

THE RULE OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCH ORDER OF DORTRECHT

(1618/19)

A HISTORICAL-THEOLOGICAL STUDY

*Kercken-Ordeninghe,*  
Ghefelt

**In den Nationalen**  
**Synode der Ghereformeerde**  
**Kercken/**

Tesamen beroepen, ende ghehouden door ordre van de  
Hooge Mogende Heeren Staten Generael der Vereenichde Nederlanden.

Binnen Dordrecht, inde Jaren  
1618. ende 1619.

*Ende (naer veranderinghe van eenighe weynighe*  
*pointzen) goeds-ghevonden ende ghearresteert by de Ed. Mo.*  
*Hoeren Staten des Furstendoms GHELRE und Graaf-*  
*schaps ZVTPHEN.*



TOT ARNHEM,

By Jan Jansz. Boeck-verkooper woonende  
inde Turf-strate in den vergulden Spbel/ 1620.

Petrus Jacobus Nel

**THE RULE OF CHRIST IN THE CHURCH ORDER OF DORTRECHT  
(1618/19)**

**A HISTORICAL-THEOLOGICAL STUDY**

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

**Magister Divinitatis**

**in the**

**Faculty of theology**

**Department Ecclesiology**

**at the**

**University of the Free State**

**Bloemfontein, South Africa**

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**September 2015**

I declare that the dissertation submitted by me here for the degree of Magister Divinitatis at the Faculty of Theology at the University of the Free State, is my own independent work and not previously submitted by me for a degree at another university/faculty. I also waive the copyright in the thesis/dissertation in favour of the University of the Free State.

It is declared by the advisors and student that the dissertation is in accordance with the requirements of editing

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION:</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 The purpose and principles subjacent to the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA, GKSA and APK.....	1
1.1.1 Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk.....	2
1.1.2 Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika.....	5
1.1.3 Gereformeerde kerke in Suid-Afrika.....	7
1.1.4 Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk.....	10
1.2 The Church Order of Dort.....	14
1.3 Critique of existing scholarship.....	15
1.4 Outline of argument.....	17
<b>CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND UNDERPINNING THEOLOGICAL TRAJECTORIES OF THE CHURCH ORDER OF DORT (1618/19)</b> .....	<b>19</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	19
1.2 Historical context.....	19
1.3 Underpinning theological trajectories.....	36
1.4 Summary.....	46
<b>CHAPTER 2: THE CHRISTOLOGICAL DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE CHURCH ORDER OF DORT (1618/19) PERTAINING TO THE ARTICLES ON THE OFFICES AND ASSEMBLIES</b> .....	<b>48</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	48
2.2 Article 1.....	48
2.3 Offices (Diensten): Articles 2-28.....	52
2.4 Assemblies (t'Samencomsten): Articles 29-52.....	63
2.5 Summary.....	72
<b>CHAPTER 3: THE CHRISTOLOGICAL DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE CHURCH ORDER OF DORT (1618/19) PERTAINING TO THE ARTICLES ON THE DOCTRINE, SACRAMENTS, CEREMONIES AND DISCIPLINE</b> .....	<b>73</b>
3.1 Introduction.....	73
3.2 Doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies (Opsicht der Leere / Sacramenten ende Ceremonien): Articles 53-70.....	73
3.3 Discipline (Christelijcke straffe): Articles 71-86.....	79
3.4 Summary.....	86

**CHAPTER 4: THE CHRISTOLOGICAL DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE CHURCH ORDER OF DORT (1618/19) COMPARED WITH THE CHURCH ORDERS OF THE NEDERDUIITSE GEREFORMEERDE KERK-, THE NEDERDUITSCHHE HERVORMDE KERK VAN AFRIKA-, THE GEREFORMEERDE KERKE IN SUID-AFRIKA-, AND THE AFRIKAANSE PROTESTANTSE KERK..... 88**

4.1 Introduction ..... 88

4.2 Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk ..... 89

4.3 Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk van Afrika..... 92

4.4 Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika..... 95

4.5 Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk ..... 97

4.6 Regulations, ordinances and provisions in the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK..... 100

4.7 Summary ..... 103

**CONCLUSION:..... 105**

**SUMMARY/SAMEVATTING: ..... 108**

**KEY WORDS/SLEUTELTERME: ..... 110**

**APPENDIX:..... 111**

**The Church Order of Dort (1618/19)..... 111**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY: ..... 130**

## INTRODUCTION

Contemporary church orders in South Africa, such as those of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK), the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (NHKA), the Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika (GKSA) and the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk (APK),<sup>1</sup> all assert indebtedness to the Church Order of Dort (1618/19).<sup>2</sup> In a study on the “Word and Tradition” of these church orders, Maré is of opinion that these South African Reformed church orders will necessarily have similarities because they all reach back to the Reformation, they all maintain the same confessions and they all were deeply influenced by the Church Order of Dort.<sup>3</sup> Maré is not alone in contending that the Church Order of Dort forms the basis of these church orders.<sup>4</sup>

In order to establish whether the mentioned contemporary church orders in South Africa are correct in their alleged indebtedness to the Church Order of Dort, a careful study of the text and context of the Church Order of Dort is needed. This would obviously have a profound influence in establishing whether or not these Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA, GKSA and APK are in fact “in line with Dort.”<sup>5</sup> The study therefore also has to scrutinize the intention, purpose and principles underlying these church orders. This will provide the platform for a theological-historical comparison with the Church Order of Dort, as well as secure the

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<sup>1</sup> 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. The abbreviations above will from here on be used continually.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 21; P.J. Strauss, *Kerk en Orde Vandag: Met die Klem op die NG Kerk* (Bloemfontein: Sun Press, 2010), 6; P.J. Strauss, *Die Ned Geref Kerkorde van 1662: Die Dordtse Kerkorde Aangepas by die Eise van ons Dag?* (unpublished, 2015), 12; S.J. Botha, “Totstandkoming van Twee Kerkordes,” in *20ste Eeu Hervormde Teologie*, ed. D.J.C. Van Wyk (Pretoria: Sentik, 1999), 216; C.J. Smit and Jan J Van der Walt, “Die Doop in die Gereformeerde Kerkorde,” *In die Skriflig* 23, no. 2 (1989): 61, <http://www.indieskriflig.org.za/index.php/skriflig/article/viewFile/827/1065>; P.J. Strauss, “Die Diaken in Twee Kerkordes in die Dordtse Tradisie,” *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* 55, no. 3&4 (2014): 831, [https://www.google.co.za/search?q=Kerkorde+in+lyn+met+Dordt%3F&rlz=1C1AVNA\\_enZA592ZA592&oq=Kerkorde+in+lyn+met+Dordt%3F&aqs=chrome..69i57.12277j0j7&sourceid=chrome&es\\_sm=122&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.co.za/search?q=Kerkorde+in+lyn+met+Dordt%3F&rlz=1C1AVNA_enZA592ZA592&oq=Kerkorde+in+lyn+met+Dordt%3F&aqs=chrome..69i57.12277j0j7&sourceid=chrome&es_sm=122&ie=UTF-8); H.J. Kleynhans, “Kerkebegrip, Belydenis en Kerkorde in die Kerkherenigingsproses van die NG Kerkfamilie in Suid-Afrika” (unpublished, 2009), 166,168, <http://etd.uovs.ac.za/ETD-db/theses/available/etd-08142009-155312/unrestricted/KleynhansHJ.pdf>; B.J. Van Wyk, “Die Kerkorde En die Kerklike Reg in die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk Van Afrika aan die hand van die Presbiteriaal-Sinodale Kerkebegrip” (unpublished, 2005), 146, <http://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/24756/05chapter5.pdf?sequence=6>; B Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg En Kerkregering* (Pretoria: V&R Drukkery, 1989), 20, [http://www.enigstetroos.org/SpoelstraB\\_KO.pdf](http://www.enigstetroos.org/SpoelstraB_KO.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Roelof Mare, *Skrif En Tradisie in Vier Afrikaanse Kerkordes: Enkele Kerkregtelike Aspekte* (Universiteit van Suid-Afrika: unpublished, 1991), xiv.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 79. See also footnote 2.

<sup>5</sup> P.J. Strauss, *Kerk en Orde Vandag: Met die klem op die NG Kerk* (Bloemfontein: Sun Press, 2010), 6; A.D. Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van ons Kerklike Reg*, vol. 2 (Pretoria: KITAL, 1991), 4.

space for theological-critical reflection in this regard. The research intends to carry this into effect. A short analysis of the church orders of the Afrikaans churches of Reformed confession, illustrates the case in point.

## **1.1 The purpose and principles subjacent to the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA, GKSA and APK**

### **1.1.1 Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk**

According to Strauss the NGK Church Order is not a duplicate of Dort, it should rather be viewed as a contemporary version of the well known seventeen century church order.<sup>6</sup> It was Vorster that suggested that the proposed Church Order for the Dutch Reformed Church of 1962 was essentially the Church Order of Dort, though it was changed and adapted to address the situation of the NGK in the 1960's.<sup>7</sup> The NGK Church Order remained the same since 1962 and still claims to be "in the line of Dort"<sup>8</sup> because of the same practice of Word and confessional characteristic of it. However the Church Order of the NGK is not only focused on the practice of Word and confession, but also on adjusting to, and meeting the "demands of the day"<sup>9</sup> and thus conditioned by practical theological considerations. The practicality of the Church Order - which is aimed at accommodating culture and society - emerges as an important principle in the church polity of the NGK. For the NGK a church order should be contemporary, relevant and functional.<sup>10</sup> The Church Order articles are therefore often changed or adapted by synods of the NGK to reflect and answer this practical situation of the day.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Strauss, *Kerk en Orde Vandag: Met die Klem op die NG Kerk*, 7,21.

<sup>7</sup> 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.

<sup>8</sup> Strauss, *Kerk en Orde Vandag: Met die klem op die NG Kerk*, 6.

<sup>9</sup> Strauss, *Gereformeerdes onder die Suiderkruis 1652-2011: Die Verhaal van Vier Afrikaanse Kerke*, 21.

<sup>10</sup> See Strauss, *Kerk en Orde vandag: Met die klem op die NG Kerk*, 17.

<sup>11</sup> Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Besluitregister van die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk," 2013, 8,19-27.45, 60, <http://www.ngkerkas.co.za/index.php/dokumente/standpunte/besluite-en-studiestukke-van-die-algemene-sinode/>; Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Besluitregister van die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk," 2011, 158,166, 173-174,, <http://www.ngkerkas.co.za/index.php/dokumente/standpunte/besluite-en-studiestukke-van-die-algemene-sinode/>; Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Besluitregister van die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk," 2007, 195, 203, 207, 214-215, <http://www.ngkerkas.co.za/index.php/dokumente/standpunte/besluite-en-studiestukke-van-die-algemene-sinode/>; Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Besluitregister van die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk," 2004, 20, 25, <http://www.ngkerkas.co.za/index.php/dokumente/standpunte/besluite-en-studiestukke-van-die-algemene-sinode/>

It is in addition perceived that a church order is “in service of the church and reflects the church’s identity, customs and order rules.”<sup>12</sup> Theologically, the Church Order of the NGK is seated within the ambit of a typical ecclesiology. This is apparent in Article 1 and 2 of the Church Order in their articulation of the centrality of the identity, foundation and mission of the church as an institution:

*Artikel 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 van Dordrecht in 1618-1619, naamlik die sewe en dertig artikels van die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis, die Heidelbergse Kategismus en die vyf Dordtse Leerreëls. Artikel 2: Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk is deur God Drie-enig geroep om deel te neem aan die missie van God in die wêreld. Die Kerk word deur die Heilige Gees opgebou om God se eer te dien en verkondig die bediening van versoening en die heil van Christus.*<sup>13</sup>

Article 1 furthermore indicates that confessional standards are intended to be the fundamental weight-bearing part of and thus determinative to the Church Order of the NGK.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, the prominent position of the confessional standards in the NGK Church Order has dominated deliberations and reflections on church unity and government.<sup>15</sup> Article 2 makes it clear that for the NGK a church order should be focused on the witness of the church to the world.<sup>16</sup> To be contemporary and relevant the Church Order as such should be missional. In order to reflect the missional identity of the NGK, the old Article 2 of the Church Order has recently been shifted to article 3,<sup>17</sup> making room for the quoted new Article 2 on the missional identity of the

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studiestukke-van-die-algemene-sinode/; Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, “Besluitregister van die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk,” 2002, 633–634, <http://www.ngkerkas.co.za/index.php/dokumente/standpunte/besluite-en-studiestukke-van-die-algemene-sinode/>.

<sup>12</sup> Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, “Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funkionele Besluite en Riglyne,” 2013, iii, <http://www.ngkerkas.co.za/index.php/dokumente/kerkorde>.

<sup>13</sup> Article 1 and 2. See *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>14</sup> See H.J. Kleynhans, “Kerkgrip, Belydenis en Kerkorde in die Kerkherenigingproses van die NG Kerkfamilie in Suid-Afrika” (unpublished, 2009), 167, <http://etd.uovs.ac.za/ETD-db/theses/available/etd-08142009-155312/unrestricted/KleynhansHJ.pdf>. The Confessions that are referred to are the three forms of unity being the Belgic Confession of faith, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dort, and also the Apostolic Confession of faith, the Nicene Confession and the Confession of Athanasius.

<sup>15</sup> P.J. Strauss, *Kerkwees in die Branding: Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Algemene Sinodale Verband 1994-2011*, Acta Theologica Supplementum 8 (Bloemfontein: SUN MeDIA, 2013), 145–146; Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, “Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funkionele Besluite en Riglyne,” 2013, iii, <http://www.ngkerkas.co.za/index.php/dokumente/kerkorde>.

<sup>16</sup> See Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, “Besluitregister van Die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk,” 2013, 8, <http://www.ngkerkas.co.za/index.php/dokumente/standpunte/besluite-en-studiestukke-van-die-algemene-sinode/>.

<sup>17</sup> The old article 2 and the new article 3 is exactly the same. See Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, “Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funkionele Besluite en Riglyne,” 1. The old Article 2 (now article 3) adapts and expands the church order of Dordt’s article 1 and reads: “Waar die Woord van God eis dat in die gemeente van Christus alles welvoeglik en ordelik moet toegaan (1 Kor 14:40), word in die volgende artikels ’n aantal bepalinge gegee vir die lewe en werk van die Kerk met die oog op die volbrenging van haar taak en roeping ooreenkomstig die Heilige Skrif en die Belydenis. Hierdie bepalinge handel oor die ampte in die Kerk, die vergaderinge van die Kerk, die werksaamhede van die Kerk, regering en tug van die Kerk en die betrekkinge van die Kerk na



church.<sup>18</sup> Moreover the synod instructed the polity commission to review the Church Order in terms of a report on the missional nature and calling of the church, to ensure that its character and standing should be more firmly embedded in the missional aspect of the ecclesiology.<sup>19</sup>

It seems that for the NGK it is important that a church order should express the principles behind the Church Order of Dort, while simultaneously it should be contemporary, relevant and functional. It is comprehended that the Church Order should reflect the church's identity and mission and also be grounded in the confessional documents. It is evident from the acts of the NGK's synods that provisions and regulations accompanying the Church Order, as a fact of matter, play a pivotal role in its ecclesiology. Much time is spent on these in assemblies and research.<sup>20</sup> The provisions and regulations that accompany the Church Order are much longer and worked out in detail, and are intended to take care of every aspect in which the church is governed.<sup>21</sup> These regulations should be seen as important governing principles for the

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buite."

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.; Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Besluitregister van die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk," 2013, 19–20, <http://www.ngkerkas.co.za/index.php/dokumente/standpunte/besluite-en-studiestukke-van-die-algemene-sinode/>. Article 2 reads: "Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk is deur God Drie-enig geroep om deel te neem aan die missie van God in die wêreld. Die Kerk word deur die Heilige Gees opgebou om God se eer te dien en verkondig die bediening van versoening en die heil van Christus."

<sup>19</sup> Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funkionele Besluite en Riglyne," iii.

<sup>20</sup> Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Handelinge van Die 14de Vergadering van Die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk," 2011, <http://www.ngkerkas.co.za/index.php/dokumente/standpunte/besluite-en-studiestukke-van-die-algemene-sinode/>; Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk, "Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika," 2013, <http://www.nhka.org/index.php/so-werk-ons-11/amptelike-dokumente.html>; Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Besluitregister van die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk," 1994, <http://www.ngkerkas.co.za/index.php/dokumente/standpunte/besluite-en-studiestukke-van-die-algemene-sinode/>; Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Besluitregister van die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk," 1998, <http://www.ngkerkas.co.za/index.php/dokumente/standpunte/besluite-en-studiestukke-van-die-algemene-sinode/>; Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Besluitregister van die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk," 2002, <http://www.ngkerkas.co.za/index.php/dokumente/standpunte/besluite-en-studiestukke-van-die-algemene-sinode/>; Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Besluitregister van die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk," 2004, <http://www.ngkerkas.co.za/index.php/dokumente/standpunte/besluite-en-studiestukke-van-die-algemene-sinode/>; Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Besluitregister van die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk," 2007, <http://www.ngkerkas.co.za/index.php/dokumente/standpunte/besluite-en-studiestukke-van-die-algemene-sinode/>; Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Besluitregister van die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk," 2011, <http://www.ngkerkas.co.za/index.php/dokumente/standpunte/besluite-en-studiestukke-van-die-algemene-sinode/>; Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Besluitregister van die Algemene Sinode van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk," 2013.

<sup>21</sup> The Church Orders of the NHKA and APK follows this same method as the rules, provisions or order rules accompanying the church order is much longer than the church order itself. See Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funkionele Besluite en Riglyne," 1–20. The Church Order is 20 pages long and the provisions about 140 pages. See Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk, "Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk

church polity of the NGK that determines the ecclesiological understanding and application of the order of its life.

### 1.1.2 Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika

The NHKA in the past relied much on the church rules and orders of the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk.<sup>22</sup> 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 and therefore the NHKA followed the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk in their regulations 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.<sup>23</sup>

The Church Law of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika of 1951 may be understood, however, as an attempt to reorientate to the Reformed church polity principles of Dort (1618/19). The confessional character of Reformed church polity was regained by this Church Law.<sup>24</sup> The NHKA changed the name “Church Law” to “Church Order” in 1998, that indicated a shift towards a more Reformed ecclesiology.<sup>25</sup> Botha understands the NHKA Church Order of 1998 as an independent development of the church government and theological convictions of the NHKA itself.<sup>26</sup> This is a development departing from the traditional source of their church orderly rules, that being the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk. This all forms part of a history where church polity did not receive much attention in the NHKA, but was gradually established by Engelbrecht and then Pont in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>27</sup> The Church Order of 1998 was then seen as a Church Order of the NHKA in terms of its “own time and circumstances.”<sup>28</sup>

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van Afrika”; Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereëls vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite. In the Church Orders of the NHKA and APK the provisions are included directly into the church order and not as separate headings.

<sup>22</sup> See Botha, “Totstandkoming van Twee Kerkordes,” 212.

<sup>23</sup> See Ibid., 215–216; A.D. Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, vol. 1 (Pretoria: HAUM, 1981), xii.

<sup>24</sup> Botha, “Totstandkoming van Twee Kerkordes,” 217.

<sup>25</sup> “Kerkwet” and “Kerkorde”

<sup>26</sup> Botha, “Totstandkoming van Twee Kerkordes,” 212.

<sup>27</sup> B.J. Van Wyk, “Vyf en Sewentig Jaar Kerkreg binne die Fakulteit Teologie vanweë die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika,” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 48, no. 1&2 (1992): 293–312, <http://www.hts.org.za/index.php/HTS/article/view/2399/4213>.

<sup>28</sup> Botha, “Totstandkoming van Twee Kerkordes,” 224.

It seems to be a fundamental principle in the Church Order of the NHKA that the Church Order should have a confessional character.<sup>29</sup> According to Pont the confession is the source, the root and the norm for the order of the church.<sup>30</sup> Van Wyk, like Pont describes the church polity of the NHKA as a “confessional polity”<sup>31</sup> and further asserts that the function of this Church Order manifests the confession.<sup>32</sup> These observations are expressed in Article 1 of the Church Order of the NHKA, confessing the church and thus followed by a portrayal of the confessional identity of the NHKA as institution:

*Die kerk is 'n gemeenskap van gelowiges wat God deur sy versoening in Christus tot stand bring en in standhou deurdat Hy mense in Jesus Christus in genade uitkies en deur die werk van die Heilige Gees saambring om deur die Woord en sakramente 'n heilige volk te wees en dienswerk in die wêreld te verrig. Ons, 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 Hom en alles wat vir ons verlossing nodig is, duidelik en voldoende deur sy Woord, die Bybel, bekend maak. Ons belydenis is 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.<sup>33</sup>*

It seems that for the NHKA the Church Order should convey the church polity principles of the Church Order of Dort, while still portraying an independent development of the identity of the NHKA itself. In the NHKA it is a logical progression that confessions should be succeeded by a church order. A church order is understood as an attempt to embody the confessions and order the congregational life embedded in the confessions. The Church Order of the NHKA therefore is derived from a confessional point of departure and is understood as the confession and order of the NHKA as institution. This Church Order furthermore consists of a number of ordinances that governs almost every aspect of the church's life. These ordinances should be seen, like the regulations accompanying the Church Order of the NGK, as important governing principles of the church polity of the NHKA. It may then be noted that as the church as institute is a

<sup>29</sup> See S.J. Botha, “Belydenis in Kerkregtelike Verband met Besondere Verwysing na die Konsep Kerkorde 1997, Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika,” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 53, no. 4 (1997): 1293, [http://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/18271/Botha\\_Belydenis%281997%29.pdf?sequence=1](http://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/18271/Botha_Belydenis%281997%29.pdf?sequence=1).

<sup>30</sup> Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1991, 2:15.

<sup>31</sup> 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>.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>33</sup> Nederduitsche Hervormde Kerk, “Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika,” 1.

determinant concept in the NGK Church Order, the confessional character of the church is preeminent for the NHKA.

### 1.1.3 Gereformeerde kerke in Suid-Afrika

In the GKSA no regulations or ordinances are associated with the Church Order. The purpose of a church order is rather understood to be a guardian of the truth.<sup>34</sup> As an expression of truth the Church Order is more than just a mutual contractual agreement between the congregations. The church polity principles underlying the Church Order of the GKSA are understood as principles that are governed by the Word. Van der Linde asserts that the Church Order of the GKSA is grounded on the Reformed church orders and thus also the Scriptures.<sup>35</sup> Concurring with Van der Linde, the Church Order of the GKSA looks almost like an exact copy of the Church Order of Dort (1618/19). Though amendments have been made to this Church Order, the GKSA has tried to maintain the Church Order of Dort (1618/19) as far as possible,<sup>36</sup> and therefore this Church Order is in essence still the 86 articles of the Church order of Dort.<sup>37</sup>

In the church polity of the GKSA there is no intention to “answer the demands of the day”, like in the NGK. This does not necessarily mean that a church order that follows in concrete terms the Church Order of Dort cannot be relevant or contemporary, as Smit has defended this principle, asserting that this is in line with the Church Orders from Calvin to Dort (1618/19) that does not give provisions and orders for the missional task of the church, but rather departs from a different concept of being church.<sup>38</sup> This is portrayed in Article 1 of the Church Order of the GKSA that states the purpose of this Church Order:

<sup>34</sup> C.J. Smit and Jan J Van der Walt, “Die Doop in die Gereformeerde Kerkorde,” *In Die Skriflig* 23, no. 2 (1989): 72, <http://www.indieskriflig.org.za/index.php/skriflig/article/viewFile/827/1065>.

<sup>35</sup> G.P.L. Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroomse Teologiese Publikasies, 1983), 7.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>37</sup> B Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering* (Pretoria: V&R Drukkery, 1989), 20, [http://www.enigstetroos.org/SpoelstraB\\_KO.pdf](http://www.enigstetroos.org/SpoelstraB_KO.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> Johannes Smit, “Die Kerkorde en die Missionale Taak van die Kerk: 'n Teenstrydigheid?,” *Die Kerkblad*, April 2013, 8–10.

*Om goeie orde in die kerk van Christus te onderhou, is daarin nodig: die dienste, samekomste, toesig oor die leer, sakramente en seremonies en die kerklike tug, waaroor hierna agtereenvolgens gehandel word.*<sup>39</sup>

Article 1 is the same as Article 1 of the Church Order of Dort (1618/19) that also aimed to maintain the order in the church of Christ through the offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments, ceremonies and Christian discipline.<sup>40</sup> The focus for the GKSA seems not to be practical, missional, confessional or ecclesiastical, as Article 1 does not begin with the identity, mission or confessions of the church as institution. Van der Linde argues that the purpose of this Church Order is rather to ensure that the church is in such a way governed that it is and stays church of Christ.<sup>41</sup> It is accepted that the Church Order should not serve the interest of the church in itself; it should rather serve to adhere to the church polity that the Scripture prescribes.<sup>42</sup> The church as institution is nowhere present in the Church Order of the GKSA. The prominence of maintaining good order in the local congregations constitutes the content of the Church Order. It is clear from Spoelstra's commentary on this Church Order that the GKSA understands the Church Order to be a portrayal of the Kingship of Christ, as every article of the Church Order is related to His Kingship.<sup>43</sup> Article 1 of the Church Order of Dort is also to some extent present in the Church Orders of the NGK and the APK. Until recently it was part of Article 2 of the NGK Church Order, but has now been moved to Article 3,<sup>44</sup> and the article forms part of Article 2 of the APK Church Order.<sup>45</sup> The Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and

<sup>39</sup> Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, "Kerkorde van die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika," n.d., 1, <http://www.gksa.org.za/Oor%20die%20GKSA/kerk-orde>.

<sup>40</sup> Article 1: "Om goede ordre inder Ghemeente Christi te onderhouden / zijn daer inne noodigh de Diensten / t'Samencomsten / Opsicht der Leere / Sacramenten ende Ceremonien / ende Christelijcke straffe. Waer van hier na ordentlijck sal gehandelt worden." 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." (Jansz, 1620), 3, [http://www.prdl.org/author\\_view.php?a\\_id=2355](http://www.prdl.org/author_view.php?a_id=2355).

<sup>41</sup> G.P.L. Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroomse Teologiese Publikasies, 1983), 8.

<sup>42</sup> B Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering* (Pretoria: V&R Drukkery, 1989), 20, [http://www.enigstetroos.org/SpoelstraB\\_KO.pdf](http://www.enigstetroos.org/SpoelstraB_KO.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*.

<sup>44</sup> Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funktionele Besluite En Riglyne," 1.

<sup>45</sup> Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereëls vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite* (Pretoria: Lig in Duisternis, 2008), 2. "Om die goeie orde in die kerk van Christus, volgens die eis van die Woord van God, dat alles welvoeglik en ordelik in die gemeente moet toegaan (1 Kor. 14:40), te onderhou, word die volgende neergelê betreffende lidmaatskap van die Afrikaanse Protestantse kerk(e) (gemeentes), die ampte in, die vergaderings van, die werksaamhede van, die opsig en tug in en die betrekkinge van die kerk(e) na buite."

APK all describe the confessional basis of the church in their first article, while in contrast to this, the GKSA only partly articulates the church's confessional basis in Article 53.<sup>46</sup> In this the GKSA also follows the Church Order of Dort which only discusses the signing of the confession in Article 53.<sup>47</sup>

The Church Order of Dort also seems to be an important guideline for the GKSA when changes to the Church Order are considered.<sup>48</sup> Bouwman as well as Strauss underscores this important place of Dort in the GKSA, asserting that from the break with the NGK in 1859 the GKSA showed great awareness for the three Forms of Unity, including the Church order of Dort.<sup>49</sup> This may also explain why the GKSA has commentaries on their Church Order in contrast with the NHK, NHKA and APK.<sup>50</sup> Revision of Church Order articles by synods of the GKSA are also often done in light of the historical development of these articles, taking for instance the decisions of the Synods of Emden (1571), Dortrecht (1578), Middelburg (1581), The Hague (1586) and Dortrecht (1618/19) under consideration when changes to articles are considered.<sup>51</sup>

It is thus apparent that the GKSA opted to follow the concrete terms and structure of the Church Order of Dort (1618/19). For the GKSA a church order should be a guardian of the truth that ensures that the

<sup>46</sup> It is partly because it is not described what the Three Forms of unity is, and because the article's focus is on the signing of the confessions and not on the confessions themselves. See Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, "Kerkorde van die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika," n.d., 7–8, <http://www.gksa.org.za/Oor%20die%20GKSA/kerk-orde>. Article 53: "Die bedienaars van die Woord en ook die professore aan die Teologiese Skool moet die drie Formuliere van Eenheid soos vasgestel op die Sinode van Dordrecht 1618-19 onderskryf en onderteken en die wat weier om dit te doen, moet metterdaad in hulle diens geskors word deur die kerkraad of klassis en in die geval van professore, deur die nasionale sinode, totdat hulle hul daarvoor volledig verantwoord het. As hulle hardnekkig weier, moet hulle heeltemal van hulle diens afgesit word."

<sup>47</sup> Article 53: "De Dienaers des Woords Gods / Item die Professorê inde Theologie ('twelck oock den anderen Professoren wel betaemt) zullen de Belijdenissen des Geloofs der Nederlantscher Kercken onderteecken / ende de Dienaers die sulcx sullen refuseren / sullen de facto van haren Dienst by den Kercken-Raet / ofte de Classe opgeschorst werden / ter tijdt toe sy haer daer inne gheheelijcken verclaert sullen hebben : ende indien sy opstinateelijcken in weygheringhe blijven / sullen sy van harê Dienst geheelijcken afgestelt werden." 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.," 27.

<sup>48</sup> Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, "Handelinge van die Tweede Algemene Sinode van die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika," 2012, 382, [http://www.gksa.org.za/Sinodes/sinodes\\_argief](http://www.gksa.org.za/Sinodes/sinodes_argief); Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, "Handelinge van die Eerste Algemene Sinode van die Gereformeerde Kerke In Suid-Afrika," 2009, 40, [http://www.gksa.org.za/Sinodes/sinodes\\_argief](http://www.gksa.org.za/Sinodes/sinodes_argief); Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, "Handelinge van die Agt-En-Veertigste Nasionale Sinode," 2003, 465, [http://www.gksa.org.za/Sinodes/sinodes\\_argief](http://www.gksa.org.za/Sinodes/sinodes_argief).

<sup>49</sup> Strauss, *Gereformeerdes onder die Suiderkruis 1652-2011: Die Verhaal van Vier Afrikaanse Kerke*, 33; H Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1928), 323.

<sup>50</sup> See G.P.L. Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroomse Teologiese Publikasies, 1983); Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*.

<sup>51</sup> Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, "Handelinge van die Eerste Algemene Sinode van die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika," 40; Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, "Handelinge van Die Agt-En-Veertigste Nasionale Sinode," 466.

church stays theologically orthodox. This Church Order is not about the identity or mission of the church as institution, as articulated in the NGK Church Order. It wants to ensure that Christ is obeyed in the church, rather than to prescribe a confessional pre-eminence as articulated in the NHKA Church Order. Therefore it must be concluded that the GKSA understands a church order in terms of the local congregation's obedience to Christ as King. The Church Order is focussed on the church polity that the Word prescribes. No provisions, ordinances or stipulations accompany this church order.

#### 1.1.4 Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk

The APK Synod of 1990 decided that its Church Order should be brought in accordance with Reformed church government.<sup>52</sup> Concurring with the Synod's decision it is indeed much similar to the other Reformed Church Orders under discussion here and has been referred to as a model Reformed church order.<sup>53</sup> But these Reformed principles of church government have not received much attention in scholarly literature from within the APK itself. Instead, Article 3 stood, just as the controversial Article 3 in the Church Order of the NHKA,<sup>54</sup> in the centre of attention and is thus basic to the church polity of the APK:

*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 hierdie Artikel in die Kerkorde van die Afrikaanse Protestantse kerke in kerkverband (kyk Art. 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.<sup>55</sup>*

<sup>52</sup> Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, "Register van Sinodebesluite" (unpublished, 2015), 94.

<sup>53</sup> C.L. Van Heerden, "Prof. F.A.H. van Staden: 50 Jaar in die Bediening," *Die Boodskapper*, no. 156 (November 2002): 12.

<sup>54</sup> Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk, "Kerkwet en Bepalings," 1889, 1, <http://www.nhka.org/index.php/so-werk-ons-11/amptelike-dokumente.html>. Article 3 read: "Tot die gemeentes en derhalwe tot die Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika, behoort blanke persone...Die Kerk, bewus van die gevare van vermenging van Blank en nie-Blank vir altwee groepe inhou, wil geen vermenging in sy midde toelaat, maar beoog die vorming van ander volkskerke onder die verskillende volksgroepe..."

<sup>55</sup> Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereëls vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite* (Pretoria: Lig in Duisternis, 2008), 3.

The origin and development of Article 3 in the Church Order of the APK is noteworthy: In the Church Order of 1987 membership of the church was not subject to subscribing.<sup>56</sup> As cited above, Article 3 in the Church Order of the APK of 2008 states that membership to a local congregation of the APK is also subject to the subscribing of Article 3 itself.<sup>57</sup>

The principles underpinning the APK Church Order are not only exclusively about just the Word of God being central in the governing of the church through the offices, assemblies, doctrine, sacraments, ceremonies and discipline, but also concerned with a cultural demarcation of membership that sends the governing of the church in a certain ethnical direction.<sup>58</sup> Strauss also makes this applicable to the earlier NHKA, before they adapted Article 3,<sup>59</sup> noting that it is striking that both these churches have a church order article that influences its whole existence.<sup>60</sup> Botha, like Strauss, asserts 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 whole Church Order of the NHKA was built on this one central issue.<sup>61</sup>

The dominance of Article 3 in the church polity of the APK is evident in the APK's official publication *Die Boodskapper*: Between 1992 and 2015 only a few articles concerning church polity and government were published,<sup>62</sup> while the principle of the "indigenisation of the church under the Afrikaner-

<sup>56</sup> Die Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, "Kerkorde, Bepalings en Ordereëls vir Vergaderings" (Die Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, 1987), 1.

<sup>57</sup> Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereëls vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite* (Pretoria: Lig in Duisternis, 2008), 3.

<sup>58</sup> See Strauss, *Gereformeerdes onder die Suiderkruis 1652-2011: Die Verhaal van Vier Afrikaanse Kerke*, 87.

<sup>59</sup> Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk, "Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika," 64. Article 3 now makes part of Order rule 4, with the difference that membership is now open to all ethnic groups and not limited to white Afrikaans people. Though the church does still see itself as "n volkskerk met sy eie kerklike kultuur, geskiedenis, taal en tradisie wat geroepe is tot die verkondiging van die evangelie van Jesus Christus aan die Afrikaner volk en tegelyk aan alle mense."

<sup>60</sup> Strauss, *Gereformeerdes onder die Suiderkruis 1652-2011: Die Verhaal van Vier Afrikaanse Kerke*, 87.

<sup>61</sup> Botha, "Totstandkoming van Twee Kerkordes," 213.

<sup>62</sup> F.A.H. Van Staden, "Die Rol en Betekenis van die Ring volgens die Kerkorde," *Die Boodskapper*, no. 54 (October 1992): 9–10; F.A.H. Van Staden, "Dit Mag Tog Nie!," *Die Boodskapper*, no. 91 (April 1996): 4; A.S. Van Jaarsveld, "Noodsaaklikheid en Betekenis van 'n Kerkorde Vir 'n Gereformeerde Kerk van Christus," *Die Boodskapper*, no. 95 (September 1996): 6; F.A.H. Van Staden, "Ek Bedank!," *Die Boodskapper*, no. 109 (February 1998): 9,11; C.L. Van Heerden, "Prof. F.A.H. van Staden: 50 Jaar in die Bediening," *Die Boodskapper*, no. 156 (November 2002): 11–12; F.A.H. Van Staden, "Ons in die A.P. Kerkverband en die Kerkorde," *Die Boodskapper*, no. 166 (November 2003): 5–6; Paul Möller, "Amptelike Kerkorde- Nie Meer Nodig?," *Die Boodskapper*, Maart 2012, <http://apk.co.za/index.php/publikasies/die-boodskapper1>.



Boerevolk”<sup>63</sup> is consistently profiled. This principal and practice of ethnicity is so crucial for the APK that it is the only article in the Church Order that’s acceptance in writing is compulsory for membership.<sup>64</sup>

Despite the prominence of Article 3, the APK Church Order consists of more than just this one article. Article 1 explains the nature of the Church Order by emphasising the seat of the local congregation in the APK. From this basis it describes the identity and foundation of the church as institution:

*Die Kerkorde is die gemeenskaplike akkoord deur die plaaslike kerke (gemeentes), soos vervat in die Kerkjaarboek van die AP Kerk, wat in kerkverband met mekaar saamlewe, gegrond op die eenheid in Skrif en Belydenis. 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 1618-19, naamlik die Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis, die Heidelbergse Kategismus en die vyf Dordtse Leerreëls. Die Twaalf Artikels, die Geloofsbelydenis van Nicea en die Geloofsbelydenis van Athanasius word as historiese, algemene belydenisskrifte aanvaar.<sup>65</sup>*

In this the Church Order balances both the role of the local congregation and the church as institution. The Church Order is understood in terms of the local congregation confessionally being an expression of the body of Christ. In terms of this approach the Church Order maintains an ecclesiological perspective, but also emphasises the confessional foundation of the church, as in the case of the NGK and NHKA.

It seems that for the APK the role of the local congregation, but also the confessional documents of the church as institution, form the basis of a church order. In addition the Church Order of the APK also includes requirements for membership as necessary for the good order in the church of Christ. These requirements receives prominence in Article 3, before the articles on the offices, assemblies, discipline and relation to other churches are discussed.<sup>66</sup> Requirements for membership hold an important position in the Church Order and is therefore an important principle governing the Church Order of the APK. The Church Order is also accompanied by a number of provisions that has gradually developed to provide a much larger scope for governing the church than the Church Order itself. In this respect the Church Order of the APK is

<sup>63</sup> My translation: “die verinheemings van die kerk van Christus onder die Afrikaner-Boerevolk...” See Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereëls vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite*, 3.

<sup>64</sup> A synod decision of 2004 also excludes those from membership that does not agree with the APK’s view on Scripture, women in office, Christian Sunday celebration etc. See Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, “Register van Sinodebesluite,” 113.

<sup>65</sup> Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereëls vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite*, 2.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 2–3.

similar to the Church Orders of the NGK and NHKA.<sup>67</sup> Like the Church Order of the GKSA and in contrast to the Church Orders of the NGK and NHKA, the APK Church Order emphasises that the Church Order is an order for the local congregations and not for the church as institution per se. The Church Order of the APK, however, does emphasise the confessional basis of the church as institution, as also articulated in the Church Orders of the NGK and NHKA.

