):

*As iemand 'n klagte het dat hy deur die uitspraak van 'n mindere vergadering verontreg is, mag hy hom op 'n meerdere vergadering beroep. Wat met 'n meerderheidstem besluit is, sal vir vas en bindend beskou word, tensy bewys word dat dit met die Woord van God of die artikels van die Kerkorde in stryd is.*¹¹³

It may be inferred that the Church Order of the GKSA now again allows freedom for the Word of God to rule in the church. There is no trace of any influence of the *General Regulation* (1816) on the article. This Church Order is consistent with the ecclesiology confessed in Articles 27 -32 of the Belgic Confession of faith and implements these theological positions.

However, the GKSA Church Order is also accompanied - like the Church Order of the NGK, NHKA and APK – by *Addendums* with supplementary articles.¹¹⁴ In these supplementary

¹¹³ Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, 'Kerkorde van die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika', Article 31.

¹¹⁴ Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, 'Bylaes by die Kerkorde', accessed 30 December 2018, <http://www.cjbf.co.za/kerkorde/kerkorde.html>.

articles the shift in the GKSA towards an *ecclesiocentric* appraisal and understanding of the Church Order, as a fundamental and formal ecclesiastical document with a pragmatic and judicial purpose, is evident. A theological-judicial polity emerges with a theoretical-disciplinary predominated application of the Church Order. If the *Addendums* to the Church Order of the GKSA is read with the Church Order itself (as intended), it is obvious that the polity of the GKSA is much in line with that of the NGK, NHKA and APK. This is despite the fact that the GKSA Church Order is a revised version of the Church Order of Dort (1619). The ministerial character of the “original” 1619 Dort Church Order is overshadowed by a modern institutionalised reinterpretation and theoretical exegesis and hermeneutic, deployed in an authoritarian way to govern ecclesial life. Through the *Addendums* the *General Regulation* surfaces thus in the polity of the GKSA.

This is nowhere more clear than with the Addendum to the above-discussed Article 31. The Addendum stipulates the procedure of an appeal judicially point for point (over 70 stipulations). Article 31 itself thus serves no purpose anymore, as the Addendum dictates everything in a detailed exposition. The judicial framework is furthermore underpinned by the Addendum on appeals when it states that the deputies, hearing the appeal, should be chosen from members who have expertise in ecclesiastical polity (although not limited to them).¹¹⁵ Moreover, if the correct procedure is not followed in cases of the appeal (which is no easy task), the appeal will not be heard. The deputies are also not mere deputies, but they represent the assembly to which is appealed. The appeal is thus not in reality made to a major assembly, but to a permanent commission. They may not be called moderators as in the *General Regulation*, but there is in fact no difference between the appeal deputies of the GKSA and the moderators in the *Regulation*.

¹¹⁵ See 3.2 Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika.

Although the GKSA *Addendums* do by far not equate the range and scope of the addendums/regulations/ ordinances in the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK, they are authoritative and binding decisions of the Synod, which aim to regulate the life of the church. The Church Order is thus not just Scriptural as claimed, but rather testifies to a judicial ordering. The claimed *jus constituendum (Scripture)* therefore does not correspond with the *jus constitutum*. The GKSA sustain a verbal acceptance (in adapted form) of Church Order of Dort (1619), but the *Addendums* (which testifies of the practice and interpretation) restrict and determine the practical life of the Church Order in the churches.¹¹⁶ In these *Addendums* a theological-judicial polity emerges with a theoretical-disciplinary predominated application of the Church Order. The shift towards an ecclesiastical implementation and theoretical judicial-appropriate execution of the 1619 Church Order erodes its theological foundation and ministerial intention.

4.4 Conclusion

The ultimate chapter considered the question to what extent the Afrikaans Reformed church orders are indebted to the *General Regulation* of 1816 instead of the Church Order of Dort 1619. It was assumed that since the Church Order of Dort (1619) was replaced by the *General Regulation* in 1816, this *Regulation* had an influence on the character, disposition and compilation of South African Reformed Church Orders. The short historical investigation convincingly disclosed that the 19th century *Laws and Stipulations* of the Dutch Reformed Churches, as well as the *Regulations* of the NHKA, were undoubtedly and fundamentally informed by the Dutch *General Regulation* of 1816. The 1816 article pertaining to membership

¹¹⁶ Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, 'Bylaes by die Kerkorde', accessed 30 December 2018, <http://www.cjbf.co.za/kerkorde/kerkorde.html>.

of the church played a pivotal role in this regard. The only exception was the Reformed Church that came into existence in 1859. Linked to the *Afscheiding* (initially) in the Netherlands, this Church deliberately identified itself in the terms of the Church Order of Dort (1619). And it is here that the Church Order of Dort (1619) surfaced for the first time in South Africa's theological history.¹¹⁷

The provincial NG Churches, the NHKA and the GKSA developed theologically and ecclesiologically in ways of their own, yet interrelated during the 20th century. In a theological self-justification during the 1950s, the NGK opted to replace the earlier Laws and Provisions with its own church order. In the ranks of the NGK it was (and is) maintained that this church order is based on Church Order of Dort. Moreover, it has been seen as the culmination of a church polity tradition since 1652, which would have been carried by the very Church Order of Dort and its theology. Historically, and theologically, these assumptions and generalizations cannot be maintained. This is unequivocally stated in the chapter above. In fact, the tradition carried by the *General Regulation* was decisive for the NGK. Above is shown how this tradition continuously determined the new church order, its application, its reviews, the added rules, decisions, related documents. Most evident in this regard is the accommodation of South African labour law and legislation since the 1998 edition of the Church Order.

Regarding the APK, which seceded from the NGK in 1987, the decisive influence of the 1816 *General Regulation* could also be indicated. In this regard, particular reference is made to the determination of membership (Article 3), as the decisive issue with regard to the Church Order.

¹¹⁷ See Britz, “‘As Adjusted to Our State of Affairs...’. The Church Order of Dordt at the Cape of Good Hope: Restrictive Influence - Augmented Ecclesiastical Identity”,” 7.

The NHKA admitted that the *General Regulation* influenced the church's Rules and Provisions, and its 1951 reviewed Church Law. Appreciation for the Church Order of Dort coincided with the emphasis to provide this church an outspoken Biblical-reformational theology since the 1940s. This theological insistence i.a. stimulated the formulation and acceptance of church orders in 1998 and 2016. Both are theologically motivated and the articles that limited membership to white persons and defined the church as a people's church, have been removed. However, the influence of the *General Regulation* has not been terminated.

The GKSA kept it to the Church Order of Dort, as it was from time to time adapted to circumstances in South Africa, with its typifying Addenda.

My analysis of the Church Orders involved, in a *formal* sense, the NGK, APK and GKSA (and to a lesser extent the NHKA) during the 20th century in their church polity orientated towards the Church Order of Dort. The pretence of these Church Orders to be based on or to adhere to the Church Order of Dort (1619) is, however, too pretentious. The Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK stand in the shadow of Dort, not in its light. They do not reflect the ministerial character of this Church Order. Their polity is rather seated in and defined by a legalised understanding, which is thoroughly church centrically. Even the GKSA reflect a certain legalised understanding of polity through the *Addendums* to its Church Order.

Materially, however, the *General Regulation* determined the application, the revision and ecclesiological seat of the respective Church Orders. Where the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK stand in the shadow of Dort, it may be inferred that they proceed from the light of the *General Regulation* (1816).

CONCLUSION

In Dutch reformed history of theology the 1619 Church Order of Dort represents the culmination and consolidation of a theological-ecclesiastical line of thinking with regard to the formation of the ministry of the church. For the next two centuries this Church Order (with or without (provincial) government approval or sanction) determined the formation and ministry of the Reformed church in the particular provincial synodical regions. The Church Order functioned in a public Christian dispensation in the Netherlands. Only after the turbulent years incepted by the Batavian Republic, the subsequent French occupation and the restoration of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1815, the Church Order of Dort was replaced with a new *Algemeen Reglement voor het Bestuur der Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* in 1816. This *General Regulation* was to last for more than 130 years.

During this period of time the *General Regulation* was questioned in differentiating ways. Theologians from the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* raised from time to time their discomfort and criticism. After the Second World War theological concerns on the formation and ministry of the church gained the upper hand and the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* received a Church Order in 1951, replacing the *General Regulation*. Our research has only taken indirectly note of this. Much more attention - due to obvious reasons - was paid to the rejection of the *General Regulation* and the formation of separate churches during the 19th century. These church formations, no longer part of the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, recalled the Church Order of Dort (1619) to serve their denominations.

The scholarly award of status and lasting authoritative merit are thus characteristic of the interpretation and following the Church Order of Dort (1619) gained in the Netherlands during the early *Afscheiding* (Separation) and subsequent *Doleantie* (Doleance) during the 1880s. As an

identifying document the Church Order of Dort was utilised in an apologetical and polemical way to justify the establishment of *de novo* organised reformed churches, separated from the traditional historical church. For these new church formations the stumbling-block occurred to be the renowned early 19th century *Algemeen Reglement voor het Bestuur der Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (1816). In their view, the *General Regulation* (1816) could theologically and ecclesiologically not countervail the Church Order of Dort (1619).

During the 20th century, in South Africa, the Afrikaans Reformed churches, i.e. the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, the Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk in Afrika, the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid Afrika and the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk all claimed, with regard to their current church orders, to a more or lesser extent, indebtedness to the Church Order of Dort (1619). This claim, however, was not based on the theology and ecclesiology of the 1619 Church Order as such, but was informed by the apologetic positioning of 19th century Dutch church history. South African scholarship (apart from the NHKA) followed the *Doleantie* appropriation of the Church Order of Dort uncritically and was therefore deeply influenced by the Dutch contemporary apologetical scholarship. The Church Order of Dort (1619) was elevated as a sign of Reformed orthodoxy while the *General Regulation* received little or no appreciation. South African scholarship was thus mostly framed by the *Doleantie* reaction against the *General Regulation*. The NHKA identified itself with what was called a biblical-reformational theology in the 1940s. This eventually led to an awareness that the Church Law, based on the 1816 General Regulation should be scrutinised and replaced by a church order. In theological-critical dealing with the Church Law, the Church order of Dort was valued positively. In this respect the NHKA also accommodated a constructive view of the Church Order of Dort.

