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MEDITATIE

Veilig Vernachten

*Die in de schuilplaats des Allerhoogsten is
gezet, die zal vernachten in de schaduw des
Almachtigen.*

Ps. 91:1.

Rusteloos zoekt de mensch naar het nieuwe!

Het oude bekoort niet; het tegenwoordige bevredigt niet; het nieuwe, hetgeen nog niet is, maar worden zal, trekt aan!

Een jaar geleden werd met veel geklingklang van bellen en klokken en stoomfluit-geblaas, met uitbundig vreugdebedrijf en dronkemans-gejoel, een nieuw jaar in geluid en met de blijdschap der verwachting begroet. En thans werd met evenveel geestdrift het oude jaar vaarwel gezegd om den blik hoopvol te vestigen op het thans weer nieuwe jaar. . . .

Zonder begeerd te zijn maak het oude jaar, waarop men zijn hope had gevestigd, zijn *exit*.

En het nieuwe jaar bekoort!

Het oude jaar stelde teleur, zooals alle oude jaren, die tevoren geweest zijn. Het bracht niet, wat men zocht. Het was vol ijdelheid en kwelling des geestes. Er was arbeid en inspanning van krachten, een zoeken van en streven naar geluk, naar het "meer overvloedige leven," naar welvaart en voorspoed, naar levensvreugde en zingenot, naar rijkdom en eer, naar macht en invloed, naar vrede ook, ja, vooral naar vrede, naar wereldvrede en het Utopia waarin alle zwaarden tot ploegijzers zijn omgesmeed; maar, ziet het was al tevergeefs! Er was teleurstelling en ijdele worsteling, er was droefheid en smart, lijden en dood; en, ja, er

was ook success, er was ook voorspoed en wereldweelde, maar ook deze waren nog ijdelheid en kwelling des geestes, moeite en verdriet. En inplaats van de zoo zeer gewenschte en zoo ernstig gezochte vrede, woedde de oorlog, vreeselijker dan ooit tevoren. Verwoesting werd alom aangericht. . . .

Zoo was het in 't oude jaar.

Zoo was het trouwens in alle oude jaren onzer herinnering, en in alle oude jaren, waarvan 't geschiedblad melding maakt.

Maar de verwachting bleef: en weer richt zich het oog des menschen hoopvol op het nieuwe jaar!

Op 't onbekende!

Want ook dat behoort tot de ijdelheid van den vloek, die op den mensch ligt, en die door alle dingen wordt getorcht, dat het kind des tijds nooit ophoudt zichzelf te vleien met de gedachte en hope, dat de morgen brengen zal wat in den avond niet kwam, dat de toekomst het nieuwe zal baren, dat men in het verleden en in het heden tevergeefs zocht. En zoo vergaat altijd weer de verwachting des goddeloozen. . . .

Hoe kan het anders?

Wandelt niet de ijdele mensch in een kringloop, en is juist daarom niet het *Excelsior*, dat hij in zijn vanen schreef, een ijdele spreuk? Is het niet zoo, dat hij in zijn bekoring voor, en in zijn jagen naar het nieuwe, binnen den kringloop der aardsche en den vloek dragende dingen, altijd weer vindt het oude, en is dat oude niet ijdelheid der ijdelheden, al ijdelheid?

Beweegt zich niet de kringloop der aardsche dingen binnen de sfeer des doods, die ons van alle zijden omringt, en zit niet de dood in al het jagen naar het leven. . . .

En er is geen uitkomst!

De mensch jaagt naar het nieuwe, en er is niets nieuws onder de zon! Wat er is, dat is er altijd geweest; en wat er geweest is, en thans is, dat zal er zijn, zoolang de kringloop der ijdelheid duurt!

Ijdelheid der ijdelheden!

Groot is de bekoring, die het kind des tijds heeft voor het nieuwe!

En rusteloos jaagt hij er naar.

Ja, maar dan toch: *rusteloos!*

Vernachten!

Vernachten in de schaduw des Almachtigen!

Zalig hij, wiens werkelijke positie en welbewuste houding in deze wereld en met betrekking tot al de ijdelheden van den aardschen kringloop is uitgedrukt in deze woorden!

Vernachten!