In summary, to conclude this overview, it has become clear that the opening articles of the NGK, NHKA, GKSA, and APK Church Orders differ, articulating respectively the church as an inclusive institute (NGK), as expression of a confession (NHKA), as a church where the Kingship of Christ is important (GKSA) and where the local congregation confessionally is an expression of the body of Christ (APK), with cultural provisions as far as membership is concerned. Except for the GKSA, each of the Church Orders is profoundly embraced with a range of ecclesiastical provisions, arrangements, decisions and regulations to govern the respective churches as denominations. The question therefore may be raised: what constitute these differences, since all four Reformed churches assert their adherence and indebtedness to the Church Order of Dort? Before this could be answered, a thorough analysis of the Church Order of Dort should be made. The theological intention of this Order should be uncovered in order to provide a tenable platform to argue a comparison. In this way, the underpinning trajectories of this study now emerge: it concerns itself with the theological (and Christological) intention of the Church Order of Dort in order to establish to what extent this Church Order was and is indeed received in the respective Church Orders of the mentioned Afrikaans churches of Reformed confession. A concise historical and theological overview of the Church Order of Dort therefore should be offered.

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<sup>67</sup> The Church Order gradually developed from 1987 (about 20 pages) to 2008 (over 200 pages) mostly due to provisions. See Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereëls vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite*; Die Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, “Kerkorde, Bepalings en Ordereëls vir Vergaderings” (Die Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, 1987).

## 1.2 The Church Order of Dort

Much has been written on reformed church government and polity since the Synod of Dort (1618/19), and almost all the secondary sources describing church polity and government assert the principle of the Church Order of Dort: Christ rules His church.<sup>68</sup> The historical background and development of church polity has often been studied,<sup>69</sup> but there is, however, no direct focus on the Christological distinctiveness of the Church

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<sup>68</sup> F.L. Rutgers, *De Geldigheid van de Oude Kerkenordening Der Nederlandsche Gereformeerde Kerken* (Amsterdam: J.A. Wormser, 1890); F.L. Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordening van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, ed. J De Jong (Rotterdam: Libertas, 1918); Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*; H Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, vol. 2 (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1934); F.L. Bos, *De Orde Der Kerk* ('s-Gravenhage: Guido de Brès, 1950), <http://www.kerkrecht.nl/main.asp?pagetype=onderdeel&item=41>; J Plomp, *Beginselen van Reformatorisch Kerkrecht* (Kampen: Kok, 1967), <http://www.kerkrecht.nl/main.asp?pagetype=onderdeel&item=202>; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*; Joh. Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1952); 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); D Nauta, *Verklaring van de Kerkorde van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (Kampen: Kok, 1971); Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981; G.P.L. Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van Die Gereformeerde Kerkorde* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroomse Teologiese Publikasies, 1983); 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); A.D. Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, vol. 2 (Pretoria: KITAL, 1991); Mare, *Skrif en Tradisie in Vier Afrikaanse Kerkordes: Enkele Kerkregtelike Aspekte*; David W Hall and Joseph H Hall, eds., *Paradigms in Polity: Classic Readings in Reformed and Presbyterian Church Government* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994); S.J. Botha, "Belydenis in Kerkregtelike Verband met Besondere Verwysing na die Konsep Kerkorde 1997, Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika," *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 53, no. 4 (1997), [http://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/18271/Botha\\_Belydenis%281997%29.pdf?sequence=1](http://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/18271/Botha_Belydenis%281997%29.pdf?sequence=1); G Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On, 2005*, New Series 21 (Secret Harbour: The Reformed Guardian), accessed February 22, 2015, <http://www.kerkrecht.nl/main.asp?pagetype=onderdeel&item=153>; Strauss, "Die Diaken in Twee Kerkordes in die Dordtse Tradisie"; Smit and Van der Walt, "Die Doop in die Gereformeerde Kerkorde"; Van Wyk, "Die Kerkorde En Die Kerklike Reg In Die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk Van Afrika Aan Die Hand van Die Presbiteriaal-Sinodale Kerkbegrip"; Johannes Smit, "Die Kerkorde en die Missionale Taak van die Kerk: 'n Teenstrydigheid?," *Die Kerkblad*, April 2013, 8–10; Strauss, *Die Ned Geref Kerkorde van 1962: Die Dordtse Kerkorde Aangepas by die Eise van Ons Dag?*; Strauss, *Gereformeerdes Onder die Suiderkruis 1652-2011: Die Verhaal van Vier Afrikaanse Kerke*; Strauss, *Kerk en Orde Vandag: Met die Klem Op die NG Kerk*; Kleynhans, "Kerkbegrip, Belydenis en Kerkorde in die Kerkherenigingproses van die NG Kerkfamilie in Suid-Afrika"; P.J. Strauss, *Kerkwees in die Branding: Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Algemene Sinodale Verband 1994-2011*, Acta Theologica Supplementum 8 (Bloemfontein: SUN MeDIA, 2013); Botha, "Totstandkoming van Twee Kerkordes"; Van Wyk, "Vyf En Sewentig Jaar Kerkreg binne die Fakulteit Teologie vanweë die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika."

<sup>69</sup> 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), <http://www.prdl.org/genres.php?genre=Church%20Order>; Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981; P Coertzen, *Vanaf Geneve na die Suidpunt van Afrika*, Stellenbosse Teologiese Studies 17 (NG Kerk-Uitgewers, 1989); Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van Die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*; De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1991; Strauss, "Die Diaken in Twee Kerkordes in die Dordtse Tradisie"; Strauss, *Kerk en Orde Vandag: Met Die Klem Op Die NG Kerk*; Strauss, *Gereformeerdes onder die Suiderkruis 1652-2011: Die Verhaal van Vier Afrikaanse Kerke*; Strauss, *Die Ned Geref Kerkorde van 1962: Die Dordtse Kerkorde Aangepas by die Eise van Ons Dag?*.

Order of Dort in secondary literature.<sup>70</sup> Little emphasis is placed on what Britz and Strauss refer to as the Christological conviction of Dort that fundamentally differs from that of the modern church orders.<sup>71</sup> This Christological conviction is not concerned with natural law but only with the Word of God.<sup>72</sup> The Church Order of Dort is then understood to be not about ordering the church; rather it is about a putative order in the congregation which origins can be traced back to the Word, to Christ himself.<sup>73</sup> Article 1 profoundly portrays the Christological distinctiveness of the Church Order:

*Om goede ordre inder Ghemeente Christi te onderhouden / zijn daer inne noodigh de Diensten / t'Samencomsten / Opsicht der Leere / Sacramenten ende Ceremonien / ende Christelijcke straffe. Waer van hier na ordentlijck sal gehandelt worden.*<sup>74</sup>

Obviously this distinctive character of the Church Order of Dort will be argued in the research. For the purposes of the introduction it should be noted and related to the already mentioned ecclesiological distinctiveness of the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK. In this respect it can be accepted that the Church Order of Dort will possibly not only portray a structural or formal difference with the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA, APK and even the with the Church Order of the GKSA, but also a theological deviation.

### 1.3 Critique of existing scholarship

Church government and polity in South Africa has not received much attention in the past: Botha laments the fact that there has been little to no reflection and research on church polity and government the past 100 years

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<sup>70</sup> W.D. Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk* (Pretoria: Universiteit van Suid Afrika, 1965); R.M. Britz and S.A. Strauss, eds., *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, vol. 8, UV Teologiese Studies (Bloemfontein: Pro Christo-Publikasies, 1995); Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (Londen: SCM Press, 1954).

<sup>71</sup> Britz and Strauss, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:7.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> R.M. Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, ed. S.A. Strauss and R.M. Britz, vol. 8, UV Teologiese Studies (Bloemfontein: Pro Christo-Publikasies, 1995), 61.

<sup>74</sup> 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.," 3.

in the NHKA, except on the disputed Article 3.<sup>75</sup> He further contends that the principles of church polity was never really debated or questioned in the NHKA.<sup>76</sup> In the APK there has also not been much reflection on church polity and government during the past 20 years.<sup>77</sup> Even in the NGK and GKSA where studies in church polity has been more prominent than in the NHKA and APK, there has been no scholarly focus on the text and context of the Church Order of Dort, with most scholars relying on Pont, which is at best a secondary source.<sup>78</sup>

This inevitably leads to a presumed, but substantially associated understanding of the Church Order of Dort. The Church Order of Dort itself nowhere surfaces in Afrikaans and Reformed scholarship. A critical scrutiny of existing scholarship indicate that the profile given to the Church Order is rather employed apologetically to defend certain ecclesiastical conflicts arising in church polity, or utilised to affirm (by way of projection) a sound Reformed practise of church government. This utilisation of the Church Order of Dort should historically and theologically be attributed to an ecclesiological understanding of church government and polity as expressed in especially the Church Orders - accompanied by provisions and regulations - of the NGK, NHKA and APK, and to a lesser extend the GKSA. This evidently raises the need for a thorough study of the Church Order of Dort as such, as a primary text in terms of its original context and its theological intention.<sup>79</sup> The study aims to let this symbol of Reformed orthodoxy,<sup>80</sup> as a fundamental document in the

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<sup>75</sup> Botha, "Totstandkoming van Twee Kerkordes," 213. He suggests that only after 1990 studies on church polity in the NHKA received some attention.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>77</sup> 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.

<sup>78</sup> See chapter 1.1 where the principles of these church orders are discussed.

<sup>79</sup> Most South African scholars uses Pont or Hooijer as primary source, while Pont is at best a secondary source on the text of the church orders and in some cases even a tertiary source as he uses Hooijer's texts that is also in most cases only a secondary source. See Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981; 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*; Synod of Dordt (1618/19), "Acta Synodi Nationalis, In Nomine Domini Nostri Iesu. Christi" (Isaaci Elzeviri, 1620), [http://www.prdl.org/user\\_edit.php?a\\_id=2316&bk\\_id=88278](http://www.prdl.org/user_edit.php?a_id=2316&bk_id=88278); Synod of Dordt (1618/19), "Kercken-Orderinghe; 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."; H Bavinck, ed., *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* (Leiden: Didericum Donner, 1881); F.L. Rutgers, ed., *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw ('s-Gravenhage: Martinus Nijhoff, 1889)*, <http://www.kerkrecht.nl/main.asp?pagetype=onderdeel&item=138&subitem=4266&page=>; 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); Herman J Selderhuis, *Acta of the Synod of Dordt*, ed. Donald Sinnema, Christian

battle for the truth of the government of Christ in his Church,<sup>81</sup> come to a right of its own. The Church Order of Dort in addition, seems in a wider perspective also not to be of current interest. The recent publication “*Revisiting the synod of Dordt*”<sup>82</sup> underscores this by not including one article that relates to the Church Order of Dort or the church polity tradition preceding the synod of Dort (1618/19). In revisiting the Synod of Dort (1618/19) the historical significance of the Church Order of Dort is overlooked. Only the Canons of Dort is discoursed on. In this sense the study contributes in a wider range of scholarship.

#### 1.4 Outline of argument

The issue that is addressed in this study is whether the assumption of NGK, NHKA, GKSA and APK to adhere and be indebted to the Church Order of Dort and that their respective Church Orders are “in the line of Dort”, is at all correct. Can it be asserted that the underpinning trajectories of the Church Order of Dort in reality constitute the Church Orders of the mentioned churches fundamentally?<sup>83</sup> It has been established that relevant scholarship does not consider the historical context and theology of the Church Order of Dort in terms of the primary sources themselves. Therefore a study of the text and context of the Church Order of Dort is necessary in order to discern what the main fundamental principles or determinative characteristics of the Church Order of Dort were.

The first chapter of this study focuses on the historical context and underlying theological trajectories of the Church Order of Dort (1618/19). This is followed by an in-depth analysis of the Christological distinctiveness of the Church Order of Dort in two parts: Chapter 2 discusses this distinctiveness as pertaining to the articles on the offices and assemblies and chapter 3 as effected in the articles concerning the doctrine, sacraments, ceremonies and discipline. This distinction correlates with the differentiation that the

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Moser, and Herman J Selderhuis, vol. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), [http://www.v-r.de/pdf/titel\\_inhalt\\_und\\_leseprobe/1008021/inhaltundleseprobe\\_978-3-525-55078-6.pdf](http://www.v-r.de/pdf/titel_inhalt_und_leseprobe/1008021/inhaltundleseprobe_978-3-525-55078-6.pdf).

<sup>80</sup> See 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): 447.

<sup>81</sup> Kleynhans, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, 21; Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*, 2.

<sup>82</sup> 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).

<sup>83</sup> See footnote 2.

Belgic Confession makes in describing the marks by which the true church is known. The first mark of whether the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein correlates with chapter 2. The second and third marks which is the maintenance of the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ and the exercising of Christian discipline, stands in relation with chapter 3. Article 29 of the Belgic Confession is followed by articles 30 and 31 on the offices and their government in the church, which is related to the articles on the offices and assemblies of the Church Order of Dort. Articles 32-35 of the Belgic Confession on the discipline and sacraments are connected with the articles on the doctrine, sacraments, ceremonies and discipline of the Church Order of Dort.<sup>84</sup> The following chapters will make this distinction more clear and enable a comparison of the Church Order of Dort with the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA, GKSA and APK in chapter 4. Only then will a conclusion be possible that may explain what constitutes the differences in the Church Orders of the NHK, NHKA, GKSA and APK with that of the Church Order of Dort.

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<sup>84</sup> "Belgic Confession of Faith," accessed September 1, 2015, [http://www.prc.org/bc\\_index.html](http://www.prc.org/bc_index.html).

## **CHAPTER 1: HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND UNDERPINNING THEOLOGICAL TRAJECTORIES OF THE CHURCH ORDER OF DORT (1618/19)**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The first chapter aims to offer a perspective on the historical context and events that gave rise to and precipitates in the Church Order of Dort. The second section of the chapter gives an outline of the underpinning theological trajectories that played a pivotal role in the formulation and structure of the Church Order of Dort, as knowledge and understanding of these are essential to identify the distinctive theological character of this renowned Church Order. These will be of importance in the understanding and reading of the Church Order of Dort.

### **1.2 Historical context**

It was on Tuesday the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1618 that the the Synod of Dortrecht (1618/19) officially opened in the Grote Kerk in Dortrecht.<sup>1</sup> The Synod lasted until the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 1619 and comprised 180 sessions that convened in the Kloveniersdoelen in de Doelstraat. The Synod is well-known and in the history of theology a noted meeting of consequence, especially due to the formulation of the Canons of Dort that were received as part of the confessional standards of Dutch (originated) reformed churches worldwide. In the same way the Synod also gave reformed churches a Church Order, that deeply influenced their church political thinking and practise. During the last decade a growing interest in the Synod of Dort has emerged,<sup>2</sup> and also voices calling for a reassessment in the historiography of the Synod.<sup>3</sup>

Reformed church polity leading up to the Synod of Dort (1618/19) originated in struggle and with challenges.<sup>4</sup> The Roman Catholic persecution under the Edict of Augsburg of 25 September 1550,

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<sup>1</sup> Both the opening of the Synod and the public presentations of the Canons (6 May 1619) took place in the Grote Kerk. See Goudriaan and Van Lieburg, *Revisiting the Synod of Dordt (1618-1619)*, 49:xi; Willem J Van Asselt and Paul H.A.M. Abels, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, ed. H.J. Selderhuis (Kampen: Kok, 2006), 430; 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*, 426.

<sup>2</sup> Goudriaan and Van Lieburg, *Revisiting the Synod of Dordt (1618-1619)*, 49:xii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 49:xiii.

<sup>4</sup> See De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 17; H.J. Selderhuis and P Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, ed. H Selderhuis (Kampen: Kok, 2006), 288.



whereby Charles V wanted to extinguish heresies and obliterate all heretics from his empire, left many fleeing, seeking refuge in Zeeland, Holland, Eastern Friesland, Vlaandere, Brabant, Emden and London.<sup>5</sup> The persecution was continued under Charles' son Phillip II, especially after the peace with France in 1559.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless the French speaking Walloon churches grew into one large body, particularly in east- and west Vlaandere. The situation in the southern Walloon churches later became perilous, danger were so imminent that the Walloon synods 'under the cross' used pseudonyms in the Acta<sup>7</sup> as a safety measure.<sup>8</sup> During this time about 180 000 supporters of the Reformation left the southern Netherlands,<sup>9</sup> of which most were leading figures in the politics and economy.<sup>10</sup>

Moreover language was a challenge in the reformed churches. In the southern regions Walloon and French were spoken and in other parts Vlaams and Dutch. This did not prevent the churches to convene. The different Walloon synods under the cross (1563-1566) used French.<sup>11</sup> The Convent of Wezel 1568,<sup>12</sup> and National Synod of Emden 1571,<sup>13</sup> communicated in Latin to accommodate all the churches. But the difference in language became 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 barrier.<sup>14</sup> Language remained a problem as the classes of Keulen would later protest that

<sup>5</sup> 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*, 1; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:55; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 309.

<sup>6</sup> See 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*, 2; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:55.

<sup>7</sup> "Acta" refers to the minutes of their ecclesiastical meetings. No formal church order existed yet, but these minutes testify of various decisions relating to church polity. For the acts of the Walloon synods see 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*, 1–23.

<sup>8</sup> Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:56.

<sup>9</sup> The Netherlands did not constitute the relatively homogeneous ethnic and political unit we know today. This would only happen in the 17th century. See Peter Y De Jong, "Rise of Reformed Churches in the Netherlands," in *Crisis in the Reformed Churches: Essays in Commemoration of the Synod of Dort (1618-'19)*, ed. Peter Y De Jong (Grand Rapids: Reformed Fellowship, 1968), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 279.

<sup>11</sup> Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:58; 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*, 7–23.

<sup>12</sup> Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 1–41.

<sup>13</sup> See *Ibid.*, 42–119.

<sup>14</sup> 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

only those speaking Dutch were invited to the Synod of Dortrecht 1578 and in the process the stipulations of Emden 1571 were being ignored.<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup>

It addressed the practical situation of the day and therefore later synods could be held in Dutch rather than Latin. Dutch would be the language used in the Synods of Dortrecht 1578,<sup>17</sup> Middelburg 1581,<sup>18</sup> and The Hague 1586.<sup>19</sup> Although recorded in Latin, the acts of the synod of Emden 1571 were translated in Dutch shortly after the Synod,<sup>20</sup> and other synods' acts, such as that of Dortrecht 1578, were translated from Dutch to Latin at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Roman Catholic writer C. Schultingius Steinwichius published most of the acts of the 16<sup>th</sup> century synods.<sup>21</sup> The Synod of Dort 1618/1619 would return to Latin as the medium of instruction, even during the Post-Acta sessions, where the church polity of the Dutch reformed churches were discussed.<sup>22</sup>

The second half of the 16th century also saw the emergence of what would later be confessions and standards in the reformed churches, such as the Belgic Confession or *confession de Foy* of 1559 and the Heidelberg Catechism of 1563. The Council of Trent (1545-1563) also convened and stipulated the contra-reformation theology of the Roman Catholic Church. It was a difficult time in which the reformed

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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."

<sup>15</sup> See *Ibid.*, 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.

<sup>16</sup> Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:56; Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 245; Nauta, "De Nationale Synode van Dordrecht (1578)," 11. 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 gheviele dat de nationali synodus van wegghen der noot voor den ghewoonlickent 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."

<sup>17</sup> Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 221–338.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 339–480.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 481–643.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 116, 123, 223.

<sup>22</sup> See Selderhuis, *Acta of the Synod of Dordt*, 1:Lii; 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*, 435; Synod of Dordt (1618/19), "Acta Synodi Nationalis, In Nomine Domini Nostri Iesu. Christi." Selderhuis notes that it is clear that the Dutch Acta is only a translation.

churches had to organise themselves. The peace of Augsburg 1555 formally acknowledged Protestantism as a legitimate religion, but following the Council of Trent, the Diet of Augsburg of 1566 tried to exclude the reformed churches from this peace.<sup>23</sup> There was a growing need in the churches under the cross for meeting in a synod in order to express their unity in confession and polity.<sup>24</sup> The first steps towards this realised when a convent gathered in 1568 at Wezel which was strategically located close to a number of refugees from the west and also a city not in direct danger.<sup>25</sup> The year 1568 would also mark the beginning of the revolt when the provinces in the Netherlands revolted against the reign of Phillip II of Spain.<sup>26</sup> Prince William of Orange played a key role in this regard as he not only led the revolt, but later also supported the reformation itself. But the revolt led to war, persecution and economic distress. The Netherlands was of strategic importance as it had an advantageous location on the sea and vast financial resources, which enabled Charles V and then Phillip II to dominate the political scene and in the process also succour the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>27</sup>

It was during this time that the first national synod of the Netherland churches would convene in 1571 in Emden,<sup>28</sup> as Emden, like Wezel was outside of the Netherlands and therefore not in direct danger of war. While persecution, war and affliction ravaged the land, the reformed churches adopted the first official church order.<sup>29</sup> According to Hooijer, followed by Pont, Emden 1571 represented a clear decision that the Reformed church in the Netherlands would be a Calvinist church. This is in contrast with the concept Church Order of Wezel 1568 where one finds an accommodating tone and signs of the milder spirit of Zwingli and à Lasco. The Church Order of Emden portrays the strict spirit of a Calvinistic

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<sup>23</sup> See 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*, 25.

<sup>24</sup> See Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 309.

<sup>25</sup> Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:70; De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 18; 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*, 26.

<sup>26</sup> See Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 303, 307. According to Selderhuis and Nissen historians no longer refer to this revolt as the 80 year war (1568-1648), as this suggest that there was 80 years of uninterrupted war.

<sup>27</sup> De Jong, "Rise of Reformed Churches in the Netherlands," 4.

<sup>28</sup> Pont argues that Emden was the first National synod while Rutgers disagrees on this. See Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 46; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:93; Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 313.

<sup>29</sup> De Jong, "Rise of Reformed Churches in the Netherlands," 13.

approach, the scholastic of Beza and the synods of the Reformed church of France.<sup>30</sup> Moreover the Church Order of Emden begins with a clear, but implicit, Christological focus in its first article that echoes the authority of Christ under which the church lives and ministers:<sup>31</sup> “Nulla Ecclesia in alias, nullus minister in ministros, nullus Senior in Seniores, Diaconus en Diaconos primatum seu dominationem obtinebit, sed potius ab omni et suspitione et occasione cauebit.”<sup>32</sup> This Christological focus of the Church Order of Emden 1571 would contribute to the theological conflict that eventually brought about the Synod of Dort 1618/19,<sup>33</sup> as it set forth the church’s authority as distinct from the state. Emden is also known for accommodating more than church polity, it is said that in her hospitality and care for refugees the city of Emden surpassed even Wezel.<sup>34</sup> Not only did Emden care for the refugees, but also provided for other cities in need.<sup>35</sup> It was also in Emden that the Bible, the Heidelberg Catechism and other books were distributed and translated.<sup>36</sup> Therefore Emden is known as the “mother church” of the Reformed church in the Netherlands.<sup>37</sup>

From 1572 the revolt in the Netherlands gained momentum as the Spanish yoke was gradually cast off by a number of military successes that were often violent and cruel and included the plundering of churches and monasteries and the persecution of many Catholics.<sup>38</sup> This meant that many refugees could

<sup>30</sup> See 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*, 63; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:95.

<sup>31</sup> Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:110; Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:60.

<sup>32</sup> The first article of the Disciplines Ecclesiastique 1559 was the first to begin with such a anti-hierarchical formula. See Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 55; Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordening van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, 149. The Dutch translation of Article 1 Emden 1571 reads: “Gheen Kercke sal over een ander Kercke, gheen Dienaer des Woorts, gheen Ouderlinck, noch Diaken sal d’een over d’ander heerschappie voeren, maar een yeghelijck sal hen voor alle suspicien, ende aenlockinge om te heerschappen wachten” The English reads: “No church shall in any way lord over another church, no minister of the Word, no elder, no deacon shall lord over another one, but everyone shall be on his guard against any suspicion and temptation to lord over others.”

<sup>33</sup> Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:95.

<sup>34</sup> 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*, 54.

<sup>35</sup> See *Ibid.*, 58. These other cities that Emden helped according to Hooijer were Antwerpen (1576), Brussel (1588), Paltz (1629) and Tweebrugge (1637).

<sup>36</sup> See Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 293–295. The Belgic Confession was translated in Dutch as early as 1562 and the Heidelberg Catechism in 1566 and it saw 60 editions between 1566 and 1585.

<sup>37</sup> See 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*, 59; Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 280.

<sup>38</sup> See 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*, 83; Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 310,311. On 24 June 1572 five Franciscans were hanged in

return and churches previously belonging to the Roman Catholic Church were made available for reformed congregations which stimulated new growth in the reformed churches as people were also now free to attend reformed services in many places.<sup>39</sup> Many pastors also returned, as the Church Order of Emden 1571 urged Netherland pastors that served outside the country, to adhere to the calling of the Netherland churches.<sup>40</sup> The government became a guardian for religion, and at first allowed both the Roman Catholic and Reformed religion alongside each other.<sup>41</sup> This ruling was re-examined a year later in 1573 when Roman Catholicism was prohibited, as Roman Catholic and Spanish support became associated with each other and bitterness grew against the cruelty of the Spanish.<sup>42</sup> This pattern would repeat itself as religious peace was often practiced and sought for a short while, before violence and hatred erupted again. It was a time full of strife, discord, unrest and conflict.<sup>43</sup> 1575 also saw the establishment of the University of Leiden which meant that students did not have to leave the Netherlands to study anymore. It would answer the urgent need for qualified ministers,<sup>44</sup> stimulate the country intellectually,<sup>45</sup> and serve as proof of the formation of the Union of Delft Holland and Zeeland as one state under the supreme authority of Orange.<sup>46</sup>

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Enkhuizen, on 9 July 1572 nineteen priest and monks were hanged outside Den Briel, on 23 July 1572 twelve Karthuizers and 11 others were murdered in Roermond, in December 1572 the priest Cornelius Musius was also hanged.

<sup>39</sup> See 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*, 83; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:114.

<sup>40</sup> Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 74. Article 35: "Ministri Belgio oriundi, qui exteris Ecclesiis operam addixerunt, si ab Ecclesiis Belgicis revocentur, dabunt operam ut vocationi obtemperent, constitutu Ecclesiis suis legitimo tempore, quo sibi de aliis ministris prospiciant. Quod, si Exterae illae Ecclesiae illos dimittere nolint, ad alias non suspectas erit provocatio. Admonebuntur autem ii, quo nondum operam suam cuiquam ddixerunt, ut libertatem obtemperandi vocationi retineant."

<sup>41</sup> See Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:114; 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*, 87; Van Asselt and Abels, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 393–394.

<sup>42</sup> 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*, 87; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:114.

<sup>43</sup> 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*, 132.

<sup>44</sup> Not all ministers were qualified during this time, it would not be until the Synod of Dortrecht (1618/19) that this would be an official precondition for ministry. See Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 339.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 323.

<sup>46</sup> R.H. Bremmer, "De Nationale Betekenis van de Synode van Dordrecht (1578)," in *De Nationale Synode van Dordrecht 1578*, ed. D Nauta and J.P. Van Dooren (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn, 1878), 73.

There was a continual urgency in the churches to convene in order to bring about conformity in doctrine and polity and therefore the National Synod of Dortrecht convened from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 1578.<sup>47</sup> At the Synod of Emden 1571 the classes of the Palts were appointed to convene the next synod, but the unexpected events in the Netherlands led to the synod's postponement for almost 7 years. Only in 1578 the Synod could convene, and at the time not in the Palts, but in the liberated territory.<sup>48</sup> Dortrecht 1578 was the first national synod on Dutch soil and therefore had to deal with the new political and ecclesiastical situation in the Netherlands. The church had to clarify its role and function in society. Article 17 of the Church Order of Dortrecht 1578 attempted to do this, defining the scope and purpose of synodical discussions, as it states that "ecclesiastical matters shall be dealt with in an ecclesiastical manner."<sup>49</sup> It testifies of the public relationship between church and state that has changed since Emden 1571. Article 17 may therefore implicitly be understood as defining the distinctiveness of a church order, signalling that the church is different than the government as it is not ruled by a civil order, but by an order constituted by Christ. Therefore ecclesiastical matters are dealt with differently. In doing this the Synod strengthened the relationship with and support for the Prince politically, but did not surrender itself to the leadership of the government.<sup>50</sup> Shortly after the Synod the peace of Matthias was signed to bring about religious stability, but it in fact only brought on enmity and revolt.<sup>51</sup> Under leadership of count Jan of Nassau the Union of Utrecht was established in 1579 uniting most of the Northern provinces and in the

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<sup>47</sup> See Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:93; Nauta, "De Nationale Synode van Dordrecht (1578)," 26; Van't Spijker, "De Kerkorde van Dordrecht (1578)," 131; Nauta, "De Nationale Synode van Dordrecht (1578)," 10,16.

<sup>48</sup> See Van't Spijker, "De Kerkorde van Dordrecht (1578)," 126.

<sup>49</sup> Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 240. "In dese versamelinghen en sal niet gehandelt worden dan van kerckelicken dinghen ende dat na wijse der kerckenregieringhe. Ende soo vele die dingen aenaet, dewelcke eensdeels kerckelick eensdeels politisch sijn, ghelijck somwijlen in houwelicksche ende ghelijcke saken voorvallen, het verschil dat daerover ontstaet sal bij de overicheyt ende kerckenraet te samen gheeyndicht worden."

<sup>50</sup> See Bremmer, "De Nationale Betekenis van de Synode van Dordrecht (1578)," 92,101. "De synode steunde de politiek van de Prins. Dat wilde niet zeggen dat zich zonder meer aan de leiding van de overheid overgaf."

<sup>51</sup> See 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*, 171; Bremmer, "De Nationale Betekenis van de Synode van Dordrecht (1578)," 93; Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 223. This was a provisional peace that gave the Reformed churches permission to conduct preaching, the Lord's Supper, Baptism and other services.

process advancing the cause of the reformation to such an extent that in 1580 a provincial synod could convene in Harderwijk.<sup>52</sup>

In 1580 the States-General decided that Catholicism be prohibited.<sup>53</sup> The revolt which began against political and also protestant repression paradoxically disembogued into a repression of Catholicism.<sup>54</sup> Van Asselt and Abels describes the Catholics during this time as “one scattered flock with here and there one wandering shepherd.”<sup>55</sup> This changed the situation in the reformed churches as ministers were now depended on the state for their sustenance as the state now paid their salaries and owned all the property that the Catholic Church previously owned.<sup>56</sup> Though in the favourable position, the reformed church was by no means a ‘state church’. The reformed church was also not dominant, in the course of two centuries membership of this church grew from about 10 to 15 percent of the population to about 50 percent. All religious practice, except the reformed, was forbidden, but no one was forced to become reformed.<sup>57</sup> This relationship may be described as a “reformed commonwealth.”<sup>58</sup> Calvinism was therefore not a yoke laid upon the Netherlands, but it rather contained the organising capacity and attraction that ensured the society freely embrace the reformed doctrines, giving stability in a time of political disruption and dissolution.<sup>59</sup> But this new situation did ask of ever member of society one conscious religious decision and a decision for Catholicism, Anabaptism or Lutherism brought about social consequences which evidently degraded a person to second class citizenship.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> 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*, 171. Count Jan of Nassua was the brother of prince William of Orange.

<sup>53</sup> See Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 308.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

<sup>55</sup> My translation. See Van Asselt and Abels, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 394. “een verstrooide kudde, met hier en daar een dolende herder.”

<sup>56</sup> See Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:115; 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*, 89.

<sup>57</sup> See Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 335, 341.

<sup>58</sup> My translation. See Van Asselt and Abels, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 392. “gereformeerde statenbond.”

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 406.

As if there wasn't enough strife and conflict, divisions arose within the reformed churches over doctrine and polity.<sup>61</sup> Because of these divisions, tension also grew between state and church as the States of Holland were opposed to the principle of self-government within the church and rejected the Church Order that the National Synod of Middelburg 1581 presented for approval. At Middelburg 1581 the church's authority as distinct from the state was set forth, as a strife in Leiden over the freedom of the church to appoint its own elders served as catalyst to establish the self-government of the church. Caspar Coolhaes defended the position of Thomas Erastus that the state had the power to govern the church; the church had no right to discipline and also could not call their own ministers. The National Synod of Middelburg 1581 condemned these views and argued that the church was free to call its own ministers and appoint its own elders.<sup>62</sup> The States of Holland would not approve of this and in 1583 appointed a commission to design its own church laws that subordinated the church to the Government.<sup>63</sup> This is typical of the relationship between Christian state and church during this time, the state immediately setting aside a church order while the classes gradually incorporates it.<sup>64</sup>

The danger of war was at the same time all but over. In 1584 prince William of Orange was murdered in Delft and the political and military situation looked bleak.<sup>65</sup> Robert Dudley, Count of Leicester was then sent by Queen Elizabeth to the Netherlands as he would stand at the head of the council of states and help to establish authority. He had great affection for the reformed churches as he himself attended the church services and the Lord's Supper and showed himself to be a zealous defender of the reformed church.<sup>66</sup> Dudley not only allowed the church to convene in a National Synod in The Hague 1586,<sup>67</sup> but also ensured that the provincial states supported the Synod and for most part accepted a

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<sup>61</sup> 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*, 188–189; Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 319.

<sup>62</sup> Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 319.

<sup>63</sup> 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*, 225; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:153.

<sup>64</sup> Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 336.

<sup>65</sup> See Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:156.

<sup>66</sup> See 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*, 246; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:158.

<sup>67</sup> Also called the National Synod of Den Haag or s'Gravenhage. See Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:156.



uniform Church Order.<sup>68</sup> This is significant, as Selderhuis and Nissen describe this Church Order as a strict Calvinist church order because it allowed the government no right in the calling of ministers.<sup>69</sup>

Article 4 of this Church Order states that “the lawful calling of those who formerly have not been in office, both in the cities and in the country, consist: first, in their election, which shall be carried out by the consistory and the deacons, together with the advice of the classis...Also in the examination or investigation both of doctrine and life...Third, in the approbation and approval of the authorities...”<sup>70</sup>

This is in contrast to the Church Order of Emden 1571 where the state received no role or authority over the church.<sup>71</sup> De Jong notes that “the churches at Emden regarded themselves as completely sovereign to manage all ecclesiastical affairs, electing their own officary and exercising discipline in matters of doctrine and conduct over the members as well as ministers.”<sup>72</sup> The Synod of Dortrecht 1574 did confirm the same principle in its Church Order, but met opposition from the state government.<sup>73</sup> Succeeding synods that unlike the Synod of Emden convened on Dutch soil, made certain concessions: The Synod of Dortrecht 1578 decided that the government should be informed in the calling and appointments to those

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 1:163.

<sup>69</sup> Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 337.

<sup>70</sup> Article 4: “De Wettelijcke Beroepinghe der ghener die te vooren inden Dienst niet gheweest en zijn, soo wel inde Steden als ten platten Lande, bestaet: Ten eersten in die *Verkiesinghe*, de welcke gheschieden sal door den Kercken-Raet ende Diakenen, mitsgaders het oordeel der Classen, ofte van twee ofte drie Naest-gheseten Dienaren, ende in plaetsen daer gheen Kercken-Raet en is, door de Classe met bidden ende vasten. Ten anderen, in de *Examinatie*, ofte ondersoekinghe beyde der Leere ende des Levens, de welcke by de selve staen sal, vanden welcken sy vercoren werden: Wel-verstaende dat Nieuwelinghen, Mispriesters, Monicken, ende die andersins eenighe Secte verlaten hebben, niet sullen toeghelaten worden, voor dat sy seker tijt beproeft zijn. Ten derden, inde *Approbatie* ende goet-kenninghe der Overheyt vande plaetse respectivelick (de welcke sy sullen aenghegheven worden, om te vernemen of sy hares Levens ofte Borgherlijcken wandels halven eenige Wettelijcke oorsaecke heeft te wederspreken) ende der gantscher Ghemeynte, Wanneer den naem des Dienaers den tijt van veerthien daghen inder Kercken vercondicht zijnde, geen hindernissen daer teghen en coomt. Ten laetsten, inde opentlijcke *Bevestinghe* voor der Ghemeynte, de welcke met behoorlijcke Stipulatie ende af-vraginghen, vermaninghen, Ghebedt ende oplegginge der handen vanden Dienaer die de bevestinghe doet (ofte eenigen anderen, daer meer Dienaren zijn) toegaen sal, Naer het *Formulier* daer van zijnde. Wel-verstaende dat de oplegginghe der handen sal moghen ghedaen worden inde Classicale vergaderinghe aenden nieuwen ghepromoveerden Dienaer, die ghesonden wordt inde Kercken onder t’ Cruyce.” See Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 487–488.

<sup>71</sup> Article 13: “*Ministri eligentur a Consistorio, cum iudicio Conventus Classici, aut duorum triumve ministrorum vicinorum. Electi autem sistentur coram Ecclesia, vt vel tacitis suffragiis comprobentur, vel si quid sit, cur in electionem minus consentire velit) Ecclesia, intra dies plus minus quindecim obiiciatur. Si quae tamen Ecclesiae consuetudinem electionis popularis, quae apud eas est, mutandam non esse censerent, ferentur, donec Synodo Generali sit aliter constitutum.*” See Ibid., 61.

<sup>72</sup> De Jong, “Rise of Reformed Churches in the Netherlands,” 13.

<sup>73</sup> Article 12: “Om de konfusie of verwarring te vermijden, die uit de verkiezing des gemenen volks ontstaan mocht, is besloten, dat de dienaren des Woords van de konsistorie der plaats, daar zij dienen zullen, beroepen zullen worden, doch also dat hierin zonder advies der classikale verzameling of twee of drie der genabuurde kerken, niet geschiede, en zullen also de gemeenten voorgesteld worden, naar uitwijzen van het 13e artikel der Embdische Synode.” The states of Holland and Zeeland refused to accept this church order, saying that that government had the right to call, nominate and appoint to office. See Van’t Spijker, “De Kerkorde van Dordrecht (1578),” 131; Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 136.

in office.<sup>74</sup> Middelburg 1581 made the calling to office free, but the appointment needed to be approved by the government,<sup>75</sup> and The Hague 1586 also confirmed this decision.<sup>76</sup> The Church Order of The Hague 1586 did not say anything different on this matter than the Church Order of Middelburg 1581; rather it was significant because the freedom of the church to call its own ministers was now accepted by the government. The government still had the right of approbation and therefore this Church Order was not as free as that of the Church Order of Emden 1571, where the church was completely sovereign in all ecclesiastical affairs, but in a difficult and challenging situation the Synod of The Hague 1586 stood firm in its revision of the Church Order of Middelburg 1581.