This South African reception of the *Doleantie* interpretation and use of the Church Order of Dort is, for the purposes of the study, referred to as the ‘Dort paradigm’ in our scholarly work

in church polity. This paradigm was (and is) simply accepted during the second half of the 20th century. The Church Order of Dort (1619) is accordingly mentioned by name, referred to, used, acclaimed, but only, it appears, to serve purposes supporting the theological soundness of the particular church orders. Informed by previous research of my own, which questioned the Dort paradigm and established that the Dort-South African parallels are overestimated, the current investigation raised a different question: Did the other significant influential document on the order and governance of the Dutch Reformed Church, the *Algemeen Reglement voor het Bestuur der Hervormde Kerk in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*, other than the Church Order of Dort, not shape the Afrikaans reformed church polity and church order application more than is expected or conceded? Only the NHKA admits *General Regulation* influence, which is limited to the first half of the 20th century. In general no study in South African scholarship thus far has been devoted to trace the trajectory of sources concerning the influence of the *General Regulation* in the structure, the interpretation and application of the Afrikaans Reformed church orders. This research stepped into the gap.

The study excavated the church political trajectory in the Netherlands from 1619 to 1816, i.e. from the Church Order of Dort (1619) to the *General Regulation* (1816). The reason for this is that I am convinced that the 1816 *Regulation* does not infer, in terms of its rationale, theology and ecclesiology, a complete break with history. The *Regulation*, based on a functional concept and comprehension of the church, defined the church as a recognized public institution in and for society. Actually, the *Regulation*, its status and impact, provided the best open space for the national church in the Netherlands of the restoration that she could be confined to. This is one of the important reasons why the appropriation of Dort in 1834 and 1886/92 represents a 19th century application of the Order. It differs from the original church order and its relevance.

The study assumed that the roots of the *General Regulation* were hidden in the past, in the 17th and 18th centuries. Therefore, the first two chapters were devoted to the history of theology during these centuries. The first chapter discussed the historical context and underlying theological trajectories in Dutch Reformed church polity during the time of high orthodoxy (c.a. 1620-1700). It was indicated that the era of religious wars at last came to an end during this period. It stimulated new economic and religious impulses. The Netherlands became a haven of liberty. The public recognised and supported Reformed church formed part of this dynamic, differentiated and increasingly tolerant society. The Reformed church had an international character and gained much influence in society.

It became clear that Reformed theology in the 17th century was not unambiguous and that different ecclesial trajectories emerged after the Synod of Dort 1618/19. The rise and proliferation of polemics became the order of the day. The orthodox Reformed theologians used scholasticism as a method to engage in polemical disputes. Notwithstanding, the decline of religious life is evident at the end of the century, and the clarity and unity that was established at the Synod of Dort 1618/19 became obscured. There was reaction from within the Reformed church against this decline in the form of the *Nadere Reformatie*, but even this movement could not steer the church back to the reformed orthodoxy. The first chapter thus indicated that the theological landscape as it developed after the Synod of Dort 1618/19, already contained the seeds, which eventually would cultivate a functional notion of the church: to be a church for and in the public sphere. The formulation and acceptance of the second major ecclesiastical document on the order and governance of the national church in 1816, viz. the *General Regulation* would be the culmination of this understanding of the church.

The second chapter aimed to trace the context and trajectories during the time of late orthodoxy (c.a. 1700-1790) and transition into the 19th century. The orthodox theology of

Reformed scholasticism embodied in the Church Order of Dort (1619) had to contend with the popular and growing view of the church as a human association of believers. The tide of rationalism swept into the church to such an extent that the authority of the Word did not order public life anymore. The continued reaction of the *Nadere Refomatie* in the 18th century proved unsuccessful as Reformed scholasticism was gradually abandoned and emphasis placed on internal piety, revival and practical theology. At the same time the Enlightenment and its philosophy introduced a new world view. This furthered the cause of rationalism and tolerance. And, it challenged the traditional and confessional understanding of faith, the church, its order, ... and God.

The consequences of the Enlightenment were revolutionized and inaugurated in the Netherlands as the Batavian Republic. Then followed the French period, to be concluded by the restoration of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Historically the *General Regulation* (1816) stands in relation with the political rejection of the French Republic and the ecclesiastical schism between Christian church and Christian state. The period of transition from 1791-1815 moulded the church to such an extent that it was theologically ready and willing to accommodate the new age and accept the *Regulation*. The *Regulation* therefore rather represents continuity than discontinuity. It brought a solution and an end to the consequences of total separation of state and church at this time, but along with it a theological shift from the era of orthodoxy. It was the result of a new approach and methodology of understanding reality. Intellectually, theologically, and politically new thinking was accepted.

The *Regulation* was a modern - in step with the times - document which ensured the authority and identity of the church in governance, polity and practice. It was, moreover, scientifically grounded and judicially removed all uncertainties for the church. Through the *Regulation* (1816) the position of the church in a dynamic society was thus strengthened. The

second chapter thus indicated that at a precarious time the lifeline of the *General Regulation* (1816) was thrown to the church and it was more than willing to cling to it in order to be saved from drowning.

The new dispensation created the opportunities for the church to embody ecclesiological trajectories, conformations and adjustments insisted upon. The Reformed polity, clarified by the Synod of Dort 1618/19 and present in the Church Order of Dort (1619), was no longer the accepted norm. The church now saw herself as an *institution* and *instrument* that should suffice and appreciate its place in the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The most obvious way was to do this in terms of a dynamic ecclesial regulation, and not a rigid confessional order. These developments were articulated in the third chapter of the research. It was confirmed by the in-depth scrutiny of the *General Regulation* (1816). The *Regulation* embodied the emphasis of the era which shifted from the doctrine stressed by Reformed orthodoxy to the proliferation of religious knowledge and Christian morals in civil society. It rather steered the Reformed church for the next 134 years until a new order was incorporated. The acceptance of the *General Regulation* was a deed of significance which had consequences for generations to come. It became apparent that the *Regulation* aimed to demarcate the church to a voluntary organization that maintains the civil order in the church. A hierarchical structure surfaced throughout the *Regulation*. Decisions could be made and kept.

The last chapter provided evidence that the *General Regulation* not only deeply determined and shaped the Regulations, Laws and Stipulations typical of the 19th century South African Dutch reformed churches, but that its legacy had a profound impact on the articulation, the application, the status given to the church orders as ecclesial identity documents, corpus of addenda, regulations, etc., of the Church Orders that the four Afrikaans reformed churches received during the latter part of the 20th century. In the Afrikaans reformed church polity this

shift towards an *ecclesiocentric functional* appraisal and understanding of the church order, as a fundamental and formal ecclesiastical document with a pragmatic and judicial purpose is apparent. The Church Orders of the NGK and APK proved to have a formal familiarity with the Church Order of Dort (1619), but the pretense of these Church Orders to be based on or to adhere to the Church Order of Dort (1619) is too pretentious. The NHKA is obviously less pretentious, however, its functional church order still carries the influence of the *General Regulation*.

Even the Church Order of the GKSA, which is verbally based on Dort, nullifies the Church Order of Dort (1619) in practice through its Addendums. The Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA, APK and GKSA stand in the shadow of Dort, not in its light. They do not reflect the ministerial character of this Church Order. Their polity is rather seated in and defined by a legalised and functional understanding, which is thoroughly church centrically. This is due to none other than the legacy of the *General Regulation*.

The comparison with the *General Regulation* (1816) indicated that the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK are much in line with the underlying scope of this *Regulation* and echoes the same spirit and intention and departs from the same associated understanding of the church. As a matter of fact, the *General Regulation* played a pivotal role in the structure, the interpretation and application of all the Afrikaans reformed church orders. The mere fact that the NGK, NHKA, APK and GKSA – all previously united in the Cape-Dutch church and sharing the same confessional standards to this day – can refuse to unite as one denomination, while still recognising each other as true churches, testifies that they all work with the polity of the *Regulation* in practice. They all see the church as a voluntary association, a matter of sentiment and tradition. The true church is merely an idea (*jus constituendum*) and stands in a far off relation with the visible church as it takes shape in different cultures, traditions and times (*jus constitutum*).

The final conclusion of the research confirms that the legacy of the *General Regulation*, rather than that of the Church Order of Dort, prevails in South African reformed church polity and its Church Orders. Indeed, fundamentally spoken, these church orders and their application, serve the rule of the church, rather than the rule of Christ in and over the church.

SUMMARY

The study on the reception of the Church Order of Dort (1619) and the *General Regulation* (1618) in South African Church Orders revealed that the NGK, NHKA and APK Church Orders differ from the Church Order of Dort (1619), despite the popular assumption that these Church Orders correspond with the Church Order of Dort (1619). The Church Order of Dort (1619) is not to be blamed for these differences, as it is clear that the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK *formally* acknowledge and agree to the Church Order of Dort (1619), but *materially*, with respect to their application, the status assigned to them as documents of authority and identity, etc., the spirit, legacy and tradition of the *General Regulation* determine. The *General Regulation* (1816) holds the key to explaining the coherence in the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK, despite their differences with the Church Order of Dort (1619). These Church Orders are much in line with the underlying scope of the *General Regulation* (1816) and echoes the same spirit and intention and departs from the same understanding of the church. Despite their appeals to adhere to the Church Order of Dort (1619) and their shared ecclesial history in South Africa, the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK incorporated the replacement of the Church Order of Dort (1618) with the *General Regulation* (1816). Even the GKSA interprets its Church Order through the lens of the principles of the *Regulation*. These Church Orders are therefore modern versions of the *General Regulation* (1816). They stand in the shadow of Dort (1619), but proceeds from the light of the *Regulation* (1816).