Dat is metterdaad de ervaring en de houding van het kind van God, dat principieel een kind des lichts werd, schoon hij, al wandelt hij ook in het licht, tijdelijk moet vertoeven in den tegenwoordigen nacht der wereld!

Vernachten! O, zeker, dat wil zeggen, dat het donker is rondom: de zon ging onder! En de donkerheid en duisternis zijn beeld van het kwade. Het is de nacht der zonde, die zijn vlerken spreidde over ons, over het schepsel, over alle dingen. En met die duisternis der zonde kwam ook de vloek, die ijdelheid, de bange en alles verslindende dood! Uit dien nacht werd Gods kind verlost: hij werd in zijn innerlijkst bestaan een kind des lichts. Maar hij verkeert nog in den nacht. En in dien nacht sluipen de vijanden rond, die op hem loeren, die hem pogen te vernietigen. In den nacht is er ook "de schrik des nachts," en is er "de pestilentie, die in de donkerheid wandelt." In dezen nacht dreigt ook "de pijl, die des daags vliegt," en woedt ook "het verderf, dat op den middag verwoest," waardoor duizenden bij duizenden vallen, en kruipt de adder, en brult de felle leeuw! . . .

Vernachten!

O, ja, ook voor het kind des lichts is deze duisternis van den nacht benauwende werkelijkheid! Ook hij ervaart het lijden dezes tegenwoordigen tijds: de algemeene wereldsmart, pijn, ziekte, dood, angst, droefheid, smart, oorlog, verwoesting, vrees, benauwdheid; nameloze ellende! En bovendien loeren daar op hem in de duisternis van den nacht zijne bijzondere vijanden: de satan, de wereld, de zonde in zijn eigen vleesch. En allen gaan rond in dien nacht, zoekende om hem te verslinden!

Vernachten! Zeker, dat wil zeggen, ook voor het kind des lichts, dat het voor hem nog altijd donker is rondom, schoon 't licht is van binnen, en dat ook hij van nature nog midden in den dood ligt!

Maar *vernachten* wil ook zeggen, dat hij uitziет, en dat op goede gronden, en met een levende hope, naar den morgen!

Ook hij jaagt naar het nieuwe! Grooter dan voor iemand anders is zijne bekoring voor het nieuwe! Maar dat nieuwe zoekt hij niet ijdelijk binnen den kringloop van het tijdelijke en aardsche. Hij weet, dat binnen dien kringloop nooit iets anders is te verwachten dan de nacht, de ijdelheid, de dood. Maar hij zocht en vond een uitweg uit dien ijdel en kringloop, door de opstanding van Jezus Christus uit de dooden! Ook Hij, de Zone Gods, God uit God, Licht uit Licht. Leven uit Leven, kwam in onzen nacht, en liep voor een wijle onzen ijdel en kringloop tot in den dood toe! Maar Hij is de opstanding en het leven! Wandelende in onzen dood worstelde Hij met den dood tot in den dood des kruises, tot op de diepte der hel, en daar verwon Hij hem. Hij worstelde *door* het oude tot in het eeuwig nieuwe, *door* de duisternis van den nacht tot in den morgen van den eeuwigen dag, door den dood tot in het eeuwige leven. Hij staat nu buiten, en ook boven den ijdel en kringloop van het oude, van den dood, in het eeuwige nieuwe licht des levens, en dat ook als de Heer over dood en leven, die de sleutelen heeft van hel en dood! En op Hem ziet het geloof van het kind des lichts. Want Hij, Die de opstanding en het leven is, straalt het heerlijk licht van Zijn leven in onze duisternis. En het geloof, dat Hij Zelf in de harten Zijner broederen, die nog wandelen in den nacht, werkt, vangt de stralen van Zijn opstandingsleven op met een levende hope. . . .

Geloofd zij de God en Vader van onzen Heere Jezus Christus, Die naar Zijne groote barmhartigheid ons heeft wedergeboren tot eene levende hope, door de opstanding van Jezus Christus uit de dooden!

En zoo *vernachten* wij!

En zoo viere wij ook Nieuwjaar!

Niet met de ijdele wereld turen wij op den sluier, die de geheimen, de bijzonderheden van dat nieuwe jaar voor ons oog verbergt.

Ach, we weten het, ook dat nieuwe brengt verbergt in zijn schoot dezelfde ijdelheid der ijdelheden als het oude jaar.