This uniformity in church polity would not last long; in 1587 when it became known that Dudley had to negotiate peace with Phillip II for Queen Elizabeth, his role became obsolete and the uniformity crumbled.<sup>77</sup> In Utrecht the old Government which Leicester dispelled was reinstated and designed their

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<sup>74</sup> Article 4: “De benoeminghe der dienaren sal gheschieden van den kerckenraet met bijvoeghinghe der diaconen ende het oordeel der classe, soo deselve tesamen koemen kan, ende, soo niet, van twee oft dry naestgheseten dienaren derselver. De ondersoekinghe sal van denselven gheschieden, bij denwelcken de beroepinghe staet. Dewelcke ondersoekinghe voornemelick over die sal gheschieden, die tevooren in den dienst niet gheweest oft niet ghenoeghsaem ondersocht en sijn. Maer soo vele denghenen aengaet welcke de universiteyt van Leyden ofte eenighe andere universiteyt onser religie bequame gheoordeelt sal hebben, en sullen van nieuws niet gheexamineert worden, wel verstaende soo vele de leere aengaet. De dienaers aldus beproeft ende vercoren sijnde, sullen der ghereformeerde overheyt aenghegheven, ende voorts der ghemeynte der tijt van veerthien daghen voorghestelt worden: opdat, soo yemant yet hadde, hetselfde onverhindert mochte voortbrenghe, hetwelcke hij in tijts bij den kerckenraedt doen sal, opdat deselvighe met somighen uut der classe daarvan rijpelic oordeelen magh. Ende soo niemant yet voortbrengt, sal het swijghen voor bewillighen gheacht worden.” There was also a development in church polity on who in the church is involved in the calling of a minister. It is noteworthy that article 4 of the church order of Dordrecht 1578 over this issue was wrongly copied in later editions. The first edition of 1612 does not read that deacons should also have a role in the calling of ministers. Article 4 in the first edition reads: “De benoeminghe der Dienaren sal gheschieden van den Kerckenraet, met byvoeghinghe der Dienaren...” This and other mistakes did not influence the Church Order of Dortrecht 1618/19, as the authentic Acts of this synod was used. See *Ibid.*, 225,235, 345; This and other copy mistakes are still being followed today, see Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1:131.

<sup>75</sup> Article 4: “De wettelicke beroepinghe der ghenen, die te voren in den Dienst niet gheweest zijn bestaet ten eersten inde Verkiesinghe, dewelcke gheschieden sal door den Kerckenraedt ende Diaconen, mitgaders het oordel der Classe, ofte van twee of drie naest gheseten Dienaren, met bidden ende vasten. Ten anderden int Examen ofte ondersoekinghe beijde der leere ende des levens, dewelcke bijden selven staen sal vanden welcken zij vercoren werden: welverstaende dat nieuwelinghen, mispriesters monicken, ende die andersins eenighe Secte verlaten hebben niet sullen toeghelaten werden, voor datse ettelicke maenden langh beproeft sijn. Ten derden inde Approbatie ende goetkennighe, beijde der Overicheyt doende professie vande ghereformeerde Religie (derwelcke de Dienaer aenghegheven sal werden) ende der gantschen Ghemeynte, wanneer zijnen naem den tijdt van XIII daghen inder Kercke vercondicht zijnde, gheen hindernisse daer teghen ghecomen is. Ten laetsen, inde Bevestinghe in der Ghemeynte, dewelcke met behoorlicke stipulatiën ende afvraghinghen, ende soo het de ghelegghenheit der Kercke lijden mach, met handtoplegghinghe, tsij in de Kercke opentlick, of na dat het ghelegghen is, in den Kerckenraedt of Classe, doch altiids met openbare ghebeden, toegaen sal.” See Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 377.

<sup>76</sup> See *Ibid.*, 487–488.

<sup>77</sup> Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 330.

own church orderly laws in 1590 that denied the church's distinct authority to govern itself.<sup>78</sup> Zeeland would follow Utrecht's example and confine the freedom of the church to call its own ministers at the Provincial Synod of Middelburg in 1591,<sup>79</sup> and in The Hague 1591 the States of Holland diminished the freedom of the church to appoint its own ministers to office.<sup>80</sup> By these church orders the state produced in a given right of their own, the church would gradually lose more ground to the state and a pattern would develop wherein the state had control in the governing of the church.<sup>81</sup> In some places the majority of church councils consisted of members of government as they could also be appointed as elders.<sup>82</sup> Although the Synod of The Hague 1586 determined in their Church Order that a national synod should convene every 3 years,<sup>83</sup> it would be the last National Synod before the Synod of Dort (1618/19) as political developments and especially opposition from the state governments made it impossible to convene.<sup>84</sup> This is despite the Particular Synod of Holland and her deputies unceasingly insisting from 1590 onwards at the highest government levels for a synod to convene.<sup>85</sup> The States General refused permission for a national synod, fearing too much authority and autonomy on the part of the church.<sup>86</sup>

In contrast to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the 17<sup>th</sup> century in the Netherlands is described as the Golden Age.<sup>87</sup> Prince Maurice of Orange had achieved successful military campaigns in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century and the

<sup>78</sup> See 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*, 285–293.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 339–340.

<sup>81</sup> For example article 1 of the church order of the states of Holland and Zeeland 1576 gave the magistrates the deciding vote in the appointments to office: "De Magistraet van ieder hoofstadt, sal op 't aengeven en met raedt van haere Predikanten voor haer stadt, en alle de plaetsen van haere jurisdictie Predikanten verkiesen." See *Ibid.*, 121.

<sup>82</sup> See Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 349.

<sup>83</sup> Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 497. Article 44 states: "De Nationale Synode sal ordinaerlijck all drie jaren eens gehouden werden, ten ware datter eenighe dringhende noot ware om den tijt corter te nemen. Tot dese sullen twee Dienaren ende twee Ouderlingen uyt elcke particuliere Synode beyde der Duytscher ende Walscher spraecke, af-ghesonden werden. Voorts sal de Kercke die last heeft om den tijdt ende plaetsse des Generalen Synodi te benoemen (soo de selfde binnen de drie jaren te beroepen ware) haer particuliere Synode vergaderen, ende t'selfde oock der naest-gheleghener Kercken die van een ander Tale is laten weten, de welcke vier persoonen daer henen senden sal, om met gemeynen advijse vandet tijt ende plaetse te besluuten. De selve Kercke die vercoren is om de Generale Synoden te samen te beroepen, wanneer sy met de Classe vanden tijt ende plaetse beract-slaghen sal, sal t'selfde de hooghe Overheydt in tijts te kennen gheven, op dat met haren weten, ende (soo het haer ghelieft mede eenighe te senden tot den Classe) vander saecke in teghenwoordichheydt ende met advijs van hare ghedeputeerde besloten werde."

<sup>84</sup> Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 314.

<sup>85</sup> 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*, 425.

<sup>86</sup> De Jong, "Rise of Reformed Churches in the Netherlands," 14.

<sup>87</sup> Van Asselt and Abels, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 363.

Lands Advocate Johan van Oldenbernevelt ensured that that the “Republic”<sup>88</sup> of the seven united provinces of the Netherlands were *de facto* acknowledged. These developments led to the ceasefire of 1607 and the Twelve years truce of 1609 wherein the sovereignty of the Republic was officially recognised.<sup>89</sup> The reformed church was now confronted with the task to convey the meaning of the Reformation in a new academic context and from these efforts the Republic grew to become an international centre for science in general and especially for reformed theology.<sup>90</sup> The western part of the Republic developed a dynamic economy, while the eastern parts gradually became depopulated. Through her chartered company *de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* that was established in 1601, Holland controlled the coast and stimulated economic development even in foreign countries.<sup>91</sup> The 17<sup>th</sup> century would also see the emergence of publishing, art, literature and sober church architecture in the Netherlands.<sup>92</sup>

Although called the Golden Age, the 17<sup>th</sup> century in the Netherlands remained a difficult time with many calamities. The mortality among infants, epidemics, war, piracy and ‘immigration’ to the foreign colonies brought about that the mortality rate was higher than the birth rate. Poverty, criminality, gambling and prostitution were also prominent and high taxes stimulated the gap between rich and poor.<sup>93</sup> Moreover the cold winters, wet and dry summers, storms and flooding, fires, plagues and pest caused much uncertainty among the people. The church ascribed these events to God’s wrath over the sins of the nation and wanted to remove all superstition or “volksgeloof” from society.<sup>94</sup> But despite the mortality rate, the population growth in the cities escalated.<sup>95</sup> In the midst of all the religious and political disputes, the Netherlands emerged as a tolerant and flexible society in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, receiving many refugees

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<sup>88</sup> See *Ibid.*, 371, 373. Van Asselt and Abels notes 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 verzameling rivaliserende stadsstaten, die uit eigenbelang in een bepaalde situatie op elkaar aangewezen waren en compromissen moesten zoeken.”

<sup>89</sup> Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 330–331. Maurice was the son of Prince William of Orange that had died in 1584. After the departure of Robert Dudley count of Leicester, Maurice at only 20 years of age took over the military command.

<sup>90</sup> Van Asselt and Abels, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 379–380.

<sup>91</sup> See *Ibid.*, 369. The *Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* is known in English as the Dutch East-Indian company.

<sup>92</sup> See *Ibid.*, 384–391.

<sup>93</sup> See *Ibid.*, 377.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 412. The consultation of witches, wizards, fortune tellers, incantations and miracle healing formed the domain of the volksgeloof. Popish superstition was also removed such as the belief that church bells would cast away demons, praying for the dead and holding church services on Good Friday.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 368–369.

and allowing religious freedom.<sup>96</sup> Many Jewish refugees that fled Spain and Portugal because of the inquisition and those who were forced to be baptised, could return to the Jewish religion in the Republic. Economically and culturally the Jews in the Republic were one of the most influential societies in western Europe.<sup>97</sup> The economic development of the Republic gave rise to international correspondence which had an influence on the church and so Reformed theology developed an international character. Exchange of students, pastors and lecturers were now possible and foreign theological books were read in the Netherlands and in many cases even translated.<sup>98</sup> But Catholicism did not die a slow death in the Netherlands, as newly trained priests that were trained in the contra-reformation spirit of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) became available for missions and ensured that Catholicism remained strong in important parts of the Republic like Twente, East-Gelderland, Haarlem and Delft.<sup>99</sup>

Discordancy in the reformed congregations would remain as the Provincial Synod of Utrecht 1612 confined the freedom of the church to the state even further by giving the magistrates the final authority to appoint ministers to office.<sup>100</sup> The authority of the state over the church was therefore still the main issue in church polity during the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>101</sup> The debate in the Netherlands was therefore not between Protestant and Catholic as such, but between church and state.<sup>102</sup> Bremmer, like Selderhuis and Nissen, indicates that the freedom of the church over the state was now of national significance.<sup>103</sup> Neither the church nor the state promoted a separation between church and state and therefore the previous synods

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<sup>96</sup> See *Ibid.*, 374–375.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 407.

<sup>98</sup> Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 357.

<sup>99</sup> See Van Asselt and Abels, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 396, 441.

<sup>100</sup> Article 2 of the church order of Utrecht 1612 states: “Soo wanneer inde Steden deser Provincie eenich Pastoor ofte Predicant sal van noode zijn, zullen die vanden Kercken-raedt sulcx de Magistraet der stadt ofte Stede daer sulx valt, aendien, Dienvolghende vier Persoonen uyt de Magistraet, doende openbaer professie vande Gereformeerde Relegie, by die vande Magistraet, ende vier Persoonen uyt den Kercken-raedt, by die vande Kercken-raedt, ghecommiteert zullen werden. Welcke acht Persoonen na een bequaem en ghequalificeert Persoon om de Ghemeynte in den Woorde des Heere te dienen, uit-sien zullen. Ende den selven beyde Raedt der selven Stadt enden Kercken-raedt respective presenteren, om byde selve geaccepteert of gerefuseert te werden, soo sy ten beyden syden ten dienst van-de gemeynte sullen bevinden te behore, ende inghevalle van refuys van d’een of d’ander zijde, sullen de voor-schreven acht Gecommitteerden tot nieuwe nminatatie ende presentatie als vooren procederen, ende in cas van acceptatie ten beyden zijden, sal die voorschreven ghenomineerde, ghepresenteerde ende gheaccepteerde uyt name beyde des Magistraets ende Kercken-raedts, beroepen ende inghestelt werden, soo hier naer verclaert sal werden, in t’welcke sy-luyden alle ghehouden sullen wesen te gaen met goede kennisse van ons, ofte ons Ordinarise Gedupteerden.” See 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*, 394–395.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

<sup>102</sup> Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 350.

<sup>103</sup> Bremmer, “De Nationale Betekenis van de Synode van Dordrecht (1578),” 102.

had to ensure in one way or another that the government also received a right in the calling of ministers, elders and deacons.<sup>104</sup> This conflict between church and state first came to expression in the Church Order of Dortrecht 1574 as the Synod of Dortrecht 1574 was the first synod of the Reformed church in the Netherlands on Dutch soil, and this conflict would continually be expressed in all the church orders onwards even up to Dortrecht 1618/19.<sup>105</sup>

Amidst the struggle around a church order there also emerged conflict around the confession and authority thereof. This controversy originated in Leiden between Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) and Franciscus Gomarus (1563-1641) over the doctrine of predestination, and what started as an academic dispute quickly developed into a public debate. The dispute resulted on the one hand from an international dispute over the relationship between divine sovereignty and human responsibility and on the other hand from growing political and theological tensions in the Netherlands.<sup>106</sup> This was no idle matter; it was a question that deeply touched human existence, especially in a time where the morality rate and death of infants in particular were higher than the birth rate.<sup>107</sup> Selderhuis, like Van Asselt and Ables argues that because of the relevant nature of the issue of predestination, the controversy did not remain merely academic or political, but pervaded society more broadly.<sup>108</sup> After the death of Arminius, his supporters, the Remonstrants, proposed their five points of dispute in June 1610 to the deputy States of Holland and West-Friesland. The majority of the meeting under leadership of Oldenbarnevelt reacted positively. Politicians now became involved in the theological and ecclesiological dispute. The Contra-Remonstrants would react to this, indicating that objections to the confession should not be brought to the government but to the church's meetings. The Remonstrants held the position that the government had the competence to decide over matters of church order, worship and offices.<sup>109</sup> The different opinions over doctrine and

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<sup>104</sup> Van Asselt and Abels, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 375.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 413; 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*, 423.

<sup>106</sup> Selderhuis, *Acta of the Synod of Dordt*, 1:xvi.

<sup>107</sup> Van Asselt and Abels, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 419.

<sup>108</sup> Selderhuis, *Acta of the Synod of Dordt*, 1:xviii.

<sup>109</sup> Van Asselt and Abels, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 423–424.

church polity went hand in hand as there was just as much hostility over church polity between the followers of Arminius and Gomarus, as there was concerning the doctrine of predestination.<sup>110</sup>

Even though church polity was only discussed in the so called Post-Acta sessions of the Synod of Dort (1618/19), it is clear that church polity was no secondary matter leading up to the Synod of Dort (1618/19).<sup>111</sup> The Synod was called together for two reasons: to settle the difference in doctrine and to provide general order for the Netherland churches.<sup>112</sup> Selderhuis, like Hooijer, is of opinion that church polity was 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.”<sup>113</sup> Both Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants longed for ecclesiastical and political unity and peace, and this could only be brought about by a church order.<sup>114</sup> According to both De Jong and Selderhuis there was thus a simultaneous church-political dispute on the issue of the government’s role in the affairs of the church and therefore over the Reformed church’s right to dispose from office those whose teachings were in conflict with the confessional documents of the church.<sup>115</sup> At issue between Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants was therefore not only a matter of sound doctrine but also that of the degree of authority of the state over the church.<sup>116</sup>

This all grew into such a power struggle that church and political interest could hardly be separated anymore. Efforts to bring peace produced no results. 1610 even saw the establishment of the University of Groningen as alternative for the “arminian Leiden.”<sup>117</sup> The wide extent of the debate led to division in the Netherlands at a time when it was still at war with Spain and therefore, when it became clear in 1607 in a meeting at The Hague that the differences between Remonstrants and Contra-

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<sup>110</sup> See 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*, 424.

<sup>111</sup> Others disagree with this position: cf. Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:170.

<sup>112</sup> 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*, 426.

<sup>113</sup> Selderhuis, *Acta of the Synod of Dordt*, 1:xv.

<sup>114</sup> 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*, 425.

<sup>115</sup> De Jong, “Rise of Reformed Churches in the Netherlands,” 15; Selderhuis, *Acta of the Synod of Dordt*, 1:xvii.

<sup>116</sup> De Jong, “Rise of Reformed Churches in the Netherlands,” 7.

<sup>117</sup> Selderhuis and Nissen, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 325.

Remonstrants were actually deep-rooted and considerable, the States General – under pressure from the States of Holland - refused a synod.<sup>118</sup> Because the States did not expect that a synod could restore peace, there was at this time no real interest in a national synod. Furthermore “the idea of a national synod clashed with each individual state’s desire for independence.”<sup>119</sup>

However, a synod would later become unavoidable for ecclesiastical and political stability. Maurice visited a Contra-Remonstrant church service on 23 July 1617 in The Hague and openly sided with the Contra-Remonstrants. The Remonstrants were now associated with Oldenbarnevelt and Contra-Remonstrants with Maurice.<sup>120</sup> The Republic was on the edge of civil war. Oldenbarnevelt reacted with a ‘sharp resolution’ that enabled governments to employ ‘waardgelders’-troops that had to guard the cities and suppress riots. This in turn led to many violent riots in different cities.<sup>121</sup> It was seen by Maurice and his party as a declaration of independence by the province of Holland and therefore as a revolutionary deed.<sup>122</sup> The only hope for resolving the conflict lay in convening a national synod.<sup>123</sup> But the resistance of the province of Holland under leadership of Oldenbarnevelt did not allow for a synod. After continual protests by the church the States General decided that a National Synod would be allowed to convene. On the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 1618 Oldenbarnevelt was arrested, as he became suspect of being not sufficiently supportive of the revolt against Spain. The arrest of Oldenbarnevelt and other leaders left many Remonstrants in fear.<sup>124</sup> Maurice immediately used his authority and appointed new magistrates in Holland and Utrecht that supported the Contra-Remonstrants cause in order to avoid civil war.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Selderhuis, *Acta of the Synod of Dordt*, 1:xviii.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:xx.

<sup>120</sup> See B Glasius, *Geschiedenis Der Nationale Synode, in 1618 En 1619 Gehouden Te Dordrecht, in Hare Voorgeschiedenis, Handelingen En Gevolgen*. (Leiden: Akademische boekhandel van P. Engels, 1860), 254.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>122</sup> Selderhuis, *Acta of the Synod of Dordt*, 1:xxi.

<sup>123</sup> De Jong, “Rise of Reformed Churches in the Netherlands,” 16.

<sup>124</sup> Glasius, *Geschiedenis Der Nationale Synode, in 1618 En 1619 Gehouden Te Dordrecht, in Hare Voorgeschiedenis, Handelingen En Gevolgen.*, 303.

<sup>125</sup> On the 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1619 Oldenbarnevelt received the death penalty and was publicly beheaded the next day. He was beheaded for “subversie van religie en politie” and “perturbatie van de gemene rust.” See Van Asselt and Abels, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 425–426; Selderhuis, *Acta of the Synod of Dordt*, 1:xx–xxi; Glasius, *Geschiedenis Der Nationale Synode, in 1618 En 1619 Gehouden Te Dordrecht, in Hare Voorgeschiedenis, Handelingen En Gevolgen.*, 301, 304. Oldenbarnevelt was beheaded for “subversie van religie en politie” and “perturbatie van de gemene rust.”



All that remained was the official approval of the states of Holland. This was given on 27 October 1618.<sup>126</sup> Eventually after 32 years a national synod could convene again. The Synod of Dort 1618/19 is described as a national synod with an international character as a total of 26 delegates were in attendance from Great Britain, the Palatinate, Hesse, the Swiss cantons, Nassau-Wetteravia, Geneva, Bremen and Emden. Although the French were invited, they were forbidden by King Louis XIII to participate, and Lutheran opposition prevented the Brandenburg delegates to attend.<sup>127</sup>

*The reason for inviting foreign delegates was not only the importance of the issue at stake and its consequences for politics and for international Calvinism, but also the fact that similar discussions played a role in Heidelberg and the Palatinate in the late sixteenth and early years of the seventeenth century, as well as in Cambridge (1590s) and in Bern (1588).<sup>128</sup>*

In accordance with Article 52 of the Church Order of Dortrecht 1578 the provinces each sent a professor of theology and these Professors also attended the Post-Acta sessions.<sup>129</sup> On the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 1619 the Church Order came to be discussed at the Synod of Dort 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 not open for public attendance like most of the preceding sessions.<sup>130</sup>

We are now in a position, having expounded the historical context and ecclesiastical developments that played a role in the formulation of the Church Order of Dort (1618/1619), to thresh out the theological-historical trajectories that underpins this influential 17<sup>th</sup> century Church Order.

### 1.3 Underpinning theological trajectories

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that the church polity tradition in the Netherlands was not incepted at the Synod of Dort 1618/19. After 1554 different conceptions on church polity entered the

<sup>126</sup> Glasius, *Geschiedenis Der Nationale Synode, in 1618 En 1619 Gehouden Te Dordrecht, in Hare Voorgeschiedenis, Handelingen En Gevolgen.*, 305.

<sup>127</sup> See Goudriaan and Van Lieburg, *Revisiting the Synod of Dordt (1618-1619)*, 49:xxiv; Van Asselt and Abels, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 428,429; 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*, 429; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:168.

<sup>128</sup> Selderhuis, *Acta of the Synod of Dordt*, 1:xxiv.

<sup>129</sup> Article 52: "Soo de classe ofte synode in de plaetse daer de universiteyt is, tesamen koemt, sullen de professores der theologie mede bijkoemen derwelcker een uut den name der anderer stemme hebben sal." See Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 247.

<sup>130</sup> 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.

Netherlands which indeed signalled the beginning of a particular church polity tradition in the Netherlands.<sup>131</sup> The earliest Dutch church order is found in the Church Order of the Dutch refugee congregation in London of 1554. The reformed church in the Netherlands owes much to à Lasco who organised the Netherlands refugee congregation in London and set forth a church order that would be an important source for church polity in the Netherlands.<sup>132</sup> Church polity and governance received profound attention at synods and state meetings from 1554 onwards. Church polity were discoursed on at the Walloon synods under the cross 1563-1566,<sup>133</sup> the Convent of Wezel 1568, the Synod of Emden 1571, - Holland and Zeeland 1574, -Holland and Zeeland 1576, -Dortrecht 1578, -Harderwijk 1580, -Middelburg 1581, -The Hague 1586, -Middelburg 1591, -The Hague 1591, -Groningen 1595, -Utrecht 1612 and finally at the Synod of Dortrecht 1618/19. Because of these theological and church order trajectories the Synod of Dort 1618/19 did not have the task to compose a church order from scratch. The preface of the concept Church Order of Wezel 1568 already testifies that the Reformed church in the Netherlands was implanted in accepted theological and historical trajectories as it states that “de quibus apud optimè reformatas ecclesias consultatum est.”<sup>134</sup> This preface of Wezel may be seen as a referral to the underpinning trajectories in Geneve, Londen and the Walloon churches.<sup>135</sup> The concept Church Order of Wezel 1568 is seen as the first argued outline and conceptualisation of the Church Order of Dort 1618/19, as it was the articles of Wezel that were revised and confirmed at Emden 1571, Dortrecht 1574, Dortrecht 1578, Middelburg 1581, The Hague 1586 and Dortrecht 1618/19.<sup>136</sup>

In a political and ecclesiastical difficult situation the Church Order of Dort were to give direction. The opportunity to at last set forth an authoritative church order for the whole of the Netherland reformed

<sup>131</sup> See De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 17. De Gier mentions that before 1554 it was the Lutheran, Erastian and Baptist (doper) ideas that were prominent in the church.

<sup>132</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 308.

<sup>133</sup> Many meetings were held: At Teurs, Tournay, Armentieres and Antwerpen. See *Ibid.*, 309.

<sup>134</sup> The full precept states: “Praecipit Apostolus Paulus ut in ecclesia Dei omnia fiant ordine et decenter: Quò non modò vnanimis ecclesiae in doctrina, verum etiam in ipso ordine et politica ministerii gubernatione constet ac habeatur consensus. Ut autem earum rerum consimilis ratio in omnibus Belgicis ecclesiis seruari possit, visum fuit haec subsequencia capita, de quibus apud optimè reformatas ecclesias consultatum est, ordine proponere, quò ad salutarem ecclesiae fructum à Belgii ministris vnanimi consensu et obsignentur et obseruentur.” See Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 9.

<sup>135</sup> See Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:58.

<sup>136</sup> See De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 18; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:70.

churches was never more promising.<sup>137</sup> The Church Order of the The Hague 1586 was read to the Synod in the 156<sup>th</sup> sitting,<sup>138</sup> and the main content thereof was approved.<sup>139</sup> The Synod of Dort therefore only discussed and revised the Church Order of The Hague 1586 on certain points.<sup>140</sup> This is significant, because by not ignoring the Church Order of The Hague 1586, the Synod of Dort acknowledged the authority of preceding synods and church orders as article 53 of the Church Order of Emden 1571 stated that an order was binding until changed by a following synod:

*Articuli hi ad legitimum Ecclesiae ordinem spectantes ita mutuo consensu sunt constituti, ut si utilitas Ecclesiarum aliud postulet, mutari, augeri, et minui possint ac debeant; non erit tamen alicuius privatae Ecclesiae id facere, sed dabunt omnes operam vt illos observent, donec a Synodo aliter constituatur.*<sup>141</sup>

The purpose of the Post-Acta discussions was therefore never to create a new church order, but to review the current church order. The acceptance and revising of the Church Order of The Hague 1586 meant that the Remonstrants now also lost the dispute over church polity as this indicated that the church remained sovereign in ecclesiastical matters and had the authority to govern itself, in contrast with the church laws that the governments in various states created.<sup>142</sup>

Even though the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 is in essence the Church Order of The Hague 1586, it may still be seen as an independent development and significant in regard to church polity as Selderhuis notes:

<sup>137</sup> See 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*, 435.

<sup>138</sup> Rutgers notes that it is unfortunate that both the authentic acts of the synod of The Hague 1586 and the authentic church order were still missing at the synod of Dort 1618/19. The Post-Acta does not mention this, but out of the minutes that the elder of Amsterdam Theodorus Heyngius recorder himself, he notes that on the 170<sup>th</sup> sitting of Tuesday 28 May, it was ordered that the preceding National synods' acts should be searched for. These authentic acts are still missing. The synod of Dort made use of the 1612 Delft edition of the church order of The Hague 1586.

Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 482–483.

<sup>139</sup> Glasius, *Geschiedenis Der Nationale Synode, in 1618 En 1619 Gehouden Te Dordrecht, in Hare Voorgeschiedenis, Handelingen En Gevolgen.*, 292.

<sup>140</sup> Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:170.

<sup>141</sup> Article 53: "Deze Articulen de Wetterlijcke ende behoerlijcke ordre der Kercken betreffende, zijn alsoo met ghemeyn accoord ghestelt, datse, soo de nutticheydt der Kercken vereyschet, verandert, vermeerdert, ende vermindert moghen ende behooren te worden. Nochtans sal 't gheen besondere Kercke vry staen sulcx te doen: maer alle Kercken sullen arbeyden dese te onderhouden, tot dat in een Synodale vergaderinghe anders besloten wort." See Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 87.

<sup>142</sup> 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*, 486.

*With the acceptance of the so-called Dort church order (Dordtsekerkorde) the responsibilities of church and state were meant to be clarified. The church would be free to call and appoint its ministers and to implement discipline.<sup>143</sup>*

This was a profound development as a number of church laws were implemented by the state before Dort 1618/19 that confined the freedom of the church to govern itself.<sup>144</sup> Article 1 of the Church Laws of the States of Holland and Zeeland 1576 exemplifies this, stating that “De Magistraet van ieder hoofstadt, sal op ‘t aengeven en met raedt van haere Predikanten voor haer stadt, en alle de plaetsen van haere jurisdictie Predikanten verkiesen.”<sup>145</sup> Britz asserts that these church laws portray a fundamental different attitude than the church orders: “The church laws looks like a network of rules, expressed in a judicial ordering for the sake of the judicial state.”<sup>146</sup> It is not surprising then that most governments showed little willingness to accept the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 as it was only accepted in Utrecht, Gelderland and Overijssel.<sup>147</sup> Although there was now no unity based on a church order in the provinces, both Bouwman and Pont asserts that the different church orders that were in use, were in substance much the same as the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 and that Dort would have such an influence on church polity in general that it was *de facto* in use.<sup>148</sup>

The Church Order of Dort 1618/19 still gave much authority to the government as the authorities had the right to approbation.<sup>149</sup> But this was in a way unavoidable as the government owned all the church’s buildings and paid the ministers’ salaries. Therefore De Gier, like Hooijer notes that the Synod were forced to make certain concessions in order to get the Church Order accepted by the government.<sup>150</sup>

Dort 1618/1619 did not and could not reform back to Emden 1571 where the church had sovereignty over

<sup>143</sup> Selderhuis, *Acta of the Synod of Dort*, 1:xv.

<sup>144</sup> See De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 18.

<sup>145</sup> Article 1: “The Magistrate of each city, shall after the indication and advice of the ministers, elect ministers for the city and all the places under his jurisdiction.” See 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*, 121.

<sup>146</sup> My translation. See Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:62. “Hierdie kerklike wette en ordonansies adem heeltemal ‘n ander gees as die kerkordes. Dit lyk na ‘n netwerk van reëlings, uitgedruk in ‘n regskerklike ordening ter wille van die regstaat.”

<sup>147</sup> Van Asselt and Abels, *Handboek Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis*, 436; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 311,312.

Bouwman says: “De Dordtsche kerkorde is dus feitelijk de regel geweest, waarnaar de Gereformeerde kerken in ons land hebben geleefd, totdat zij in 1816 op eene onwettige wijze plaats gemaakt heeft voor het „Algemeene Reglement voor het bestuur der Ned. Hervormde kerk.”

<sup>148</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 311; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:171.

<sup>149</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 311.

<sup>150</sup> De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 41; 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*, 440.

all ecclesiastical matters. This led to conflict in the Synod as many found it humiliating that while Jews, Anabaptist and others could freely convene, the consistory meetings had to be observed by political representatives.<sup>151</sup> The church was now on Dutch soil and therefore could not ignore the political and ecclesiastical developments that had since taken place. The Provincial Synod of Dortrecht 1574 was the first synod held in the Netherlands itself and from the Church Order that was formulated here this political context is already evident as Article 5 states that “De dienaars en ouderlingen zullen wel voor zich zien, dat zij in de konsistoriën, classen en synoden niet verhandelen, dan hetgeen dat kerkelijk is...”<sup>152</sup> Article 17 of the Church Order of Dortrecht 1578 that states that “In dese versamelinghen en sal niet gehandelt worden dan van kerckelicken dinghen ende dat na wijse der kerckenregieringhe...”<sup>153</sup> is a further development of thinking. It testifies of the public relationship between church and state that has changed since Emden 1571. But it can also be inferred that this article - that would be present in all the following church orders including that of Dort 1618/19 -<sup>154</sup> is Christological in character: it is about more than defining the relation between church and state, but also wants to emphasise that the meetings of the church is different from those of the state and in this indirectly pointed to the Word of God that constitutes the church’s meetings. Article 28 of the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 attempted to clarify this relation, clearly stating the task of the ‘office’ of Christian authorities and in contrast also the task of the church’s offices to the authorities:

*Ghelijck het Ampt der Christelijcke Overheden is / den H. Kercken-dienst in alle manieren te bevorderen / den selven met haer exempel den onderdanen te recomanderen / eñ den Predicanten / Ouderlingen eñ Diaconen in alle voorvallende noot de hant te biedē / ende by hare goede ordeningen te beschermen ; Alsoo zijn alle Predicantē / Ouderlinghen ende Diaconen schuldigh de gantsche Gemeente vlijtighlijck eñ oprechtighlijck in te scherpen de ghehoorsaemhey / liefde eñ eerbiedinghe die sy den Magistraten schuldigh zijn...*<sup>155</sup>

<sup>151</sup> See 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*, 440.

<sup>152</sup> Article 5: “the ministers and elders shall see to it that they don’t discuss in the consistory, classis and synods, that which is not ecclesiastical...” See Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 149.

<sup>153</sup> Article 17: “In the assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be dealt with in an ecclesiastical manner.” See Ibid., 240.

<sup>154</sup> Article 30: “In dese t’samen-comstē sullen geen ander dan Kerckelijcke saecken / ende t’selfde op Kerckelijcke wijze gehandelt worden. In meerder vergaderinge salmen niet handelen / dan t’geen dat in mindere niet en heeft af-gehandelt connen werden / ofte dat tot de Kercken der meerder vergaderinge int gemeyn behoort.” 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.,” 10–11.

<sup>155</sup> Article 28: “Since the office of Christian authorities is to promote church services in every way, to recommend the same to their subjects, to help ministers, elders and deacons in all existing need and to protect them by their good order, all

The Church Order of Dort 1618/19 should then be understood as an independent development that dealt with the questions of its own context. It clarified the relation between Christian church and Christian state and in doing this tried to resolve the political and ecclesiastical conflict that had been ongoing for over 40 years.

The particular context in which the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 originated did not isolated it from the underpinning trajectories, as Dort “did not just fall from the air”<sup>156</sup> but was also a continuation of the church polity tradition in the Netherlands. The title “Kercken-ordeninge” already testifies of this. The name “Kercken-ordeninge” dates back to the Synod of Middelburg 1581,<sup>157</sup> before that ‘church orders’ were only referred to as “Capita seu articuli”<sup>158</sup> or “Acta ofte handelinge.”<sup>159</sup> Middelburg 1581 called the articles ‘kerckenordeninghe’ and The Hague 1586 would clarify this by calling it “Kercken-ordeninghe der Nederlandtsche Ghereformeerde Kercken”<sup>160</sup>, and thereby clearly stating that it was the Church Order of the 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.<sup>161</sup> The title “Kercken-ordeninge” clearly indicates that this is not a state or civil order but an ecclesiastical order.

The first article of the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 is further evidence that it was a continuation of the church polity tradition in the Netherlands: “Om goede ordre inder Ghemeente Christi te onderhouden / zijn daer inne noodigh de Diensten / t’Samencomsten / Opsicht der Leere / Sacramenten ende Ceremonien / ende Christelijcke straffe. Waer van hier na ordentlijck sal gehandelt worden.”<sup>162</sup>

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ministers, elders, and deacons are duty bound diligently and sincerely to impress upon the whole congregation the obedience, love and respect they owe the magistrates...” See *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>156</sup> Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 12.

<sup>157</sup> Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 376.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 487.

<sup>161</sup> 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 jaren 1618 Ende 1619.” 2. The full title reads: “Kercken-ordeninge; Gestelt indē Nationalen Synode der Ghereformeerde Kercken.”

<sup>162</sup> Article 1: “For the maintenance of good order in the Church of Christ it is necessary that there should be: offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments, and ceremonies, and Christian discipline; of which matters the following articles treat in due order.” See *Ibid.*, 3; Hall and Hall, *Paradigms in Polity: Classic Readings in Reformed and Presbyterian Church Government*, 176.

The Church Order of Middelburg 1581 was the first to use the formulation that the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 would begin with: “Om goede ordene inder Ghemeijnte Christi te onderhouden, zijn daer inne noodich, de Diensten, Tsamencoemsten, Opsicht der Leere, Sacramenten ende ceremonien, ende Christelicke straffe: waer van hier na ordentlick gehandelt sal warden.”<sup>163</sup> This formulation would be followed by the National Synod of The Hague 1586,<sup>164</sup> and also the Provincial Synod of Zeeland in Middelburg 1591.<sup>165</sup> Britz is of opinion that Middelburg’s formulation of this first article is a shorter and clearer formulation of the concept Church Order of Wezel’s first article:

*Quandoquidem et ad constituendas ritè ecclesias inprimis erit necessarium summam ac praecipuam adhiberi curam vt pii, docti et in Scripturarum cognitione praestantes viri qui verbum Dei rectè norint secare ecclesiis praeficiantur ministri ac pastores, ei rei linguarum disciplinarumque cognitionem, ac explicandarum Scripturarum assiduas exercitationes (quas propositiones siue prophetias vocant) maximè conducere nemo ambigit. Et illis porro constitutis ad vnum omnium consensum tum in doctrina, tum in ceremoniarum ac disciplinae ratione, quoad eius fieri potest, ineundum retinendumque, omnino expediet frequentes vicinarum ecclesiarum conuentus institui, ad quos de singulis rebus referatur.<sup>166</sup>*

The roots of this departure point of the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 may then be traced back to the first concept Church Order of the reformed church in the Netherlands. It may thus be inferred that the concept Church Order of Wezel proceeds from a Christological departure point, although it does not mention Christ, it echoes articles 27-35 of the Belgic Confession of faith which points to Christ as the Head of the church.<sup>167</sup> The Church Order of Middelburg’s (1581) formulation of this brought this Christological principle more clearly to the forefront.

The Church Order of Dort 1618/19 would in the same way indirectly follow the concept Church Order of Wezel’s principle of no hierarchy in the church: “Neque vllum imperium dominandique licentiam vsurpaturos, siue erga Ministros siue erga ecclesiam...”<sup>168</sup>, which the Church Order of Emden

<sup>163</sup> See Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 376.

<sup>164</sup> Article 1: “Om goede ordre inder Ghemeente Christi te onderhouden, zijn daer inne noodigh de Diensten, T’samencomsten, Opsicht der Leere, Sacramenten ende Ceremonien, ende Christelijcke straffe. Waer van hier nae ordentlick sal gehandelt worden.” See *Ibid.*, 487.

<sup>165</sup> Article 1 is exactly the same as that of The Hague 1586. See 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*, 306.

<sup>166</sup> See Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:58; Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 9–10.

<sup>167</sup> This is underscored by Britz and Pont. See Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:58; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:98.

<sup>168</sup> This principles is also present in Chapters 4:9, 5:19, 8:14,20. Chapter 4:7 in the Dutch: “in den naam des Here gene heerschappij gebruiken, noch over de dienaren noch over de gemeente...” See Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 23; Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordering van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, 151–152; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:83.