OPSOMMING

Die studie aangaande die resepsie van die Dordtse Kerkorde (1619) en die Algemene Reglement (1816) in Suid-Afrikaanse Kerkordes het aan die lig gebring dat die Kerkordes van die NGK, NHKA en APK verskil met dié van Dordt (1619), ten spyte van die populêre aanname dat hierdie Kerkordes met die Dordtse Kerkorde (1619) ooreenstem. Die Dordtse Kerkorde (1619) is egter nie te blameer vir hierdie verskille nie, aangesien dit duidelik is dat die Kerkordes van die NGK, NHKA en APK die Dordtse Kerkorde (1619) wel *formeel* erken en ooreenstem, maar *materieel* ten opsigte van die aanwending, die status wat aan die dokument in terme van gesag en identiteit toegeken word, die gees en tradisie van die *Algemene Reglement* adem. Die *Algemene Reglement* (1816) hou die sleutel om nie net die verskil van hierdie Kerkordes met die van Dordt (1619) te verduidelik nie, maar ook die koherensie tussen die Kerkordes van die NGK, NHKA en APK. Hierdie Kerkordes staan in die lyn van en getuig van dieselfde gees en kerkbegrip soos beliggaam in die *Algemene Reglement* (1816). Ten spyte van hierdie Kerkordes se beroep dat hulle in ooreenstemming is met die Dordtse Kerkorde (1619) en hulle gedeelde kerkregtelike geskiedenis aan die suidpunt van Afrika, het die NGK, NHKA en APK die skuif vanaf die Dordtse Kerkorde (1619) na die *Algemene Reglement* (1816) in hulle Kerkordes opgeneem. Selfs die GKSA interpreteer hulle Kerkorde deur die lens van die *Reglement*. Hierdie Kerkordes kan daarom beskryf word as moderne weergawes van die *Algemene Reglement* (1816). Hulle staan in die skadu van Dordt (1619), maar gaan voort uit die lig van die *Reglement* (1816).

KEY WORDS

Afrikaans Churches of Reformed confession

Church Governance

Church Order

Church Order of Dort 1619

Church Polity

General Regulation 1816

SLEUTELTERME

Afrikaanse Kerke van Gereformeerde belydenis

Algemene Reglement 1816

Dordtse Kerkorde 1619

Kerkreg

Kerkregering

Kerkorde

APPENDIX

Algemeen Reglement voor het bestuur der Hervormde Kerk in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden (1816)¹

Eerste Afdeling

Algemeene Bepalingen

Artikel 1

Tot het Hervormd Kerkgenootschap behooren allen, die, op belijdenis des geloofs, tot ledematen zijn aangenomen, dezulken, die in de Hervormde kerken gedoopt zijn, en die gene, welke in andere landen, als tot het Hervormd Kerkgenootschap behoorende, erkend, zich hier te lande ter neder zetten, mits door behoorlijke bewijzen of attestatiën van hunnen doop of lidmaatschap buiten 's lands hebbende doen blijken.

Artikel 2

Deze allen blijven tot het Hervormd kerkgenootschap behooren, zoo lang zij niet vrijwillig en duidelijk verklaard hebben, zich daarvan af te scheiden of om wettige redenen daarvan afgescheiden zijn.

Artikel 3

Het bestuur der Hervormde kerk wordt synodaal, provinciaal, classikaal en gemeentelijk uitgeoefend.

Artikel 4

De leden der Collegiën, waar aan dit onderscheiden bestuur, volgens de na te meldene bepalingen wordt opgedragen, stemmen altijd hoofdelijk, zonder eenigszins gebonden te zijn aan lastbrieven van de vergaderingen of kerken, voor welke zij kunnen geacht worden te verschijnen.

¹ Hooijer, *Kerkelijke Wetten voor de Hervormden in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*.

Artikel 5

De mindere Kerkbesturen hebben het recht voorstellen in te zenden aan de hoogere, en om in voorkomende gevallen derzelve voorlichting te vragen; terwijl zij daarentegen verplicht zijn aan de aanschrijvingen te voldoen der hoogere collegiën, en in het bijzonder ten spoedigste de berigten en rapporten in te zenden, welke van hen gevorderd worden.

Artikel 6

Een minder Kerkbestuur vermeenende, door de besluiten van een hooger bezwaard te zijn, heeft het recht zich deswegens bij nog hooger Bestuur te beklagen, onder gehoudenheid nochtans, van aan de ontvangene bevelen inmiddels te gehoorzamen, tenzij de zaak, bij de eindelijke uitspraak niet weder in zijn geheel zoude kunnen gebragt worden, in welk geval echter daarvan onmiddellijk aan het Ministeriëel Departement voor de zaken der Hervormde en andere Erediensten, behalve dien der Roomsche Katholijken, zal worden kennis gegeven.

Artikel 7

Van alle zaken, bij uitspraak van een Kerkelijk Collegie beslist, valt appél aan het in rang volgend hooger Collegie, doch ter tweeder instantie beslist zijnde, wordt geen nieuw appél toegestaan.

Artikel 8

In een hooger Kerkelijk collegie zal niets behandeld worden dan het gene in een minder Collegie niet is kunnen afgehandeld worden, de gemeene kerken onder hetzelfde ressorterende nut is, en tot het hooger Collegie behoort.

Artikel 9

De zorg voor de belangen, zoo van het Christendom in het algemeen, als van de Hervormde kerk in het bijzonder, de handhaving harer leer, de vermeerdering van Godsdienstige kennis, de bevordering van Christelijke zeden, de bewaring van orde en eendragt, en de aankweeking van

liefde voor Koning en Vaderland, moeten steeds het hoofddoel zijn van allen, die in onderscheidene betrekkingen met het Kerkelijk bestuur belast zijn.

Artikel 10

Alle Kerkbesturen gedragen zich wijders overeenkomstig de voorschriften van dit reglement, en de algemeene of bijzondere verordeningen, welke vervolgens zullen worden vastgesteld; alle daarmede niet overeenkomstige wetten en inrigtingen worden, bij het successivelijk in werking brengen dier verordeningen, gehouden voor vervallen.

Artikel 11

Alle stemming tot het formeren van nominatiën ter vervulling van posten van Kerkelijk Bestuur, of tot het verkiezen van leden in hetzelfde, geschiedt steeds bij beslotene biljetten.

Artikel 12

Geene Kerkelijke vergadering vermag te corresponderen met buitenlandsche kerken, zonder voorafgaande toestemming van Zijne Majesteit den Koning.

Artikel 13

Alle de Hervormde kerken in het Koningrijk zoo wel Waalsche, Presbyteriaansche Engelsche en Schotsch, als Nederduitsche, behooren tot hetzelfde geheel en zijn onder hetzelfde gemeenschappelijk bestuur geplaatst.

Artikel 14

Dezelve kerken zullen echter, naar hare bijzondere behoeften en omstandigheden, hare afzonderlijke huishoudelijke inrigtingen kunnen hebben, mogende nochtans deze inrigtingen niets behelzen, strijdig met die eenheid in beginselen en gelijkvormigheid in hoofdzaken, welke de onderscheidene kerken, als deelen van hetzelfde geheel, behooren te kenschetsen. Ten aanzien der kerken in de zuidelijke Provinciën, en in Nederlandsch Oost- en West-Indiën, zullen nadere bepalingen gemaakt worden.

Artikel 15

Geene veranderingen kunnen in dit Reglement gemaakt worden, dan door Zijne Majesteit, op voorstel, of immers na voorafgaande overweging bij het Synode, hetwelk echter, vóór en aleer ten dezen besluit te nemen, daarop de consideratiën zal inwinnen van de Provinciale Kerkbesturen.

Tweede afdeeling.**Van het Synode****Artikel 16**

Het hoogste Kerkelijk Bestuur is opgedragen aan het Synode.

Artikel 17

Elk der na te meldene Provinciale Kerkbesturen benoemt jaarlijks in deszelfs vergadering van Mei, een lid uit deszelfs midden tot het bijwonen der Synodale Vergadering, benevens een secundus of plaatsvervanger, die echter niet optreedt, dan in geval het benoemd lid door onvoorziene verhindering belet wordt zich naar het Synode te begeven. De Secretarissen der Prov. Kerkbesturen zijn, even als de andere leden, verkiesbaar tot leden van het Synode. Op gelijke wijze wordt door de Commissie tot de zaken der Waalsche Kerken, een Predikant naar het Synode gecommitteerd.

Bovendien heeft in het Synode zitting, en is lid van hetzelfde een Ouderling of Oud-Ouderling, volgens de orde der provinciën in art. 50 voorkomende, door de Provinciale Kerkbesturen bij beurtwisseling te benoemen. Eindelijk wordt door elk der Hervormde Godgeleerde faculteiten op de drie hooge scholen, te *Leyden*, *Utrecht* en *Groningen* een Hoogleeraar benoemd, om het Synode bij te wonen; deze Hoogleeraren, zullen een praeädviserende, doch geene concluderende stem hebben.

Alle de leden der eerste Synodale vergadering worden door den Koning benoemd.

Uit de Predikanten, leden van het Synode, wordt door den Koning een President en een Vice-president benoemd, welke slechts gedurende de zitting fungeren.