Maar over het nieuwe jaar, en met de nieuwe bekoring van het eeuwig nieuwe in onze harten, en over alle jaar-wenteling des tijds heen, zien we op Hem, Die uit de dooden is opgewekt, de Morgenster!

En op Hem ziende door het geloof, en in de levende hope, die nooit kan beschamen, zien we uit naar den morgen, die dagen zal, als onze Zaligmaker uit den hemel zal verschijnen, om alle dingen nieuw te maken!

En alzo *vernachten* we dan!

Vernachten *en* verwachten!

Wachtend op, en verwachtend met eene zekere verwachting, den eeuwigen morgen!

En we zingen het lied der lichtkinderen in den nacht!

Ik blijf den Heer verwachten;
Mijn ziel wacht ongestoord;
Ik hoop in al mijn klachten,
Op Zijn onfeilbaar woord;
Mijn ziel, vol angst en zorgen,
Wacht sterker op den Heer,
Dan wachters op den morgen;
Den morgen; ach, wanneer?

Ja, toch: vol angst en zorgen!

Maar ook: in al dien angst en al die zorgen niet allen verwachting, maar ook *wachtend* op den Heer!

Want immers: het is nog nacht! De Zonne der gerechtigheid kwam wel, en schittert wel in de glans der eeuwige heerlijkheid door de opstanding van Jezus Christus uit de dooden; en haar licht schijnt ook wel door het geloof en in de levende hope in onze harten. Maar toch *hier en nu* is het nog altijd nacht. De dag schittert in al zijne heerlijkheid aan de andere kant, even buiten, maar dan toch zeer werkelijk buiten de grenzen van onzen nacht. . . .

Boven!

Daar, waar Christus is, aan de rechterhand Gods, daar is het dag!

En naar dien dag zien we uit, maar *in den nacht!* En in dien nacht is onze ziel "vol angst en zorgen." Want de pestilentie wandelt in de donkerheid, en de pijl vliegt, en het verderf verwoest, en de adder sluipt, en de felle leeuw brult, en de vijanden zijn vele, en de werkingen des lichaams trekken ons naar de duisternis, en de wereld dreigt, en verleidt, en de duivel gaat rond als een brieschende leeuw, zoekende wien hij zou mogen verslinden. . . .

En wij zijn zwak!

En ook aardsch! En ook vleeschelijk van nature!

En tegenover al die machten, die in de duisternis rondwaren, vermogen wij niets.

En zoo komt het dan, dat onze ziel wel waarlijk vol angst en zorgen is!

Maar toch: wij *vernachten!* En dat wil ook zeggen, vreemd als het moge schijnen, dat we leeren om met en temidden van als die angst en zorgen vrede te hebben.

Want: wij wachten op den Heer!

Wij *zitten* in de schuilplaats des Allerhoogsten in den nacht. En we *vernachten*, met al onze angst en zorgen, in de schaduw des Almachtigen! En dat wil zeker zeggen, dat dit wel waarlijk onze positie is in den objectieven zin des woords, en dat wel naar Zijn eeuwig welbehagen, waarmee Hij ons heeft lief gehad, en in deze schuilplaats en in die schaduw heeft geplaatst; en naar Zijne groote genade, waardoor Hij souverain ook in den tijd ons in die schuilplaats zet en met die schaduw ons liefderijk dekt, zoodat niemand

ons uit Zijne hand ooit rukken kan, en niets ons ooit van Zijne liefde kan scheiden, en geen vijand ons ooit kan deren, en geen leed ons werkelijk ooit kan genaken, en we onzen voet nimmer aan eenen steen zullen stooten; maar het wil ook zeggen, dat we met al onze angst en zorgen onszelf welbewust in die schuilplaats zetten, en daar gaan *zitten*, en dat we door het geloof de schaduw van die vlerken, waarmee Hij ons dekt, ook werkelijk en welbewust zoeken en ook vinden, zoodat we tot den Heere zeggen: "Mijne Toevlucht en mijn Burg! mijn God, op Welken Ik betrouw!"

O, maar dan is 't goed!

Goed, ook in den nacht!