1571 would be formulated as an independent Church Order article: “Nulla Ecclesia in alias, nullus minister in ministros, nullus Senior in Seniores, Diaconus en Diaconos primatum seu dominationem obtinebit, sed potius ab omni et suspitione et occasione cauebit.”<sup>169</sup> The Synod of Dortrecht 1578 adapted this article as the Church Order now developed a more logical structure, and what was previously Article 1 was now moved to the last article of the Church Order.<sup>170</sup> The Synod of Middelburg 1581 restored the article closer to its original, by removing any additions that may lead to confusion.<sup>171</sup> The Synod of Dort 1618/19 followed the Church Order of Middelburg 1581 and the Church Order of The Hague 1586 in this, by bringing the article in the back of the Church Order.<sup>172</sup>

Article 4 of the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 is exemplary of both the context and underlying trajectories as it sets out the right of the church to call its own ministers:

*De Wettelijcke Beroepinghe der gener die te vooren in den Dienst niet gheweest en zijn / soo wel inde Steden als ten platten Lande / bestaet. Ten eersten inde Verkiesinghe, de welcke na voorgaende vasten ende bidden gheschieden sal door den Kercken-Raet ende Diaconen / ende dat niet sonder goede correspondentie met de Christelijcke Overheyt der plaetse respectivelijck / ende voorwetê ofte advijs vandê Classe / daer't selve tot noch toe gebruyckelijck is geweest. Ten anderen / inde Examinatie ofte ondersoekinghe beyde der Leere eñ des Levens / de welcke staê sal by de Classe ten overstaê vande Gedeputeerde des Synodi ofte eenige der selver. Ten derde / inde Approbatie / eñ goet-kenninge vande Overheyt / eñ daer na oock vande litmatê der Gereformeerde Ghemeente vande plaetse / wanneer den name des Dienaers den tijdt van veerthien dagen inder Kercken vercondicht zijnde / geen hindernisse daer tighen en comt... ”<sup>173</sup>*

<sup>169</sup> The first article of the *Disciplines Ecclesiastique* 1559 was the first to begin with such a anti-hierarchical formula. See Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 55; Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordering van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, 149. The Dutch translation of article 1 Emden 1571 reads: “Gheen Kercke sal over een ander Kercke, gheen Dienaer des Woorts, gheen Ouderlinck, noch Diaken sal d’een over d’ander heerschappie voeren, maar een yghelijck sal hen voor alle suspicien, ende aenlockinge om te heerschappen wachten” The English reads: “No church shall in any way lord over another church, no minister of the Word, no elder, no deacon shall lord over another one, but everyone shall be on his guard against any suspicion and temptation to lord over others.”

<sup>170</sup> Nauta, “De Nationale Synode van Dordrecht (1578),” 27–28; Knetsch, “De Positie Der Waalse Kerken,” 61; Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 261; Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordering van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, 153. Article 102: “Gheen kercke en sal over andere kercken, gheen dienaar over andere dienaers, gheen ouderlinck noch diaken over andere ouderlinghen ofte diakenen eenighe heerschappie voeren ofte overhant hebben, maer liever sal hem een yghelick van alle oorsake ende suspitie van dien wachten, hoewel uut plicht der liefde de eene kercke de andere, de een dienaar den anderen etc. niet alleen moghen, maer oock behooren te vermanen.”

<sup>171</sup> Article 68: “Gheen Kercke sal over andere Kercken, gheen Dienaer over andere Dienaeren, gheen Ouderlinck noch Diaken over andere Ouderlinghen ofte Diaconen eenighe heerschappie voeren.” The confusion may have been that the last part that has now been removed was more about the moral duty than about the order of the church. See Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 400; Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordering van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, 153.

<sup>172</sup> Article 84 is the exact wording of Middelburg 1581. See Synod of Dort (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.

<sup>173</sup> Article 4: “The lawful calling of those who have not previously been in office, in cities as well as rural districts, consists: First in the election, after previous fasting and prayer, by the Consistory and Deacons, not without proper correspondence with the Christian authorities of the respective districts, and the knowledge or advice of the Classis, where this has been customary up to now. Secondly, in the examination and investigation, both of doctrine and life, which shall be done by the classis in the presence of the deputies of the synod or some of the same. Third, in the approbation and approval of the



The government still had the right of approbation, just as the congregation had this right. In this Dort 1618/19 maintained the principles set forth by Middelburg 1581 and The Hague 1586 that the church was free to call its own ministers to office. This stands in direct opposition to the church laws that the government created in various provinces that did not allow the church to govern itself: The States of Holland and Zeeland would design its own church laws in 1576,<sup>174</sup> the States of Holland in 1583,<sup>175</sup> the States of Utrecht in 1590,<sup>176</sup> and laws were also designed in The Hague 1591.<sup>177</sup>

The Synod of Dort 1618/19 also brought a completion to certain trajectories like the binding nature of the church's confessional documents. The Convent of Wezel 1568 already proposed that ministers should be questioned on their doctrine;<sup>178</sup> the Church Order of Emden 1571 stated that ministers should sign both the French and Netherland confessions;<sup>179</sup> the Church Order of Dortrecht 1578 would require the signing of the Belgic Confession by the ministers, the Professors in theology and the elders in the congregations; the Church Order of Middelburg 1581 required the same and included in the signing also the other Professors that did not necessarily lecture theology as well as school teachers,<sup>180</sup> and the

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authorities, and thereafter of the members of the local Reformed congregation, when the name of the minister having been announced in the churches for fourteen days, no objections is presented..." or See *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>174</sup> Article 1 handed the magistrates the deciding vote in the appointments to office: "De Magistraet van ieder hoofdstad, sal op 't aengeven en met raedt van haere Predikanten voor haer stad, en alle de plaetsen van haere jurisdictie Predikanten verkiesen." 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*, 121.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 233–234.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, 393–340.

<sup>178</sup> 2nd heading article 8: "In doctrina quatuor obseruari erit vtile, primum vt requiratur testimonium siue ecclesiae siue Scholae aut etiam Ciuitatis in qua ante hac vixit: vt certò constare possit an cuiusdam haeresi addictus fuerit, an exoticis et curiosis quaestionibus speculationibusque otiosis plus aequo se oblectarit, an hereticorum libros studiosius quam par est legerit, hominumque fanaticorum et suis somniis indulgentium consuetudine multa vsus fuerit. Deinde quaeratur equid per omnia consentiat cum ea doctrina quae in ecclesia publicè retinetur secundum ea quae Confessione fidei primum Galliarum Regi per ecclesiarum illius regni ministros oblata, deinde etiam in vernaculam linguam conuersa Hispaniarum regi, coeterisque inferioris Germaniae magistratibus inscripta exhibitaeque fuit, denique etiam Catechesi continentur. Tertio interrogetur de primariis quibusque religionis Capitibus. Ac postremo proponantur ei vt minimum bis terue aliquot Scripturae loca coram Ministris si adfuerint ac Prophetis seu Doctoribus, vel (sin minus aderint) coram Senioribus in prophetiae morem explicanda." See Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 14.

<sup>179</sup> Article 2: "Ad testandum in doctrina inter Ecclesias Belgicas consensum, visum est fratribus confessioni Ecclesiarum Belgicarum subscribere, et ad testandum harum Ecclesiarum cum Ecclesiis Regni Galliae consensum et coniunctionem, confessioni fidei Ecclesiarum illius Regni similiter subscribere, certa fiducia earum Ecclesiarum ministros confessioni fidei Ecclesiarum Belgicarum vicissim ad mutuum testandum consensum subscripturos." See *Ibid.*, 56; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:173.

<sup>180</sup> Article 37: "De Dienaers des Woordts, Ouderlinghen ende Diaconen, item de Professeurs in der Theologie (twelck oock den anderen Professoren wel betaemt) ende de Schoolmeesters sullen de Belijdenisse des gheloofs der Nederlandtschen Kercken onderteijkenen." See Rutgers, *Acta van de Nederlandsche Synoden Der Zestiende Eeuw*, 390.

Church Order of The Hague 1586 stipulated that those who refuse to sign the confessions will be relieved of their office.<sup>181</sup> The Church Order of Dort 1618/19 would continue in this same tradition:

*De Dienaers des Woords Gods / Item die Professorê inde Theologie ('twelck oock den anderen Professoren wel betaemt) zullen de Belijdenissen des Geloofs der Nederlantscher Kercken onderteecken / ende de Dienaers die sulcx sullen refuseren / sullen de facto van haren Dienst by den Kercken-Raet / ofte de Classe opgeschorst werden / ter tijdt toe sy haer daer inne gheheelijcken verclaert sullen hebben : ende indien sy opstinatelijcken in weygheringhe blijven / sullen sy van harê Dienst geheelijcken afgestelt werden.*<sup>182</sup>

The Synod of Dort also formulated a form of subscription and formalised the signing of the confessions in this way and thereby clearly stipulating the binding nature of the church's confessions.<sup>183</sup> The qualifications needed for ordination in the ministry were furthermore formalised and the role of the congregation, classis and synod in the examination of candidates were identified.<sup>184</sup>

After 180 sessions, on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 1619 the Synod of Dort 1618/19 officially closed in the Grote Kerk in Dordrecht.<sup>185</sup> Almost 200 years passed before a national synod could convene again,<sup>186</sup> and therefore the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 would emerge as “a symbol of Reformed orthodoxy”<sup>187</sup> as it

<sup>181</sup> Article 47: “De Dienaers des Woorts, Item die Professoren in de Theologie (twelck oock den anderen Professoren wel betaemt) sullen de Belijdenisse des Gheloofs der Nederlandtscher Kercken onderteeckenen: ende de Dienaers die sulcx sullen refuseren, sullen *de facto* van haren Dienst by den Kercken-Raet, ofte de Classe opgheschorst werden, ter tijdt toe sy haer daer inne gheheelicken verclaert sullen hebben: ende indien sy obstinatelijcken in weygheringhe blijven, sullen sy van hare Dienst gheheelicken afghestelt werden.” See *Ibid.*, 498.

<sup>182</sup> Article 53: “The ministers of the Word of God and likewise the Professors in Theology shall subscribe to the Confession of faith of the Netherlands Churches (which is proper for the other Professors as well), and the ministers who refuse to do so shall *de facto* be suspended from their office by the consistory or classis until they shall have declared themselves fully in this manner, and if they obstinately persist in refusing, they shall be disposed from their office.” See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.,” 27; Hall and Hall, *Paradigms in Polity: Classic Readings in Reformed and Presbyterian Church Government*, 182.

<sup>183</sup> Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Acta of Handelingen Der Nationale Synode Dordrecht 1618-1619,” ed. J.H. Donner and S.A. Van den Hoorn, 1883, 987, [http://www.prdl.org/user\\_edit.php?a\\_id=2316&bk\\_id=34689](http://www.prdl.org/user_edit.php?a_id=2316&bk_id=34689); Glasius, *Geschiedenis Der Nationale Synode, in 1618 En 1619 Gehouden Te Dordrecht, in Hare Voorgeschiedenis, Handelingen En Gevolgen.*, 300; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1981, 1:173; 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*, 443.

<sup>184</sup> Article 8: “Men zal geen School-meesters / Hant-wercks liedê ofte andere die niet gestudeert en hebben / tot het Predick-ampt toelaten / ten sy datmen verzekert is / van hare singuliere gaven / Godtzaligheyt / ootmoedigheyt / zedicheyt / goet verstant ende discretie / mitsgaders gaven van welsprekenheyt. Soo wanneer dan soodanighe persoonen sich tot den dienst presenteren / zal de Classis de selve (indien't de Synodus goet vint) eerst examineren / ende na datse de zelve int examê bevint / haer een tijt langh laten int prive proponeren / ende dan voorts met hem handelen / als sy oordeelen zal stichtelijck te wesen.” See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.,” 5.

<sup>185</sup> Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Acta of Handelingen Der Nationale Synode Dordrecht 1618-1619,” 950.

<sup>186</sup> See Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 8.

<sup>187</sup> Britz, “Oor die Kerkbegrip en die Ordening van die Kerklike Lewe by die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk,” 447.

remained the rule for church polity in Reformed churches in the Netherlands and abroad for centuries and still has this position today in many churches.<sup>188</sup>

#### 1.4 Summary

Tracing each article of the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 back to its origin and discussing its development is a task that has already been done by many.<sup>189</sup> The foregoing attempted to point out that the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 is on the one side and independent development in its own context, but also a continuation of the underpinning trajectories and church polity tradition in the Netherlands. Historically the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 stands in relation with the political revolt against Spain and the ecclesiastical break with the Roman Catholic Church. Resolving the ongoing conflict between Christian church and Christian state over the freedom of the church to govern itself was of importance for the Synod of Dort 1618/19.

From the analyses of the underpinning trajectories it has become clear that the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 was a continuation of the preceding church orders and in essence does not differ much from the first church order accepted by the National Synod of Emden 1571. Therefore, an analysis of the Christological distinctiveness of all the church orders preceding the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 has not been undertaken, as it is clear that the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 is a continuation in the form and structure of the Church Order accepted at Emden 1571, since the church orders following Emden 1571, only revised the same Church Order and never incepted a new church order. The Church Order of Dort 1618/19 is then *de facto* the same church order as the Church Order of -Emden 1571, -Dordrecht 1578, -Middelburg 1581 and -The Hague 1586. Only a few articles of preceding church orders, like the concept Church Order of Wezel's and the Church Order of Emden's Article 1 has been shown in the above analysis to be Christological in character or to portray the theological centrality of Christ. The Christological distinctiveness of the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 should then also be understood, *ipso*

<sup>188</sup> Selderhuis, *Acta of the Synod of Dordt*, 1:xv. As discussed in the introductory chapter, the Church Order of Dort holds a significant position also in the NGK, NHKA, GKSA and APK.

<sup>189</sup> Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*; De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*; Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van Die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*; F.L. Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 1892, <http://www.reformed-digital.net/node/1278>; Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordening van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*.

*facto*, as a continuation of the Christology of the preceding ‘church orders’, because the Church Order of Dort was not a new church order, but a continued revision of the Church Order that was accepted in 1571 at the Synod of Emden.

With this being said, the study should continue with an in-depth exposition of the Christological distinctiveness of the Church Order of Dort 1618/19, which follows in chapters 2 and 3.

## CHAPTER 2: THE CHRISTOLOGICAL DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE CHURCH ORDER OF DORT (1618/19) PERTAINING TO THE ARTICLES ON THE OFFICES AND ASSEMBLIES

### 2.1 Introduction

As noted in the previous chapter, this chapter turns to the Church Order of Dort itself. It focuses on the Christological distinctiveness of the Church Order. In the introduction it was motivated why this chapter limits itself to a discussion of the articles on the offices (de Diensten) and assemblies (t'Samencomsten). The second chapter of our study therefore begins with an analysis on the first article of the Church Order of Dort, as Article 1 serves as a preface for the whole church order.

### 2.2 Article 1

The Church Order of Dort makes it from the outset clear that the Church Order is not about the order of the civil government, nor for the ecclesiastical government of the church. The title “Kercken-ordeninghe”<sup>1</sup> indicates that it is about an ecclesiastical order. “Kerken” is here no plural form that refers to all the Reformed churches in the Netherlands; it should be understood as an adjective, indicating it is the articles of the church’s order and not those of state or civil order.<sup>2</sup> The Church Order of Dort did not aim to receive its legitimacy from the government and its binding nature originated not from the civil authorities, but from the fact that it served to maintain the good order that Christ has instituted.<sup>3</sup> Antonius Thysius who found himself in this context, articulated this principle found in the Church Order of Dort in the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*; the standard work on Reformed theology in the 17<sup>th</sup> century:

*Per Caput Ecclesiae, metaphoricè intelligimus, Christum τεανθρωπον ac Mediatorem, supremam et absolutam dignitatem, majestatemque, auctoritatem, potestatem et jus habentem, et exercentem, quo ipse (ut in quo est omnium quae ad salute requiruntur, plenitude, et ad Ecclesiam conveniens symmetria, et cum ea conjunction et unio) in Ecclesiam universam Spiritu suo per verbum efficaciter influit, omnia*

<sup>1</sup> 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.,” 2.

<sup>2</sup> See Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 7; De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 22; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 9.

<sup>3</sup> See Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:63; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 4; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 326.

*bona spiritualia ei communicat, eam vivificat, regit et defendit, idque tum interne, tum externe, ad salute ejus, Deique gloriam.*<sup>4</sup>

Thysius makes it clear that Christ directly and actually or immediately rules His church; this confession is found in almost all Reformed Confessions and church orders.<sup>5</sup> Therefore the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 “was viewed as consistent with the theology adopted by the synod and also as a means to protect the church while implementing those adopted theological positions.”<sup>6</sup> Both Britz and Jonker argues that for Dort it is not about the functional arrangement for the management or government of the church’s life, but it rather portrays an underlying or concealed scope of the basic principle of all church polity: an outright confession that Christ alone rules his church and that His direct and actual reign should be acknowledged.<sup>7</sup> Bouwman also asserts that there is no single idea that governs the doctrine of the church and her polity so much as the kingship of Christ.<sup>8</sup>

The Church Order of Dort did not aim to stipulate the church’s life as the government aimed to do in its church laws. At the Synod of Dort a different conviction was present: the Synod wanted to practically describe the way that Christ rules in the congregation through his Word and Spirit.<sup>9</sup> Therefore the departure point of this church order is Christological; the Church Order was associated with the ministry of the Word and therefore with Christ. De Gier, like Jansen asseverates that it is in this case not about an order with a judicial or legal character, but one with a moral or ethical character.<sup>10</sup> It is an ecclesiastical ordering and not a law, stipulation or provision.<sup>11</sup> This is underscored by the first article that carries a powerful theological statement concerning maintenance of the good order in the congregation of Christ:

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<sup>4</sup> The Dutch translation reads: “Onder het Hoofd der Kerk, verstaan wij overdrachtelijk Christus God-en-mens (theanthroopos) en Middelaar, die de hoogste en absolute waardigheid, majesteit, autoriteit, macht en recht heeft, en uitoefent, waardoor hij (als in wien de volheid is van alles wat tot de zaligheid vereist wordt, en de passende gelijkmatigheid – *conveniens symmetria* – tot de Kerk met zijn Geest door het word krachtwerkend invloeit, haar alle geestelijke goederen mededeelt, haar levend maakt, regeert en verdedigt, en dat zowel inwendig als uitwendig, tot haar heil en tot Gods ere.” See Antonium Thysium, *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, ed. H Bavinck (Leiden: Didericum Donner, 1881), 445; Antonius Thysius, *Synopsis of Overzicht van de Zuiverste Theologie*, trans. D Van Dijk, vol. 2 (J. Boersma Enschede, 1968), 98.

<sup>5</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 334.

<sup>6</sup> Hall and Hall, *Paradigms in Polity: Classic Readings in Reformed and Presbyterian Church Government*, 175.

<sup>7</sup> Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:61; Jonker, *Om Die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 334.

<sup>9</sup> Britz and Strauss, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:7; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 324.

<sup>10</sup> De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 23; Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 2.

*Om goede ordre inder Ghemeente Christi te onderhouden / zijn daer inne noodigh de Diensten / t'Samencomsten / Opsicht der Leere / Sacramenten ende Ceremonien / ende Christelijcke straffe. Waer van hier na ordentlijck sal gehandelt worden.*<sup>12</sup>

Wherever one finds the offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and Christian discipline as it is described in the Church Order; there good order in the congregation of Christ prevails.<sup>13</sup> This is not merely a summary of content and a formal division of the Church Order, but points beyond these elements.<sup>14</sup> It succeeds in doing what Van Engen suggests the Protestant-Reformation of the sixteen century sought to return to: a self-critical corrective. The Belgic Confession's 'marks' of the true church, as it is expressed in Article 29, are also evident of such an approach:

*The marks, by which the true Church is known, are these: if the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if she maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin: in short, if all things are managed according to the pure Word of God, all things contrary thereto rejected, and Jesus Christ acknowledged as the only Head of the Church.*<sup>15</sup>

Where Jesus Christ rules as the Head of the church, these marks are present. Christ's presence in the congregation is portrayed as the Word audible in the Scriptures, the Word visible in the sacraments and the Word sensible through Christian discipline.<sup>16</sup>

This seems also to be the reasoning behind the first article of the Church Order of Dort. The four headings which the Church Order deemed necessary for the maintenance of the good order in the church of Christ, were as the Belgic Confession's three marks of the church "ways by which members of a local body could ascertain their proximity to Jesus Christ, the one and only true Center of the Church's deep essence...it is the presence of Christ in the midst that test all the Church's activities, dogmas, and postures

<sup>12</sup> "For the maintenance of good order in the Church of Christ it is necessary that there should be: offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and Christian discipline; of which matters the following articles treat in due order." See Hall and Hall, *Paradigms in Polity: Classic Readings in Reformed and Presbyterian Church Government*, 176; Synod of Dordt (1618/19), "Kercken-Orderinghe; 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 laren 1618 Ende 1619.," 3. The Dutch does not read "Church of Christ" but rather "Congregation of Christ": "Ghemeente Christi."

<sup>13</sup> With "church" or "congregation the church order of Dort means the local congregation. See De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 24.

<sup>14</sup> Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 15.

<sup>15</sup> Walaeus like van Engen confirms these 3 marks to be the marks of the true church. See Charles Van Engen, *God's Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1991), 32–33; Antonio Walaeo, *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, ed. H Bavinck (Leiden: Didericum Donner, 1881), 443; Antonius Walaeus, *Synopsis of Overzicht van de Zuiverste Theologie*, trans. D Van Dijk, vol. 2 (J. Boersma Enschede, 1966), 95.

<sup>16</sup> J.A. Heyns, *Dogmatiek* (Goodwood: Nasionale Boekdrukkery, 1988), 376.

of discipline.”<sup>17</sup> Britz, Van Engen and Van Rongen is in agreement with this, noting that no human institution can constitute the four elements wherein the order of Christ convenes. Each one of these - the offices, assemblies, doctrine, sacraments, ceremonies and discipline – has a Scriptural definiteness and should be understood as such. It is more than just a formal division, it also has a confessional character and therefore these four elements cannot be excluded from the true church of Christ.<sup>18</sup> It is not an ideal which must be realized; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which the congregations through grace alone may participate.<sup>19</sup>

*It is essential building blocks of the building that Christ erects. It is also his choice. Addition thereof, or own inventions, just comes down to contempt of the King of the Church. In these four matters Christ is taken at his Word and the ordination that He ordains in His Word is preserved. By that the Church is known as Church of the Lord and in that the gospel of grace echoes.*<sup>20</sup>

Dort as a reformed church order wanted to point, like the Belgic Confession “to something beyond the four attributes to the Center, to Jesus Christ, to whom the Church owed its life and nature.”<sup>21</sup> The purpose of the Church Order was then to ensure that the voice of Christ is heard and listened to.<sup>22</sup> Where Jesus Christ is obeyed, there true church order exists.<sup>23</sup> These four headings of Dort on the offices (de Diensten), assemblies (t’Samencomsten), doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies (Opsicht der Leere / Sacramenten ende Ceremonien) and Christian discipline (Christelijcke strafe) direct the church to its task and essence; its reason for being is Christ, He is the very Head, the cornerstone, the Lord that defines the congregation. Therefore these four headings are not activities or actions of the church, but its totality of existence. They are indispensable necessities.<sup>24</sup> It may then be inferred that the Church Order of Dort is Christological in character as it “claims to show how the Lord Jesus reigns His church and how He desires it to be governed. It summarizes what the apostles have spoken, and applies it to the present

<sup>17</sup> Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church*, 57.

<sup>18</sup> Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:63; Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church*, 57; Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 15.

<sup>19</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 18.

<sup>20</sup> My translation. See Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:63. “Dit is onmisbare boustene van die gebou wat Christus oprig. Dit is ook sy keuse. Aanvulling daarvan, of eie bedinksels, 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.”

<sup>21</sup> Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church*, 57.

<sup>22</sup> See Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: ’N Verklaring van Die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 8.

<sup>23</sup> Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg En Kerkregering*, 20.

<sup>24</sup> Van Engen, *God’s Missionary People: Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church*, 63; Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 10.



circumstances. In this respect it is an elaboration of certain articles of the Belgic Confession of Faith.”<sup>25</sup> Like in the preceding church orders, the Church Order of Dort does not directly confess the headship of Christ in any of its articles, it rather points indirectly to Christ. In this it aims to truly order the congregation for life together under the Word.<sup>26</sup> What it deemed necessary for good order in the church of Christ is offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and Christian discipline. For the purposes of our study, we start with the offices in the next paragraph.

### **2.3 Offices (Diensten): Articles 2-28**

The term offices should not be understood as a referral to the (official positions) offices of ministers, elders, deacons and professors as such. The Church Order rather speaks of “diensten” and this refers to the service and task of the offices and not to the offices themselves. Christ was the great Servant. The offices are therefore not church positions but services by which Christ rules His church as the whole life in and of the church of Christ has a serving, like Him, disposition and function. The offices precede the church as there can be no church without the “diensten” which insures that the ministering of the Word, sacraments and discipline are possible.<sup>27</sup> The offices are necessary because Christ instituted them.<sup>28</sup> Minister of the Word, professor of theology, elder or deacon are therefore not titles that one may claim and which immediately brings with it authority like the Roman Catholic Church’s offices. The ministry of the offices is in service of Christ, in his Name and on His authority and not on and in that of the church. The minister, professor, deacon and elder’s authority is only in the Word that they minister, their status lies in service. The moment the offices are not organs of Christ and not bound to His Word anymore, they lose all authority.<sup>29</sup> Antonius Thysius also understood it as such, observing “omnisque hic potestatis qualiscunque per homines exsecutio, tantum ministerialis est.”<sup>30</sup> By referring to the minister, doctor of

<sup>25</sup> Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 10.

<sup>26</sup> Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*, 13; Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 7.

<sup>27</sup> See Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 17.

<sup>28</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, 342.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 329.

<sup>30</sup> See Antonium Thysium, *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, ed. H Bavinck (Leiden: Didericum Donner, 1881), 448; De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 24; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 23; F.L. Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 1892, 15, <http://www.reformed-digital.net/node/1278>; Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, 328,335.

theology, elder and deacon as ‘diensten’, the Church Order indirectly confirms that the offices are all serving under Jesus Christ, the Head of the church.<sup>31</sup>

This implies that these offices or ‘diensten’ have no status that it crowns the ‘bearers’ with. Ministry or service means service of the person to Christ. In the center of ministry is not the person, but Christ.<sup>32</sup> Both Britz and Jonker argue that the Church Order of Dort proceeds from such a Christological conviction rather than an ecclesiastical conviction. This means that the offices are not there for the sake of the good order or functionality of the church or to rule the church by themselves. The offices serve or minister for the sake of Christ and his rule in His church as it surfaces through exhortation, teaching, comforting, care, love, rule and discipline.<sup>33</sup> This was in contrast with the Roman Catholic practice of the time. The Reformers could not see it any differently as that the Roman Catholic system of church government displaced Christ from His position as Head of the church and in the process entrusted the rule of the church to people or more accurately to the Catholic office bearers.<sup>34</sup> The Church Order confesses that the offices are used by Christ, but never so, that He transfers His power to them or let His personal and direct rule of the church be taken out of His hands. Christ has no need for a replacement because He is directly and actually present in His congregation.<sup>35</sup> The highest authority in the church remains Christ’s and His authority cannot be shared. Therefore Antonius Thysius articulates Christ’s authority as not being *κοινωνητός*.<sup>36</sup> It may then be inferred that in the simplicity of the word ‘diensten’, the Church Order of Dort makes it clear that in the church there can be no rulers and subordinates, Christ govern alone and those in office are wholly bound to His Word.<sup>37</sup>

Because Christ directly and effectively rules His congregation the Church Order extendedly emphasises in Articles 3-5 that ministers should be lawfully called to the ministry of the Word. Article 3 summarises this principle:

<sup>31</sup> See Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On, 2005*, 16; Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: ’n Verklaring van Die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 8; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 24; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 17.

<sup>32</sup> Strauss, *Kerk En Orde Vandag: Met Die Klem Op Die NG Kerk*, 37; Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, 347.

<sup>33</sup> R.M. Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, ed. S.A. Strauss and R.M. Britz, vol. 8, UV Teologiese Studies (Bloemfontein: Pro Christo-Publikasies, 1995), 63; W.D. Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk* (Pretoria: Universiteit van Suid Afrika, 1965), 5; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 22.

<sup>34</sup> Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*, 2–4.

<sup>35</sup> See *Ibid.*, 5; Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, 334.

<sup>36</sup> See Thysius, *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, 448.

<sup>37</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, 350–351.

*Het sal niemant / al-hoe-wel hy eê Doctor / Ouderlingh ofte Diaken is / gheoorloft zijn den dienst des Woords ende der Sacramenten te betreden / sonder wettelijck daer toe beroepen te zijn : Ende wanneer yemandt daer teghen doet / ende meermael vermaent zijnde niet af en staet / soo sal de Classe oordeelen / ofmen hem voor eenen scheurmaecker verklaren / ofte op eenighe ander wijze straffen sal.*<sup>38</sup>

It is not enough that one deems oneself inwardly called; the outward call of Christ should also follow through the congregation.<sup>39</sup> For the Church Order of Dort the calling and electing to office is directly and actually the calling and electing of Christ.<sup>40</sup> In requiring such an outward calling the church order guarded against all sorts of mysticism and pietism that deemed the inward calling of Christ to be enough, and in turn confessed that Christ rules His congregation and not the individual. He alone thus has the authority to outwardly call a minister through the consistory into service. A calling is lawful only when it has been extended and acknowledged by a congregation.<sup>41</sup> It was deemed illegitimate for someone to perform the service of an office without being inwardly and outwardly called to that office.<sup>42</sup> For the Church Order of Dort the ministry of the Word it is not in the first place about being learned, popular or talented but about being lawfully called. The church does not need brilliant personalities, but faithful servants of Christ.<sup>43</sup> Rutgers notes that the systematic theology of the Synod is evident here as it opposed the free will of man against the sovereignty of God and His election.<sup>44</sup>

It is further evident from Article 6 of the Church Order that church and office cannot be separated; the ordination to office cannot be given by synods or governments, it proceeds from Christ through the consistory:

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<sup>38</sup> Article 3: "No one, though he be a professor, elder or deacon shall be permitted to enter the ministry of the Word and sacraments without having been lawfully called thereto; and if anyone acts contrary thereto and, having been frequently admonished, does not desist, the classis shall judge whether he is to be declared a schismatic or is to be punished in some other way." 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.," 3–5.

<sup>39</sup> See De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 30; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 23; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 346,367.

<sup>40</sup> Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:63.

<sup>41</sup> See Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 19; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 25.

<sup>42</sup> De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 31; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 28; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 370.

<sup>43</sup> Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van Die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 13.

<sup>44</sup> Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 25; Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 85.

*Sal oock geen Dienaer dienst moghen aen-nemen in eenige particuliere Heerlijckhedē / Gast-huysen ofte andersins / ten sy dat hy voorhenen gheadmitteert ende toe-ghelaten sy / volghende de voorgaende Artijckelen : en sal oock niet min als ander der Kercken-ordeninghe onderworpen zijn.*<sup>45</sup>

Likewise Article 15 opposes any attempt to administer the Word or sacraments without the consent of the consistory as Christ calls by no other means as through His church:

*Het sal niemant geoorloft zijn / den Dienst zijnder Kercken onderlatende / ofte in geenen sekeren dienst zijnde / hier ende daer te gaen predicken buyten consent en autoriteyt des Synodi ofte Classis : Ghelijck oock niemant in een ander Kercke eenige Predicatie sal moghē doen ofte Sacramenten bedienen / sonder bewillinghe des Kercken-Raeds.*<sup>46</sup>

The “proponenten, oefenaars, catechiseermeesters, ziekenbezoekers, voorlezers, kosteren, administrateurs” is not seen as offices or services of the church as Christ did not institute them and are therefore not essential for maintaining good order.<sup>47</sup>

The calling to office is no idle matter as Article 4 states that the electing of those who have not previously been in office should take place with fasting and prayer by the consistory and deacons.<sup>48</sup> With the calling of a minister the church has to appoint someone whom Christ has given them into service of Christ, and not into service of the church. Therefore the electing to office is not primarily the task of the congregation, but of the consistory and deacons. Christ grants His authority to them. It may be inferred that the Church Order in this portrays that the church is no democracy where the majority rules, but a Christocracy where Christ rules, it is monarchical in its essence.<sup>49</sup> Antonius Thysius articulates the same principle, indicating: “qui hoc ipso servi efficiuntur, non proprie Ecclesiae, sed Dei et Christi Domini

<sup>45</sup> Article 6: “Also no minister may accept a ministry in any particular manors, hospitals or otherwise unless he has previously been admitted and permitted to do so in accordance with the previous articles and he shall no less than other be subject to the church order.” 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.,” 5; De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 55.

<sup>46</sup> Article 15: “No one is permitted, having left the ministry of his church or being in no fixed ministry, to go preaching here and there without the consent of the synod or classis; so also no one may preach or administer the sacraments in another church without the consent of the consistory.” 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.,” 7; Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 73.

<sup>47</sup> Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 15; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 16.

<sup>48</sup> Article 4: “...Ten eersten inde Verkiesinghe, de welcke na voorgaende vasten ende bidden gheschieden sal door den Kercken-Raet ende Diaconen...” 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.” (Jansz, 1620), 4, [http://www.prdl.org/author\\_view.php?a\\_id=2355](http://www.prdl.org/author_view.php?a_id=2355); Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 43.

<sup>49</sup> De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 34; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 19; Thysius, *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, 591; Thysius, *Synopsis of Overzicht van de Zuiverste Theologie*, 1968, 2:272.

relative, idque suo orine et modo; Ecclesiae vero Praefecti, Praepositi, Episcopi, Pastores, etc.”<sup>50</sup> Election to office is therefore not a democratic election by the congregation whereby the candidate with the majority of votes is elected and called.<sup>51</sup> This does not mean that the consistory functions independent from the congregation as it does not rule apart from the congregation but rather leads in ruling; the Church Order of Dort carefully guards against the rule of both the majority and only a few in the church.<sup>52</sup>

Article 11 articulates this relation between the consistory and congregation as “...den Kercken-Raedt / als representerende die Ghemeynte.”<sup>53</sup> When the congregation lives in unity and in dependency on Christ under governance of the offices, and when the consistory with the congregation allows the Word of God to govern her, then the freedom and right of the congregation are ensured and the rule of Christ is revealed.<sup>54</sup> Also in the election of elders and deacons the Church Order maintains the rule of Christ, as there is no democratic vote to office and also no lifetime service in office.<sup>55</sup>

That the offices have a serving function is furthermore clear from the ordination of ministers as Article 4 grants no status to ministers and does not describe ordination as a sacrament that transfers one from a layman into a spiritual, but rather plainly states that ordination happens “...inde opentlijcke Bevestiginge voor de Ghemeynte / de welcke met behoorlijcke stipulatie ende af-vraginghen /

<sup>50</sup> See Thysium, *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, 591; Thysius, *Synopsis of Overzicht van de Zuiverste Theologie*, 1968, 2:272.

<sup>51</sup> Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 22.

<sup>52</sup> W.D. Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk* (Pretoria: Universiteit van Suid Afrika, 1965), 24; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 376.

<sup>53</sup> Article 11: “...the consistory, as representing the congregation.” See Synod of Dort (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.,” 6.

<sup>54</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 529.

<sup>55</sup> Article 22: “De Ouderlinghen sullen door het oordeel des Kercken-Raets ende der Diakenen vercoren worden : Soo dat het na de ghelegentheydt van een yeder Kercke vry sal zijn / soo veel Ouderlinghen alsser van noode zijn de Ghemeente voor te stellen / om van die selve (ten ware datter eenigh beletsel voor-viele) gheapprobeert ende goet ghekent zijnde / met openbare Ghebeden ende stipulatiën bevestight te worden : ofte een dobbel getal / om het halve deel by der Ghemeente vercoren te worden / ende opde selve wijze inden Dienst te bevestigen / volgende het formulier daer van zijnde.” Article 24: “De selve wijze die vande Ouderlingen gheseyt is / salmen oock onderhouden inde Verkiesinghe / approbatie ende bevestighe der Diakenen.” Article 27: “De Ouderlinghen ende Diakenen sullen twee Jaren dienen / ende alle Jaer sal het halve deel verandert / ende andere in de plaetse gestelt werden / ten ware dat de ghelegentheydt ende t’proffijt van eenighe Kercken anders vereyschte.” See Synod of Dort (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.,” 8–10.

vermaninghen / Ghebedt ende oplegginghe der handen vanden Dienaer die de bevestinghe doet (ofte eenighen anderen / daer meer Dienaren zijn) toegaen sal / naer het Formulier daer van zijnde...”<sup>56</sup>

Because Christ rules His church the Church Order stipulates the responsibilities of the congregation in the election, examination, approbation and ordination of ministers.<sup>57</sup> In these stipulations it is clear that the church wants to be diligent in caring for the faithful preaching of God’s Word in the church of Christ.<sup>58</sup> It is significant that the Church Order of Dort does not stipulate where students of theology should study, what is of importance is rather the capability and faithfulness to Christ. The Church Order proceeds from the idea that capability requires diligent and continued study of the languages, arts and theology or ‘godgeleerdheid’, but the Church Order does not close the door for those that did not formally study and possessed singular gifts. This may be seen as an indirect confession that Christ is sovereign to call whom He wishes.<sup>59</sup> Because Christ calls whom He wishes even novices, priests, monks and those who leave a sect may be admitted to the ministry, though with great care and caution. In this the Church Order of Dort gave recognition to the offices of the Roman Catholic Church and *ipso facto* also acknowledged the baptism in the Roman Catholic Church to be lawful.<sup>60</sup> It may be inferred that the Church Order upholds the rule of Christ in this, by placing the focus of ministry not on the minister but on Christ. For the Church Order of Dort ministry is not about the minister and advancing a

<sup>56</sup> Article 4: “...in the public ordination in the presence of the congregation, which shall take place with proper stipulations and questions, admonitions, prayer and laying on of the hands by the minister who conducts the ordination service (or any other, if there are more ministers present) according to the Form for this purpose...” See *Ibid.*, 4; De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 43; Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 28; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 409.

<sup>57</sup> Article 8 stipulates this process: “Men zal geen School-meesters / Hant-wercks liedê ofte andere die niet gestudeert en hebben / tot het Predick-ampt toelaten / ten sy datmen verzekert is / van hare singuliere gaven / Godtzaligheyt / ootmoedigheyt / zedicheyt / goet verstant ende discretie / mitsgaders gaven van welsprekentheyt. Soo wanneer dan soodanighe persoonen sich tot den dienst presenteren / zal de Classis de selve (indien’t de Synodus goet vint) eerst examineren / ende na datse de zelve int examê bevint / haer een tijd langh laten int prive proponeren / ende dan voorts met hem handelen / als sy oordeelen zal stichtelijck te wesen.” See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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 laren 1618 Ende 1619.” 5.