Artikel 18

Het Hoofd van het Ministeriëel Departement voor de zaken van den Hervormden en andere eerediensten, behalve dien der Roomsche Katholijken, zal, indien hij den Hervormden Godsdienst belijdt, en, geëdsisteerd, zoo hij dit verkiest, door zijnen Secretaris, de Synodale vergaderingen bijwonen, behoudens nochtans de faculteit des Konings om, bij ontstentenis van dien, dezelve vergaderingen door één of meer Commissarissen politiek, van den Hervormden Godsdienst, daartoe door Hoogstdenzelven te benoemen, te doen bijwonen.

Artikel 19

Het Synode heeft eenen vasten Secretaris en eenen Secundus voor denzelven, beide door den Koning benoemd uit de Predikanten van 's *Gravenhage*.

Hij heeft rang en stem als lid. Bij vacature wordt de benoeming gedaan uit een drietal, door het Synode geformeerd. Het Synode heeft eenen vasten quaestor, uit de Ouderlingen of Oud-ouderlingen van *Amsterdam*, met gelijken rang en stem, en op dezelfde wijze, als de Secretaris, benoemd.

Artikel 20

De gewone Synodale vergadering wordt eenmaal 's jaars in 's *Gravenhage* gehouden op den eersten Woensdag in de maand Julij. Deze tijdsbepaling kan niet worden veranderd of eene buitengewone vergadering van het Synode beschreven dan met goedvinden van Zijne Majesteit.

Artikel 21

Het Synode is belast met de zorg voor de algemeene belangen der Hervormde Kerken, en in het bijzonder voor alles, wat den openbaren Godsdienst en de kerkelijke instellingen betreft.

Hetzelve staat in een onmiddellijk verband met het bovengemeld Ministeriëel Departement.

Artikel 22

Het Synode beslist in laatste ressort de geschillen, welke in of tusschen de Provinciale Kerkbesturen mogten ontstaan, en doet uitspraak in cas van appél over zaken, welke ter eerster instantie bij die collegiën gediend hebben.

Artikel 23

Het Synode ontwerpt algemeene kerkelijke reglementen en verordeningen, en draagt dezelve voor aan het meergemeld Ministeriëel Departement, ten einde daarop de goedkeuring des Konings te erlangen.

Artikel 24

Het Synode maakt in het bijzonder bepalingen omtrent de wijze van admmissie en de examina van hen, die tot leeren bestemd zijn, ten einde van derzelve kunde en geschiktheid volkomen te doen blijken. Bij deze verordeningen zal acht moeten geslagen worden op hetgene in de vijfde Afdeeling ten aanzien van de Waalsche, Presbyteriaansche Engelsche en Schotsche kerken bepaald wordt.

Artikel 25

Het Synode zorgt voor doelmatige schikkingen, en maakt regelen ter bevordering, regeling en verbetering van het Godsdienstig onderwijs.

Artikel 26

Het Synode ontwerpt een reglement op de Kerkvisitatiën.

Artikel 27

Het zal een der eerste werkzaamheden van het Synode zijn, een ontwerp van reglement op de manier van Kerkelijke zaken te behandelen voor en bij de Kerkenraden, Classikale Moderatoren, Provinciale Kerkbesturen, en het Synode, en over het Kerkelijk opzigt en tucht, te vervaardigen; daarbij in acht nemende, om door nauwkeurige bepalingen en voorschriften alle aanleiding tot willekeur en onzekerheid, zoo veel mogelijk, te vermijden.

Artikel 28

Er zullen bij het Synode zoodanige algemeene bepalingen ontworpen worden omtrent de inrigting der Predikantsberoepingen, als kunnen dienen ten grondslag der bijzondere reglementen, welke in de onderscheidene provinciale ressorten, naar derzelver omstandigheden, kunnen worden vastgesteld.

Artikel 29

Insgelijks zullen verordeningen worden gemaakt, ten einde de Plaatselijke Kerkenraden, op de voor de zaak van den Godsdienst en de belangen van de gemeenten meest voordeelige wijze in te rigten.

Artikel 30

Voor de classikale uitgaven en onderhoud zal uit 's Rijks kas eene somma van *veertien duizend* guldens jaarlijks worden toegestaan, om door het meergemeld Ministeriëel Departement onder de classen verdeeld te worden.

Er zullen doelmatige en algemeen werkende schikkingen gemaakt worden tot bepaling der uitgaven voor het classikaal bestuur; de meest eenvoudige en zekerst werkende middelen zullen worden bij de hand genomen, om in het te kort te voorzien, op eene voor de gemeenten en andere belanghebbenden min drukkende en zoo veel mogelijk gelijk werkende wijze.

Ten einde de spoedige vaststelling der in de voorgaande artikelen omschreven verordeningen te verzekeren, zullen van de reglementen op de examina, het godsdienstig onderwijs, de manier van

behandeling der kerkelijke zaken, het kerkelijk opzicht en tucht, de Predikantsberoepingen en de kosten daarop vallende, het Kerkelijk Bestuur in de gemeenten, en de classikale kosten voor de bijeenkomst der eerste synodale vergadering, ontwerpen vervaardigd, en aan de tot het Synode benoemde leden zoo tijdig mogelijk medegedeeld worden, ten einde daarop vóór het einde hunner zitting te kunnen besluiten.

Alle de bovengenoemde reglementen, zullen, nadat dezelve door het Synode zijn bepaald, aan 's Konings goedkeuring onderworpen worden.

(Tot ampliatie dezer tweede Afdeeling dient de *Instructie voor de Algemeene Synodale Commissie der Nederlandsche Hervormde kerk*. Zij zal op dit reglement volgen).

Derde afdeeling

Van het Provinciaal Kerkbestuur

Artikel 31

De leden van het Provinciaal Kerkbestuur worden uit de onderscheidene classikale ressorten benoemd, en wel voor elke classis één Predikant, en voor eene der classen bij jaarlijksche beurtwisseling één Ouderling of Oud-Ouderling.

Artikel 32

Gemelde leden door den Koning benoemd, de eerste reize onmiddellijk, en vervolgens uit een zestal geformeerd door de moderatoren van het classikaal-ressort, hetwelk de vacature betreft en tot een drietal verminderd door het Provinciaal Kerkbestuur.

Artikel 33

Elk jaar treedt af een derde, of, zoo na mogelijk een derde der Predikanten, leden der Provinciale Kerkbesturen, volgens een daartoe te maken rooster.

De aftredende blijven steeds verkiesbaar. De eerste aftreding zal plaats hebben den 1 Januarij 1818.

Artikel 34

Voor elk lid wordt op dezelfde wijze een Secundus of plaatsvervanger benoemd, die niet fungeert, dan bij afwezendheid van den Primus; bij het aftreden van een lid, moet ook een ander Secundus worden aangesteld.

Artikel 35

Wanneer door overlijden of vertrek van een lid uit het ressort der classis, waarvoor hij zitting heeft, tusschen tijds eene vacature ontstaat, zal deszelfs Secundus dadelijk optreden en fungeren tot den tijd dat hij, wiens plaats vervuld wordt, zoude zijn afgetreden.

Bij overlijden, vertrek of optreding van eenen Secundus, wordt op de wijze bij art. 32 omschreven, een ander in deszelfs plaats benoemd.

Artikel 36

Tot goedmaking der kosten van het Synode en de Provinciale Kerkbesturen, wordt van 's Lands wege eene somme betaald, welke bij de jaarlijksche begrooting door Zijne Majesteit vastgesteld, en bij het voorgesemd Ministeriëel Departement, verdeeld en geregeld wordt.

Artikel 37

Ieder Provinciaal Kerkbestuur heeft eenen President uit de Predikanten, leden van hetzelfde, door den Koning benoemd.

Hij fungeert een jaar, en blijft steeds weder verkiesbaar. De President wordt ingeval van afwezendheid door den oudsten der leden vervangen.

Artikel 38

Op gelijke wijze, de eerstemaal onmiddellijk, en vervolgens uit een drietal door het Provinciaal Kerkbestuur geformeerd, benoemt de Koning eenen Secretaris voor elk Provinciaal Kerkbestuur,

buiten de gewone leden, bij voorkeur uit de Predikanten der stad of uit de nabuurschap derzelve, alwaar de vaste vergaderingen van het Provinciaal Kerkbestuur gehouden worden. Hij fungeert drie jaren, en blijft steeds weder verkiesbaar. De Secretaris heeft rang en stem als de leden, en wordt bij afwezigheid door het jongste lid vervangen.

Artikel 39

De gewone vergaderingen worden gehouden driemaal 's jaars, op de eerste Woensdagen der maanden Mei, Augustus en October. De President kan daarenboven buitengewone bijeenkomsten beschrijven.

Artikel 40

De vergaderplaatsen der Provinciale Kerkbesturen zijn *Arnhem* voor *Gelderland*, 's *Gravenhage* voor *Zuid-Holland*, *Amsterdam* voor *Noord Holland*, *Middelburg* voor *Zeeland*, *Utrecht* voor de provincie *Utrecht*, *Leeuwarden* voor *Vriesland*, *Zwolle* voor *Overijssel*, *Groningen* voor de provincie *Groningen*, 's *Hertogenbosch* voor *Noord-Brabant*, en *Assen* voor *Drenthe*.

Artikel 41

De Provinciale Kerkbesturen zijn belast met de zorg voor de belangen van den Godsdienst, de bewaring der goede orde, en de handhaving der Kerkelijke wetten, in hun ressort; zij corresponderen deswegens zoo met de bevoegde magten, als met de classikale Moderatoren, en in zaken de ringen betreffende, met derzelve praetor.

Artikel 42

Zij kunnen reglementen ontwerpen op het Kerkbestuur in hun ressort, gegrond op de algemeene verordeningen. Deze ontwerpen worden voor de eerste reize ingezonden aan het hier voren gemelde Ministeriëel Departement, ten einde aan den Koning der sanctie te worden aangeboden. Dezelve reglementen eenmaal gearresteerd zijnde, zullen niet kunnen worden veranderd, dan

door een besluit van het Synode, genomen op voorstel van het Provinciaal Kerkbestuur, hetwelk zulks betreft, en zullen die veranderingen insgelijks aan de approbatie van Zijne Majesteit onderworpen zijn.