Dan, ja, dan zijn er nog wel de angst en zorgen, dan waart nog wel de pestilentie rond, en dan vliegt nog wel de pijl, en dan is daar nog wel de vijandige wereld, en ook ons eigen vleesch; en dan gaat nog wel, in dien donkeren nacht, de duivel rond als een brieschende leeuw; maar we hebben vrede, vrede met alles daar in de schuilplaats des Allerhoogsten, en in die schaduw des Almachtigen!

Want immers, Hij is de Allerhoogste! En Hij is de Almachtige!

En mocht ook dat u nog met angste en vreeze vervullen, omdat ge misschien zoudt meenen, dat er naast of onder den Allerhoogsten ander hoogen, en naast of onder dien Almachtige andere machtigen zijn, weet dan, dat dit nog maar een zeer menschenlijke wijze van spreken over den hoogen God is, die u dekt met de schaduw Zijner vleugelen; en dat "de Allerhoogste" beteekent, dat Hij de "Alleen-hooge" is, en dat er naast of zelfs onder Hem geen hoogen zijn; en dat "de Almachtige" aanduidt, dat Hij de "Alleen-machtige" is, en dat alle andere machten alleen van Hem zijn!

Want, ziet, die pestilentie, die rondwaart, is alleen van Hem, en die pijl vliegt alleen door Zijne kracht, en onder Zijn bestuur; en die vijanden kunnen zich niet verroeren dan door Zijn wil en macht, en die duivel maakt zijn rondgang als een brieschende leeuw precies naar Zijnen wil, en alleen door Zijne kracht. . . .

Of wilt ge weten, hoe machtig Hij de Almachtige is, en hoe hoog de Allerhoogste is? Ziet dan op de hoogheid Zijner souvereiniteit, en op de macht Zijner almacht, zooals Hij die heeft geopenbaard in de opstanding en verhooving van den Heere Jezus Christus uit de dooden, en ge zult vastelijk gelooven, dat er reden is om te zingen:

Hij kan, en wil, en zal, in nood,
Zelfs bij het naad'ren van den dood,
Volkomen uitkomst geven!

Dan zijt ge veilig! Dan weet ge, dat ge veilig zijt!
Dan hebt ge vrede met al uw angst en zorgen!

Veilig vernachten in de schaduw des Almachtigen!
Tot de morgen daagt!

H. H.

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EDITORIALS

A Hymn And A Latch

Recently *The Banner* editorially put up a defense of the Reformed truth that salvation is by grace only, over against what the editor evidently considers manifestations of Arminian tendencies in the Christian Reformed Churches. The first editorial on this question was written in connection with and as a criticism of the hymn: "Let Jesus come into your heart." The editor finds that this hymn expresses a "thoroughly Arminian sentiment." For "where does the Bible teach that we can let Jesus into our hearts? The phrase implies that Jesus wants to come in but is unable to do so as long as we are unwilling to give him entrance." And this implication, according to the editor, is based on a number of assumptions that are contrary to the Word of God. The first of these is that the decision, whether a man shall be saved or not, rests with him, not with Christ. The second is that man is not so depraved that he cannot open the door of his heart. And the third is that it is Christ's intention to save all sinners. The Bible never presents the Saviour as standing at the door of a man's heart, waiting to be admitted, not even in Rev. 3:20, of which passage by the way, the editor offers a very unique explanation. All this is about the "hymn" to which I refer in the superscription above this editorial.

The second article, written more than a month after the first, deals with the "latch." The editor received letters that criticized his attempt to defend the Reformed view of salvation by grace only. A "lay mission worker" even sent him a copy of a tract published by the *Faith, Prayer and Tract League*, entitled: "Just Outside the Door." The tract tells the old story about the artist who painted the picture of Jesus knocking at the door of man's heart, and who, being criticized for not having painted a latch on the door, remarked that the latch was on the inside. Well, as one might well imagine, the tract finally offers such cheap and sentimental, but also wicked nonsense as this: "My friend, is Jesus just outside of the door of your heart? Yes, He is standing there, if you have not opened the door, and let Him in. Can you see Him standing there at your heart's door, knocking? How long have you been causing Him to stand there? How long must He stand there before you let Him in? Must He stand and knock all in vain? The latch of your heart's door is on the inside!" And to this the editor of *The Banner* replies

that "this is Arminianism pure and simple. The latch of our heart's door is not on the inside but on the outside. . . and if it is true that the latch to the door of every sinner's heart is on the outside, the picture of Christ standing at the door vainly seeking entrance is a thoroughly false representation of the offer of salvation."