<sup>58</sup> See Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 30.

<sup>59</sup> Although they had no formal training, history shows that those of singular gifts admitted to the ministry did study afterwards. The rule was always to study, even if it meant to study after ordination. See Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg En Kerkregering*, 36,61; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 57; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 340,435.

<sup>60</sup> Article 9: “Nieuwelingen / Mis-priesters / Monicken / ende die andersins eenighe secten verlaten / zullen niet toeghelaten worden totten Kercken dienst / dan met groote sorghvuldigheyt eñ voorsichtigheyt / na datse oock eenen sekeren tijd eerst wel beproeft zijn.” See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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 laren 1618 Ende 1619.” 6; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 61; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 440.

‘career’, but about serving in the local body of Christ. Ministry “is no longer the place in which he can most successfully assert himself, but the place where he can best perform his service.”<sup>61</sup> Therefore a minister must be stationed in a specific place unless sent by the local congregation to preach elsewhere or gather scattered churches.<sup>62</sup> The Reformed fathers knew nothing of ministers that do not stand under the calling, supervision and support of the local congregation.<sup>63</sup>

Because the church is not one large society a minister is not free to preach in another congregation; ministry of the Word and sacraments can only take place on the authority of the local consistory. This is again a principal that indirectly has a confessional character: the Roman Catholic Church claimed that wherever the priests are, the Church is as well. A priest is first and foremost in service of the institution and then of the local congregation. Others claimed that every minister is a minister of the whole or the national church, but the Church Order of Dort emphasised the significant position of the local church and thereby showing that the church of Christ is both catholic and universal.

In the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* Antonius Walaeus also described the visible church as both local and universal.<sup>64</sup> The Church Order knows nothing then of ‘ministers-in-general-service, but only of service in the local congregation of Christ. No one is a minister of the Word that has not been called by a local congregation.<sup>65</sup> The calling and sending of ministers is a calling and sending to a particular place and a particular congregation. Article 10 articulates this:

*En Dienaer eens Wettelijcken beroepen zijnde / mach die Ghemeynte daer hy sonder Conditie aenghenomen is / niet verlaten / om elders een beroepinge aen te nemē / sonder bewillighingh des Kercken-Raeds met de Diaconen / ende de ghene die te voren in dienst eñ Ouderling-schap ende Diaken-schap gheweest zijn / mitsgaders die van de Magistraet / ende met voorweten vande Classe...*<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 72.

<sup>62</sup> Article 7: “Niemandt en sal tot dē Dienst des Woords beroepen worden / sonder hem in een seker plaetse te stellen / ten waer dat hy gesondē worde om hier oft daer te predicken inde Gemeente onder ’t Cruyce / ofte andersins om Kerckē te vergaderen.” 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.,” 5–6; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 51.

<sup>63</sup> De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 57; Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 39; Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: ’n Verklaring van Die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 34; Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, 430.

<sup>64</sup> See Walaeo, *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, 440; Walaeus, *Synopsis of Overzicht van de Zuiverste Theologie*, 2:92.

<sup>65</sup> Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On, 2005*, 20–21; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 72; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 42,53.

<sup>66</sup> Article 10: “a minister, once lawfully called, may not leave the congregation which unconditionally received him, to accept a call elsewhere, without the consent of the consistory and the deacons, and those who previously held the office of elder

A minister can also not wilfully, by own choice, leave a congregation and take up a call elsewhere; this decision lies with the consistory and deacons. De Gier, like Jansen and Bouwman asserts that “bewillighingh” is meant here more in the sense of decision and not consent.<sup>67</sup> The first and the last word belong to the consistory. The minister can therefore be forced to stay at his congregation if the consistory and deacons decide that Christ is not calling the minister to another congregation.<sup>68</sup> The Church Order of Dort in this way places the rule in the congregation not in the hands of one person; the aspirations of ministers do not rule the church, Christ rules through His Word and Spirit. Therefore in the same way a congregation could not simply dispose of a minister as this relationship is bilateral.<sup>69</sup>

The Church Order of Dort also makes it clear that major assemblies do not rule the church; they have no authority for placing, displacing or exchanging ministers in congregations. The minister is not in service of an institute of which the local congregation is a division or branch, but in service of Christ within the ambit of the local congregation. In this the church order indirectly guards against all forms of hierarchy that displaces or challenge Christ from His position as Head of His church.<sup>70</sup>

Because Christ rules His church Article 12 states that a minister called to a congregation was “bound to the service of the church for life.”<sup>71</sup> One could not simply decide to not be a minister anymore; as the election to office was not in the hands of the minister, but in the hands of Christ, which means that disposing of office was also in the hands of Christ. The Church Order of Dort guards against the rule of

and deacon together with the magistrate, nor without the knowledge of the classis...” See Hall and Hall, *Paradigms in Polity: Classic Readings in Reformed and Presbyterian Church Government*, 178; 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 laren 1618 Ende 1619.,” 6.

<sup>67</sup> De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 68; Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 48; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 446.

<sup>68</sup> This did indeed happen often. See Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 443.

<sup>69</sup> Article 11: “... ende sonder kennisse ende oordeel des Classis niet te verlaten / de welke oock by ghebreecke van onderhoudt / sal oordeelen of die voorschreven Dienaers te versetten zijn / ofte niet.” 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 laren 1618 Ende 1619.,” 6; Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 48.

<sup>70</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 458,482.

<sup>71</sup> Article 12: “...zijn leven langh aenden Kercken-dienst verbonden is soo sal hem niet geoorloft zijn hem tot een anderen staet des levens te begheven...” 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 laren 1618 Ende 1619.,” 6–7; Hall and Hall, *Paradigms in Polity: Classic Readings in Reformed and Presbyterian Church Government*, 178; Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 33; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 63.



ministers in the church, as ministry is not a profession, but service to Christ. Therefore the Church Order also does not allow for “part time” ministers, not because ministers are to ‘spiritual’ to work elsewhere, but rather it was understood that official ministry requires all the love, all the time, all the persistence and dedication.<sup>72</sup> Ministers are members of a body, not only when they choose to be, but in their whole existence.<sup>73</sup> When a person is called it is a call for a lifetime of service in the church of Christ and therefore the laying on of hands at ordination only happens ones and is not repeated.<sup>74</sup> The Church Order does therefore not stipulate an age for the retirement of ministers as Christ might bless a minister with good health and a long life in order to minister His Word. Even when ministers become incapable of performing ministry, they remain ministers of the Word as the relation to the church of Christ remains. This should not be understood in the sense that the office and person cannot be separated, it should rather be understood in such a way that the office is not bound to the person but to the service of Christ. In the person self there is nothing to admire.<sup>75</sup>

Article 17 further emphasises this serving function as it states that equality shall be maintained among the ministers of the Word. This is on the one side not only a confession in opposition to the hierarchy in the Roman Catholic Church, but also against malpractice in the Reformed churches concerning the duties of ministers. In this the Church Order wants to say that there can be no “head pastors” and also no pastors who because of popularity only preach and others only minister to the sick, elderly or youth. All in office should perform all duties that Christ mandates for that particular office and perform them equally.<sup>76</sup> The minister is not in service of people or a career, and also not under the authority of superintendants, moderators or commissions; but in service and under the authority and assignment of Christ.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> De Gier notes that ministers received very little financial support during the 17th century. See De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 81; Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 51; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 461.

<sup>73</sup> See Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 68.

<sup>74</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 411.

<sup>75</sup> Retired ministers are therefore called emeritus: their service is obsolete but their relation to Christ remains. See De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 81; Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 56; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 66; Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 85.

<sup>76</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 492–493.

<sup>77</sup> Article 17: “Onder de Dienaren des Woords sal ghelijckhey ghehouden worden / aengaende de Lasten hares Dienstes / mitsgaders oock in andere dinghen soo veel moghelijcken is / volgende het oordeel des Kerken-Raets / ende (dies van noode

Article 16 also indirectly portrays this confessional character of the Church Order:

*Der Dienaren Ampt is inde Ghebeden ende bedieninghe des Woords aen te houden / de Sacramenten uyt te reycken / op haer Mede-broeders / Ouderlinghen ende Diakenen / mitsgaders de Ghemeenten goede acht te nemen / ende ten laetsten met die Ouderlingen de Kerckelijcke Discipline te oeffenen / ende te besorghen dat alles eerlijck ende met order gheschiede.*<sup>78</sup>

As in most articles of the Church Order, the confessional character is not found in letter, but in spirit; it's not what the article says, but what it intends: that only Christ's Word should be heard in the church. The ministry proceeds from Christ and His Word and not from the church.<sup>79</sup> This is also portrayed in article 25 concerning the task of the office of deacons. Salvation by faith in Christ alone and not by works meant that the motivation for charity was now the love of Christ and not to gain salvation by the giving of alms. This is love that does not desire, but serves for Christ's sake alone.<sup>80</sup> It may be inferred that in the articles concerning the offices the Church Order of Dort articulates that ministry is about Christ, it is not a profession whereby one works for a salary or a career that may lead to a promotion. The work in the service of Christ cannot be paid, and therefore the Church Order also does not speak of wages or salaries, but simply states that the consistory should provide proper support for its ministers.<sup>81</sup> The consistory owes accountability to Christ and therefore provision should be made for the ministry of His Word.

zijnde) des Classis : het welcke oock in Ouderlinghen ende Diakenen te onderhouden is." See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), "Kercken-Orderinghe; 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), 7–8, [http://www.prdl.org/author\\_view.php?a\\_id=2355](http://www.prdl.org/author_view.php?a_id=2355); Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 42; Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van Die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 74; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 103.

<sup>78</sup> Article 16: "The office of minister is to continue in prayer and the ministry of the Word, to administer the sacraments, to watch over their colleagues, the elders and deacons, together with the whole congregation and finally to exercise church discipline with the elders and to see to it that everything is done decently and orderly." See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), "Kercken-Orderinghe; 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." 7; Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 70.

<sup>79</sup> See Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg En Kerkregering*, 99.

<sup>80</sup> Article 25: "Der Diakenen eygen Ampt is / de Aelmoessen ende ander Armen-goederen neerstelijck te versamelen / ende de selve ghetrouwelijcken en vlijtighlijck naer den eysch der behoefighen / beyde der Inghesetenen ende vreemden met ghemeyn advijs uyt te deelen / de benauden te besoecken ende te vertroosten / ende wel toe te sien dat de Aelmoessen niet misbruyckt en worden / waer van sy rekeninghe sullen doen inden Kercken-Raet / ende oock (soo yemandt daer by wil zijn) voor der Gemeenten / tot sulcken tijdt als het de Kercken-Raet goet vinden sal." See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), "Kercken-Orderinghe; 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." 9; Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, 567; Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 21.

<sup>81</sup> In practice support or 'onderhoudt' meant that a minister with children would receive more support than the same minister in the same congregation without children. The congregation was to provide sufficient support for the minister and his family. It wasn't a salary by which one received payment for service. Article 11 reads: "Op d'ander zijde sal den Kercken-Raet / als representerende die Ghemeynte / oock ghehouden zijn haere Dienaers van behoerlijcke onderhoudt te versorghen ..." See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), "Kercken-Orderinghe; Ghestelt In Den Nationalen Synode Der

Concerning the election of elders, Article 22 states that “dat het na de ghelegentheydt van een yeder Kercke vry sal zijn / soo veel Ouderlinghen alsser van noode zijn de Ghemeente voor te stellen.”<sup>82</sup> In this the ‘spirit’ of the Church Order of Dort echoes the following: it does not stipulate but rather provides liberty according to circumstances for the Word of God to rule in the church. Article 27 provides this same freedom by stipulating the service of elders and deacons to two years, and then adding: “ten ware dat de ghelegentheydt ende t’proffijt van eenighe Kercken anders vereyschte.”<sup>83</sup>

The circumstance and profit of the congregation is constantly in view in the Church Order of Dort. The office of the Doctors of theology has this same profit of the local congregation in view; the description of their task indirectly confess that the foundation, and even the fountain, of theology for the church of Christ is Scripture: “Het Ampt der Doctoren ofte Professoren inder Theologie is / de Heylighe Schriftuere uyt te legghen / ende de suyvere Leere teghen de Ketteryen ende doolinghen voor te staen.”<sup>84</sup> By inference it is clear that in the articles on the offices the Church Order of Dort confess that ministry in the congregation is not about schemes, programs or activism but revolves around the ministry of the Word. The ministry of the Word practiced through the offices should help and encouraged each believer to live under the Word at home, work and all spheres of life. Where the learning and living proceeds from the Word of God, where the congregation’s life is “life together under the Word,”<sup>85</sup> the rule of Christ in His church is acknowledged.<sup>86</sup>

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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.,” 6; Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: ’n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 48.

<sup>82</sup> Article 22: “every church shall be at liberty, according to its circumstances, to present the congregation with as many elders as are needed...” 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.,” 8; Hall and Hall, *Paradigms in Polity: Classic Readings in Reformed and Presbyterian Church Government*, 179.

<sup>83</sup> Article 27: “unless the circumstances and the profit of any church require otherwise.” 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.,” 10; Hall and Hall, *Paradigms in Polity: Classic Readings in Reformed and Presbyterian Church Government*, 179.

<sup>84</sup> Article 18: “The office of the Doctors of Theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures and to defend sound doctrine against heresies and errors.” 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.,” 8; Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 37.

<sup>85</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 7.

<sup>86</sup> Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 132; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 347.

Article 28 is the last article concerning the offices and portrays the circumstances and context the church found itself in; Article 28 was formulated by the Synod to stipulate the task of the government towards the church, and by way of comparison the church's relation towards the government:

*Ghelijck het Ampt der Christelijcke Overheden is / den H. Kercken-dienst in alle manieren te bevorderen / den selven met haer exempel den onderdanen te recommanderen / en den Predicanten / Ouderlingen en Diaconen in alle voorvallende noot de hant te biedê / ende by hare goede ordeningen te beschermen ; Alsoo zijn alle Predicantê / Ouderlinghen ende Diaconen schuldigh de gantsche Gemeente vlijtighlijck en oprechtighlijck in te scherpen de ghehoorsaemhey / liefde en eerbiedinghe die sy den Magistraten schuldigh zijn : ende zullen alle Kerckelijcke persoonen met haer goet exempel in desen de Ghemeente voor gaen / ende door behoerlijck respect en correspondentie / de gunst der Overheden tot de Kercken zoeken te verwecken ende te behouden : ten eynde een yeder het zijne in des Heerê vreese / aen wederzijden doende / alle achterdencken en wantrouwen moge werden voorgecomê / en goede eendracht tot der Kercken welstant onderhouden.<sup>87</sup>*

It is significant that that the Church Order speaks of the office (Ampt) of the Christian authorities. In this way it indirectly reminds the (Christian) government that it is also there in service and by the authority of Christ. Article 28 simply wants to say that both the government and church is in service of Christ, and therefore both owe accountability towards each other. By doing this the Church Order of Dort rejected both the Remonstrant idea that the government is above the church, and the Roman Catholic idea that the government is under the church.<sup>88</sup>

#### **2.4 Assemblies (t'Samencomsten): Articles 29-52**

With the term 'assemblies' the Church Order of Dort refers not to the assembly of the congregation under the ministry of the Word, but to that of the consistory, classes meetings and the particular- and national synod.<sup>89</sup> Britz indicates that the Church Order chooses the term "t'Samencomsten" instead of "meetings" on purpose. A meeting is something different than an assembly or gathering. A meeting is constituted by

<sup>87</sup> Article 28: "Since the office of Christian authorities is to promote church services in every way, to recommend the same to their subjects, to help ministers, elders and deacons in all existing need and to protect them by their good order, all ministers, elders, and deacons are duty bound diligently and sincerely to impress upon the whole congregation the obedience, love and respect they owe the magistrates. All ecclesiastical persons shall set a good example to the congregation in this, and by proper respect and correspondence seek to awaken and maintain the favour of the government, toward the churches to the end that each one on each side doing his duty in the fear of the Lord, all suspicion and distrust may be prevented and good unity be maintained for the welfare of the churches." See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), "Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.," 10.

<sup>88</sup> Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 130; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 147.

<sup>89</sup> The consistory is also referred to as a minor assembly while the classical meetings and the particular- and national synod are referred to as major assemblies.

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. But an assembly or gathering is constituted by the Word of God and therefore by Christ and his Spirit. At an assembly the Word of God has authority and is held in reverence, “there, and in that way, Christ rules.”<sup>90</sup> In this the Church Order of Dort indirectly confessed that in the Christian community God’s Word alone is binding, in contrast to a civil meeting where men bind others to themselves in terms of a legal-directed frame. In the assembly all power, honour and dominion belongs to Christ, in the civil meeting, spheres of power and influence of a personal nature are sought and cultivated.<sup>91</sup> Therefore it may be asserted that the point of departure for the Church Order concerning the articles on the assemblies is not ecclesiological, but as in the previous articles on the offices, Christological.<sup>92</sup> The Church Order of Dort makes it clear, by inference, that the ground and strength and purpose of assembling is in Christ alone, only in Jesus Christ are congregations one, only through him are they bound together.<sup>93</sup>

Article 30 portrays something of this distinctiveness as it speaks of dealing with ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner: The character and spirit of an ecclesiastical assembly is different as that of a civil meeting and therefore the manner of dealing with matters is different. The church is no association of members, but the body of Christ.<sup>94</sup> The reason for assembling is because all the congregations are one in Christ. Assemblies are not the unity of the church but serve the unity.<sup>95</sup> The Church Order of Dort’s approach is one wherein the relation between the congregations of Christ is not expressed in terms of a church governmental relationship, but embodied in and related to Christ.<sup>96</sup> It indirectly confesses that the relation between the churches means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ, not more or less than this, but only this. Congregations belong to one another only through

<sup>90</sup> My translation. See Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:64. “Daar, en op daardie wyse, regeer Christus.”

<sup>91</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 19.

<sup>92</sup> Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg En Kerkregering*, 149.

<sup>93</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 12,18.

<sup>94</sup> Article 30: “In dese t’samen-comstê sullen geen ander dan Kerckelijcke saecken / ende t’selfde op Kerckelijcke wijze gehandelt worden...” See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.,” 10–11; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg En Kerkregering*, 156; Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:32.

<sup>95</sup> Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 134; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 153.

<sup>96</sup> Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:64.

and in Jesus Christ.<sup>97</sup> The Church Order of Dort may then be described as “a set of ordinances for maintaining the body of the church, in the unity of true faith, and under the bond of peace.”<sup>98</sup>

The Synod of Dort 1618/19 confirmed in the Church Order the need for assembling against the practice of the Roman Catholic Church. Rome saw the church as an institute of salvation through which Christ gave grace to the world. The visible church was the mystical link for humans to have communion with God. Where the pope, and the bishops and priests whom he appointed were, there was the church. Against this practice the Synod confessed that the members of the body of Christ were of essence for the church of Christ. Because Christ is Head of His body, the body should assemble.<sup>99</sup> Because Christ is the relation uniting the congregations, the Church Order of Dort was meant to be a guideline for the benefit of the service of the Word in the local congregation. Everything revolves around the building up of a living, active, confessional congregation with the worship service as centre.<sup>100</sup>

These articles on the assemblies confess, by inference that the goal of assembling was to truly “meet one another as bringers of the message of salvation.”<sup>101</sup> The character of assemblies is also portrayed in Article 32 which states that the assembly should begin with the calling on of God’s name and closed with thanksgiving. In this the Church Order wants to imprint this spiritual character, indirectly showing that the assemblies are held in the presence of God and ruled by Christ.<sup>102</sup> Because of this spiritual character, the Church Order of Dort makes it clear that no congregation can be forced by government or by other congregations to assemble, but it is in a congregation’s interest to assemble with other congregations as it helps the congregation to truly remain free and complete church of Christ.<sup>103</sup> When congregations assemble no new church originates out of this. The different local congregations are

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<sup>97</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 10.

<sup>98</sup> Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 11.

<sup>99</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:6–7.

<sup>100</sup> Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*, 12.

<sup>101</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 12.

<sup>102</sup> Article 32: “De handelighen aller t’samen-comsten sullen met aenroepinghe des Naems Gods aenghevenghen / ende met een dancksegginghe besloten worden.” See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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), 11, [http://www.prdl.org/author\\_view.php?a\\_id=2355](http://www.prdl.org/author_view.php?a_id=2355); Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: ’n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 134.

<sup>103</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:10,12.

not dissolved into one church.<sup>104</sup> This relation allowed the French speaking Walloon churches to convene in their own consistories, classes meetings and particular synods. But as for the national synod, both the Dutch and Walloon churches would attend and Article 52 of the Church Order stipulates that in cities with Walloon churches, Dutch and Walloon ministers and elders should gather every month to promote good unity.<sup>105</sup> It may be derived that these regulations make it clear that the congregations convene freely in major assemblies in order that they may continue to be free and faithful churches of Christ.<sup>106</sup>

To ensure that this unity as embodied in the major assemblies does not become a hierarchy and the congregation does not become a subdivision of synods ruling the church, the Church Order stipulates the task of major assemblies: “In meerder vergaderinge salmen niet handelen / dan ’tgeen dat in mindere niet en heeft af-gehandelt connen werden / ofte dat tot de Kercken der meerder vergaderinge int gemeyn behoort.”<sup>107</sup> The freedom and autonomy of the local congregation is continually maintained. The major assemblies are not called together or instituted to dominate, but rather to persuade as the assembly has 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.<sup>108</sup> For this reason the Church Order of Dort knows no permanent assembly except for the consistory. This was not only a confession against the hierarchy in the Roman Catholic Church, but it was primary aimed against the theology of the Remonstrants that did not want assemblies that could make binding decisions, but rather believed that the government should have this authority over the church.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 2:14.

<sup>105</sup> See article 50-52. Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.,” 15–16.

<sup>106</sup> Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 11.

<sup>107</sup> Article 30: “In major assemblies only that shall be dealt with that could not be finished in the minor, or that which concern the churches of the major assembly in common.” See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.,” 10–11.

<sup>108</sup> See Ibid., 12; De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 168,199; Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 51; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 120.

<sup>109</sup> See Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:10.

In terms of the binding nature of church's decisions the Church Order of Dort confesses in Article 31 that the boundary of any church authority and decisions is the Word of God.<sup>110</sup> The final word does not lie with the synod, the synod is not sovereign, it is not *Roma locuta, causa finite est*; rather these decisions should constantly be subjected to the control of the Scriptures.<sup>111</sup> This article suggest that if someone is not convinced that a decision is in accordance with the Word of God, even after an appeal to a major assembly, the whole matter is thereby finished and no one forced to moral constraint.<sup>112</sup> A decision has no authority if it is contrary to the Word of God.<sup>113</sup> Van der Linde disagrees with Van Rongen on the interpretation of this article, arguing that that the decision made by the major assembly on the appeal is also binding even if the complainant deems it in conflict with the Word of God.<sup>114</sup> Concurring with Van Rongen and Spoelstra on this matter, an appeal is not a dispute between two parties where the major assembly is sovereign to rule on a matter; Scripture has the only authority and therefore a decision deemed contrary to God's Word cannot bind one's conscience. Article 31 sets out a principle and not a procedure, otherwise the majority would rule the church and force others to conform, and not Christ ruling through His Word.<sup>115</sup> Although the interpretation of this article is disputed, it does make it clear that although major assemblies' decisions have binding authority, it is always limited as it stays subject to the Word of God, here again it may be inferred: The Lord Jesus Christ governs His church directly and actually through His Word.<sup>116</sup> Antonius Thysius also placed emphasis on this, arguing that Christ is truly the only authority, nobody can take His place: "Est ergo Christus unicum et solitarium, immediatum et aeternum Caput, Sponsus et Maritus, Paterfamilias, Pater, Herus en Dominus, Pastor, Rex, Monarcha,

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<sup>110</sup> Article 31: "Soo yemant hem beclaeght deur de uytpraeccke der minder Vergaderinghe veronghelijck te zijne / die selve sal hem tot een meerder Kerckelijcke vergaderinghe beroepen moghen : ende 'tghene door de meeste stemmen goet ghevonden is / sal voor vast ende bondigh ghehouden werden. Ten sy dattet bewesen worde te strijden teghen het Woort Gods / ofte teghen de Artijkulen in desen Generalen Synodo besloten / soo langhe als de selve door geen ander Generale Synode verandert zijn." 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.," 11.

<sup>111</sup> Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*, 26; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 157.

<sup>112</sup> Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 53.

<sup>113</sup> Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*, 9.

<sup>114</sup> Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van Die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 130–131; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 126.

<sup>115</sup> Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 53; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 179; Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:57.

<sup>116</sup> See De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 173; Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 53.



atque fundamentum Ecclesiae Dei, Deique vicarius.”<sup>117</sup> The last part of this article limits the authority of the major assemblies to the Church Order and in this way it indirectly indicates that the Church Order has a serving function: in service of the Headship of Christ.<sup>118</sup> Article 31 in no way wants to minimise the authority of the synod, but rather acknowledges it to be binding. In the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, Antonius Thysius makes this clear, arguing that the institute of the synod rest not on human right, but on godly right. Therefore the synod’s decisions are binding and have authority:

*Atque in Synodo, idque suo ordine et gradu, est auctoritatis et potestatis Ecclesiasticae eminentia et apex; totius Ecclesiae Dei, qua externa est, unitas, status et ordinis firmamentum ac vinculum, atque infestantibus malis, salutare remedium.*<sup>119</sup>

Article 46 also confesses this as matters that were finished by preceding assemblies may not be proposed again unless judged necessary because church polity is about Christ’s Word which does not change but is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. This also implies that major assemblies are only temporary gatherings of congregations and therefore a following assembly cannot explain or motivate a previous decision as if the assembly is a continuation of the previous meeting. A decision can only be changed or diminished.<sup>120</sup>

It may seem unnecessary that Article 32 stipulates that “De handelighen aller t’samen-comsten sullen met aenroepinghe des Naems Gods aengevanghen / ende met een dancksegginghe besloten worden.”<sup>121</sup> But this is significant as Article 32 does not stipulate that the assemblies should proceed with the reading of the Word of God. The Church Order of Dort deemed the reading of Scripture not necessary because an assembly does not convene to edify or celebrate the Lord’s Supper, but to govern. The preaching of the Word and celebration of the Lord’s Supper belongs only in the local congregation.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>117</sup> Thysius, *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, 448.

<sup>118</sup> Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 166.

<sup>119</sup> Thysius, *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, 592–593; Thysius, *Synopsis of Overzicht van de Zuiverste Theologie*, 1968, 2:274; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:49.

<sup>120</sup> Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: ’n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 167; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 183.

<sup>121</sup> Article 32: “The proceedings of all assemblies shall begin with calling on God’s name and be closed with thanksgiving.” 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 laren 1618 Ende 1619.” 11.

<sup>122</sup> See Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 154; Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: ’n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 134; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 178; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 128; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:97.

Because the major assemblies have no authority of their own, delegates need credential letters and instructions to have any authority at major assemblies. These letters and instructions are those of the consistory and not the government; again an indirect confession that Christ rules his church and not the classes, synod or government.<sup>123</sup>

It is not the government that visits the churches in order to discern whether the ministers, consistories and schoolmaster faithfully fulfil their offices, but rather this is the task of the classes. This ‘investigation’ by the classes is not administrative or statistical or even to inquire about the finances or condition of the church buildings, it is rather about discerning the purity of doctrine in the congregation. Because the congregations relate to each other in and through their confession of Christ, this is of importance and not optional.<sup>124</sup> And to ensure that no congregation rules over another, each congregation is only allowed to send one elder and one minister to the classes meetings and in places where there is more than one minister all will be allowed to attend, but then only receive one vote in particular matters.<sup>125</sup> It may then be inferred that the Church Order makes it clear that all congregations are equal because they only acknowledge Christ as Head, assemble through the working of His Spirit and views everything directly dependant on Christ and bound to His Word.<sup>126</sup>

The Church Order of Dort furthermore carefully protects the church against all forms of hierarchy as it knows nothing of a permanent praeses, president or moderator: “voort sal zijn Ampt uytgaen / wanneer die t’samen-comste scheydet.”<sup>127</sup> The position of praeses is only a temporary function for the duration of the assembly and has no remaining churchly dignity, *ipso facto*, as all major assemblies are

<sup>123</sup> See article 33: “Die tot de t’samen-comste af-ghesonden worden / sullen hare Credentz-brieven ende instructien / onderteekent zijnde vanden ghenen diese senden mede-bringhen / ende dese zullen alleene keur-stemmen hebben.” Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.,” 11.

<sup>124</sup> See article 44. Ibid., 14; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:166.

<sup>125</sup> Article 41: “...de welcke elck eenê Dienaer eñ eenen Ouderlingh ter plaetse eñ tijde by hen...” Article 42: “Daer in een plaetse meer Predicanten zijn als een / zullen die altesamen in de Classe moghen verschijnen eñ keur-stemmen hebben / ten ware in saken / die hare persoonen ofte Kercken int bysonder aengaen.” See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.

<sup>126</sup> See Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:15.

<sup>127</sup> Article 35: “his office shall cease when the assembly adjourns.” See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.,” 11–12.

only temporary; only the consistory being a permanent assembly. The office is bound to the assembly and not to the person.<sup>128</sup> Also when deputies are appointed to effect what a synod has decided they do not form a deputation or commission but rather are designated as individual persons and therefore they have no ecclesiastical authority. Deputies do not form a commission, but receive a commission.<sup>129</sup> The Church Order of Dort so carefully guards against the rule of people in the church that Article 37 even stipulates that in congregations where there is more than one minister, the ministers should preside in turn,<sup>130</sup> and in Article 41 that in the classes meetings the same person may not preside twice in succession.<sup>131</sup> Also in places where as yet there is no consistory, the Church Order stipulates that the classes should in the meantime do what the consistory is charged to do.<sup>132</sup> This is stipulated as the Synod deemed it not safe that everything should be decided by one minister.<sup>133</sup> The Church Order ensures that those in office do not become ‘church leaders’ but remain servants of Christ. Therefore the Church Order also stipulates that the same amount of elders and ministers should be delegated to the major assemblies.<sup>134</sup> When at first no article about this existed, there were far more ministers than elders at the synods and ‘dominocracy’ threatened the church.<sup>135</sup>

<sup>128</sup> See De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 192; Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 164; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 134; Bouwman, *Gereformerd Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:90.

<sup>129</sup> Article 49: “Yeder Synodus sal oock eenighe deputeren / om alles wat de Synodus geordonneert heeft / te verrichten / soo wel byde Hooge Overheyt / als by de respectieve Classen / onder haer sorterende / mede om t’samen oft in minder ghetal over alle examina der aencomender Predicanten te staê : ende voorts in alle andere voorvallende swarigheden dê Classen de hant te bieden / op dat goede eenigheyt / ordre ende suyverheyt der leere behouden ende gestabilieert worden. Eñ zullen dese van alle hare handelinghen / goede notitie houden / om den Synodo rapport daer van te doen / ende soo’t geeycht werdt / redenen te geven. Oock en zullen sy niet ontslagen wesen van harê dienst / voor eñ aleer de Synodus selfs haer daer van ontslaet.” 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.” (Jansz, 1620), 15, [http://www.prdl.org/author\\_view.php?a\\_id=2355](http://www.prdl.org/author_view.php?a_id=2355); Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 251–252; Bouwman, *Gereformerd Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:214,217,221.

<sup>130</sup> Article 37: “...al-waer den Dienaer des Woords (ofte Dienaren / soo daer meer zijn) by ghebeurte presiderê ende die Actie regeren sal.” 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,” 12.

<sup>131</sup> Article 41: “so nochtans dat d’selve tweemaal aen een niet en sal moghen vercoren worden.” See *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>132</sup> Article 39: “In die plaetsen daer noch geen Kercken-raet en is / sal middelertijdt by de Classe ghedaen worden ‘tghene anders den Kercken-Raedt nae uyt-wijzen dezer Kercken-ordeninghe opgeheylet is te doen.” See *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>133</sup> See De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 209.

<sup>134</sup> 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.

<sup>135</sup> De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 251.

It should be noted that throughout the articles on the assemblies it is clear that in the church there is only one authority, Jesus Christ, and that His authority is the same throughout. This is also seen in article 36: “t’Selfde segghen heeft de Classis over den Kercken-Raet / ’twelck de particuliere Synode heeft over de Classe / ende de Generale Synode over de particuliere.”<sup>136</sup> The Christological character of the Church Order echoes, as one assembly has a say over the other (segghen) and not authority, because there is only One authority throughout all assemblies.<sup>137</sup> The Church Order wants to ensure that all assemblies strive to maintain the Kingship of Christ.<sup>138</sup> The purpose for assembling is not primarily church unity, but purity in doctrine.<sup>139</sup> Articles 37 and 38 therefore does not speak church centrically about ‘establishment’ or ‘succession’ of churches; the main question throughout is how the rule of Christ shall be ministered in a particular place and therefore the consistory precedes the church: “Wel-verstaende dat inde plaetsen daer den Kercken-Raet vā nieuw is op te rechten / ’tselfde niet en geschiede / dā met advijs vande Classe. Ende daer ‘tghetal vandē Ouderlinghē seer cleyn is / sullē de Diakenē mede tot den Kercken-Raet mogen ghenomen worden.”<sup>140</sup> Where there is no consistory, there is no church. It is Christ’s ordination for Christ’s church that there should be discipline, ministry of the Word, sacraments and discipline which cannot take place without offices.<sup>141</sup> Therefore “It is not simply to be taken for granted that the Christian has the privilege of living among other Christians...It is by the grace of God that a congregation is permitted to gather visibly in this world to share God’s Word and sacrament.”<sup>142</sup> Christ is the source that creates the communion through the offices that He has instituted for this purpose. Here again the theology of the Synod echoes in the Church Order, making it clear that “the community of

<sup>136</sup> Article 36: “The classis has the same authority over the consistory that the particular synod has over the classis, and the general synod over the particular.” See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.,” 12.

<sup>137</sup> Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 194–195.

<sup>138</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:66.

<sup>139</sup> Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On, 2005*, 64; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg En Kerkregering*, 149,254.

<sup>140</sup> Article 38: “It is understood that in places where the consistory is to be newly established, the same cannot take place except with the advice of the classis. Where the number of elder is very small, the deacons shall be included in the consistory.” See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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), 12, [http://www.prdl.org/author\\_view.php?a\\_id=2355](http://www.prdl.org/author_view.php?a_id=2355); Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 205.

<sup>141</sup> Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 138; Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:100.

<sup>142</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 7,8.

Christians springs solely from the biblical and Reformation message of the justification of man through grace alone; this alone is the basis of the longing of Christians for one another.”<sup>143</sup>

Article 48 furthermore takes precautions against any haughtiness or provincial pride in major assemblies, stipulating that “Het sal yeghelijcken Synodo vry staen / correspondentie te soecken ende te houden met zijnen Bena-buerden Synodo ofte Synodis / in suelker forme / als sy meest profijjtigh achten zullen / voor de ghemeene stichtinghe.”<sup>144</sup> Under Oldebarnevelt provincialism were strongly driven as he wanted to centralise authority, also on ecclesiastical terrain, in order to prevent a national synod.<sup>145</sup>

Article 48 ensures that such sentiments shall not be present as the common edification of the congregations is in view. It may then be inferred that the church order wants to ensure that the congregations’ community does not rest on national sentiments, but solely on what Christ has done.

## 2.5 Summary

At the end of our in-depth exposition it may be concluded that the articles on the offices portray a Christological distinctiveness by directly acknowledging that all offices are in service of Christ and under His authority. The Church Order of Dort depicts the major assemblies to be of benefit for life within the congregations, since the congregations have supervision over each other, and in that way are kept alive as faithful churches of Christ.

In the next chapter the focus shifts from the offices and assemblies, to the articles on the doctrine, sacraments, ceremonies and discipline.

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>144</sup> Article 48: “Each synod shall be free to request and to continue correspondence with its neighbouring synod or synods in such form as it shall judge most profitable for common edification.” 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.,” 15.

<sup>145</sup> See Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 178–179.

## **CHAPTER 3: THE CHRISTOLOGICAL DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE CHURCH ORDER OF DORT (1618/19) PERTAINING TO THE ARTICLES ON THE DOCTRINE, SACRAMENTS, CEREMONIES AND DISCIPLINE**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter the Christological distinctiveness of the Church Order of Dort will again be analysed, but as it pertains to the articles on the doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies (Opsicht der Leere / Sacramenten ende Ceremonien) and Christian discipline (Christelijcke strafe). The division which the Belgic Confession of faith makes is again the reason for this demarcation, as mentioned in the introduction. The analysis of Article 1 of the Church Order of Dort made in the previous chapter should also be taken as a prelude to this chapter.

### **3.2 Doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies (Opsicht der Leere / Sacramenten ende Ceremonien): Articles 53-70**

The Church Order of Dort does not begin with a confessional statement that stipulates what the church as ‘institution’ is and what it believes. There is also no article in the entire Church Order that has this function; Article 53 simply states: “De Dienaers des Woords Gods / Item die Professorê inde Theologie (‘twelck oock den anderen Professoren wel betaemt) zullen de Belijdenissen des Geloofs der Nederlantscher Kercken onderteecken...”<sup>1</sup> For the Church Order of Dort the confessions are a *conditio sine qua non*.<sup>2</sup> This regulation on the signing of the confessions is intended to ensure that the churches continue to conform to the Word of God, and remain faithful churches of Christ. For the Church Order of Dort subscription of the confession is thus one of the elements necessary for good order in the church, not the only element. Therefore, it does not disclose itself by starting with a stipulation of the confessional standards that the church subscribes. It is clear that every stipulation of the Church Order in and by itself

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<sup>1</sup> Article 53: “the ministers of the Word and likewise the professors in theology shall subscribe to the confession of faith of the Netherland churches.” De Gier notes that article 53 does not stipulate that the catechism and Canons of Dort should be subscribed, but the form of subscription formulated at Dort does require this. See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.,” 17; De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 259; Hall and Hall, *Paradigms in Polity: Classic Readings in Reformed and Presbyterian Church Government*, 182.