Artikel 43

Zij beslissen alle verschillen, welke in classikale besturen en vergaderingen, of tusschen dezelve mogten ontstaan.

Artikel 44

In cas van appél doen zij uitspraak in kerkelijke geschillen, welke ter eerster instantie bij de classikale Moderatoren zijn behandeld.

Artikel 45

Zij verleenen de admissie tot den predikdienst overeenkomstig de bepalingen, welke deswegens in het vervolg zullen worden gemaakt.

Artikel 46

Zij zijn bevoegd de Predikanten, Candidaten en Kerkenraadsleden, om gegronde redenen, en na voorafgaand wettelijk onderzoek, volgens de bepalingen van het reglement op de manier van Kerkelijke zaken, te behandelen, en over het Kerkelijk opzigt en tucht, af te zetten. De afgezette personen behouden regt van appél aan het Synode.

Artikel 47

Predikanten en Candidaten, wegens zedelijk wangedrag, eenmaal afgezet zijnde, kunnen nooit weder als zoodanig aangenomen worden.

Artikel 48

In provinciën waar thans synodale weduwen-beurzen of andere fondsen, welke aan derzelver gezamenlijke Predikanten behooren, bestaan, of vervolgens mogten worden opgerigt, is de administratie van die fondsen aan het Provinciaal Kerkbestuur opgedragen.

Vierde afdeeling

Van het Classikaal Bestuur

Artikel 49

De Hervormde kerken, onder hetzelfde Provinciaal Kerkbestuur behoorende, worden ter geregelde uitoefening van het Kerkelijke Bestuur verdeeld in classen; en wijders, ten einde de waarneming van den dienst in vacerende gemeenten, en de bijeenkomsten der Predikanten gemakkelijk te maken, in ringen.

Artikel 50

In de provinciën of landschappen, bevorens uitgemaakt hebbende den staat der Vereenigde Nederlanden, zullen zijn de navolgende drie en veertig classen.

In Gelderland zes; *Arnhem, Nijmegen, Zutphen, Thiel, Bommel, Harderwijk.*

In Zuid-Holland zes; *'s Gravenhage, Rotterdam, Leyden, Dordrecht, Gouda, Brielle.*

In Noord-Holland vijf; *Amsterdam, Haarlem, Alkmaar, Hoorn, Edam.*

In Zeeland vier; *Middelburg, Zierikzee, Goes, Yzendijke.*

In Utrecht drie; *Utrecht, Amersfoort, Wijk.*

In Vriesland vijf; *Leeuwarden, Sneek, Harlingen, Dokkum, Heerenveen.*

In Overijssel drie; *Zwolle, Deventer, Kampen.*

In Groningen vier; *Groningen, Winschoten, Appingadam, Middelstum*

Artikel 51

Ten aanzien der zuidelijke provinciën van het Koninkrijk zullen in het vervolg de bepalingen gemaakt worden, welke noodig mogten bevonden worden.

Artikel 52

De grensscheiding tusschen de onderscheidene classen en derzelver verdeeling in ringen, zullen nader bepaald worden bij het Ministeriëel Departement voor de zaken van den Hervormden en andere eerediensten, behalve dien der Rooms Katholijken. Bij de bepalingen te dien aanzien zal worden in het oog gehouden:

- a.* Dat de bestaande afdeeling de grondslag der nieuwe moet zijn, en daarin alleen de noodzakelijke veranderingen gemaakt worden.
- b.* Dat geene classe zich meer dan in ééne provincie zal kunnen uitstrekken.
- c.* Dat zoo veel mogelijk eene meerdere gelijkheid worde daargesteld, tusschen de uitgestrektheid, getal van Predikanten, en aantal gemeenten, behoorende tot de classen van dezelfde provincie.
- d.* Dat de ringen zoodanig naar plaatselijke omstandigheden zijn ingerigt, als meest geschikt is om de behoorlijke waarneming van den dienst, in vacerende gemeenten te verzekeren.

Artikel 53

Bij de invoering der nieuwe classikale verdeeling, zullen door de classikale Moderatoren de noodige schikkingen worden geproponeerd, ten aanzien der bestaande weduwen-beurzen en andere fondsen.

Artikel 54

Op voorstel van het Kerkbestuur der provincie, welke zulks betreft, zullen in het vervolg in deze verdeeling der classen in ringen, en bepaling der classikale hoofdplaatsen door het Synode veranderingen kunnen gemaakt worden, met toestemming van het hier voorgemelde Ministeriëel Departement.

Artikel 55

Het Kerkelijk Bestuur in elk classikaal ressort is opgedragen aan eene commissie van Moderatoren, bestaande uit eenen Praeses, eenen Assessor, eenen Scriba, en twee, drie of vier

gecommitteerde Predikanten, naar mate van de uitgebreidheid der classen of talrijkheid der leden, alsmede uit eenen Ouderling of Oud-Ouderling, die na één jaar aftreedt.

Artikel 56

Elk lid van het Provinciaal Kerkbestuur fungeert als Praeses bij de Moderatoren van zijn classikaal ressort, en zijn Secundus als Assessor.

Artikel 57

De Scriba wordt benoemd door Zijne Majesteit den Koning, uit de Predikanten der classikale hoofdplaats, of derzelve nabuurschap voor den tijd van drie jaren, de eerste maal onmiddelijk en vervolgens uit een zestal, door de classikale vergadering geformeerd, en door het Provinciaal Kerkbestuur tot een drietal verminderd. Hij blijft steeds weder verkiesbaar; bij zijne afwezigheid fungeert de jongste der gecommitteerden.

Artikel 58

De gecommitteerden worden alsmede door den Koning benoemd uit de Predikanten, Ouderlingen en Oud-Ouderlingen van het classikaal ressort, de eerste maal onmiddelijk en vervolgens uit gelijke nominatie al in het voorgaande artikel is vermeld.

Van de gecommitteerden, indien derzelve getal vier is, treden twee, en anderszins één, jaarlijks, af, die echter steeds weder benoembaar blijven. De eerste aftreding zal plaats hebben den 1sten Januarij 1818.

Artikel 59

De Moderatoren houden hunne gewone vergaderingen in de classikale hoofdplaatsen, op den laatsten Woensdag van de maanden Januarij, Maart, Mei, Julij, September en November. Zij kunnen echter hunne bijeenkomsten, bijzonder des winters, uitstellen, indien de werkzaamheden zulks toelaten. De Praeses heeft het regt buitengewone vergaderingen te beschrijven.

Artikel 60

De Moderatoren zorgen voor de belangen der kerken in hun ressort, en houden toezicht over de gemeenten, Kerkenraden en Predikanten daartoe behoorende. Zij corresponderen, zoo met de Provinciale Kerkbesturen, als met de Kerkenraden der onderscheidene gemeenten.

Artikel 61

Zij houden bijzonder een wakend oog over de vacerende gemeenten, en corresponderen deswegens met de Praetors der ringen; zij zorgen dat de beroepingen der Predikanten geregeld en ten spoedigste geschieden, dat de beroepene leeraren bevestigd, en de vertrekkende, van hunne betrekkingen behoorlijk ontslagen worden.

De verzoeken om handopeningen en approbatie moeten door hen worden ingezonden aan het Ministeriëel Departement voornoemd.

Artikel 62

De classikale Moderatoren behartigen de belangen van Predikants-weduwen en weezen in hun ressort.

Artikel 63

Zij beslissen de geschillen in of tusschen de Kerkenraden der gemeenten ontstaan, en doen uitspraak in cas van appél over alle zaken, die ter eerster instantie bij de plaatselijke Kerkenraden zijn behandeld.

Artikel 64

Zij zijn bevoegd tot het suspenderen van Predikanten, Candidaten en Kerkenraads-leden.

Artikel 65

Op den laatsten Woensdag in de maand Junij wordt in de hoofdplaats der classis, eene classikale vergadering gehouden, bestaande uit alle de Predikanten van het ressort, en zoodanig getal

Ouderlingen, of Oud-Ouderlingen als thans gebruikelijk is, of in het vervolg bij huishoudelijke reglementen mogt worden bepaald.

Artikel 66

De Praeses, Assessor en Scriba van classikale Moderatoren, fungeren ook als zoodanig in deze vergadering.

Artikel 67

De handelingen der classikale vergaderingen zullen zich bepalen:

1°. Tot het formeren der nominatiën voor de keuze van een Scriba voor de classikale Moderatoren (art. 57) en van gecommiteerden tot het classikaal bestuur (art. 58).

2°. Tot het afhooren en sluiten der rekeningen van de classikale weduwenbeurs en andere fondsen, alsmede tot het benoemen van Quaestors, en voorts daaromtrent te besluiten, zoo als geoordeel wordt te behooren.

Vijfde afdeeling

Over de Waalsche, Presbyteriaansche Engelsche en Schotsche Kerken

Artikel 68

De Waalsche kerken behouden de vrijheid om zoodanige afzonderlijke verbindtenissen en betrekkingen met elkander te bewaren, als door derzelver financiële belangen, en het verschil van taal gevorderd worden, zonder echter daar door op te houden van onder het algemeen Kerkbestuur begrepen te zijn.

Artikel 69

Ter behartiging dezer afzonderlijke belangen, zal er eene commissie bestaan van zes leden, zijnde vijf Predikanten en een Ouderling der Waalsche kerken, welke den titel zullen hebben van *Gecommiteerden tot de huishoudelijke zaken der Waalsche kerken in Nederland*.