Thus far the story of the hymn and the latch.

Now, we sincerely rejoice to notice that the editor of *The Banner* does not want to go all the way along with "Arminianism pure and simple," and to read articles of this nature in the official organ of the Christian Reformed Churches. And we wish that these churches, and especially also the editor of *The Banner* would return altogether from the errors they adopted in 1924, and forsake the slippery path of Arminian and Pelagian doctrine which they chose at the synod of Kalamazoo. If they would receive sufficient grace to confess that they erred when they adopted the Three Points, and when on their basis they expelled from their midst brethren who had always championed, and still do champion the cause of Reformed truth, as their opponents themselves are forced to admit, our hearts would, indeed, rejoice.

However, it is not in the heart of the editor of *The Banner* to repudiate the doctrine of the Three Points. And because of this, he is not able to defend his cause, the cause which he intended to defend in his articles: that salvation is purely by sovereign grace. One feels this all through the articles. His position is weak. One even receives the impression that he himself was conscious of his weak position when he wrote the articles. The tone is after all too apologetic. The thought of the Three Points was evidently constantly before him while he wrote. The result is, that while he condemns Arminianism as unscriptural, i.e. as it is expressed by the hymn he criticizes, and by the painting of the door with the latch on the inside, he virtually admits by way of apology that the Arminian viewpoint is correct nevertheless. And that is deplorable.

Let me point to a few instances that may prove this contention.

The editor writes: "A third mistaken assumption is that it is Christ's *intention* to save every sinner to whom the plea comes to believe and be saved. The thought is that Christ paid for the sins of all, wants to save all, and stands at the door of every heart, but that whether he will be admitted depends entirely on whether the sinner makes up his mind to receive him." And this the editor rightly condemns as Arminian. But, according to him, the "truth is that, though the blessings of the gospel are sincerely offered to all who hear the gospel, Christ died only for his people in the sense that for them only did he actually pay the price of sin." And a little further: "salvation is

sincerely offered to all on the condition of faith and repentance." Again he writes: "We do not deny that Christ pleads with sinners. Nor do we deny that his pleadings are sincere, earnest, and insistent, and that those pleas often fall on deaf ears."

Now, if those that insist on singing and speaking of Christ's standing at the door of the heart, knocking, have the power of discernment and distinction, they will reply to the editor of *The Banner*: but you are teaching the same doctrine as we do! And they will be quite right in replying thus. Or what does it mean that Christ sincerely offers salvation to all that hear the gospel? And what does it mean that He sincerely, earnestly, and insistently pleads with sinners, and that, too, with those that reject Him, so that His plea falls on deaf ears? What does Christ sincerely offer? Salvation, the editor replies. Very well, but does not *salvation* include regeneration, the indwelling of Christ, the coming of Christ into our hearts? According to the editor of *The Banner*, therefore, Christ sincerely offers to the sinner, even to him that is never regenerated and called, to come into his heart. But what else is this than to stand at the door of the sinner's heart and knock, and to ask him to open the door? Is not the question quite in order: why does the editor of *The Banner* make so much noise about a hymn and a latch, while he himself teaches the same doctrine that is expressed in the hymn and represented by the latch? May only Christian Reformed synods and ministers teach Arminian doctrine, and must laymen be bluffed into silence when they follow the example of their leaders?

The Christ presented by that painting which the editor of *The Banner* criticizes is weak and helpless, to be sure. For the latch is on the inside, and He cannot open the door to come into the heart of the sinner. But He is at least plainly sincere. His plea is evidently in earnest: He is willing to come in, if only the sinner will open the door. But what to think of the Christ the editor of *The Banner* presents, Who stands, pleading to come in, at a door whose latch is on the outside, and that cannot be opened from the inside at all? If any man would thus stand pleading with one within, at a door with the key on the outside, would you not say to him: man, why don't you prove your sincerity by simply turning that key, and opening the door? The Christ of *The Banner* is not sincere. His actions belie His words.

Yes, indeed, the defense put up by the editor of *The Banner* is very weak, because it teaches the very same error it purposes to combat, and it denies the very faith it would champion.