<sup>2</sup> See Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 194.

testify of the confession that Christ alone is Lord of the church. Even though the confessional documents are made mandatory by the Church Order, they do not in themselves form the foundation of the Church Order, but also rest on the Word of God, Christ Himself. Only in Jesus Christ the church is one and only through Him bound together.<sup>3</sup> Rutgers observes that this fundamental principle of the Headship of Christ is the result and application of Dort's systematic theology.<sup>4</sup> The departure point for the Church Order is not ecclesiastical, it does not stipulate the identity, believes and mission of the church as institution, but proceeds from Christ. By subscribing to the confessions those serving in office are again reminded that they are only servants of Christ for the wellbeing of His church.<sup>5</sup>

As in the article on the doctrine, it may be extrapolated that the articles on the sacraments make it clear that the church is not a random gathering of people, but a congregation that lives in Christ and therefore partakes in all His promises.<sup>6</sup> Concerning baptism this Christological character is evident:

*Het verbondt Gods sal aen den kinderen der Christenen met den Doop / soo haest als men die bedieninghe des selven hebben can / bezegelt worden / ende dat inde openbare versamelinghe / wanneer Gods Woordt ghepredickt wort. Doch ter plaetsen daer niet soo veel Predicatie ghedaen worden / salmen eenen sekeren dagh ter weke verordenen / om den Doop extraordinaerlijck te bedienen / so nochtans dat 'tselve sonder Predicatie niet en gheschiede.<sup>7</sup>*

In decisive matters like baptism, the Word of God is given the freedom to rule in the congregations. It is significant that the Church Order states that the children of Christians should be baptised and not that the children of members of the church should be baptised; in this it points to the relation of baptism with Christ rather than with the church.<sup>8</sup> Christ instituted this sacrament and therefore it should be administered.<sup>9</sup>

Because Christ rules His church the sacraments may only be administered by those that He has mandated to that task through the local congregation's consistory, those being the ministers of the Word.

<sup>3</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 12.

<sup>4</sup> Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 195.

<sup>5</sup> Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*, 21; Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 180.

<sup>6</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:268.

<sup>7</sup> Article 56: "God's covenant shall be sealed for the children of Christians by baptism as soon as its administration can take place, and that in a public meeting when God's word is preached. But in places where few preaching services are held a certain day of the week shall be set aside to administer baptism extraordinarily. Nevertheless, this shall not take place without a sermon being preached." 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.," 17.

<sup>8</sup> Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 273.

<sup>9</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:234.

The lawfulness of baptism was not so much dependant on the person that administered it, but on the institution of Christ.<sup>10</sup> Therefore a baptism by an elder, deacon or even a doctor of theology that has not been called as a minister of the Word was seen as illegitimate, but the baptism administered by the priests or bishops of the Roman Catholic Church was accepted as lawful.<sup>11</sup> Article 56 is then also meant to be a guideline for the benefit of the service of the Word in the local congregation as the administering of baptism should take place in “a public meeting when God’s Word is preached.”<sup>12</sup> The ministry of the Word precedes the ministry of baptism. This is furthermore evident in the formulation of Article 57 concerning the presentation of the child for baptism. The Roman Catholic view did not permit the parents to present their child for baptism as they were the reason that the child was born in sin and therefore two witnesses should present the child whereby the child is baptised on the ground of their faith. Against this practice, Article 57 exhorts ministers to do their best and strive to the end that the father presents his child for baptism.<sup>13</sup> It is here about the covenantal sacrament that is brought in relation with the Word. Those presenting the child for baptism should be instructed about what the Scriptures teach in this regard, before the child may be baptised. This is the task of the minister of the Word and not the elder.<sup>14</sup>

The Church Order further stipulates that the ministers of the Word should use the forms of the institution and administration of baptism. By doing so, the Church Order relates the sacrament to the ministry of the Word. It is not the church that should use the form of administration, but the minister, because the ministry of the Word precedes the church and the minister is in service of Christ to administer the sacraments.<sup>15</sup> The form of administration furthermore ensures that baptism is no private matter

<sup>10</sup> De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 271; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:320.

<sup>11</sup> See Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 216.

<sup>12</sup> Article 56: “ende dat inde openbare versamelinghe / wanneer Gods Woordt ghepredickt wort.” 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.” 17.

<sup>13</sup> Article 57: “De Dienaers sullen haer beste doen ende daer toe arbeyden / dat de Vader zijn kint ten Doop presentere. Ende inde Ghemeenten daermen neffens den Vader oock ghevaders ofte ghetuygen by den Doop neemt (welcke ghebruyck / in hem selven vry zijnde / niet lichtelijck te veranderen en is) betaemt het datmen neme die de suyvere Leere toegedaen ende vroom van wandel zijn.” See *Ibid.*, 17–18; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 280–281.

<sup>14</sup> Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: ’n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 198.

<sup>15</sup> Article 58: “De Dienaers zullen int doopen soo den jonger kinderen als der bejaerder persoonen / die formulieren vande instellinghe ende ghebruyck des Doops / welck tot dien eynde onderscheydentlijck beschreven zijn / ghebruycken.” See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Kercken-Ordeninghe; Ghestelt In Den Nationalen Synode Der Ghereformeerde Kercken, Te



between the minister and the parents but stand under supervision of the church.<sup>16</sup> By using the form it is made clear that it truly is Christ through His Word that administers the sacrament.<sup>17</sup> In this way the Church Order of Dort not only advocates for pure doctrine, but also exhorts that the congregation be instructed in the practice of this and in this way maintains that congregational life is life together under the Word. This application is also evident from Article 59 that states that people that have been baptised as adults are duty bound to partake in the Lord's Supper. The table fellowship of Christians implies obligation. It is a communal meal that firmly bounds believers to one another.<sup>18</sup> The Church Order advocates that the sacraments should not be empty ceremonies or symbols, but testify of a living faith in doctrine and practice.

In Article 62 on the manner of celebrating the Lord's Supper the Church Order of Dort again provides only broad principles and even states that "een yerder Kercke sal sulcke maniere van bedieninghe des Avontmaels houden / als sy oordeelt tot de meeste stichtinghe te dienen."<sup>19</sup> The Church Order leaves much to the freedom of the churches that is deemed not to be principle matters, like the number of times a person should be sprinkled at baptism or if the Lord's Supper should be received sitting or standing or the amount of elders that should accompany a minister on house visits.<sup>20</sup> Where the manner of celebrating the Lord's Supper may not have been a principle matter for the Church Order of Dort, the matter of who is allowed to partake in the Lord's Supper was, as article 61 states:

*Men sal niemant ten Avontmael des Heeren toelaten / dan die na der ghewoonheydt der Kercken / tot de welck hy hem voeght / belijdenisse der Ghereformeerde Religie gedaen heeft / mitsgaders hebende*

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Samen Beroepen, Ende Ghehouden Door Ordre van de Hooghe Moghende Heeren Staten Generael Der Vereenichde Nederlanden, Binnen Dordrecht, in de laren 1618 Ende 1619.," 18; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 284.

<sup>16</sup> Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 237.

<sup>17</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:407.

<sup>18</sup> Article 18: "De bejaerde worden door den Doop der Christelicke Gemeente inghelijft / ende voor Lidtmaten der ghemeente aenghenomen / ende zijn daerom schuldich het Avontmael des Heeren oock te ghebruycken / t'welck sy by haren Doop sullen beloven te doen." See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), "Kercken-Orderinghe; 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 laren 1618 Ende 1619.," 18; Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 51.

<sup>19</sup> Article 62: "each church shall administer the Lord's Supper in such a manner as it judges best contributes to edification..." See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), "Kercken-Orderinghe; 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 laren 1618 Ende 1619.," 18–19.

<sup>20</sup> De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 303,304; Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 267.

*ghetuyghenisse eens vromen wandels / sonder welcke oock de ghene die uyt andere Kercken comen / niet zullen toegelaten worden.*<sup>21</sup>

The Church Order makes it clear that the Lord's Supper is not free for everyone to participate in, this is in contrast to what the Remonstrants were teaching; that participation should be left to everyone's own conscience.<sup>22</sup> The Church Order stipulates that only those who have made a public confession of faith and whose life testifies of a godly walk shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper, as the sacrament doesn't provide faith, but strengthen faith that is already present. Because Christ rules His church the participation in the Lord's Supper is not a personal decision; the responsibility lies with the consistory and indeed, with the whole congregation. This is clearly indicated by this article as "na der ghewoonheydt der Kercken" means that the governing in this matter is not in the hands of the minister, but in the hands of the consistory.<sup>23</sup> Like baptism, the Lord's Supper as sacrament is intended for the local congregation to be celebrated in public worship; for the Church Order of Dort the sacraments is not meant for individual or even ecumenical celebration at home or at assemblies and conferences, the Word precedes the sacraments. The purpose of an assembly was not for edification or ministry of the Word.<sup>24</sup> Supervision regarding admission to the Lord's Supper belongs to Article 29 of the Belgic Confession of faith's second and third marks of the true church, being the pure administration of the sacraments as Christ instituted them and the exercising of church discipline.<sup>25</sup>

Whereas the Roman Catholic Church ascribed much significance to the church's festivals; De Gier and Jansen note that the Reformed churches distinguished significantly between the celebration of

<sup>21</sup> Article 61: "Only those shall be admitted to the Lord's Supper who, according to the usage of the churches which they join, have made confession of the Reformed religion, together with having testimony of a godly walk, without which also those who come from other churches shall not be admitted." See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), "Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.," 18.

<sup>22</sup> Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 268; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 251–252.

<sup>23</sup> Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 252.

<sup>24</sup> See Article 62: "Een yerder Kercke sal sulcke maniere van bedieninghe des Avontmaels houden / als sy oordeelt tot de meeste stichtinghe te dienen. Welverstaende nochtans dat de uytwendighe Ceremonien in Gods Woord voor-geschreven / niet verandert / ende alle supersitie vermijdet werde / ende dat nae voleyndinghe der Predicatie ende der gemeyne Gebeden op den Predick-stoel / het formulaer des Avontmaels / mitsgaders het Gebedt daer toe dienende / voor de Tafel sal wordê gelesen." See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), "Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.," 18–19; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 297,301.

<sup>25</sup> See Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 77.

the Sunday and the church's festivals. The Reformed church at first pleaded with the government to abolish all festivals except for Sunday, as reaction against the Roman Catholic practice which created all sorts of 'holy days' that filled almost the whole calendar year. But under pressure from the government the Synod of Dordt (1618/19) made provision for Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. Antonius Thysius summarises and defends the accommodation of these days in the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*:

*Attamen dum hebentur pro humanitus institutis, et abest divini cultus opinio, omnisque superstitio, necessitate eorum libertas Christiana non premitur, multitudine Ecclesia non oneratur, sed ad ordinem usumque illustrem Ecclesiae tenentur...*<sup>26</sup>

To ensure that these days do not become extravagant and indecent the Church Order suggested that the Lord's Supper should be celebrated on these festivals where the circumstances allowed it.<sup>27</sup> For the Church Order of Dort the celebration of the Lord's Day was of the highest importance as this was instituted by Christ, but the festivals were instituted by the church. To commemorate the redemption history was not the problem for the reformers, but then it should take place on the Sunday and not be limited to only certain 'holy' days.<sup>28</sup> The redemption history found its place in the preaching of the Catechism on Sunday afternoons which was opposed by the Remonstrants and therefore this article was strictly formulated as it leaves no room to avoid this responsibility:<sup>29</sup>

*De Dienaers sullen alomme des Sondaeghs ordinaerlick inde namiddaeghsche Predicatie / de Somma der Christelijcke Leer inden Catechismo / die teghenwoordigh in de Nederlandsche Kercken*

<sup>26</sup> The Dutch translation reads: "Maar toch wanneer ze voor menselijk ingestelde gehouden worden, en de bedoeling van goddelijke verering afwezig is, en alle bijgelovigheid, de Christelijke vrijheid niet door hun menigte niet belast wordt, maar zij voor de goede order en het verheven gebruik der Kerk gehouden worden, - dan menen wij dat ze nuttig gebruikt kunnen worden..." See Thysius, *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, 202; Antonius Thysius, *Synopsis of Overzicht van de Zuiverste Theologie*, trans. D Van Dijk, vol. 1 (J. Boersma Enschede, 1964), 193.

<sup>27</sup> Article 63: "Het Avontmael des Heeren sal ten twee Maenden eens / soo veel het mogelijk is / ghehouden werden : ende sal stichtelijck zijn daer het de gelegentheyt der Kercken lijden can / dat op den Paesdagh / Pincxterdagh ende Christ-dagh hetselve gheschiede. Doch ter plaetsen daer noch gheen Kerckelijcke ordre en is / salmen eerst Ouderlinghen ende Diakenen by provisie stellen." See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), "Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.," 19; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 269; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:482-487.

<sup>28</sup> De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 327-328; Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 285-286; Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 83; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 320; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 268,279,280. De Gier notes that John Calvin preached his normal *lectio continua* out of Deuteronomy on 25 December 1555, while preaching the Christmas message the previous Sunday.

<sup>29</sup> Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 291.

*aenghenomen is / vervatet / cortelijck uytlegghen / alsoo dat de selve jaerlijcx magh gheeyndight worden / volghende de af-deelinghe des Catechismi selfs daer op gemaect.*<sup>30</sup>

The Synod of Dort wanted to ensure that there should be exposition in preaching of the Catechism ones every Sunday, even if this would mean that the minister then only preached before his own family.<sup>31</sup> This was also done to clearly indicate that the Reformed church was a confessing church and Christians should know and live by the Confessions.<sup>32</sup> Article 69 on the hymns allowed in the churches is formulated in this strict way.<sup>33</sup> The Synod of Dort had no objection to other spiritual hymns outside of the worship service, but in the worship service the Synod held the principle of Sola Scriptura.<sup>34</sup> The strictness of this article is not about the hymns as much then, but about the doctrine in them. It is about living entirely by God's Word. The Church Order in a way wanted to point to the Word in the singing; that in singing it was possible for Christians to speak and pray the same Word at the same time, they sing because they can unite in the Word. All devotion, all attention should then be concentrated upon the Word in the hymn. "The music is completely the servant of the Word. It elucidates the Word in its mystery."<sup>35</sup>

### 3.3 Discipline (Christelijke straffe): Articles 71-86

It is significant that the Christian discipline is not brought in relation with the church by the Church Order of Dort, but with Christ. Article 71 and -72 is only the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> mentioning of Christ in the Church Order since Article 1. This is to make it clear that "the discipline proceeds from Christ, with the aim on

<sup>30</sup> Article 68: "Ministers shall on each Lord's Day, ordinarily in the afternoon sermons, briefly explain the sum of Christian doctrine contained in the catechism which at present is accepted in the Netherlands Churches in such a way that it may be completed annually, following the division of the catechism made for that purpose." Synod of Dordt (1618/19), "Kercken-Orderinghe; 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 laren 1618 Ende 1619.," 68.

<sup>31</sup> De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 337; Jansen, *Korte Verklaring van de Kerkorde Der Gereformeerde Kerken*, 291.

<sup>32</sup> Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 81; Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 223.

<sup>33</sup> Article 69: "Inde Kercken zullen alleen die 150 Psal. Davids / de thien Geboden / het Vader onse / de 12 Arciculen des Geloofs / de Lofsanghen Mariae, Zachariae, Simeonis ghesongen worden. 'Tghesangh / O Godt die onsen Vader bist / wort inde vryheyt der Kercken ghestelt / om 'tzelve te gebruycken ofte naertelaten. Alle anderen gesangen salmen uyt de Kercken weren / ende daerder eenige albereets inghevoert zijn / salmen de selve / met de ghevoeghelijckste middelen afstellen." See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), "Kercken-Orderinghe; 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 laren 1618 Ende 1619.," 20.

<sup>34</sup> De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 342.

<sup>35</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 43.

the reconciliation with Christ. Not with the Church.”<sup>36</sup> Article 71 therefore speaks of “Christelijke strafe” and not church discipline.<sup>37</sup> The main question concerning discipline is not if someone was disobedient to the church as such, but to Christ.<sup>38</sup> As in the previous articles, it may be asserted that the Church Order is Christological rather than ecclesiastical in character. The rule of Christ in his church is here clearer than in the previous articles as discipline is the direct outcome of the kingly office of Christ, indeed the church cannot maintain good order without discipline.<sup>39</sup> These articles confess that Christ is King of and in the church. Bouwman therefore defines discipline as “the maintenance of the rule of God’s Word in the church.”<sup>40</sup>

Because Christ rules His church, discipline always has to be ministry of the Word, nothing more and nothing less; therefore governance in the church may never be practiced in a judicial manner.<sup>41</sup> This explains why there is no need for anyone to be represented by a lawyer or advocate in matters concerning discipline, as discipline is spiritual in character.<sup>42</sup> Both Britz and De Gier assert that when discipline is understood in this way it is simply an acknowledgement that Christ is the only Saviour; Christ Himself is the actual Minister of the discipline.<sup>43</sup> It is then significant that Article 75 concerning the repentance and reconciliation of the sinner precedes the articles describing the continuance of the discipline procedure. In this the distinctive character of the Church Order echoes, because in civil courts a confession of guilt can be the ground for a conviction, but this is not the case in the covenant life of Christ with His church as confession reconciles the person with Christ.<sup>44</sup> Christian discipline is ministry of reconciliation and not punishment.<sup>45</sup> Even sin burdening the communal life is then an opportunity to give thanks that the

<sup>36</sup> My translation. Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:64. “gaan van Christus uit, met die oog op die versoening met Christus. Nie met die Kerk nie.”

<sup>37</sup> Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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 laren 1618 Ende 1619.” 21; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 128.

<sup>38</sup> Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 334.

<sup>39</sup> Walaeo, *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae*, 576; Walaeus, *Synopsis of Overzicht van de Zuiverste Theologie*, 2:255.

<sup>40</sup> My translation. The Dutch reads: “de handhaving van de heerschappij van Gods Woord in de kerk.” See Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:600,601.

<sup>41</sup> Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*, 10; Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordering van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, 12; Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:599.

<sup>42</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:45–46,595.

<sup>43</sup> Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:64; De Gier, *De Dordtse Kerkorde: Een Praktische Verklaring*, 355.

<sup>44</sup> Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 89.

<sup>45</sup> Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 353; Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordering van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, 12.

congregation may live under the forgiving love of God in Jesus Christ. The Church Order of Dort reminds that the congregation can never live by their own words and deeds, but only by that one Word and Deed which really binds them together – the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ.<sup>46</sup>

Over against the ‘Romanizing’ of the churches, whereby the authority and power was put into the hands of the ‘clergy’, the Church Order of Dort again returned to the Scriptures in the matter of discipline; Article 72 of the Church Order pointing directly to Scripture: “soo sal den reghel onderhouden worden / welck Christus duydelijcken voorschrijft, Matth. 18.”<sup>47</sup> The Church Order provides the Word of God the freedom to rule in the congregations as it allows nothing but the Word of God to stand between the sinner and the congregation.<sup>48</sup> These articles on discipline also emphasise that secrets sins should be kept secret if confessed to another Christian or the consistory, and public sins should be reconciled publicly.<sup>49</sup> The theology of the Synod of Dort again echoes here, it proceeds from the fact that people are sinners. Nobody has to conceal sin and live in lies and hypocrisy. Sin is brought into the light. “When the call to brotherly confession and forgiveness goes forth it is a call to the great grace of God in the Church...the last stronghold of self-justification is abandoned”<sup>50</sup>

Christian discipline is also closely related with the Lord’s Supper as confession of sins serves the preparation for the Table. Article 76 states that one who obstinately rejects the admonition of the consistory shall be barred from the Lord’s Supper.<sup>51</sup> The articles on discipline is now brought in relation with the previous articles on the offices, doctrine and sacraments, because if the decision to participate in the Lord’s Supper was left to each individual conscience and not to the consistory, the consistory would

<sup>46</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 16–17.

<sup>47</sup> Article 72: “...the rule which Christ clearly prescribes in Matthew 18 shall be maintained.” 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 laren 1618 Ende 1619.,” 21; Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 86.

<sup>48</sup> See Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordening van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, 11,19.

<sup>49</sup> 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 laren 1618 Ende 1619.,” 21–22.

<sup>50</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 87,88.

<sup>51</sup> Article 76: “Soo wie hartneckelijck de vermaninghe des Kercken-Raets verwerpt / Item die een openbare ofte andesins een grove sonde ghedaen heeft / sal vanden Avontmael des Heeren afgehouden worden...” 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 laren 1618 Ende 1619.,” 22.

now have no ground to exclude someone from the Lord's Supper as a form of discipline. Also the "extreme remedy" of excommunication revolves around the Lord's Supper as reconciliation with the congregation is announced before the Lord's Supper and the excommunicated person is also reinstated at the Lord's Supper as this brings forth the central meaning of the sacrament:<sup>52</sup> "The life of Christians together under the Word has reached its perfection in the sacrament."<sup>53</sup> The Church Order of Dort portrays discipline as mercy for the Christian; "for when does sin ever occur in the community that he must not examine and blame himself for his own unfaithfulness in prayer and intercession, his lack of brotherly service, of fraternal reproof and encouragement, indeed, for his own personal sin and spiritual laxity..."<sup>54</sup> Therefore excommunication is done according to the form prepared for this in terms of God's Word and advice of the classes in order that it is clear that the minister is not excommunicating a person, but Christ through his Word.<sup>55</sup> In this way discipline is brought in direct relation with the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the local congregation. The church is not an institute constituted by civil law, but a community of saints gathered around the Word and sacraments. It is not a group of people that arbitrary gathers, but the body of Christ that is governed through His Word and Spirit.<sup>56</sup>

This explains why a certificate of testimony is needed when one moves away from the congregation to another congregation: only those reconciled with Christ may gain access to the Lord's Supper. These "attestatie" is not there for administrative reasons but for the sake of the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the local congregation.<sup>57</sup> The Church Order does not stipulate when a person is allowed to leave the congregation for another congregation, but simply states that to those who move away from their congregations shall be given "een attestatie ofte getuyghenis haeres wandels."<sup>58</sup> In this the

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<sup>52</sup> Article 78: "Wanneer yemandt / die gheexcommuniceert is / hem wederom wil versoenen met de Gemeente door boetvaardicheyt : Soo sal het selfde voor de handelinghe des Avontmaels / ofte andersins nae gheleghentheyte / te vooren de Gemeente aengeseyt werden / ten eynde hy ten naestcomenden-Avontmale (soo verre niemant yet weet voort te brengen ter contrarie) openbaerlijck met professie zijner bekeeringe weder opgenomen werde / volgende het formulier daer van zijnde." See *Ibid.*, 23; Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordening van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, 99.

<sup>53</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 96.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 79–80.

<sup>55</sup> See Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordening van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, 73.

<sup>56</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:610.

<sup>57</sup> Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 265.

<sup>58</sup> 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 laren 1618 Ende 1619.," 24.

Church Order ensures that it is not church central but rather spiritual; it governs the church not as institute around geographical boundaries but it rather proceeds from Christ.<sup>59</sup> Therefore no congregation is under any obligation to accept the ‘attestatie’ from another congregation; this is to be decided by each congregation’s consistory. The ‘attestatie’ is also not given by a single minister or elder, but by the conduct of the consistory as only they have been granted the authority to do so by Christ. This principle is made even clearer by the stipulation that the ‘attestatie’ is given to the person directly and cannot be transferred from one congregation to another. The church is not one large society; rather each congregation is complete and free.<sup>60</sup>

The effectiveness of articles concerning church discipline at the time should not be underestimated: the civil government has no real role in discipline when it proceeds from Christ. This is an outright confession that Christ is the only Authority in the church.<sup>61</sup> This also argues against the Remonstrants who accused the Synod of Dort of being incompetent and schismatic because the Synod was seen to be the judge in their own case against the Remonstrants. Against this, Articles 71-86 makes it clear that “when Christ is the Subject of the discipline, the Church can never become the judge in their own case.”<sup>62</sup> Christ has not given this authority to the government nor the Pope, but grants it to the offices which He himself has instituted. The Church Order does not stipulate procedures for discipline as in civil law, it has a different character. This is underscored by Article 71 that describes the discipline as being spiritual and thereby not exempting anyone from trial and punishment from the government:

“Ghelijckerwijs de Christelijcke straffe Geestelijck is / ende niemant vanden Borgerlijcke gherichte ende straffe der Overheydt bevrijt / alsoo wordê oock benefens de Borgerlijcke straffe de Kerckelijcke Censuren nootsaeckelijck vereyst / om den Sondaer met der Kercke ende zijnen naesten te versoenen / ende de ergernisse uyt de Gemeente Christi wegh te nemen.”<sup>63</sup> In the matter of church discipline, Christ

<sup>59</sup> See Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 394.

<sup>60</sup> See Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordening van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, 132–134; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:452.

<sup>61</sup> Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordening van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, 15.

<sup>62</sup> My translation. See Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:65. “wanneer Christus die Subjek van die tug is, kan die Kerk nooit regter in sy eie saak word nie.”

<sup>63</sup> Article 71: “Inasmuch as Christian discipline is spiritual and exempts no one from civil trial and punishment, as besides civil punishment ecclesiastical censure is necessarily demanded in order to remove the offence from the church of Christ.” See Synod of Dort (1618/19), “Kercken-Ordeninghe; Ghestelt In Den Nationalen Synode Der Ghereformeerde Kercken, Te



alone rules in the congregation, not the government nor the people. The Church Order of Dort also ensures that no minister, elder or deacon is exempt from Christian discipline and even gives examples in Article 80 of gross sins that are worthy of being punished or could dispose a minister from office.<sup>64</sup> Those in office are not supervised by a higher authority as there is no higher authority in the church than Christ; therefore they are exhorted to admonish one another in friendly way.<sup>65</sup>

The first article of the Church Order of Emden 1571 now finds its place in Article 84 of the Church Order of Dort: “Geen Kercke sal over andere Kercken / geen Dienaer over andere Dienaren / geen Ouderlingh noch Diaken over andere Ouderlingen ofte Diakenen eenighe heerschappye voeren.”<sup>66</sup> It may be inferred that it summarises in a way the whole confessional character of the Church Order. Therefore Britz concludes that Article 84, as Article 1, should also be seen as a point of departure for the Church Order of Dort: Beneath this article, Britz notes:

*...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 to, 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. Out of this conviction the church order grows and has to be understood as such.*<sup>67</sup>

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Samen Beroepen, Ende Ghehouden Door Ordre van de Hooghe Moghende Heeren Staten Generael Der Vereenichde Nederlanden, Binnen Dordrecht, in de Iaren 1618 Ende 1619.,” 21; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 335.

<sup>64</sup> Article 80: “Voorts onder de grove sonden die weerdigh zijn met opschortinghe ofte afstellinghe vanden dienst ghestraft te worden / zijn dese de voornaemste. Valsche Leere of Ketterije : openbare scheur-maeckinghe : opentlijcke blasphemie : Symonie: trouloose verlatige zijns diensts / ofte indringhinghe in eens anders dienst : Meyneedicheyt : Eebreuck : Hoererije / Dieverije / geweld / gewoonlijcke dronckenschap / vechterije / vuyl ghewin : Cortelijck alle de sonden ende grove feyten die den Autheur voor de Werelt eerloos maeckê / ende in een ander gemeen Lidtmaet der Kercken der af-snijdinghe weerdigh souden gherekent werden.” 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.,” 23.

<sup>65</sup> Article 81: “De Dienaeren des Woords / Ouderlingen ende Diakenen sullen onder hen de Christelijcke Censuere oeffenen / ende malcanderen vande bedieninghe hares Ampts vriendelijck vermanen.” See Ibid., 24; Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordening van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, 127.

<sup>66</sup> Article 84: “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.

<sup>67</sup> 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 kompleetheit 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.”

The Church Order of Dort wants to direct the church to its essence and foundation by clearly stating as Van Rongen notes: “we are no Roman-catholics, but have been granted the grace of returning to the Scriptural government of the church, to the one and only universal Bishop and the only Head of the church, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”<sup>68</sup> There can only be good order in the church when Christ is the only one who has power and authority. All ministry in the church should therefore be in service of Christ.<sup>69</sup> Article 84 intends to convey that even though the congregations have a responsibility towards each other and are not independent, no congregation or assembly may force another into something: “As institute the church is not one large whole, but the revelation of the body of Christ in one particular place where everything needed for the essence of the church is present and that is exactly why all churches are equal...”<sup>70</sup> With this principle the whole Reformation stands or falls. The Church Order wants to free the local congregation from any attempt to be regulated, coerced or dominated. This correlates with the Belgic Confession of faith which confesses this in Article 32: “we reject all human inventions, and all laws, which man would introduce into the worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever.”<sup>71</sup> The congregations need to maintain their independence in order to remain faithful churches of Christ. “Life together under the Word will remain sound and healthy only where it does not form itself into a movement, an order, a society...”<sup>72</sup>

This ‘spirit’ of the Church Order of Dort is again present in Article 85 where openness and freedom is practiced towards the foreign churches, as different customs is not deemed to be principle matters: “In middelmatighe dinghen salmen de buyten-Landtsche Kercken niet verwerpen / die een ander ghebruyck hebben dan wy.”<sup>73</sup> Unity is not institutionalised or limited to only the Netherland churches and good order is not merely important for the internal life of the church but also for the witness of the church

<sup>68</sup> Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 11.

<sup>69</sup> Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg En Kerkregering*, 404; Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordening van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, 161.

<sup>70</sup> “Als instituut echter is de kerk niet een groot geheel, maar die openbaring van het Lichaam Christus op eene bepaalde plaats, waarin alles aanwezig is, wat tot het wezen van eene kerk behoort; en juist daarom zijn alle kercken gelijk.” See Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordening van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, 150,155.

<sup>71</sup> “Belgic Confession of Faith.”

<sup>72</sup> See Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 23,24.

<sup>73</sup> Article 85: “In indifferent matters the foreign churches which have different customs from our own shall not be rejected.” 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 laren 1618 Ende 1619.” 24.

in the world. The Church Order reminds in these last articles that its departure point is not ecclesiastical but rather Christological: to be one church in Christ is to believe the same and not to be the same; to be united in diversity. The Church Order does not portray the Nederlandsche Gereformeerde kerk as a group of isolated churches or a “vaderlandsche Kerk” with no relation to other churches outside. The body of Christ is not limited to the boundaries of the Netherlands or the Dutch language. The body of Christ is the whole Christian church.<sup>74</sup>

The last article imprints the character of the Church Order, showing that it is not a judicial law book, not a burden on the congregations and therefore it is stated:

*Dese Artijckelen / de wettelijcke Ordeninghe der Kercken aengaende / zijn alsoo ghestelt ende aenghenomen met gemeyn accoordt / datse (soo het profijt der Kercken anders vereyschte) verandert / vermeerdert ofte vermindert mogen ende behooren te worden. Ten sal nochtans gheen bysondere Gemeente / Classe ofte Synode toestaen sulcx te doen / maer sullen neersticheydt doen om die te onderhouden / tot dat anders vande Generale ofte Nationale Synode verordent wort.*<sup>75</sup>

The statement made in the first lines of this article – that the articles have been formulated and adopted by common consent - indicates that it was an important moment in the history of the Reformed churches when the Synod of Dort 1618/19 adopted the Church Order, as it was not something forced on them by the authorities or even by other congregations.<sup>76</sup> This last article also makes it clear that the Church Order is not infallible but may be adapted or diminished if the welfare of the churches demand it.

### 3.4 Summary

In the articles on the doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies the Church Order only provided broad principles to help the church to continue to conform to the Word of God. The Church Order did not intend to stipulate every detail on administering the sacraments, but wanted to point to Christ as the visible Word

<sup>74</sup> Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordening van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, 169.

<sup>75</sup> Article 86: “These articles concerning the lawful order of the churches have been so formulated and adopted by common consent that, if that if the profit of the churches demands otherwise may and ought to be altered, augmented or diminished. Nevertheless, no individual congregation, classis or synod shall be permitted to do this, but they shall diligently seek to maintain them until it is otherwise ordered by the General or National synod.” 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.” 24–25; Hall and Hall, *Paradigms in Polity: Classic Readings in Reformed and Presbyterian Church Government*, 184.

<sup>76</sup> Van Rongen, *Decently and in Good Order, the Church Order of Dordrecht Commented On*, 2005, 97; Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'N Verklaring van Die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*, 267; Rutgers, *Bespreking Der Hoofdpunten van Het Kerkrecht Naar Aanleiding van de Dordtsche Kerkenorde*, 180.

in the sacraments. For this reason the Church Order stipulates who is allowed to be engrafted into His congregation and who is allowed to sit at His table. The Church Order reminds in these articles that to be gathered as congregation in unity of doctrine and to receive the sacraments is something extraordinary, that “it is grace, nothing but grace, that we are allowed to live in community with Christian brethren.”<sup>77</sup> Discipline in the church is therefore aimed at reconciliation with Christ. It is spiritual in character because it proceeds from Christ.

In chapters 2 and 3 the Christological distinctiveness of the Church Order was discussed. Therefore this study can now return to the initial intention, which provided for the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA, GKSA and APK to be compared with the Church Order of Dort. This will be done in chapter 4.

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<sup>77</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 10.

**CHAPTER 4: THE CHRISTOLOGICAL DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE CHURCH ORDER OF DORT (1618/19) COMPARED WITH THE CHURCH ORDERS OF THE NEDERDUITSE GEREFORMEERDE KERK-, THE NEDERDUITSCHER HERVORMDE KERK VAN AFRIKA-, THE GEREFORMEERDE KERKE IN SUID-AFRIKA-, AND THE AFRIKAANSE PROTESTANTSE KERK.**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this final chapter is to compare the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA, GKSA and APK with the Church Order of Dort. The purpose and principles subjacent to these church orders were discussed in the introductory chapter, where it was concluded that NGK, NHKA, GKSA, and APK Church Orders mutually differ, despite their acknowledged adherence to the Church Order of Dort. The NGK emphasising the church as institute, the NHKA as confession, the GKSA a church where the Kingship of Christ is important and the APK stressed the local congregation confessionally being an expression of the body of Christ. The question was raised to what constitutes these differences as the NGK, NHKA, GKSA and APK all assert to adhere to and be indebted to the Church Order of Dort (1618/19). In order to discern whether the asserted indebtedness of these church orders to the Church Order of Dort is correct, the Church Order of Dort was analysed. The historical context and underpinning trajectories of the Church Order of Dort were dislodged on in chapter 1. Emphasis was placed on studying the primary source in its original context on the basis of its theological intension in order to avoid assumptions, conclusions, projection or the (mis)use of the Church Order of Dort as an apologetic tool.

The in-depth analysis of the Church Order of Dort in chapters 2 and 3 unearthed the Christological distinctiveness of the Church Order. It was evident that the Church Order of Dort has a Christological character. It is not functional or pragmatic and does not give expression to the identity, mission or doctrine of the church. The Church Order of Dort is about preserving the order that is in the Scriptures, rather than determining the order. The order of the Church Order of Dort is a Scriptural order that is being served to the life of the congregations. On the ground of this the Church Order of Dort can now be compared to the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA, GKSA and APK.

## 4.2 Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk

The Church Order of the NGK is divided into six chapters: introduction, offices, assemblies, the church's labour, discipline and relation of the church to the "outside" - that is the institutions of and in society at large.<sup>1</sup> The formal familiarity of the Church Order of the NGK with the Church Order of Dort is clear from this division as articles on the offices, assemblies, doctrine, sacraments, ceremonies and discipline are accommodated in this church order. In contrast to the Church Order of Dort, the NGK articles in this regard are all expanded in terms of policies, decisions, and regulations and thus much longer than those of the Church Order of Dort.

The Church Order of the NGK makes it clear that the offices are in service of Christ and assigned by Him and therefore no office may rule over another. Christ is the only Head, King and Lord of his church.<sup>2</sup> It proceeds to stipulate that no one may serve in office if not lawfully called or elected, approbated and ordained. The Church Order insists that ministers of the Word should be fit and qualified for their duties in office and the church should ensure that this happens.<sup>3</sup> A minister of the Word is not a minister of the whole NGK but only of a local congregation.<sup>4</sup> The Church Order of the NGK does not foresee, as the Church Order of Dort, that a minister of the Word is bound to the service of the church lifelong, but does make it clear that a person may only leave the office of minister of the Word for serious reasons.<sup>5</sup> The offices of elders and deacons are also not lifetime offices, but only for a fixed term.

The Church Order of Dort echoes in the articles concerning the assemblies as the Church Order of the NGK mentions that ecclesiastical matters should be dealt with in an ecclesiastical manner.<sup>6</sup> It further stipulates principles of the Church Order of Dort like which matters may be dealt with by major

<sup>1</sup> Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funksionele Besluite en Riglyne," v–ix.

<sup>2</sup> Article 4.4 makes this clear: "Die drie besondere ampte is gelykwaardig, maar word in opdrag en werk onderskei. By die uitoefening van hulle roeping mag geen ampsdraer oor ander ampsdraers heerskappy voer nie, aangesien Christus die enigste Hoof, Koning en Meester van sy kerk is." See Ibid., 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 2–3.

<sup>4</sup> Article 10: "'n Bedienaar van die Woord mag geen ampspligte (vergelyk Artikel 9 van die *Kerkorde*) onder lidmate van 'n ander gemeente verrig sonder die toestemming van daardie kerkraad nie." Ibid., 4.

<sup>5</sup> Article 11:1: "'n Bedienaar van die Woord kan die kerklike bediening slegs om ernstige en gewigtige redes verlaat." See Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Article 21: "Die kerkvergaderinge behandel sake vanuit kerklike perspektief, in die lig van die Woord van God en op kerklike wyse." See Ibid., 7.

assemblies and on what authority.<sup>7</sup> The same assemblies that the Church Order of Dort identify, are also indicated by the Church Order of the NGK. Typical principles of the Church Order of Dort are also confessed, like church discipline to be conducted in terms of a spiritual intention and character,<sup>8</sup> and that the government is a servant of God for the wellbeing of the church.<sup>9</sup> Many more examples could be given, but from the afore mentioned it seems that the Church Order of the NGK formally corresponds to the structure and echoes certain articles of the Church Order Dort.

However, this is not the case substantively. In contrast with the Church Order of Dort, the Church Order of the NGK is rooted in the concept of the church as institution and not in the living and ruling Christ. Concurring with Britz, the concept church government of the NGK, that developed since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is seated in and defined by legalised understanding which is thoroughly church central.<sup>10</sup> The NGK may be described as a “synodcracy”<sup>11</sup> which does not order the church in terms of Scriptural revelation of Christ’s rule in and over his people, but rather focuses on supporting the synod while congregational life progressively declines and shallows.<sup>12</sup> The Church Order of the NGK is not a Scriptural order, but a functional order. An institutional departure point furthermore implies that the synod now represents the “complete church” because no congregation is independently complete anymore.<sup>13</sup> The church has become an institution of society. In contrast to the Church Order of Dort, the Church Order of the NGK portrays a synod as a permanent body. Commissions and moderating bodies functionally continue the major assemblies even after these assemblies have ended. This may also explain why the current process to church unity is a constant struggle for the “NGK-family,” because it is much more difficult to unite institutions than local congregations.<sup>14</sup> The synod as a permanent body

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> See article 60. Ibid., 16.

<sup>9</sup> Article 67.1: “In die lig van Romeine 13 erken die Kerk die staat as ‘n dienaar van God tot ons beswil.” See Ibid., 19.