Artikel 70

De gecommiteerden worden door den Koning benoemd, de eerste reize onmiddelijk, en vervolgens uit een drietal door de commissie geformeerd.

Artikel 71

Elk jaar, te beginnen met den 1 Januarij 1818, zal één der gecommiteerde Predikanten aftreden, blijvende de aftredende steeds weder verkiesbaar. De Ouderling zal na één jaar zitting aftreden.

Artikel 72

Aan deze gecommiteerden wordt aanbevolgen het oppertoezicht over de financiële instellingen der gezamenlijke Waalsche kerken, mitsgaders het afnemen van examina van hen, die zich aan derzelver dienst toewijden, ten gevolge der verordeningen hierboven bij art. 24 vermeld.

Artikel 73

Dezelve commissie is wijders met betrekking tot de Waalsche kerken belast met de functiën aan de Provinciale Kerkbesturen en classikale Moderatoren opgedragen, en één lid uit dezelve woont het Synode bij; zullende voorgaan geen afzonderlijk Synode der Waalsche kerken meer gehouden worden.

Artikel 74

De Waalsche kerken hebben het regt, om eenmaal 's jaars eene bijeenkomst te houden over derzelver huishoudelijke belangen, vervangende voor haar, zoo veel zulks mogt te pas komen, de classikale vergaderingen; de eerste bijeenkomst zal te 's *Gravenhage* plaats hebben, en alsdan de beurtwisseling ten deze nader worden bepaald.

Artikel 75

De Waalsche Predikanten, blijven leden der ringsvergaderingen. De commissie houdt hare zittingen steeds in 's *Gravenhage*.

Artikel 76

De Presbyteriaansche Engelsche en Schotsche kerken worden in de classen, tot welke de Nederduitsche Hervormde gemeente, in die stad, in welke zij gevestigd is, behoort, ingelijfd, in zoo verre dit nog geen plaats heeft.

Artikel 77

Zoo ten aanzien van het hooger als van het Kerkenraadsbestuur wordt in het oog gehouden, dat de kerken, in het vorig artikel vermeld, de bijzondere huishoudelijke inrichtingen en regten behouden, welke aan dezelve afzonderlijk en privativelijk behooren.

Zesde afdeeling

Van de Ringen en derzelve bijeenkomsten

Artikel 78

Elke classis wordt verdeeld in ringen.

Artikel 79

De Ringen moeten zorgen voor de vervulling van den dienst in de vacante gemeenten volgens schikkingen daartoe door classikale Moderatoren gemaakt.

Artikel 80

De Predikanten, tot denzelfden ring behoorende, worden opgewekt om bepaalde zamenkomsten te houden, niet ter uitoefening van eenig Kerkelijk Bestuur, maar, ter onderlinge opscherping en versterking van den band der broederlijke liefde.

Artikel 81

Bij de zamenstelling van zulke bijeenkomsten, kiezen zij bij meerderheid eenen Praetor en Scriba, en vergaderen voorts zoo dikwijls, als zij goedvinden.

Artikel 82

Hunne werkzaamheden bestaan in de overweging en behandeling van onderwerpen den Godsdienst, en den bloei des Christendoms, de bevordering van bijbelkennis en de waarneming van hunne bedieningen betreffende.

Artikel 83

Zij houden aanteekening van hunne werkzaamheden en geven van dezelve jaarlijks een verslag aan classikale Moderatoren, zijnde zij bevoegd, om daarbij tevens voorstellen in te zenden; de classikale Moderatoren brengen dit verslag, zoo veel noodig, met bijgevoegde consideratiën, ter kennis van het Provinciaal Kerkbestuur, hetwelk daarvan een algemeen verslag opmaakt, en aan het Ministeriëel Departement voor de zaken van den Hervormden en andere eerediensten, behalve dien der Roomsche Katholijken inzendt.

Zevende afdeeling

Over het Kerkelijk Bestuur in de gemeenten

Artikel 84

In alle gemeenten, waar de stof daartoe niet geheel ontbreekt, zal een afzonderlijke Kerkenraad zijn.

Artikel 85

Dezelve bestaat uit den Predikant of de Predikanten der plaatsen, en uit Ouderlingen, gekozen uit de achtewaardigste, kundigste en voornaamste leden der gemeente. De pligten van de Leeraren, de Ouderlingen, de Diakenen en de betrekking van Diakenen tot den Kerkenraad, worden door het Synode bij het Reglement op de Kerkenraden omschreven en bepaald.

Artikel 86

Gemeenten, waar, door gebrek aan stof, geene Kerkenraden bestaan, zijn geplaatst onder het onmiddellijk opzicht van classikale Moderatoren met den Predikant.

Artikel 87

Aan den Kerkenraad behoort de zorg voor hetgeen den openbaren Godsdienst, het Christelijk onderwijs en het opzigt over de leden van de gemeente betreft.

Artikel 88

De censure over de leden der gemeente om gegronde redenen, en volgens de bepalingen van het Reglement op de manier van kerkelijke zaken te behandelen, en over het Kerkelijk opzigt en tucht, noodig zijnde, geschiedt ter eerster instantie door den Kerkenraad, zijnde dezelve censure, voor zoo veel Predikanten, Kerkenraads-leden en Candidaten betreft, onverminderd de bepaling in art. 46 van dit Reglement voorkomende, en achtervolgens de voorschriften van het voorz. Reglement op de manier van Kerkelijke zaken te behandelen, en over het Kerkelijk opzigt en tucht, aan de classikale Moderatoren opgedragen.

Artikel 89

Aan Diakenen blijft de zorg voor de armen der gemeente, naar plaatselijk gebruik, aanbevolen.

Artikel 90

In de administratie der Kerk, Pastorij, Custorij en andere gemeenten-fondsen, en de betrekkingen tusschen derzelve Bestuurders en de Kerkenraden, wordt door de bepalingen van dit reglement geene veranderingen gemaakt.

Artikel 91

De classikale Moderatoren zijn verplicht om van alle misbruiken, die in de administratie der in het voorgaande artikel genoemde fondsen bestaan, of er door hen verder in ontdekt mogten worden, dadelijk kennis te geven aan het Provinciaal Kerkbestuur, dat daarvan met deszelfs consideratiën berigt moet geven aan het Ministeriëel Departement voor de zaken der Hervormde en andere eerediensten, behalve dien der Roomsch-Katholijken, ten einde redres te bekomen.

Artikel 92

Het hiervoren gemeld Ministeriëel Departement zal, na ingenomen te hebben de gedachten van de Provinciale Kerkbesturen, en na voorafgaande raadpleging met de Staten der Provincie welke zulks betreft, over de onderwerpen in de voorgaande artikelen vermeld, de noodige voordragten doen aan Zijne Majesteit den Koning.

Artikel 93

De huishoudelijke belangen der gemeenten, zullen voor het overige, overeenkomstig de algemeene verordeningen, door plaatselijke reglementen, onder 's Konings goedkeuring, kunnen worden geregeld.

General Regulations for the Government of the Reformed Church in the Kingdom of the Netherlands²

Section First: General Resolutions

Article 1

To the Reformed Church belong all those, who, upon profession of faith are received as members; such as have been baptized in the Reformed Churches, and those who are acknowledged in other countries to belong to the Reformed Church, but have taken up their residence in this country, provided they can produce proper attestations of their having been baptized, and received as communicants out of this kingdom.

Article 2

All such continue to belong to the Reformed Church, until they shall voluntarily and explicitly declare their wish to withdraw, or, for lawful reasons, are separated from her communion.

Article 3

The Reformed Church is regulated by Synodal, Provincial, Classical, and Consistorial governments.

Article 4

The members of the courts to which this separate government is transferred according to the after-mentioned limitations, vote always freely, without being in any way bound by letters of instructions from assemblies or churches which they may be considered to represent.

Article 5

² Steven, *A Brief View of the Dutch Ecclesiastical Establishment: Showing the Past and Present Organization of Its Several Judicatories with an Appendix, Containing the General Regulations for the Government of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands.*, 36-.

The inferior church directions have the right of sending propositions to the higher, and of asking their advice in difficulties which occur; whilst, on the other hand, they are bound to comply with the mandates of the higher courts, and particularly to furnish with all dispatch the communications and reports which may be demanded.

Article 6

An inferior church direction conceiving itself aggrieved, by the resolutions of a higher, has the privilege of preferring its complaint thereupon to a court still higher; with this reservation, however, that it must give obedience in the meantime to the orders received, if the matter cannot be finally decided to its full extent; in which case however, the matter shall immediately be communicated to the Ministerial Department for the Affairs of the Reformed and other religious persuasions, that of Roman Catholics excepted.

Article 7

Of all matters determined by the decision of an ecclesiastical court an appeal may be made to the next higher court; but a sentence once pronounced in this second tribunal, no further appeal is granted.

Article 8

In a higher church court nothing may be transacted except what is beyond the jurisdiction of an inferior tribunal and is conducive to the general good of the churches, and properly belongs to this higher court.

Article 9

Solicitude for the interests of Christianity in general, of the Reformed Church in particular, the protecting of her doctrine, the increasing of religious knowledge, the promoting of Christian

principles, the preserving of order and concord, and the cultivating of love for our King and Country, must be the constant aim of all who are entrusted with the various matters connected with Church government.

Article 10

All church directions must conduct themselves agreeably to what is prescribed in this regulation, and to the general or particular ordinances which shall in future be determined: all laws and regulations which, in consequence of successively bringing those ordinances into operation, may not be conformable to the present, are to be held as void.

Article 11

All votes towards the forming of nominations for the filling up of posts in the direction of the Church, or in the choosing of members of the same, must take place by means of sealed billets.

Article 12

No ecclesiastical court may correspond with foreign churches without previous permission from his Majesty the King.