Or what must one think of a sentence like this: "But though Christ pleads with sinners to repent of their sins and believe on him, *he does not plead with them to do what He alone is able to do*: namely to

open their hearts to his regenerating Spirit?" (Italics are the editor's, not mine.) Must this statement be ascribed to mere carelessness and lack of clear thinking on the part of the editor? I think not. I am inclined to think that the attempt on the editor's part to fight Arminianism and champion the cause of Reformed truth was frustrated throughout by his own Arminianism and that the spectre of the Three Points constantly confused his mind as he was writing his articles. Plainly, in the above sentence the editor teaches that the sinner *is able of himself to repent and believe*. For, to put it in the form of a syllogism: 1. Christ pleads with sinners to repent and to believe. 2. Christ never pleads with them to do what they cannot do. 3. They are, therefore, able to repent and believe. But this, too, is "Arminianism pure and simple."

Does it do any good to finish such a sentence by saying that Christ alone is able to open the hearts to his regenerating Spirit? Is not that in flat contradiction with the rest of the sentence? Or is, perhaps, the editor consistently Arminian here? Taking the sentence by itself, and proceeding on the assumption that the editor knew what he was writing, one comes to the following conclusions as to his views: 1. Christ pleads with the sinner to repent and to believe. 2. This the sinner is able to do. 3. If he does repent and believe, Christ opens his heart and regenerates him.

And this would be quite in accord with another statement that occurs in these articles by the editor of *The Banner*, namely, "that salvation is sincerely offered to all on condition of faith and repentance." A truly Reformed man would never make a statement like this, for he knows that there are no *conditions* to salvation by grace whatsoever. Even faith and repentance are gifts of grace, part of the salvation of which the editor of *The Banner* declares that it is "offered to all on condition of faith and repentance."

I am sincerely sorry that I have to write all this. Some had assured me that the editor of *The Banner* was opposing Arminianism and championing the cause of Reformed truth. And in this I heartily rejoiced, before I had myself read the articles, for nothing there is that I could desire more fervently than to see the Christian Reformed Churches return from their evil way of false doctrine chosen in 1924. But as I read the articles I became more and more disappointed. For they are characterized throughout by the same duplicity as the Three Points, will confuse the minds and hearts of the Christian Reformed reading public, and result in a more hearty singing on their part of the hymn "Let Jesus come into your heart," and a deeper admiration for the painting of the door with the latch on the outside. As long as the Three Points are the pattern of Reformed teaching, on the pulpit, in the catechism room, or through the press, there is

no hope that the tide of Arminianism, and of modernism ultimately, that is flooding the churches, can be stemmed. The editor of *The Banner* is trying to fill a hole in the dike with dirt obtained by digging another hole in the same dike.

H. H.

The Triple Knowledge

An Exposition Of The Heidelberg Catechism

PART TWO

OF MAN'S REDEMPTION

Lord's Day X.

Chapter 2.

The Scope Of God's Providence.

This, then, that God, the Creator of the universe, is omnipresent, not only in His power, but also in His essence; that as the transcendent One He is immanent in all things, and that, too, as the living and ever active God, Who continues to speak the Word that once creatively proceeds out of His mouth, and Who thus upholds all things by the Word of His power, is the basic idea of the providence of God.

From moment to moment, therefore, God is the Lord, and remains strictly and absolutely sovereign with relation to the world He created, not only because He created all things, but also because they are in His hand, and they exist only by His will. This is to be understood in the most absolute and unlimited sense of the word. The sun, and moon, and stars, the sea and the dry land, the mountains and the hills, forest and plain, trees and flowers, corn and wheat, rain and sunshine, gold and silver; the bread we eat, and the water we drink, and the air we breathe; the light and the eye, the sound and the ear; our power of mind and will, the strength to labor and toil,—all things exist and continue to exist, each in their own sphere and according to their own nature, only by the will and word of God "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." God is the Lord. Without Him nothing could have had being at all; and without His will nothing would continue to exist even for a moment.