<sup>10</sup> See Britz, “Oor die Kerkbegrip en die Ordening van Die Kerklike Lewe by Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk,” 448; E.P. Kleynhans, *Die Kerkregtelike Ontwikkeling van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika: 1795-1962* (Bloemfontein: N.G. Sendinguitgewers, 1973).

<sup>11</sup> My translation. See Britz, “Oor die Kerkbegrip en die Ordening van die Kerklike Lewe by die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk,” 450. “Sinodokrasie”

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> See Daniël Johannes Langer, “Die Aktualiteit van ‘n Gereformeerde Kerkorde vir Vernuwning in Makrogemeentes” (unpublished M.th dissertation, 1999), 47; Pont, *Die Historiese Agtergrond van Ons Kerklike Reg*, 1991, 2:95.

<sup>14</sup> With the “NGK-family” it is meant those churches in South Africa that originated out of the NGK like the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika, the Verenigende Gereformeerde Kerk in Suider-Afrika and The Reformed Church in Africa. This

owns property, financial investments and has permanent employees in her service which makes uniting around Word, sacraments, discipline, confessions and church order practically impossible. The church is an institutionalised corporate body. The only authority and relation between the congregations is not the Word, as a branch of the church denomination the congregation is the subject of the synod. Therefore the Church Order of the NGK makes provision for a moderating body to ensure that the church as organisation is managed effectively. Here a compounded ecclesiastical concept functions, managed as an association. At the Synod of Dort (1618/19), though, a different conviction was present: the effective functioning of the church was not of importance, but the rule of Christ in His church. Effective functioning has in view the denomination as a “brand” which should be managed in order that a positive image may be portrayed to the media and society. The Church Order of Dort was far more interested in preserving the ordering of the Word than with effective managing of the church.<sup>15</sup>

For the NGK a church order seems to be more located in the field of Practical Theology than Church polity and governance.<sup>16</sup> Therefore the Church Order follows certain practices and principles that are not in line with the Church Order of Dort: The Church Order of the NGK allows for a minister to be called into service of the church as denomination and not only into service of the local congregation,<sup>17</sup> and the General Synod also sets a fixed retirement age for ministers.<sup>18</sup> The Church Order of the NGK furthermore allows that a congregation with more than one minister may send all their ministers, accompanied by another elder or deacon, for each extra minister to a synod, all receiving a right to vote.<sup>19</sup> This in practice means that a congregation with more ministers can rule over a congregation with fewer ministers, again in contrast with the Church Order of Dort. The Church Order of the NGK does not limit the authority of a synod to the Word of God. This church order does not stipulate like the Church Order

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study also understands the “family” more broadly, including the churches that separated from the NGK, like the NHKA, GKSA and the APK.

<sup>15</sup> W.D. Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk* (Pretoria: Universiteit van Suid Afrika, 1965), 12.

<sup>16</sup> See Britz and Strauss, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:7.

<sup>17</sup> Article 8.2: “’n Bedienaar van die Woord word vir diens aan die kerkverband deur ‘n kerkvergadering of sy gevolmagtigde benoem, met approbasie deur die kerkverband en goedkeuring deur die betrokke sinodale regs-/kerkordekommissie.”

Article 9.6: “As deel van die dienswerk van die kerkverband aan die wereld tref die kerkverband reelings oor wyses waarop die bedienaar van die Woord diensbaar is in die kerk en in die wereld.” See *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*, “Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funkisionele Besluite en Riglyne,” 3.

<sup>18</sup> See article 14.1. *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Article 33.12: “as ‘n gemeente meer as een pos vir bedienaar van die Woord het, het die kerkraad die reg om meer bedienaars van die Woord en nog een ouderling/diaken vir elke bykomende bedienaar van die Woord af te vaardig, indien die sinode daartoe besluit.” See *Ibid.*, 9.



of Dort's Article 31 that a decision is not binding if deemed in conflict with the Word of God.<sup>20</sup> This is because the Synod has become the governing body whose decisions are practically impossible to appeal to and who's decision on appeal is sovereign.<sup>21</sup> Although the Church Order of the NGK states that only members who have made a profession of faith or baptised members that has been admitted by the consistory may partake in the Lord's Supper, it also states that guest from the same denomination and other acknowledged churches may partake, which implies that the Lord's Supper is not fully under supervision of the consistory.<sup>22</sup>

The foregoing examples are not just contradictions with the Church Order of Dort, but also with many articles in the Church Order of the NGK itself.<sup>23</sup> Therefore the Church Order of the NGK may be described as functional and pragmatic,<sup>24</sup> with the result that it handicaps a Scriptural understanding of being church. The purpose of the Church Order is not like the Church Order of Dort focussed on the marks of the true church that should be revealed in the local congregation around the ministry of the Word, sacraments and discipline, but is rather focused on the practical ordering that the circumstances of the day demand in terms of what the NGK understands as its identity.

### 4.3 Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika

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.<sup>25</sup> This indicates that the Church Order of the NHKA portrays some formal familiarity with the Church Order of Dort. This correlation with the

<sup>20</sup> Article 23.1: "Die besluite van vergaderinge of hulle gevolmagtigdes is bindend, maar daarvoor kan in appèl na 'n meerdere vergadering of die meerdere vergadering se gevolmagtigde gegaan word." See *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>21</sup> W.D. Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk* (Pretoria: Universiteit van Suid Afrika, 1965), 31.

<sup>22</sup> Article 49.2. See Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funksionele Besluite en Riglyne," 13.

<sup>23</sup> These examples contradict principles such as congregations not ruling over one another, that the local congregation is complete and that ministers can only be in service of a local congregation. It confines the Lord's Supper only to admitted members of the local congregation, but at the same time opens it up to members of the same denomination and other churches without the local congregation having any say the admittance, and in the process conveying the message that the Lords Supper is left to the guests' own conscience.

<sup>24</sup> 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): 450.

<sup>25</sup> Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk, "Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika," i-vii.

Church Order of Dort is furthermore seen in its description of the offices as “dienste” that is called to service by God himself and as servants of Christ.<sup>26</sup> To perform this service the congregations convene in assemblies where no congregation rules over another, no office over another and no office bearer over another.<sup>27</sup> It is stipulated that assemblies should only handle those matters that they have been assigned to do,<sup>28</sup> and that the forms of the church should be used when administering the sacraments and also during excommunication.<sup>29</sup> Only those that have been ordained in office may administer the Word and sacraments.<sup>30</sup> Like the Church Order of Dort, the Church Order of the NHKA brings church discipline in relation to the Word and to the headship of Christ:

*Deur die verkondiging van die Woord word orde en dissipline in die Kerk geskep sodat almal ooreenkomstig die Woord van God glo en leef, en Jesus Christus as enigste Hoof van die kerk erken word. So word die eenheid en eendrag bewaar en bevorder.<sup>31</sup>*

Despite these examples and the fact that the NHKA asserted that this Church Order is a return to the principles of the Church Order of Dort, very little of the Christological distinctiveness of the Church Order of Dort surfaces or echoes in the Church Order of the NHKA. This is because the Church Order of the NHKA is very long, with hundreds of ordinances that gives the impression of a judicial document rather than a church order. It is difficult to see how the hundreds of order rules and ordinances that are piled up one after the other are truly an embodiment of the confessions of the church. This church order’s indebtedness to the Church Order of Dort is only seen in its formal elements that in some way describe the offices, assemblies, doctrine, sacraments, ceremonies and discipline like the Church Order of Dort.

On a number of occasions the Church Order of the NHKA contradicts the Church Order of Dort: As seen in the order rule quoted on discipline above, the Church Order indeed confesses principles of the Church Order of Dort, but the ordinances following this order rule immediately contradicts these principles.<sup>32</sup> When ministering discipline becomes an ecclesiastical law case and discipline is practiced

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 5–7, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Order rule 3: “...Sodoende heers die een gemeente nie oor die ander, die een amp nie oor die ander en die een ampsdraer nie oor die ander nie.” See Ibid., 35.

<sup>28</sup> Order rule 3.2. “Elke vergadering behandel die sake wat deur die Kerkorde aan hom opgedra is.” See Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 79, 80, 98.

<sup>30</sup> See Ordinance 5.1.1 (xii). Ibid., 80.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>32</sup> See ordinance 8. Ibid., 93–100.

according to an ordinance on discipline, there exactly happens what the Church Order of Dort contradicts.<sup>33</sup>

At least the NHKA is honest about the ordinances and stipulations that it has created, because the NHKA does not like the NGK and APK exclude these ordinances as something distinct from the Church Order itself, but includes and understand it as part of the Church Order.<sup>34</sup> 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, limit the authority of the church to the Word of God, but simply communicates that the decisions of the assemblies are binding.<sup>35</sup> Ordinance 10.4 is a portrayal of this, as it indicates that the NHKA only wants to allow the Word of God freedom to rule in the congregations in emergency situations that in some way were not accounted for by the 108 pages of order rules and ordinances in the Church Order:

*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.*<sup>36</sup>

These contradictions with the Church Order of Dort may be because of the confessional understanding that the NHKA has of a church order. The Church Order proceeds from a confession of what the church is, Who the church believes in and in what documents this confession is found in. Only from here it proceeds to describe what is necessary for the good order in the church. The confessional documents are prerequisite for good order. They express the identity of the church. The result is that the Church Order as a consequence of the confessions is now more binding. Precept after precept is headed up to insure that the churches adhere to the rules of the church like they adhere to the Word and Confessions. The Church Order of the NHKA is then not like the Church Order of Dort a Scriptural order where Christ rules directly and actually, but a judicial order that binds congregations to a certain prerequisite ecclesiastical understanding.

<sup>33</sup> Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:65.

<sup>34</sup> Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, "Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funktionele Besluite en Riglyne"; Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereëls vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite* (Pretoria: Lig in Duisternis, 2008).

<sup>35</sup> See ordinance 1 and 3.8. Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk, "Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika," 3, 54.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

The Church Order of the NHKA wants to regulate congregations to insure that no doubt exist whether a congregation is a congregation of the NHKA. This understanding may also be because the NHKA still views itself as a 'volkskerk' which inevitably leads to a associated understanding of being church. While portraying some indebtedness to the Church Order of Dort, the Church Order of the NHKA has a different character than the Church Order of Dort and does not reflect the Christological distinctiveness of the Church Order of Dort. It does not, like the Church Order of Dort, bind congregations to the Word, but rather binds and compels the conscience of congregations to the NHKA. This is not a Christological polity, but a judicial polity.

#### 4.4 Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika

The Church Order of the GKSA is almost still the exact 86 articles of the Church Order of Dort in form and content. Such an adherence to the Church Order of Dort is often criticised, because the Church Order of Dort made provision for the Church Order to be changed or diminished if the welfare of the churches demand it. Strauss is of opinion that to meet the demands of the contemporary time and to be relevant, a church order cannot hold on to the historical terminology of the Church Order of Dort, the principles behind this church order should rather be sought.<sup>37</sup> Britz argues that the Church Order of Dort was never meant to be a model or fundamental church governmental document; rather it should bring one to the Word and the ministry thereof.<sup>38</sup>

It should be noted that the Church Order of the GKSA is not the exact 86 articles of the Church Order of Dort anymore, as many of the articles have been revised.<sup>39</sup> In this the GKSA makes the Church Order relevant for the modern context while holding on to the historical terms of the Church Order of Dort. Those articles that granted the authorities a say in ecclesiastical matters has been adapted,<sup>40</sup> and Article 9 for instance does not speak of priests and monks being admitted to the ministry of the Word anymore,<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Strauss, *Kerk en Orde Vandag: Met die Klem Op die NG Kerk*, 15–17.

<sup>38</sup> Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:57.

<sup>39</sup> For a detailed explanation and reasons for these revisions Spoelstra and Van der Linde can be consulted. Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*; Van der Linde, *Die Kerkorde: 'n Verklaring van die Gereformeerde Kerkorde*.

<sup>40</sup> See articles 4, 28. Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika, "Kerkorde van die Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika."

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

and the classes no longer has to act as a type of homiletic school.<sup>42</sup> The articles that speak of the relation between the Dutch and Walloon churches have also been adapted;<sup>43</sup> the signing of the confessional documents now includes the Canons of Dort and does not require the schoolmasters to sign the Confessions;<sup>44</sup> the article on the censure of books has been changed to portray and take care of the principle of sound doctrine,<sup>45</sup> and the article on the evening prayers now stands in relation with the Lord's Supper.<sup>46</sup> Article 31 of the Church Order of the GKSA is another article that portrays something of this continued revision of the Church Order of Dort. In contrast to the Church Order of Dort, the Church Order of the GKSA healds to the authority of the synod and not, as the Church Order of Dort, to the right of appeal in the first place. It now conveys in contrast to the Church Order of Dort the message that the synod has the final 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.<sup>47</sup>*

In this the Church Order of the GKSA fails to fully allow freedom for the Word of God to rule in the congregations. It is clear that an ecclesiastical motive and intention overshadows the Christological distinctiveness of the historical Church Order. These are just a few examples, as many more articles have been revised by the GKSA.

These revisions indicate that the Church Order of the GKSA is in fact a church order for its own time and circumstances, while it simultaneously holds on to the historical terminology of the 86 articles of Dort. While the Church Order of Dort does serve as a model for the GKSA, it has not been reduced to a judicial document that may not be revised. The church polity development in the Netherlands also indicates such a continued revision: from the Convent of Wezel 1568 to the Synod of Dort 1618/19, it was the concrete terms of the same Church Order that was continually reviewed. Continuation did not make any of these church orders irrelevant for its time. Continuing in this tradition, the Church Order of

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<sup>42</sup> See Article 43. Ibid., 6.

<sup>43</sup> See Articles 51 and 52. Ibid., 7.

<sup>44</sup> See Articles 53 and 54. Ibid., 7, 8.

<sup>45</sup> See Article 55. Ibid., 8.

<sup>46</sup> See Article 64. Ibid., 9.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 5.

the GKSA does not only use the principles underlying the Church Order of Dort, but the Church Order itself. In contrast to Strauss, it may be asserted that a continuation in the historical terms of the Church Order of Dort does not exclude a church order from being relevant. This is because the Church Order of Dort is not aimed at being functional, but rather to convey and capture the Scriptural indications of the rule of Christ. The reason the Church Order of Dort remains relevant after almost 400 years is because it is a Scriptural order that aims to maintain the order that the Scriptures prescribes. The reason that the Church Order of the GKSA remains relevant is not because of its continual review of the Church Order of Dort. The actuality of the Church Order of Dort lies in its accordance with Scripture. It is aimed to bring Christ's Word into effect in the midst of the congregation. And therein lies its power and ministry. The Church Order of Dort was not meant only to maintain good order in doctrine, sacraments or discipline, but it also aspired to be an existential life order for the congregation under the Word. Its actuality therefore does not lie in how contextual, relevant or functional it is for the modern context. It is existential and effective because it is Scriptural. The Church Order of Dort has a Scriptural distinctiveness, and has to be understood in this way. Where Christ rules through His Word, there one finds the offices, assemblies, doctrine, sacraments, ceremonies and discipline. Like the Belgic Confession's marks of the true church, these articles of the Church order of Dort points to the essence of the church. Concurring with Britz, the Church Order of Dort was never meant to be a fundamental church governmental document;<sup>48</sup> how could the Synod have known that no national synod would convene for almost 200 years? But this does not mean that it cannot serve as a model church order. The GKSA continues in the tradition of Dort exactly because it is a model grounded in Scripture that brings one to the Word and the ministry thereof.

#### **4.5 Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk**

Like the Church Order of the NGK, it is not difficult to see the formal orientation of the Church Order of the APK towards the Church Order of Dort. The Church Order of the APK consists of 10 sections consisting of: the identity of the denomination and its confession; purpose; church and membership;

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<sup>48</sup> Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:57.

offices; church assemblies; major assemblies; the local church; discipline; relations to the outside and administration. The Church Order of Dort echoes in the Church Order of the APK in a number of places: Article 2 sets this tone: “Om die goeie orde in die gemeente van Christus...te onderhou...”<sup>49</sup> The articles on the offices clearly confess that Christ as Head of the church, instituted the offices and because Christ is the only Head they may not prevalent over one another.<sup>50</sup> This confession resonates throughout the Church Order, as the Church Order states that nobody may serve in the church of Christ if not lawfully called, approbated and ordained,<sup>51</sup> that ministers of the Word should be thoroughly trained,<sup>52</sup> and may only minister the Word in a congregation when the consistory of that particular congregation allows it.<sup>53</sup> Like the Church Order of Dort a minister of the Word is bound to the service of the church for life and not allowed to enter into a secular occupation;<sup>54</sup> no fixed age is set for the retirement of ministers.<sup>55</sup> Familiar phrases of the Church Order of Dort like the fact that assemblies can only discuss ecclesiastical matters in an ecclesiastical manner,<sup>56</sup> and that congregations have the same ‘say’ over another is also present.<sup>57</sup>

The Church Order of the APK, in contrast with the Church Orders of the NGK and NHKA, requires, like the Church Order of Dort, mandatory preaching from the Heidelberg Catechism at least 18 times per year.<sup>58</sup> It is also confessed that church discipline has a spiritual and not a civil character,<sup>59</sup> and that the Church Order is binding until changed by a synod.<sup>60</sup> Like in the case of the NGK and NHKA the formal

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<sup>49</sup> Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereëls vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite* (Pretoria: Lig in Duisternis, 2008), 2.

<sup>50</sup> See Article 7. *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>51</sup> See Article 8. *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> See Article 10. *Ibid.*, 9–10.

<sup>53</sup> See Article 16. *Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>54</sup> See Article 17.1. *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> See Article 20. *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>56</sup> See Article 26. *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>57</sup> See Article 29. *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>58</sup> Article 48.5 of the Church Order of the NGK stipulates that “Die Heidelbergse Kategismus, Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis en Dordtse Leerreëls moet deurentyd sistematies in die prediking aan die orde gestel word.” The Church Order of the NHKA like the NGK makes no real binding decision on this in ordinance 5.1.5 (iii): “die leer van die Kerk soos vervat in die belydenisskrifte en in die besonder deur die Heidelbergse Kategismus in 'n siklus van drie jaar.” The Church Order of the NGK . The Church Order of the APK stipulates in article 42.5 that “Daar moet sover moontlik minstens 18 keer per jaar aan die hand van die Heidelbergse Kategismus gepreek word...” *Ibid.*, 42; Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, “Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funkisionele Besluite en Riglyne,” 13; Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk, “Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika,” 78.

<sup>59</sup> See Article 52.2. Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereëls vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite*, 48.

<sup>60</sup> See Article 66. *Ibid.*, 63.

elements deemed necessary for maintaining good order by the Church Order of Dort is present. It follows the NGK and NHKA by placing emphasis on the confessional documents as prerequisite for the good order in the church, but, unlike the NGK, argues not in terms of the church as institution or like the NHKA, in terms of the confession of what a church is, but rather emphasises the local congregation confessionally as an expression of the body of Christ. In this it manages to portray something of the character of the Church Order of Dort as not being focussed on the church as institution, but on the ministry of the Word in the local congregation.

In contrast to the Church Order of Dort, cultural provisions for membership of the church are integrated as necessary for good order in the church of Christ. Concurring with Strauss, it is clear that the APK explicitly tries to be “Dordts” in their church government and –order,<sup>61</sup> but where the Church Order of Dort places the offices and assemblies directly after Article 1, the APK uses its cultural preferences for membership here.<sup>62</sup> How the articles on membership stand in relation with the Headship of Christ and how it echoes the gospel of grace is unclear. By stipulating that membership of the church can only be obtained by endorsing Article 3,<sup>63</sup> the Church Order of the APK stands in contrast with the Church Order of Dort. In effectuating this it places the rule of the church in the hands of the Synod who now decides who may be members of a congregation of Christ. Membership of the church is not in the hands of Christ anymore, who admits members through the local congregation’s consistory.

The Church Order of Dort did not deem articles on membership necessary for the good order in the congregations of Christ. The purpose of the church order was not to regulate the membership of the church, but to maintain the direct and actual rule of Christ in His church. Therefore the Church Order of Dort does not even regulate who may or may not be baptised, but simply provides broad principles in order that the consistory of the local congregation, in service of Christ, may faithfully serve Him.<sup>64</sup> For Dort admittance into the church of Christ is not something a synod may decide on, but only the local

<sup>61</sup> This is already clear in Article 2 of the APK Church Order which is almost word for word that of Dordt Article 1.

<sup>62</sup> Strauss, *Gereformeerdes Onder Die Suiderkruis 1652-2011: Die Verhaal van Vier Afrikaanse Kerke*, 87.

<sup>63</sup> Along with faith in Christ and the endorsement of the confessional documents of course.

<sup>64</sup> These broad principles are that God’s covenant shall be sealed as soon as possible for the children of Christians by baptism and this in a public meeting when God’s Word is preached. See article 64. Synod of Dordt (1618/19), “Kercken-Orderinghe; 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.,” 17.



congregation's consistory that Christ has instituted for this purpose. Maybe these articles on membership is also the result of the emphasis the Church Order of the APK, like that of the NGK, NHKA and GKSA, places on the authority of the synod.<sup>65</sup>

Article 31 of the Church Order of the APK discusses - like the Church Order of Dort's Article 31 - the binding nature of the assemblies' decisions. The Church Order of the APK allows for an appeal to the decisions of assemblies, but does not clearly limit such a decision to the Word of God like the Church Order of Dort.<sup>66</sup> In this the Church Order of the APK fails to allow freedom for the Word of God to rule in the congregations. The Church Order of the APK emphasises the significant position of the local congregation, but doesn't create the freedom for this to have any effect. Unlike the Church Order of Dort, the Church Order of the APK is not aimed at articulating an order for the local congregation's life together under the Word, but an order that stipulates the local congregation's obligation to other congregation's inside the APK.

#### **4.6 Regulations, ordinances and provisions in the church orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK**

While the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK hold on to the principle that Christ alone governs his church,<sup>67</sup> they also make use of the principles of natural law that is often expressed in the theological construction that grace does not abolish reason.<sup>68</sup> This explains why these church orders are officially and authoritatively laid out in a number of provisions and rules and why law commissions now deal with church polity issues as specialist.<sup>69</sup> In these church orders with all its provisions and stipulations it is not about an order rule for the church that aims to give the Word of God freedom in the church, but it is about

<sup>65</sup> See Van Staden, "Ons in die A.P. Kerkverband en die Kerkorde," 5–6.

<sup>66</sup> Article 31: '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.' See Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereëls vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite* (Pretoria: Lig in Duisternis, 2008), 28.

<sup>67</sup> Strauss, *Kerk en Orde Vandag: Met die Klem op die NG Kerk*, 3; Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk, "Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika," Introduction; Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereëls vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite*, iii; Smit and Van der Walt, "Die Doop in die Gereformeerde Kerkorde," 60; Van Wyk, "Die Kerkorde en die Kerklike Reg in die Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika aan die hand van die Presbiteriaal-Sinodale Kerkbegrip," 153; Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 19.

<sup>68</sup> 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; Strauss, *Kerk en Orde Vandag: Met die Klem op die NG Kerk*, 21; Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, 7–10.

<sup>69</sup> Britz and Strauss, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:7.

statutes on which the church is constituted. The church is then consequently not governed by the Word of God, by Christ alone, but by people with provisions.<sup>70</sup> God is not taken at His Word, as “the reality of Christ’s living presence in the midst of the congregation seems too much to bear.”<sup>71</sup> Kleynhans, Bouwman and Britz warn that extensive provisions may harm the rule of Christ in His church and therefore the number of provisions or stipulations should be kept to a minimum.<sup>72</sup> The problem is that there is no room anymore inside the closed system of provisions and stipulations, which try to manage all possible situations in the life of the church.<sup>73</sup> Provisions trample on the fundamental Reformed principle that a church order is not a law but an order for life together under the Word. Violating these provisions is then often seen as a serious matter even when there is no principle of the Word involved.<sup>74</sup>

The implication of this is that the Word and Confessions are placed in a subordinate position against the civil law and in the process a church order is judicated.<sup>75</sup> This means that “there inevitably surfaces a separation between the church government and the confession of the church. Neither the Confessions nor the Scriptures has to eligible in any direct way with the governing of the church, because the provisions dictates how there should be acted to handle the order.”<sup>76</sup> But the Church Order of Dort shows that the order of the church cannot be sufficiently guided by law or institutionalised rules. The church cannot be ordered by the free will of people because the church is instituted by Christ.<sup>77</sup> The Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK therefore show a separation of the governing of Christ and the Church Order from each other.<sup>78</sup> This situation must be attributed to the departure point and governing that is different from that of the Church Order of Dort. Provisions have become deadly laws, the whole

<sup>70</sup> See Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*, 16; Britz, “Oor die Kerkbegrip en die Ordening van die Kerklike Lewe by die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk,” 450.

<sup>71</sup> Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*, 2.

<sup>72</sup> Kleynhans, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg*, 28–30; Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, 327; 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): 451.

<sup>73</sup> Jonker, *Om die Regering van Christus in Sy Kerk*, 16.

<sup>74</sup> Spoelstra, *Gereformeerde Kerkreg en Kerkregering*, 19.

<sup>75</sup> Langer, “Die Aktualiteit van ’n Gereformeerde Kerkorde vir Vernuwning in Makrogemeentes,” 46.

<sup>76</sup> 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.”

<sup>77</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, 2, 5.

<sup>78</sup> Britz and Strauss, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:7.

tone, key and note of a church order has changed, transforming a church order into deadly formalism or pragmatism.

If the regulations, provisions, stipulations and ordinances of the NGK, NHKA and APK are read within the ambit of their respective church orders (as intended), there seems to be no freedom in these denominations for the Word of God to rule in the congregations. The rule of Christ in His church is devaluated to an ideal to be pursued. These denominations assert that Christ rules His church, but it seems that their Church Orders do not consider the fact that there exists a tension between the governing of Christ in the church and the hundreds of provisions, rules, ordinances and stipulations that accompany these Church Orders and that effectuate the Church Orders in practise.<sup>79</sup> All the stipulations, provisions and regulations ensure that every aspect of the church is governed and little room is left open for the governing of the Word of God in the congregations. The synod now governs the church through provisions, regulations and ordinances.

This is in contrast with the Church Order of Dort that provides a pattern of “clear, concise, governing principles” and not the piling on of “precept upon precept.”<sup>80</sup> The provisions or regulations that accompany these Church Orders have become the true “ruler” of the church, as these rules are much longer than the Church Order itself. This is a fundamental misunderstanding of the principles of the Church Order of Dort, because “the rule of Christ is not acknowledged and a form is layed upon the church that is in direct conflict with its essence.”<sup>81</sup>

Jonker argues this tendency in theological-confessional perspective, when he explains that the Roman Catholic Church has also always confessed the rule of Christ in His church, but at the same time this Church does not see any discordance when there is also freely spoken of the rule of the people, the pope, bishops and priest in the church in terms of canonical law. The rule of Christ and the rule of the

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<sup>79</sup> In the NHKA the ordinances form part of the church order. It is uncertain if the stipulations of the APK should be understood as something apart from the church order itself as it is distinguished in the title page or as something that forms part of the church order itself as noted in article 66. See Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, “Die Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk met Reglemente, Beleid, Funksionele Besluite en Riglyne,” 21–158; Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk, “Kerkorde van die Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk van Afrika”; Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk, *Kerkorde, Bepalings, Ordereëls vir Vergaderings, Bylaes en Sinodebesluite*, v, 63.

<sup>80</sup> Hall and Hall, *Paradigms in Polity: Classic Readings in Reformed and Presbyterian Church Government*, 176.

<sup>81</sup> My translation. 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.”

Roman Catholic Church are seen as one. In reality this means that there can be no actual, personal and direct rule of Christ in His church. It is against this replacement of Christ by the offices that the Reformers protested and therefore the Church Order of Dort speaks of “diensten” when revering to the offices.<sup>82</sup> With hundreds of provisions and stipulations the NGK, NHKA and APK are governed by almost the same system of governance, a complex *corpus iuris*, that the Reformers departed from. It may look as if these are complete opposite matters, but the effect is the same: the rule in the church is placed in the hands of people.<sup>83</sup> Numerous provisions imply that the churches do not in the deepest essence believe and trust that Christ directly and actually rules His church.<sup>84</sup> These provisions make it clear that congregations dare not risk it with the Word of God in their midst, but should rather leave the responsibility of this to a synod. The synod is then the actual ruler in the NGK, NHKA and APK.

#### 4.7 Summary

This chapter compared the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA, GKSA and APK with the Church Order of Dort. In general it became clear that these church orders have showed a formal familiarity with the Church Order of Dort. But, the pretence of the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK to be based on or to adhere to the Church Order of Dort is too pretentious. This is seen most conspicuously in light of the Christological distinctiveness of the Church Order of Dort. A church order that claims to be based and indebted to the Church Order of Dort has to reflect this same underlying scope. What places the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK outside of the line of Dort, even though these church orders use many of the formulations and principles therein, is that they do not aim to provide a Scriptural order like the Church Order of Dort, but use the Church Order of Dort and the Scriptures as a source among many to help form their church polity. These church orders are either functional or judicial and serve the church's interest and not the rule of Christ. In contrast to the NGK, NHKA and APK, the GKSA is constantly busy with reviewing their Church Order as a continuation of that first Church Order that was accepted at

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>84</sup> "Dit is ten diepste altyd 'n hartgrondige twyfel aan die krag van Gods Woord as daar naas die Woord van God in die kerk 'n regsapparaat opgerig word om die kerk met reglemente en bepalings te regeer in plaas daarvan dat die kerk deur die gepredikte Woord self regeer word." See Ibid., 12.

Emden 1571 and that was revised until the Synod of Dort 1618/19. Like the Church Order of Dort it portrays a Christological distinctiveness that is aimed at articulating the order found in the Word and to order congregational life under the Word. The Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK stand in the shadow of Dort, not in its light.

## CONCLUSION

These 86 articles are short and few in number. The fathers of Dort were afraid that the church order might become an ecclesiastical law book. The Reformed churches wanted to move away from the Roman Catholic Church concerning church polity. In the Catholic Church the number of canonical stipulations and provisions gave rise to an authoritative and complex *corpus iuris*. Any person wishing to participate in the governing of the church, has to be a scholar of the *ius canonicum*. It was not accessible for lay people or even parish priests. Church polity was put in the hands of only a few canonical law specialists and lost its spiritual character.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to the Roman Catholic practice, the Church Order of Dort testifies of clearness and simplicity. It is at ease with the rule of the Word of God in the congregations and confesses this approach as it aims to order the congregational life as life together under the Word. It may therefore be inferred that it has a Christological distinctiveness as it “stands as a sign of thanksgiving towards Christ our Saviour.”<sup>2</sup> The Church Order makes it clear that congregations enter into common life not as demanders, but as thankful recipients who thank Christ for what He has done, for fellow congregations who live by his call, by his forgiveness, and his promise.<sup>3</sup>

A church cannot formulate or create an order for its life outside of the range of the Word. A church order has to be imbedded in Scripture, and has to proceed from Scripture. It confesses the authority of the Word, the rule of Christ through the Word and there cannot be added or subtracted to the order of the church that the Word does not prescribe. A church order’s authority is founded in the Word of God, and its actuality and effectiveness rest on the Word of God. The Church Order of Dort was not an articulation of its own order, but the recognition of the order that it received from Christ through His Word. For and in every time the order of the church remains the same. It does not change, because Christ does not change. This does not mean that the Church Order of Dort should be followed word for word. The Church Order of Dort is not the Word, but it articulates the order of the Word, the rule of Christ. To make the order of the Scriptures more clear, against the deferment in the church’s life and theology of the

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<sup>1</sup> Rutgers, *Verklaring van de Kerkenordening van de Nationale Synode van Dordrecht van 1618-1619*, 109; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht*, 327; Bouwman, *Gereformeerd Kerkrecht: Het Recht Der Kerken in de Practijk*, 2:670–671.

<sup>2</sup> Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*, 8:61.

<sup>3</sup> See Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, 16.

time, the Church Order was continually reviewed from 1571 to 1619. But this was not done for functional reasons. The welfare of the churches did not call for pragmatism, but for Scripture. This Christological distinctiveness of the Church Order of Dort is central to the comprehension and intention of the order. While Britz in proposing that the Church Order of Dort is distinctively Christological reflected mostly on the first article of this church order,<sup>4</sup> this study advanced his Christological argument by attempting a comprehensive reading of every article of the Church Order of Dort. This study, furthermore, not only scrutinized the Church Order of the NGK and its relation to the Church Order of Dort, but also considered the relation of the Church Orders of the NHKA, GKSA and APK with the Church Order of Dort. The historical context and underpinning trajectories of the Church Order of Dort 1618/19 were also shown to be central to its understanding.

It seems then that the Church Order of Dort differs with Church Orders such as those of the NGK who understands the Church Order as focussed on the contemporary needs of the church as institute; the NHKA who focuses on the Church Order as an embodiment of the confessional documents, and the APK that comprehends a church order as a form of the local congregation's expression as the body of Christ. While all these Reformed denominations are formally indebted to the Church Order of Dort, the study indicated that they stand in contrast with the Church Order of Dort. They only make use the Church Order of Dort as a source for church polity among others. This is not only seen in these church orders' content, but also in the regulations, stipulations and ordinances that are included in, or accompany these church orders. It aims to regulate the church to ensure that the church is effectively managed. In the process the synod becomes the actual ruler of the church. Even the Church Order of the GKSA, like that of the NGK, NHKA and APK, does not effectively limit the rule in the church to the Word of God.

In contrast to these church orders, the Church Order of Dort resonates 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 is because the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK's regulation of every aspect of the churches' life, accompanied by the supreme authority that they all, including the GKSA, granted to the their synods - which now also regulates the interpretation of

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<sup>4</sup> Britz, *Dordt Na 375 Jaar. 1619-1994*.

Scripture - that the rule of Christ has become a dim ideal. These ecclesiastical regulations may be seen as the effect of the discontinuity of the Church Orders of the NGK, NHKA and APK with the Christological distinctiveness of the Church Order of Dort. A church order has become a formal document for these denominations, with a pragmatic and judicial purpose. For the Church Order of Dort, the articles on the offices, assemblies, doctrine, sacraments, ceremonies, and discipline reflect rather the life that Christ gives to His congregation. The NGK, NHKA and APK has departed from those things which Christ, the Head of the church, has instituted. Their Church Orders are human inventions that bind and compel the conscience of congregations.

The actuality of the Church Order of Dort should not be underestimated. It is not only a common marker of the tradition that these churches share, but it is a Scriptural order that orders the congregation's life under the Word and therefore it remains relevant. The question that the Church Order of Dort confronts the NGK, NHKA, GKSA and APK with, is whether they truly, without compromise, believe in the reality of Christ's direct and actual rule in His church.



## **SUMMARY**

The Church Order of Dort testifies of clearness and simplicity. In terms of the Word of God in ventures itself in the congregations and confesses this Word consequently as it aims to order the congregational life as life together under the Word. It therefore has a Christological distinctiveness. It does not create an order outside of the Word, but is imbedded in Scripture, and proceed from Scripture. Its authority is founded in the Word of God, and its actuality rests on the ministry of the Word of God. The Church Order of Dort was not an articulation of its own order, but the recognition of the order that it received from Christ through His Word. This Christological distinctiveness of the Church Order of Dort is central to the understanding of it.

It seems that the Church Order of Dort differs with Church Orders such as those of the NGK who proceeds and understands the Church Order as focussed on the contemporary needs of the church as institute; the NHKA who focuses on the Church Order as an embodiment of confessional documents, and the APK that understands a church order as a form of the local congregation's expression as the body of Christ. While all these Reformed denominations are formally indebted to the Church Order of Dort, they however stand in contrast with the Church Order of Dort. They use the Church Order of Dort as a source for church polity, among others. A church order has become a formal document for these denominations, with a pragmatic and judicial purpose. For the Church Order of Dort, the articles on the offices, assemblies, doctrine, sacraments, ceremonies, and discipline are rather the life that Christ gives to His congregation under the Word. The Church Order of Dort was a Scriptural order, and therein lies its actuality. It is not a matter of practical ecclesiology, but of Christology.

## **SAMEVATTING**

Die Kerkorde van Dort getuig van helderheid en eenvoud. Dit waag dit met die Woord van God in die gemeentes en bely hierdie Woord regdeur omdat dit ten doel het om die gemeentelike lewe as lewe saam onder die Woord te orden. Dit het dus 'n Christologiese kenmerkendheid. Dit skep nie 'n order buite die

Woord nie, maar is ingebed in die Skrif. Sy aktualiteit rus op die diens van die Woord van God. Die Kerkorde van Dort was nie 'n artikulasie van sy eie orde nie, maar die erkenning van die orde wat ontvang was van Christus deur Sy Woord. Hierdie Christologiese karakter van die Kerkorde van Dort is sentraal tot die verstaan daarvan.

Dit blyk dat die Kerkorde van Dort verskil met Kerk Ordes soos dié van die NGK wat vertrek vanaf en die Kerkorde verstaan as gefokus op die huidige behoeftes van die kerk as instituut; die NHKA wat fokus op die Kerkorde as 'n beliggaming van die belydenisskrifte en die APK wat 'n kerkorde verstaan as 'n uitdrukking van die plaaslike gemeente wat belydend die liggaam van Christus is. Terwyl al hierdie Gereformeerde denominasies formeel dank verskuldig is aan die Kerkorde van Dort, staan hulle tog in teenstelling met die Kerkorde van Dort. Hulle maak slegs gebruik van die Kerkorde van Dort as 'n bron vir kerkreg onder vele ander bronne. 'n Kerkorde het 'n formele dokument vir hierdie denominasies geword, met 'n pragmatiese en regskerklike doel. Vir die Kerkorde van Dort was die artikels oor die ampte, vergaderings, leer, sakramente, seremonies en dissipline eerder die lewe wat Christus orden vir sy gemeente onder die Woord. Die Kerkorde van Dort was 'n Skriforde, en daarin lê sy betekenis en aktualiteit. Dit is derhalwe nie 'n geval van 'n praktiese ekklesiologie nie, maar van Christologie.

**KEY WORDS**

Church Order of Dort 1619

Church Polity

Church Governance

Church Order

Afrikaans Churches of Reformed Confession

**SLEUTELTERME**

Dordtse Kerkorde 1619

Kerkreg

Kerkregering

Kerkorde

Afrikaanse Kerke van Gereformeerde belydenis

**APPENDIX:****The Church Order of Dort (1618/19)<sup>1</sup>****Artikel 1**

Om goede ordre inder Ghemeente Christi te onderhouden / zijn daer inne noodigh de Diensten / t' Samencomsten / Opsicht der Leere / Sacramenten ende Ceremonien / ende Christelijcke straffe. Waer van hier na ordentlijck sal gehandelt worden.