Article 13

All the Reformed churches in the kingdom, as well Walloon, English and Scottish Presbyterians, as Dutch, belong wholly to the same, and are placed under its general direction.

Article 14

These churches shall, nevertheless be allowed to adopt their own particular and private regulations according to their respective exigencies and circumstances: these regulations, however, must contain nothing which conflicts with the unity in principles, and uniformity in

material points which ought to characterize the various churches as parts of the whole. In regard to churches in the Southern Provinces, and in the East and West India Netherlands' Colonies, regulations will afterwards be prepared.

Article 15

No changes can be made in these regulations except by his Majesty, on the proposition, or after the previous consultation of the Synod, which, before coming to any determination, must take the advice of the Provincial Church Courts.

Section Second: Of the Synod

Article 16

The highest Church Direction or Court is vested in the Synod.

Article 17

Each of the after mentioned Provincial Church Directions names annually, at its meeting in May, a member of its court to the Synod, besides a *Secundus*, or substitute, who however does not act, unless in the event that the member appointed is prevented by unforeseen obstacles from attending the Synod. The Secretaries of the Provincial Church Directions are, even as the other members, eligible to be members of the Synod. In like manner, a minister is sent to the Synod by the Commission of the Walloon Churches.

Besides, an elder or old-elder takes session in the Synod as a member thereof, according to the order of the Provinces, provided for in Art. 50, and he is to be appointed by the Provincial Church Directions in rotation.

Lastly, by each of the Reformed Theological Faculties at the three Universities of Leyden, Utrecht and Groningen, a Professor is named to attend the Synod; which Professors shall have a deliberative, but no conclusive vote.

All the members of the first Assembly of the Synod are nominated by the King.

The King names, from the ministers who are members of the Synod, a President and Vice President who officiate only during its sitting.

Article 18

The head of the Ministerial Department for the affairs of the Reformed and other persuasions, that of the Roman Catholics excepted, should he profess the Reformed religion, shall, assisted by his Secretary if that be agreeable to him, attend the Synodal meetings, it being in the power of the King however in default thereof, to name one or more political commissaries to attend the same.

Article 19

The Synod, has a permanent Secretary and a *secundus* for the same, both named by the King from ministers at the Hague. The Secretary has the rank and vote of a member. In cases of vacancy, the nomination shall take place from a list of three formed by the Synod. The Synod has a permanent Treasurer selected from the elders or old elders of Amsterdam, with similar rank and vote, and appointed in the same way as the Secretary.

Article 20

The ordinary Synodal meeting is held once a year in the Hague, on the first Wednesday of the month of July. This regulation as to the time of assembling cannot be altered, or an extraordinary meeting convoked, without the approbation of his Majesty.

Article 21

The Synod is entrusted with the care of the general interests of the Reformed Churches, and in particular with what concerns the public profession of religion and the institutions of the church.

The Synod stands in immediate connexion with the above mentioned Ministerial Department.

Article 22

The Synod definitively determines disputes which may have arisen in and between Provincial Church Directions; and it gives sentence in case of appeal, touching matter. which in the first instance have been decided by those courts.

Article 23

The Synod draws up general regulations and orders of the Church, and lays the same before the Ministerial Department, in order that they may receive the approbation of his Majesty.

Article 24

The Synod in particular makes regulations, respecting the manner of admission and the examinations of such as are destined for the ministry, for the purpose of ascertaining the talents and fitness of those persons. In these regulations attention must be paid to what has been determined in *section fifth*, relative to the Walloon, English Presbyterian, and Scottish churches.

Article 25

The Synod attends to regulations which are proper, and it makes such as promote, regulate, and improve Religious instruction.

Article 26

The Synod makes a regulation for the Visitation of Churches.

Article 27

It shall be one of the first objects of the Synod to prepare the draft of a regulation as to the Manner by which church affairs may be managed for and by Consistories, Classical moderators,

Provincial Church Directions, and the Synod; and also in regard to Ecclesiastical Inspection and Discipline, thereby taking care to avoid, as much as possible, by strict limitations and precepts, every tendency to what is arbitrary and uncertain.

Article 28

The Synod shall draw up such general orders in regard to regulating the Calling of Ministers, as may serve as the ground work of the particular rules which may be determined upon in the several Provincial Church Directions, according to their respective circumstances.

Article 29

In like manner, general rules shall be laid down, by which the local consistories may be regulated in such a way as will be most advantageous for Religion, and the interests of the Communities.

Article 30

For the expense and support of the classes there shall be allowed by Government the sum of fourteen thousand guilders annually, in order that it may be divided by the aforesaid Ministerial Department among the said classes.

Proper arrangements, of general application, shall be made in fixing the expenses of the classical direction: the surest and simplest means shall be employed to provide for any deficiency, in the way easiest and most impartial for the communities and others concerned.

For the purpose of fixing, in the speediest manner, the laws particularized in the foregoing articles, reports shall be drawn up as to the rules to be observed in Examinations, Religious Instruction, the manner of managing Church affairs, Ecclesiastical Inspection and Discipline, the Calling of Ministers, and the costs attending it, the church government in the Congregations, and the Expenses of the Clones before the first Synodal Assembly, and the same reports shall be

communicated as early as possible, to the members nominated to attend the Synod, in order that they may be prepared to come to a decision before the close of their session.

All the above regulations, after being fixed by the Synod, shall be submitted for the King's approbation.

Section Third: Of the Provincial Church Court or Direction.

Article 31

The members of the Provincial Church Direction are chosen from the various classical jurisdictions; for each classis a minister, and for one of the classes by yearly rotation, an elder or old-elder.

Article 32

The said members are appointed by the King; the first time directly, and afterwards from a list of six, formed by the moderators of the classical jurisdiction, and reduced to three by the Provincial Church Direction.

Article 33

Every year a third of the number, or, as nearly as possible a third of the number of the ministers, members of the Provincial Church Direction, shall go out office, conformably to a specific plan to be made for that purpose. Those going out still continue eligible. The first retirement shall take place 1 January 1818.

Article 34

In like manner, for each member there is named a *secundus* or substitute, who does not act except in the absence of his principal. Upon the resignation of a member, another *secundus* must be appointed.

Article 35

When a vacancy occurs by the death or departure of a member from the bounds of the classis in which he sat, his *secundus* shall immediately take his place, and perform the duties of the member so deceased or removed, till the time arrive that he, whose place he fills, should have resigned. In case of the death, departure, or change of a *secundus*, another is appointed to succeed him, as prescribed by Art. 32.

Article 36

To provide for the expenses of the Synod and the Provincial Church Directions, a sum shall be paid from the public treasury, which being fixed by the annual taxation of his Majesty, shall be regulated and divided by the foresaid Ministerial Department.

Article 37

Each Provincial Church Direction has a President, named by the King, selected from its ministers. He is appointed for one year; but continues competent to be re-elected. In case of the President's absence, the oldest member present acts in his stead.

Article 38

In like manner, the King names a Secretary (not yet a member of the court) for the Provincial Church Direction; for the first time directly, and afterwards from a list of three, formed by the Provincial Church Direction; by preference from the ministers of the city, or from its neighbourhood, where the fixed meetings of the Provincial Church Direction are held. He

remains in office three years, and continues always competent to be re-elected. The Secretary has rank and a vote as the other members, and in case of his absence, the youngest member takes his place.

Article 39

The ordinary meetings are held three times a year, on the first Wednesdays of the months of May, August and October. The President may also call extraordinary meetings.

Article 40

The places of meeting of the Provincial Church Directions are Arnhem for Gelderland; the Hague for South Holland; Amsterdam for North Holland; Middleburg for Zeeland; Utrecht for the province of Utrecht; Leeuwarden for Friesland; Zwolle for Overijssel; Groningen for the province of Groningen; Bois-le-duc for North Brabant; and Assen for Drenthe.

Article 41

The Provincial Church Directions are charged to look after the interests of religion, to preserve good order and to uphold the laws of the Church within their bounds. They correspond on such matters both with the competent Authorities, and the Classical moderators; and in matters affecting the Rings with the Pretor.

Article 42

They can draw up rules of Church government in their own jurisdiction, grounded on the General Regulations. These rules, so drawn up, are for the first time, sent to the said Ministerial Department, in order that they may be presented for the sanction of the King. These regulations being once decreed cannot be altered except by a decision of the Synod, taken up at the

solicitation of the Provincial Church Direction to which it refers; and those alterations shall in like manner be subjected to his Majesty's approbation.

Article 43

They decide all differences which may occur in the government and meetings of the Classical Directions, or betwixt the Classes themselves.

Article 44

In case of appeal they decide in church differences which in the first instance have passed under the review of the Classical moderators.

Article 45

They grant admission to the ministry, conformably to regulations which shall be made.

Article 46

They are competent to try and to depose ministers, probationers, and members of Kirk Sessions, for well-grounded reasons after a previous legal inquiry, agreeably to the regulations relative to church affairs, its inspection and discipline. The persons deposed retain the right of appeal to the Synod.

Article 47

Ministers and probationers once deposed for immorality, can never again be recognized in the same capacity.

Article 48

In Provinces where Synodal funds for the behoof of Widows or others belonging to the ministers collectively do exist, or where such may in future be instituted, the administration of such funds is committed to the Provincial Church Court.

Section Fourth: Of the Classical Court or Direction

Article 49

The Reformed Churches under the same Provincial Church Direction are, for the regular exercise of their Church government, divided into classes, for the purpose of attending to the service in vacant congregations; and in order to make the assembly of ministers more easy, is also divided into rings.