And this providence of God implies, too, that He is

absolute Ruler of the universe, and that He governs all things according to His decree and eternal purpose. This signifies, in the first place, that in the world He created, the Lord maintains and executes His own ordinances, and strictly and sovereignly controls and directs the movement of every creature. The universe is not a dead, inactive thing, or combination of motionless beings: it is a living, organic whole. It is the creation and reflection of the living Word of God, of God of Whom it may be said that He is *actus purissimus*, i.e. activity in the absolute sense of the word. And so, everything lives and moves in all the rich and wonderful creation of God. The planets move around the sun in the firmament, even as they rotate around their own axes, and so the sun rises every morning to drive away the night, and sets every evening at its appointed time; the moon glides through the silent night, flooding it with its mellow, silvery light; and the planets, comets, and stars roam with incredible speed through the immensity of space, each keeping to their appointed course. Light it is said, moves with a rapidity of one hundred and eighty six thousand miles a second; and though with far less speed, sound also travels: the reverberation of thunder, the howling of the wind, the whisper of the zephyr, the song of the lark, the cry of the young raven, the roar of the lion, the spoken word, the prayer that leaves your lips,—all these, and thousands upon thousands of other sounds that constantly fill the universe, have wings, and fly into space. The color of the lily and of the rose, as well as their fragrance, the lingering glow of the setting sun in the western sky, the silvery path struck by the moon across the lake, the reflection of your face in the mirror, the beautiful span of the rainbow in the heavens,—they all live and move according to their own nature and laws. The clouds gather, the flash of lightning zigzags through the darkness, the rain descends, rivers and brooks restlessly meander to their destination, tides rise and fall, the seed falls into the earth and dies to rise again, the seasons follow one another in regular succession, your heart beats and the blood courses through your veins,—everything is constantly in motion. And then there is the movement of the living creature, of animals and men, of holy angels and wicked demons: the worm crawls along in its path, the sparrow takes off on its wings, the wild beast roams through the forest, man thinks and plans, desires and chooses, speaks and acts, the angels sing and attend to the Word of their Lord, and the devils believe and tremble! In all the wide creation there is nothing motionless or dead. And even if we could penetrate with our perception into the existence of a grain of sand, we would detect life and movement similar to that of the stars in the firmament!

The doctrine of God's providence teaches us that God controls and directs all these movements and actions of the creature. As the Catechism expresses it: He "governs heaven and earth, and all creatures," and that "as it were by his hand." God is the Lord. He remains absolutely sovereign in relation to the world. When we contemplate the manifold movements and activities of the various creatures, we notice that they are not all of the same kind. Some are involuntary and automatic: their organic functions are unconscious, determined by what we are accustomed to call "law"; others are deliberate and voluntary, determined by the inner instincts and choice of the creatures themselves. And again, the former may be distinguished into two classes: those that occur regularly, so that their movements may be predicated accurately both as to time and space; and those that take place without such regularity of recurrence. The sun rises and sets each day of the year exactly at the appointed moment, so that the length of each day for a certain part of the globe can be predicted with absolute certainty; but the weathermen often fails even when he prepares his forecast one day ahead. And who is able to predict "rain and drought, fruitful and barren years?" Again, the deliberate or voluntary movements and acts of the creature may be distinguished into those that are the result of the limited instinct of the animals, and those that are the expression of intelligent will, the acts of men and angels. All these acts and movements are under the government and direction of the Sovereign of heaven and earth, and there is nothing that moves or stirs apart from or against His will.

This means that we may not distinguish, either deliberately or thoughtlessly, between events that are "providential," and others that have nothing to do with the providence of God, or between the "natural" and the "supernatural." All things are providential, and all things are alike natural and supernatural. The unbelieving man of science takes delight in the discovery of laws, and in speaking of them as if they were something apart from God, forces inherent in the universe by virtue of which the world runs by itself. For the Christian a "law of nature" is nothing but God's regular and orderly mode of operation. There are laws of gravity and gravitation, laws of contraction and expansion, of attraction and repulsion, principles of chemistry and physics, but they are all governed constantly, and that, too, "as it were by his hand," by the living God. Even those "laws" that can be expressed in exact mathematical formulas reveal but the orderly way in which God works and rules the universe. God works harmoniously and in orderly fashion. The universe is no chaos. It is exactly because of this fact that man can be a "co-worker" with God, and that he can order his own life