**Artikel 2**

De Diensten zijn vierderley: Der Dienaren des Woordts / der Doctoren / der Ouderlinghen / ende der Diaconen.

**Artikel 3**

Het sal niemant / al-hoe-wel hy eê Doctor / Ouderlingh ofte Diaken is / gheoorloft zijn den dienst des Woords ende der Sacramenten te betreden / sonder wettelijck daer toe beroepen te zijn : Ende wanneer yemandt daer teghen doet / ende meermael vermaent zijnde niet af en staet / soo sal de Classe oordeelen / ofmen hem voor eenen scheurmaecker verklaren / ofte op eenighe ander wijze straffen sal.

**Artikel 4**

De Wettelijcke Beroepinge der gener die te vooren in den Dienst niet gheweest en zijn / soo wel inde Steden als ten platten Lande / bestaet. Ten eersten inde Verkiesinghe, de welcke na voorgaende vasten ende bidden gheschieden sal door den Kercken-Raet ende Diaconen / ende dat niet sonder goede correspondentie met de Christelijcke Overheyt der plaetse respectivelijck / ende voorwetê ofte advijs vandê Classe / daer't selve tot noch toe gebruyckelijck is geweest. Ten anderen / inde Examinatie ofte ondersoeckinghe beyde der Leere eñ des Levens / de welcke staê sal by de Classe ten overstaê vande Gedeputeerde des Synodi ofte eenige der selver. Ten derdê / inde Approbatie / eñ goet-kenninge vande Overheyt / eñ daer na oock vande litmatê der Gereformeerde Ghemeente vande plaetse / wanneer den

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<sup>1</sup> The text provided here is a digital version of the oldest known printed edition of the Church Order of Dort, which maintains the copy errors of the original. See Synod of Dordt (1618/19), "The Church Order of Dort (1618/19)" (Salomon de Roy, 1620), <http://www.reformed-digital.net/book/export/html/439>.

name des Dienaers den tijdt van veerthien dagen inder Kercken vercondicht zijnde / geen hindernisse daer teghen en comt. Ten laetsten / inde opentlijcke Bevestiginghe voor de Ghemeynte / de welcke met behoorlijcke stipulatie ende af-vraginghen / vermaninghen / Ghebedt ende oplegginghe der handen vanden Dienaer die de bevestinge doet (ofte eenighen anderen / daer meer Dienaren zijn) toegaen sal / naer het Formulier daer van zijnde. Wel-verstaende dat de oplegginge der handen sal mogen gedaen worden inde Classicale vergaderinge aenden nieuwen gepromoveerden Dienaer / die gesonden wordt inde Kercken onder t'Cruyce.

### **Artikel 5**

Nopende die Dienaers die nu alreede indê dienst des Woordts zijnde / tot een ander Gemeente beroepen werden / sal desgelijcx soodanighe beroepinghe met correspondentie als vooren / gheschieden / soo wel inde Steden / als ten platte Lande / by den Kercken-Raet ende Diaconen met advijs ofte approbatie vandê Classe: alwaer de voorsz beroepene verthoonen sullen goede Kerckelijcke Attestatie van Leere ende Leven : Ende alsoo by den Magistraet vander plaetse respectivelijck gheapproveert / ende der Ghemeynte den tijdt van veerthiê daghen voor-ghestelt zijnde / als boven / sullen met voorgaende Stipulatie ende Ghebeden bevestight werden. Onvercort int ghene vooren gheseyt is yemanden zijn deughdelijck recht van presentatie / ofte eenigh ander recht / voor zoo veel 'tzelve stichtighlijck can worden gebruyckt / sonder nadeel van Gods Kercke / ende goeden Kercken ordre ; waerop de Hooghe Overheden ende Synoden der respective Provincien / wel gelieve te letten / eñ ten besten vande Kercken noodighe Orden te stellen.

### **Artikel 6**

Sal oock geen Dienaer dienst moghen aen-nemen in eenige particuliere Heerlijckhedê / Gast-huysen ofte andersins / ten sy dat hy voorhenen gheadmitteert ende toe-ghelaten sy / volghende de voorgaende Artijckelen : en sal oock niet min als ander der Kercken-orderinghe onderworpen zijn.

### **Artikel 7**

Niemandt en sal tot dê Dienst des Woords beroepen worden / sonder hem in een seker plaetse te stellen / ten waer dat hy gesondê worde om hier oft daer te predicken inde Gemeente onder 't Cruyce / ofte andersins om Kerckê te vergaderen.

### **Artikel 8**

Men zal geen School-meesters / Hant-wercks liedê ofte andere die niet gestudeert en hebben / tot het Predick-ampt toelaten / ten sy datmen verzekert is / van hare singuliere gaven / Godtzaligheyt / ootmoedigheyt / zedicheyt / goet verstant ende discretie / mitsgaders gaven van welsprekentheyt. Soo wanneer dan soodanighe persoonen sich tot den dienst presenteren / zal de Classis de selve (indien't de Synodus goet vint) eerst examineren / ende na datse de zelve int examê bevint / haer een tijt langh laten int prive proponeren / ende dan voorts met hem handelen / als sy oordeelen zal stichtelijck te wesen.

### **Artikel 9**

Nieuwelingen / Mis-priesters / Monicken / ende die andersins eenighe secten verlaten / zullen niet toeghelaten worden totten Kercken dienst / dan met groote sorghvuldigheyt eñ voorsichtigheyt / na datse oock eenen sekeren tijt eerst wel beproeft zijn.

### **Artikel 10**

Een Dienaer eens Wettelijcken beroepen zijnde / mach die Ghemeynte daer hy sonder Conditie aenghenomen is / niet verlaten / om elders een beroepinghe aen te nemê / sonder bewillingh des Kercken-Raedts met de Diaconen / ende de ghene die te voren in dienst eñ Ouderling-schap ende Diaken-schap gheweest zijn / mitsgaders die van de Magistraet / ende met voorweten vande Classe / ghelijck oock geen ander Kercke hem sal moghen ontvanghen / eer hy wettelijke getuygenisse zijns afscheyts vande Kercke eñ Classe / daer hy gedient heeft / verthoont hebbe.

### **Artikel 11**

Op d'ander zijde sal den Kercken-Raedt / als representerende die Ghemeynte / oock ghehouden zijn haere Dienaers van behoorlijcke onderhoudt te versorghen / ende sonder kennisse ende oordeel des Classis niet

te verlaten / de welcke oock by ghebreecke van onderhoudt / sal oordeelen of die voorschreven Dienaers te versetten zijn / ofte niet.

### **Artikel 12**

Dewijle een Dienaer des Woords eens Wettelijck / als boven / beroepen zijnde / zijn leven langh aenden Kercken-dienst verbonden is soo sal hem niet geoorloft zijn hem tot een anderen staet des levens te begheven : ten sy om groote ende wichtige oorsaecken / daer van die Classe kennisse nemen ende oordeelen sal.

### **Artikel 13**

Soo het geschiedt dat eenige Dienaers door ouderdom / sieckte ofte andersins onbequaem worden tot oeffeninge hares Dienstes / soo sullen sy nochtans des niet te min de eere eñ den name eens Dienaers behouden / ende van de Kercke die sy ghedient hebben / eerlijcken in haren nootdruft (ghelijck oock de Weduwen eñ Weesen der Dienaren int gemeen) versorget worden.

### **Artikel 14**

Soo eenighe Dienaers om die voorschreven ofte eenighe ander oorsaecken / haren dienst voor eenen tijdt onderlaten moesten (t'welck sonder advijs des Kercken-Raets niet geschieden en sal) soo zullen sy nochtans tot allen tijden de beroepinghe der Gemeenten onderworpê zijn ende blijven.

### **Artikel 15**

Het sal niemant geoorloft zijn / den Dienst zijnder Kercken onderlatende / ofte in geenen sekeren dienst zijnde / hier ende daer te gaen predicken buyten consent eñ autoriteyt des Synodi ofte Classis : Ghelijck oock niemant in een ander Kercke eenige Predicatie sal moghê doen ofte Sacramenten bedienen / sonder bewillinghe des Kercken-Raedts.

### **Artikel 16**

Der Dienaren Ampt is inde Ghebeden ende bedieninghe des Woords aen te houden / de Sacramenten uyt te reycken / op haer Mede-broeders / Ouderlinghen ende Diakenen / mitsgaders de Ghemeenten goede

acht te nemen / ende ten laetsten met die Ouderlingen de Kerckelijcke Discipline te oeffenen / ende te besorghen dat alles eerlijck ende met order gheschiede.

### **Artikel 17**

Onder de Dienaren des Woords sal ghelijckheyt ghehouden worden / aengaende de Lasten hares Dienstes / mitsgaders oock in andere dinghen soo veel moghelijcken is / volgende het oordeel des Kercken-Raets / ende (dies van noode zijnde) des Classis : het welcke oock in Ouderlinghen ende Diakenen te onderhouden is.

### **Artikel 18**

Het Ampt der Doctoren ofte Professoren inder Theologie is / de Heylighe Schriftuere uyt te legghen / ende de suyvere Leere teghen de Ketteryen ende doolinghen voor te staen.

### **Artikel 19**

De Gemeynten zullen Arbeyden datter Studenten inder Theologie zijn / die ex bonis publicis onderhouden werden.

### **Artikel 20**

Inde Kercken daer meer bequame Predicanten zijn / salmen t'gebruyck der Propositionen aenstellen / om door sulcke oeffeninghen eenighe tot den dienst des Woords te bereyden / volghende in desen de ordre daer van by desen Synodo specialijck ghestelt.

### **Artikel 21**

De Kercken-Raden sullen al-omme toe-sien datter goede School-Meesters zijn / die niet alleen de Kinderê leeren lesen / schrijven / spraecken en vrye Consten / maer oock die selfde inder Godsalicheyte en indê Catechismo onderwijsen.

### **Artikel 22**

De Ouderlinghen sullen door het oordeel des Kercken-Raets ende der Diakenen vercoren worden : Soo dat het na de ghelegentheydt van een yeder Kercke vry sal zijn / soo veel Ouderlinghen alsser van noode



zijn de Ghemeente voor te stellen / om van die selve (ten ware datter eenigh beletsel voor-viele) gheapprobeert ende goet ghekent zijnde / met openbare Ghebeden ende stipulationen bevestight te worden : ofte een dobbel getal / om het halve deel by der Ghemeente vercoren te worden / ende opde selve wijze inden Dienst te bevestigen / volgende het formulier daer van zijnde.

### **Artikel 23**

Der Ouderlinghen Ampt is / behalven 't ghene dat boven / Artijckel seshien / geseyt is / hen met den Dienaer des Woords gemeyn te zijn / opsicht te hebben dat de Dienaren / mitsgaders hare ander medehulpers ende Diakenen hare Ampt getrouwelijcken bedienen / ende de besoeckinghe te doen / naer dat de geleghentheyte des tijds ende der plaetsen / tot stichtinge der Ghemeente soo voor als naer het Nachtmal can lijden / om bysonder de Lidtmaten der Ghemeenten te vertroosten ende te onderwijzen / ende oock andere tot de Christelijcke Religie te vermanen.

### **Artikel 24**

De selve wijze die vande Ouderlingen gheseyt is / salmen oock onderhouden inde Verkiesinghe / approbatie ende bevestinghe der Diakenen.

### **Artikel 25**

Der Diakenen eygen Ampt is / de Aelmoessen ende ander Armen-goederen neerstelijck te versamelen / ende de selve ghetrouwelijcken en vlijtighlijck naer den eysch der behoeftighen / beyde der Inghesetenê ende vreemden met ghemeyn advijs uyt te deelen / de benauden te besoecken ende te vertroosten / ende wel toe te sien dat de Aelmoessen niet misbruyckt en worden / waer van sy rekeninghe sullen doen inden Kercken-Raet / ende oock (soo yemandt daer by wil zijn) voor der Gemeenten / tot sulcken tijdt als het de Kercken-Raet goet vinden sal.

### **Artikel 26**

De Diakenen sullen ter plaetse daer Huys-zitte-Meesters ofte andere Aelmoesseniers zijn / op de selve begeerê goede Correspondentie met hen te willen houden / ten eynde de Aelmoessen te beter uytghedeelt moghen worden onder de ghene die meest ghebreck hebben.

**Artikel 27**

De Ouderlinghen ende Diakenen sullen twee Jaren dienen / ende alle Jaer sal het halve deel verandert / ende andere in de plaetse gestelt werden / ten ware dat de gheleghentheydt ende t'proffijt van eenighe Kercken anders vereyschte.

**Artikel 28**

Ghelijck het Ampt der Christelijcke Overheden is / den H. Kercken-dienst in alle manieren te bevorderen / den selven met haer exempel den onderdanen te recommanderen / en den Predicanten / Ouderlingen en Diaconen in alle voorvallende noot de hant te biedê / ende by hare goede ordeningen te beschermen ; Alsoo zijn alle Predicantê / Ouderlinghen ende Diaconen schuldigh de gantsche Gemeente vlijtighlijck en oprechtighlijck in te scherpen de ghehoorsaemheydt / liefde en eerbiedinghe die sy den Magistraten schuldigh zijn : ende zullen alle Kerckelijcke personen met haer goet exempel in desen de Ghemeente voor gaen / ende door behoorlijck respect en correspondentie / de gunst der Overheden tot de Kercken zoeken te verwecken ende te behouden : ten eynde een yeder het zijne in des Heerê vreesse / aen wederzijden doende / alle achterdencken en wantrouwen moge werden voorgecomê / en goede eendracht tot der Kercken welstant onderhouden.

**Artikel 29**

Vierderley Kerckelijcke t'samen-comstê sullen onderhouden worden / de Kercken-Raet / de Classicale vergaderinghen / de particuliere Synodus / ende de Generale ofte Nationale.

**Artikel 30**

In dese t'samen-comstê sullen geen ander dan Kerckelijcke saecken / ende t'selfde op Kerckelijcke wijze gehandelt worden. In meerder vergaderinge salmen niet handelen / dan 'tgeen dat in mindere niet en heeft af-gehandelt connen werden / ofte dat tot de Kercken der meerder vergaderinge int gemeyn behoort.

**Artikel 31**

Soo yemant hem beclaeght deur de uytspreecke der minder Vergaderinghe veronghelijckt te zijne / die selve sal hem tot een meerder Kerckelijcke vergaderinghe beroepen moghen : ende 'tghene door de

meeste stemmen goet ghevonden is / sal voor vast ende bondigh ghehouden werden. Ten sy dattet bewesen worde te strijden teghen het Woort Gods / ofte teghen de Artijckulen in desen Generalen Synodo besloten / soo langhe als de selve door geen ander Generale Synode verandert zijn.

### **Artikel 32**

De handelinghen aller t'samen-comsten sullen met aenroepinghe des Naems Gods aenghevanghen / ende met een dancksegginghe besloten worden.

### **Artikel 33**

Die tot de t'samen-comste af-ghesonden worden / sullen hare Credentz-brieven ende instructien / onderteeckent zijnde vanden ghenen diese senden mede-bringhen / ende dese zullen alleene keurstemmen hebben.

### **Artikel 34**

In allen t'samen-comsten sal by den Praeses een Scriba ghevoeght werden / om neerstelick op te schrijven 'tghene waardigh is opgeteeckent te zijn.

### **Artikel 35**

Het Ampt vanden Praeses is / voor te stellen ende te verclaren 'tgene te handelen is / toe te sien dat een yeghelijck zijn ordre houde in't spreken : Den knibbelachtighen ende die te heftigh zijn int spreecken / te bevelen datse swijghen. Ende over de selve geen gehoor ghevende / de behoorlijcke Censure te laten gaen. Voort sal zijn Ampt uytgaen / wanneer die t'samen-comste scheydet.

### **Artikel 36**

t'Selfde segghen heeft de Classis over den Kercken-Raet / 'twelck de particuliere Synode heeft over de Classe / ende de Generale Synode over de particuliere.

### **Artikel 37**

In allen Kercken sal een Kercken-Raet zijn / bestaende uyt Dienaren des Woords ende Ouderlinghen / de welcke ten minsten alle weke eens t'samen comen zullen / al-waer den Dienaer des Woords (ofte

Dienaren / soo daer meer zijn) by ghebeurte presiderê ende die Actie regeren sal. Eñ sal oock de Magistraet vande plaetse respectivelijck / indient haer ghelieft / een ofte twee vanden haren / wesende Lidtmaten der Ghemeente / by den Kercken-Raet moghen hebben / om te aenhooren ende mede vande voor-vallende saecken te delibereren.

### **Artikel 38**

Wel-verstaende dat inde plaetsen daer den Kercken-Raet vā nieuw is op te rechten / 'tselfde niet en geschiede / dā met advijs vande Classe. Ende daer 'tghetal vandê Ouderlinghê seer cleyn is / sullê de Diakenê mede tot den Kercken-Raet mogen ghenomen worden.

### **Artikel 39**

In die plaetsen daer noch geen Kercken-raet en is / sal middelertijdt by de Classe ghedaen worden 'tghene anders den Kercken-Raedt nae uyt-wijsen dezer Kercken-orderinghe opgheleyt is te doen.

### **Artikel 40**

Ingelijcx sullen de Diaconen alle weken t'samen comen / om met aenroepinghe des Naems Gods vande saecken harê Ampte betreffende te handelen / daer toe die Dienaren goede opsicht sullen nemen / ende des noot zijnde haer daer by laten vinden.

### **Artikel 41**

De Classicale Vergaderinghen sullen bestaen uyt ghenabuerde Kercken / de welcke elck eenê Dienaer eñ eenen Ouderlingh ter plaetse eñ tijde by hen / int scheyden van elcke Vergaderinghe goet gevonden (soo nochtans / datmen't boven de drie maendê niet uyt en stelle) daer henen met behoerlijcke Credentie afveerdigen sullen / in welcke t'samen-comstê de Dienaers by gebeurte / ofte andersins die vande selfde Vergaderinge vercoren wort / presiderê sullen / so nochtans dat d'selve tweemaal aen een niet en sal moghen vercoren worden. Voort sal de Praeses onder anderen eenen yegelijcken af-vraghen / of sy in hare Kerckê / hare Kercken-Raedts vergaderinge houden : Of de Kerckelijcke Discipline geoeffent wort : of de Armê ende Schoolen besorgt worden : Ten laetsten / offer yet is / daer inne sy het oordeel eñ hulpe der Classe tot rechte instillinghe harer Kercke behoeven. De Dienaer dien 't inde voorgaende Classe

opgheleyt was / sal een corte Predicatie uyt Gods Woordt doen / van welcke die andere oordelen / eñ soo daer yet in ontbreekt / aenwijzen sullen. Ten laetsten / zullen inde leste vergaderinge voor den particulieren Synode vercoren werden / die op den selven Synodum gaen zullen.

#### **Artikel 42**

Daer in een plaetse meer Predicanten zijn als een / zullen die altesamen in de Classe moghen verschijnen eñ keur-stemmen hebben / ten ware in saken / die hare persoonen ofte Kercken int bysonder aengaen.

#### **Artikel 43**

Int eynde vande Classicale eñ andere meerder t'samen-comstê / salmen Censuere houden over de ghene die yet straf-waerdighs inde vergaderinghe ghedaen / ofte de vermaninghen der minder t'samen-comsten versmadet hebben.

#### **Artikel 44**

Sal oock de Classis eenighe harer Dienaren / ten minsten twee van de outste / ervarenst / ende geschichtste authorisern / om in alle Kerckê / vande steden soo wel als van het platte lant / alle jaer visitatie te doen / ende toe te sien / oft de Leeraers Kercken-raden ende School-meesters haer ampt trouwelyck waernemen / by de zuyverheyt der leere verblyven / d'aengenomene ordre in alles onderhouden / ende de stichtinge der Gemeente / mitsgaders der jongher jeught / na behooren / soo veel haer moghelijck is / met woorden ende wercken bevorderen: ten eynde sy de ghene die nalatigh in d'een oft d'ander bevonden worden / in tijds moghen broederlijck vermanen / ende met raedt ende daedt alles tot vrede / opbouwinghe / ende t'meeste profijt der Kercken / ende Schoolen helpen dirigeren. Ende sal yeder Classis deze Visitatoren mogen continueren in hare bedieninghe / soo langhe het haer sal goet duncken / ten ware dat de Visitatores selve om redenen / vande welcke de Classis oordeelen sal / versochten ontslagen te werden.

#### **Artikel 45**

De Kercke in de welcke de Classis / Item de particuliere ofte Generale Synode t'samen comt / sal Sorge dragen datse de Acten der voorgaende vergaderinghe opde naest-comende bestelle.

**Artikel 46**

De instructien der dingen die in de meerdere vergaderingen te handelen zijn / sullen niet eer geschreven worden / voor dat die besluytingen der voorgaende Synoden ghelesen zijn / op dat t'gene eens af-gehandelt is / niet wederom voor gesteld en worde / ten ware dat men yet achtete verandert te moeten zijn.

**Artikel 47**

Alle Jaers (ten ware dat den noot eenen corteren tijdt vereyschte) sullen vier ofte vijf / ofte meer naghebuerde Classis te samen comen / tot welcke particuliere Synode uyt yder Classe twee Dienaers ende twee Ouderlingen af-gevaerdicht sullen werden. Int scheyden soo wel des particulierê als des Generalen Synode sal een Kercke verordent worden / die last hebben sal / om met advijs des Classis den tijt eñ plaetse des naesten Synodi te stellen.

**Artikel 48**

Het sal yeghelijcken Synodo vry staen / correspondentie te soecken ende te houden met zijnen Benaebuerden Synodo ofte Synodis / in suclker forme / als sy meest profijtiggh achten zullen / voor de ghemeene stichtinghe.

**Artikel 49**

Yeder Synodus sal oock eenighe deputeren / om alles wat de Synodus geordonneert heeft / te verrichten / soo wel byde Hooge Overheyte / als by de respective Classen / onder haer sorterende / mede om t'samen oft in minder ghetal over alle examina der aencomender Predicanten te staê : ende voorts in alle andere voorvallende swarigheden dê Classen de hant te bieden / op dat goede eenigheyt / ordre ende suyverheyt der leere behouden ende gestabilieert worden. Eñ zullen dese van alle hare handelinghen / goede notitie houden / om den Synodo rapport daer van te doen / ende soo't geeycht werdt / redenen te geven. Oock en zullen sy niet ontslagen wesen van harê dienst / voor eñ alear de Synodus selfs haer daer van ontslaet.

**Artikel 50**

De Nationale Synode sal ordinaerlijck alle drie Jaren eens ghehouden werden / ten ware datter eenighe dringhende noot ware om den tijt corter te nemen. Tot dese sullen twee Dienaren eñ twee Ouderlingen uyt elcke particuliere Synode beyde der Duytscher ende Walscher spraecke af-gesonden werden. Voorts sal de Kercke die last heeft om den tijdt ende plaetse des Generalen Synodi te benoemen (soo de selfde binnen de drie Jaren te beroepen ware) haer particuliere Synode vergaderen / ende t'selfde oock der naestgheleghener Kercke die van een ander Tale is laten weten / de welcke vier personen daer henê senden sal / om met gemeynen advijse vanden tijt ende plaetse te besluyten. Deselve Kercke die vercoren is om de Generale Synode te samen te beroepen / wanneer sy met de Classe vanden tijt ende plaetse beraetslagen sal / sal 'tselfde de hooghe Overheydt in tijts te kennen geven / op dat met haren weten / ende (soo het haer gelieft mede eenige te sendê tot den Classe) vander saecke in teghenwoordicheyt ende met advijs van hare Gedeputeerde besloten werde.

#### **Artikel 51**

Alsoo inde Nederlandê tweederley spraecke gesproken wert / is voor goet gehouden / dat de Kercken der Duytscher ende Walscher tale op haer selven harê Kercken-Raet / Classicale vergaderingen ende particuliere Synoden hebben sullen.

#### **Artikel 52**

Is niet te min goet gevonden / dat in de Steden daer de voorsz Walsche Kercken zijn / alle Maenden sommighe Dienaren ende Ouderlingen van beyde zijden vergaderen zullen om goede eendraght eñ correspondentie met malcanderen te houden / eñ soo veel moghelijck is na gelegentheydt des noodts met rade malcanderen by te staen.

#### **Artikel 53**

De Dienaers des Woords Gods / Item die Professorê inde Theologie ('twelck oock den anderen Professoren wel betaemt) zullen de Belijdenissen des Geloofs der Nederlantscher Kercken ondertecken / ende de Dienaers die sulcx sullen refuseren / sullen de facto van haren Dienst by den Kercken-Raet / ofte de Classe opgeschorst werden / ter tijdt toe sy haer daer inne gheheelijcken verclaert sullen hebben : ende

indien sy opstinateelijcken in weygheringhe blijven / sullen sy van harê Dienst geheelijcken afgestelt werden.

#### **Artikel 54**

Inghelijcx sullen oock de School-Meesters ghehouden zijn de Artijckelen als boven / ofte in de plaetse van dien den Christelijcken Catechismum te onderteecken.

#### **Artikel 55**

Niemandt vande Gereformeerde Religie sal hem onderstaê eenigh boeck ofte schrift van hem ofte van eenê anderen gemaect ofte overgheset / handelende van de Religie / te laten drucken ofte andersins uyt tegheven / dan 'tselvede voor henen doorsien ende goet gekent zijnde van de Dienaren des Woords zijns Classis / ofte particulierê Synodi ofte Professoren der Theologie van deze Provincien / doch met voorweten zijnes Classis.

#### **Artikel 56**

Het verbondt Gods sal aen den kinderen der Christenen met den Doop / soo haest als men die bedieninghe des selven hebben can / bezegelt worden / ende dat inde openbare versamelinghe / wanneer Gods Woordt ghepredickt wort. Doch ter plaetsen daer niet soo veel Predicatie ghedaen worden / salmen eenen sekeren dagh ter weke verordenen / om den Doop extraordinaerlijck te bedienen / so nochtans dat 'tselvede sonder Predicatie niet en gheschiede.

#### **Artikel 57**

De Dienaers sullen haer beste doen ende daer toe arbeyden / dat de Vader zijn kint ten Doop presentere. Ende inde Ghemeenten daermen neffens den Vader oock ghevaders ofte ghetuygen by den Doop neemt (welcke ghebruyck / in hem selven vry zijnde / niet lichtelijck te veranderen en is) betaemt het datmen neme die de suyvere Leere toegedaen ende vroom van wandel zijn.

#### **Artikel 58**



De Dienaers zullen int doopen soo den jonger kinderen als der bejaerder personen / die formulieren vande instellinghe ende ghebruyck des Doops / welck tot dien eynde onderscheydentlijck beschreven zijn / ghebruycken.

### **Artikel 59**

De bejaerde worden door den Doop der Christelicke Gemeente inghelijft / ende voor Lidtmaten der ghemeente aenghenomen / ende zijn daerom schuldich het Avontmael des Heeren oock te ghebruycken / t'welck sy by haren Doop sullen beloven te doen.

### **Artikel 60**

De namen der ghedoopten / mitsgaders der Ouderen ende Getuyghen / Item den tijdt des Doops / zullen opgeteekent worden.

### **Artikel 61**

Men sal niemant ten Avontmael des Heeren toelaten / dan die na der ghewoonheydt der Kercken / tot de welck hy hem voeght / belijdenisse der Ghereformeerde Religie gedaen heeft / mitsgaders hebende ghetuyghenisse eens vromen wandels / sonder welcke oock de ghene die uyt andere Kercken comen / niet zullen toegelaten worden.

### **Artikel 62**

Een yerder Kercke sal sulcke maniere van bedieninghe des Avontmaels houden / als sy oordeelt tot de meeste stichtinghe te dienen. Welverstaende nochtans dat de uytwendighe Ceremonien in Gods Woord voor-geschreven / niet verandert / ende alle supersitie vermijdet werde / ende dat nae voleyndinghe der Predicatie ende der gemeyne Gebeden op den Predick-stoel / het formulaer des Avontmaels / mitsgaders het Gebedt daer toe dienende / voor de Tafel sal wordê gelesen.

### **Artikel 63**

Het Avontmael des Heeren sal ten twee Maenden eens / soo veel het mogelijk is / ghehouden werden : ende sal stichtelijck zijn daer het de gelegentheyt der Kercken lijden can / dat op den Paesdagh /

Pincxterdagh ende Christ-dagh hetselve gheschiede. Doch ter plaetsen daer noch gheen Kerckelijcke ordre en is / salmen eerst Ouderlinghen ende Diakenen by provisie stellen.

#### **Artikel 64**

Alsoo de Avont-gebeden in veel plaetsen vruchtbaer bevondê worden / soo sal in 't ghebruyck der selver elcke Kercke volghen t'ghene sy achtet tot haere meeste stichtinghe te dienen. Doch wanneermense begheeren soude wegh te nemen / sal t'selfde niet zonder 't oordeel der Classe / mitsgaders der Overheyt / de Gereformeerde Religie toe-gedaen / gheschieden.

#### **Artikel 65**

Daer de Lijck-Predicatie niet en zijn / salmen niet instellen : Eñ daerse nu alreede zijn aen ghenomen / sal neersticheydt gedaen werden om de selve met de ghevoeghlijcxste middelen af te doen.

#### **Artikel 66**

In tijden van Oorloghe / Pestilentie / dieren tijt / sware Vervolginghe der Kercken ende andere alghemeyne swaricheden / zullen de Dienaers der Kercken de Overheyt bidden dat door haer autoriteyt eñ bevel openbaer Vast ende Bid-daghen aenghestelt ende gheheylight moghen werden.

#### **Artikel 67**

De Gemeenten zullen onderhouden / benefens den Sondach / oock den Christ-dagh / Paesschen eñ Pincxsterê / met dê navolgenden dagh : Ende dewijl inde meeste Steden eñ Provintien van Nederlandt / daerenboven noch ghehouden worden / den dagh vande Besnijdinghe ende Hemelvaert Christi / zullen de Dienaers overal daer dit noch niet int gebruyck en is / byde Overheden arbeyden / datse sich met de andere mogen conformeren.

#### **Artikel 68**

De Dienaers sullen alomme des Sondaeghs ordinaerlick inde namiddaeghsche Predicatie / de Somma der Christelijcke Leer inden Catechismo / die teghenwoordigh in de Nederlandtsche Kercken aenghenomen is / vervatet / cortelijck uytlegghen / alsoo dat de selve jaerlijcx magh gheeyndight worden / volghende de af-deelinghe des Catechismi selfs daer op gemaect.

**Artikel 69**

Inde Kercken zullen alleen die 150 Psal. Davids / de thien Geboden / het Vader onse / de 12 Arciculen des Geloofs / de Lofsanghen Mariae, Zachariae, Simeonis ghesongen worden. 'Tghesangh / O Godt die onsen Vader bist / wort inde vryheyt der Kercken ghestelt / om 'tzelve te gebruycken ofte naertelaten. Alle anderen gesangen salmen uyt de Kercken weren / ende daerder eenige albereets inghevoert zijn / salmen de selve / met de ghevoeghelijckste middelen afstellen.

**Artikel 70**

Alsoo bevonden wordt dat tot noch toe verscheyden gebruycken in houwelijcxsche saecken alomme onderhouden zijn / ende nochtans wel oirbaer is gelijkformicheyt daer inne gepleeght te worden : soo sullê de Kercken blijvê by het gebruyck 'twelcke sy conform Gods Woordt ende voorgaende Kerckelijcke ordinautien tot noch toe onderhouden hebben / tot dat by der hoogher Overicheydt (diemen daer toe met den eersten sal versoecken) een Generale Ordinantie / met advijs der Kercken-Dienaren / daer op gemaect sal zijn / tot de welcke dese Kercken-ordeningh haer in dit stuck refereert.

**Artikel 71**

Ghelijckerwijs de Christelijcke straffe Geestelijck is / ende niemant vanden Borgerlijcke gherichte ende straffe der Overheydt bevrijt / alsoo wordê oock benefens de Borgerlijcke straffe de Kerckelijcke Censuren nootsaeckelijck vereyst / om den Sondaer met der Kercke ende zijnen naesten te versoenen / ende de ergernisse uyt de Gemeente Christi wegh te nemen.

**Artikel 72**

Wanneer dā yemandt tegen de suyverheydt der Leere ofte vromicheyt des wandels sondight : soo verre als het heymelijck is / ende geen openbare erghernisse ghegheven heeft / soo sal den reghel onderhouden worden / welck Christus duydelijcken voorschrijft, Matth. 18.

**Artikel 73**

De heymelijcke sonden waer van de sondaer by eê int bysonder ofte by twee ofte drie ghetuyghen vermaent zijnde / berouw heeft / sullen voor den Kercken-Raet niet ghebracht werden.

**Artikel 74**

Soo yemandt van een heymelijcke sonde van twee ofte drie persoonen inder liefde vermaent zijnde / geen ghehoor en geeft / ofte andersins een openbare sonde bedreven heeft / sulcx sal den Kercken-Raet aenghegheven worden.

**Artikel 75**

Van alsulcke sonden die van haer natueren wegghen openbaer /ofte door verachtinghe der Kerckelijcke vermaninghen int openbaer ghecomen zijn / zal de versoeninghe (wanneermen seeckere teecken der boetvaerdicheydt siet) openbaerlijck gheschiedê / door het oordeel des Kercken-Raedts : Ende ten platten Lande / ofte in mindere Steden / daer maer eenen Dienaer en is / met advijs van twee ghenae-buerde Kercken / in sulcke forme ende maniere als tot stichtinghe van een yder Kercke bequaem sal gheoordeelt worden.

**Artikel 76**

Soo wie hartneckelijck de vermaninghe des Kercken-Raedts verwerpt / Item die een openbare ofte andesins een grove sonde ghedaen heeft / sal vanden Avontmael des Heeren afghehouden worden. Ende indien hij afgehouden zijnde / na verscheyden vermaningen geen teeckê der boetvaerdicheydt bewijst / soo salmen ten lesten tot de uysterste remedie / namelijk de af-snijdinghe / comen / volghende de forme nae den Woorde Gods daer toe ghestelt: Doch sal niemant af-gesneden werden / dan met voorgaende advijs der Classe.

**Artikel 77**

Al-eermen tot der af-snijdinge comt / salmen de hartneckicheydt des sondaers der Gemeente opentlijck te kennen geven / de sonden verclarende / mitsgaders de neersticheydt aen hem bewesen int bestraffen / afhouden vanden Avontmale / ende menighvuldige vermaninghen : Eñ sal de Gemeente vermaent wordê hem aen te spreekende ende voor hem te bidden. Soodanighe vermaningen sullender drie geschieden. Inden eersten / sal den sondaer niet ghenoeemt worden / op dat hy eenigsins verschoont werde : Inden tweeden / sal met advijs der Classe zijnê name uytgedrukt werden. Inden derden / salmen de Gemeente

te kennen gheven / dat men hem / ten zy dat hy hem bekeere / vande ghemeenschap der Kercken uytsluyten sal / op dat zijn af-snijdinge /soo hy hartneckigh blijft / met stilswijgende bewillinge der Kerckê geschiede. Den tijdt tusschen de vermaninge sal int oordeel des Kercken-Raets staen.

### **Artikel 78**

Wanneer yemandt / die gheexcommuniceert is / hem wederom wil versoenen met de Gemeente door boetvaerdicheyt : Soo sal het selfde voor de handelinghe des Avontmaels / ofte andersins nae gheleghentheyte / te vooren de Gemeente aengeseyt werden / ten eynde hy ten naestcomenden-Avontmale (soo verre niemandt yet weet voort te brenghen ter contrarie) openbaerlijck met professie zijner bekeeringe weder opgenomen werde / volgende het formulier daer van zijnde.

### **Artikel 79**

Wanneer de Dienaers des Goddelijcken woorts Ouderlingen ofte Diakenen een openbare grove sonde bedrijven / die der Kercke schandelijck / ofte oock byder Overheyt straf-weerdigh is / sullen wel de Ouderlingen ende Diakenen terstont door voorgaende oordeel des Kercken-Raets der selver ende der naest gheleghener Gemeente van haren dienst afgeset / maer de Dienaers opgeschort worden. Maer of sy geheel vanden dienst af te setten zijn / sal int oordeel der Classe staen.

### **Artikel 80**

Voorts onder de grove sonden die weerdigh zijn met opschortinghe ofte afstellinghe vanden dienst ghestrafte te worden / zijn dese de voornaemste. Valsche Leere of Ketterije : openbare scheur-maeckinghe : opentlijcke blasphemie : Symonie: trouloose verlatinge zijns diensts / ofte indringhinge in eens anders dienst : Meyneedicheyt : Eebreuck : Hoereriye / Dieverije / geweld / gewoonlijcke dronckenschap / vechteriye / vuyl ghewin : Cortelijck alle de sonden ende grove feyten die den Autheur voor de Werelt eerloos maeckê / ende in een ander gemeen Lidtmaet der Kercken der af-snijdinghe weerdigh soudent gherekent werden.

### **Artikel 81**

De Dienaeren des Woords / Ouderlingen ende Diakenen sullen onder hen de Christelijcke Censuere oeffenen / ende malcanderen vande bedieninghe hares Ampts vriendelijck vermanen.

### **Artikel 82**

Den ghenen die uyt der Gemeente vertrecken / sal een attestatie ofte getuyghenis hares wandels by advijs des Kercken-Raedts mede gegeven werden onder den Zegel der Kercken / ofte daer geen Zeghel en is / van tween onderteeckent.

### **Artikel 83**

Voorts sal den Armen / om genoeghsame oorsaecken vertreckende / vanden Diakenen bystandt ghedaen worden / na discretie / mits aenteeckenende opdê rugghe van hare Attestatie de plaetsen daerse henen willen / ende de hulpe diemen haer sal ghedaen hebben.

### **Artikel 84**

Geen Kercke sal over andere Kercken / geen Dienaer over andere Dienaren / geen Ouderlingh noch Diaken over andere Ouderlingen ofte Diakenen eenighe heerschappye voeren.

### **Artikel 85**

In middelmatighe dinghen salmen de buyten-Landtsche Kercken niet verwerpen / die een ander ghebruyck hebben dan wy.

### **Artikel 86**

Dese Artijckelen / de wettelijcke Ordeninghe der Kercken aengaende / zijn alsoo ghestelt ende aenghenomen met gemeyn accoordt / datse (soo het profijt der Kercken anders vereyschte) verandert / vermeerdert ofte vermindert mogen ende behooren te worden. Ten sal nochtans gheen bysondere Gemeente / Classe ofte Synode toestaen sulcx te doen / maer sullen neersticheydt doen om die te onderhouden / tot dat anders vande Generale ofte Nationale Synode verordent wort.

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