Article 50

In the Provinces or districts which formerly composed the states of the United Netherlands there shall be the following forty-three classes:

In Gelderland, - six: Arnhem, Tiel, Nymegen, Bommel , Zutphen, Harderwijk

In South-Holland, - six: The Hague, Dordrecht, Rotterdam, Gouda, Leyden, The Brielle

In North-Holland, - five: Amsterdam, Hoorn, Haarlem, Edam, Alkmaar

In Zeeland, - four: Middleburg, Goes, Zierikzee Yzendijke

In Utrecht, - three: Utrecht, Wijk, Amersfoort

In Friesland, - five: Leeuwarden, Dokkum, Sneek, Heerenveen, Harlingen

In Overijssel, - three: Zwolle, Kampen, Deventer

In Groningen, - four: Groningen, Appingedam, Winschoten, Middelslum

In North-Brabant, - four; Bois-le-duc, Heusden, Breda, Eindhoven

In Drenthe, - three: Assen, Koeverden, Meppel

Article 51

In regard to the Southern Provinces of the Kingdom, such regulations shall be afterwards made as may be found necessary.

Article 52

The boundaries between the respective classes and their subdivision into rings, shall be afterwards fixed by the Ministerial Department for the Affairs of the Reformed and other religious persuasions, that of the Roman Catholics excepted. In those regulations will be kept in view:

- a. That the existing division must be the basis of the new, and only necessary changes shall be made in it.
- b. That no classis shall extend itself farther than one province.
- c. That, as far as possible, a greater uniformity shall be introduced between the extent, number of ministers, and the number of the Congregations belonging to the classes of the same Province.
- d. That the rings shall be adjusted in such conformity with local circumstances as may be most likely to ensure a proper performance of the service in vacant congregations.

Article 53

Upon the introduction of the new classical division, the necessary arrangements shall be proposed by their moderators in regard to widows' and other funds.

Article 54

On the proposition of the Church Direction of the Province which it concerns, changes may be made in future by the Synod as to this subdivision of the classes into rings and in fixing the classical seat with consent of the said Ministerial Department. ‘

Article 55

The Church Direction in each classical jurisdiction is entrusted to a commission of moderators, consisting of a President, an Assessor, a Secretary, and a committee of two, three or four ministers, proportioned to the extent of the classes or number of the members, as also of an Elder or Old-elder, who retires at the expiration of a year.

Article 56

Each member of the Provincial Church Direction acts as President of the moderators, of his classical jurisdiction, and his *secundus* as Assessor.

Article 57

The Secretary is nominated by his Majesty the King, from the ministers of the Classical seat or its immediate vicinity, for the space of three years; the first time directly, and afterwards from a list of six formed by the Classical Assembly, and reduced to three by the Provincial Church Direction. The Secretary may be re-chosen: in his absence, the youngest of the committee (gecommitteerden) of ministers takes his place.

Article 58

The Committee (gecommitteerden) are likewise nominated by the King from ministers, elders or old-elders of the Classical jurisdiction, the first time directly and afterwards from a like nomination, as mentioned in the preceding article.

If the Committee consist of four members, two of them go out annually; if of three members one retires; but they be may be re-elected. The first term for their retirement shall take place on the 1st January 1818.

Article 59

The moderators hold their ordinary sederunts at the classical seats on the last Wednesday of the months of January, March, May, July, September and November. They can however postpone their meetings, especially in winter, should the nature of the business permit it. The President has the power of calling extraordinary meetings.

Article 60

The moderators attend to the interests of the Churches, and take the superintendence of the Congregations, Consistories, and ministers within their bounds. They correspond, as well with the Provincial Church Courts, as with the Consistories of the different Congregations.

Article 61

In particular, they keep a watchful eye on vacant Congregations, and correspond regarding them with the Pretors of rings: they see that the calling of ministers takes place in the most regular and speedy manner; that the ministers called be admitted; and such as leave a cure be discharged in due form.

The petitions respecting permission to call (handopening) and the approbation thereof, must be sent to the Ministerial Department before mentioned.

Article 62

The Classical moderators pay attention to the interests of ministers' widows and orphans within their bounds.

Article 63

They settle differences which arise in or between consistories of the churches; and in case of appeal give a deliverance touching all matters which, in the first instance, has come under the consideration of the local consistories.

Article 64

They are competent to suspend ministers, probationers, and members of consistories.

Article 65

On the last Wednesday of the month of June, at the classical seat a classical assembly is held, consisting of all the ministers of the bounds, and such 'a number of elders or old-elders as is now customary, or which in future may be resolved on by private regulations.

Article 66

The President, Assessor, and Secretary of the classical moderators, act also as such in this meeting.

Article 67

The proceedings of the classical meetings shall be confined, - 1. To the forming of nominations for the choice of a Secretary for the classical moderators, (Art. 57) and of the Committee to the Classical Direction. (Art. 58.) 2. To the hearing and closing of accounts of the Classical Widows' and other funds, as also to the appointing of' treasurers; and further thereupon to decide as is necessary.

Section Fifth: Of the Walloon, English Presbyterian, and Scottish Churches

Article 68

The Walloon churches retain the privilege of preserving such peculiar obligations and relations with each other, as their financial interests and difference of language may demand, without however ceasing to be comprehended in the General Church Direction.

Article 69

For the purpose of watching over their particular interests, there shall be formed a Commission of six members, consisting of five ministers and an elder of the Walloon churches, bearing the title of The Commission for superintending the particular affairs of the Walloon Churches in the Netherlands.

Article 70

The Commissioners are named by the King, first directly, and afterwards from a list of three prepared by the Commission.

Article 71

Every year, to commence with the 1st January 1818, one of the clerical Commissioners shall resign, yet he continues eligible to be re-elected. The elder retires, at the expiration of his year.

Article 72

To those Commissioners is entrusted the superintendency of the financial establishment of the Walloon Churches collectively, and also the examination of those who have devoted themselves to the same service, agreeably to the rules prescribed by Art. 24.

Article 73

The same Commissioners in so far as regards the Walloon Churches, are charged with the functions conveyed to the Provincial Church Directions and Classical moderators; and a member of said Commission has a seat in the - Synod. In future, no separate Synod of the Walloon Churches shall be held.

Article 74

The Walloon churches have the power to hold an assembly once a year relative to their own peculiar affairs; relieving as much as it may be convenient for them, the Classical meetings. The first assembly shall be held at the Hague, and then the alternate places for such annual meetings shall be fixed.

Article 75

The Walloon ministers continue to be members, of the district meetings (ringvergaderingen). The Commissioners always hold their sittings in the Hague.

Article 76

The English Presbyterian and the Scottish Churches are incorporated with the classes to which the Dutch Reformed Community of the city, in which they are established, belong, in so far as this has not taken place already.

Article 77

In what concerns the higher as well as the consistorial government, it will be kept in view, that the churches, mentioned in the preceding article, retain the separate and peculiar regulations and rights which particularly and privately belong to them.

Section Sixth: Of the Rings and their meetings

Article 78

Each classis divided into districts (ringen).

Article 79

The rings must provide for the supply of Service in vacant congregations, according to the order made for that purpose by the Classical moderators.

Article 80

The ministers belonging to the same ring, are enjoined to hold stated meetings, not in regard to any church direction, but to the exciting and strengthening of the bond of brotherly love.

Article 81

On the formation of such meetings they are to choose, by a majority of votes, a Pretor and Secretary; and they meet as often as they shall judge proper.

Article 82

The labours of such meetings consist in consultation and in treating of subjects concerning Religion and the propagation of Christianity, the advancement of the knowledge of the Bible, and their pastoral duties.

Article 83

They keep a record of their transactions, and give an annual report of the same to the Classical moderators, it being also competent for them to send proposals. The classical moderators convey this report, with the necessary remarks, to the knowledge of the Provincial Church Direction, who

make up a general report from it, and this they send to the Ministerial Department for the affairs of the Reformed and other persuasions, that of the Roman Catholics excepted.

Section Seventh: The Church Government in Congregations

Article 84

In all congregations where there is not a total want of materials of which to compose it, there shall be a separate Kirk-Session,

Article 85

The same consists of a minister or the ministers of places, and ,of elders chosen from the most worthy, best informed, and principal members of the congregation. The duties of the ministers, elders and deacons, and of the relation in which the deacons stand to the consistory, shall be described and determined by the Synod in its regulations respecting the consistories.

Article 86

Congregations, where, for want of materials, no consistories exist, are placed under the immediate direction of the Classical Moderators, with the minister.

Article 87

To the Consistory belongs the care of what concerns public worship, Christian instruction, and oversight of the members of the congregation.

Article 88

The censure of members of the congregation on well attested grounds, and conformably to the limitations of the rule as to the manner in which church affairs are to be treated, and regarding

church inspection and discipline takes place, if necessary, in the first instance, by the consistory; this censure being committed to the classical moderators in so far as concerns ministers, members of consistories, and candidates, saving the limitation in Art. 116 of the present Regulations, and of the foresaid rule as to the manner in which church affairs are to be treated, and regarding church inspection and discipline.

Article 89

To the deacons is recommended the care of the poor of the congregation, according to local custom.

Article 90

In the administration of the funds belonging to the church, parsonage, endowments, and other parochial funds; with the relations betwixt the governors and the consistories, no alterations are made by the limitations of this regulation.

Article 91

It is the duty of the classical moderators to give immediate intimation to the Provincial Church Courts of all abuses which may take place in the funds mentioned in the foregoing article, or of others which may be discovered by them; that information of the same, with their remarks thereupon, may be lodged with the Ministerial Department for the affairs of the Reformed and other persuasions, that of the Roman Catholics, excepted for the purpose of obtaining redress.

Article 92

The above mentioned Ministerial Department, after having, received the opinion of the Provincial Church Courts, and after consulting the States of the province which it concerns, shall draw up

the necessary report to his Majesty the King, concerning the matters referred to in the forementioned article.

Article 93

Further, the peculiar interests of the congregations shall be governed agreeably to the general laws, by local regulations, with the approbation of the King.

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