and activity according to God's ordinances and times. How impossible this would be, if God's mode of working were arbitrary! How impossible it would be for man to order his life, if the sun would rise at three o'clock in the morning one day, and at noon the next; or if he could not depend on the regular recurrence of the seasons; or if a stone thrown in the air would come down at a certain velocity today, at a different speed to-morrow, and would remain suspended aloft at other times! However, God is a God of order, and His orderly way of operation in the universe man discovers in order that he may arrange his own life and work accordingly. "Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of the ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rie in their place? *For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him.* For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cartwheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. *This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.*" Isa. 28:24-28. But the fact that God works in a regular and orderly fashion may not tempt us so to speak of "laws" as if these operated by themselves, independently from the living God. When lightning strikes your house or barn, it is His hand that directs it, and when the sun rises and sets at appointed times, it is again His hand that moves the solar system. When a tornado suddenly tears across a stretch of country, along a very arbitrary and unpredictable path, destroying everything in its way, it is the Sovereign of heaven and earth that guides the tornado "as it were by his hand"; and when a stone falls to the ground according to an exact mathematical formula, it is by His hand that the stone is pulled down.

But this is true also of the movement and acts of the living creatures, that move by an impulse from within. The sparrow that takes to its wings is directed in its course by the hand of the Lord of all: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father," Matt. 10:29. Swarms of beetles fly down to settle on your bean crop, and they devour the plants in a single night, but the course of every one of them is determined by the same sovereign Lord: He directs their course "as it were by his hand." Millions of invisible germs creep and multiply into your lungs, dragging you down into the grave; mosquitoes carry the malaria germ into your blood, prostrating you on your bed with a burning fever; the worm crawls along

the ground, apparently without purpose; millions upon millions of fishes small and great sweep through rivers and lakes and oceans; the eagle soars into the sky, and the hawk glides in circles above its prey; the lion roams through the forest; and all the millions upon millions of living creatures move about on land and in the sea, in meadows and forests, on mountains, in deserts, or in the sky, swarming and creeping, flying and running, leaping and jumping; they sing and chirp, they cry and roar, they seek their food and rejoice,—all directed collectively and individually by the hand of the Sovereign of heaven and earth. Not one of them is ever forgotten. "These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth." Ps. 104:27-30.

And with equal force this is applicable to all the acts of God's moral, rational creatures, men and angels. God is the Lord even in relation to the thoughts and intents, the desires and aspirations, the imaginations and determinations of the heart of man, and in relation to all his acts. Here, at least, the Pelagian insists, there is a limit to the sovereignty of the Most High. Man is a free, moral, rational creature. He has an intelligent will. He makes his own determinations, and that, too, by free choice, either for good or evil. Hence, his determinations of will are beyond the control of God. He is a free agent. And he alone is responsible for his acts. It is quite impossible, therefore, that the thoughts of his heart and his deeds, which he performs as the result of his free determinations, can be predetermined, or that they can be controlled and governed by God. The freedom of God's moral and rational creatures constitutes a limit to God's sovereignty. Others less radical, but hesitant to confess God's absolute sovereignty over the acts of men and angels, and fearful lest the latter's responsibility is denied, rather describe God's relation to these acts by the word *permission*. Especially with application to the evil acts of men, they prefer to say that God *permits* them. Or the term *cooperation* is used to define God's relation to the moral acts of God's rational creatures. We make a threefold distinction in the concept of God's providence, and speak of His preservation, cooperation, and government. In respect to the acts of His moral creatures, it is said that God cooperates with them and in them.

Now, it is undoubtedly true that man is a moral being, and that as such he may be said to be a free agent in a certain sense. He is endowed with intelligence and will. Accordingly, he acts with conscious choice and determination from within. He is a per-

son, the subject of his own actions, and responsible for them. Even in his lowest state, he retains some knowledge of God, and acts in relation to Him. The work of the law is inscribed in his heart, and his conscience either excuses or accuses him. And God will surely bring him into judgment, that he may receive according to his work. But all this does not alter the truth that God remains sovereign also with respect to man's moral acts. He controls them, governs them, and through them fulfills His own will, and realizes His own counsel. One dare not say that God *permits* the acts of His moral creatures, either good or evil, for that would postulate an agent capable of operating in independence from Him, and imply a denial of His absolute sovereignty over men and angels. Nor does the term *cooperation* precisely denote the relation between God's sovereignty and man's acts as a moral agent, for this suggests a relation of equality. Reformed theologians are wont to define the relation by the terms *primary cause*, and *secondary causes*. And this distinction has a good deal in its favor. It avoids the danger of destroying man's moral nature, and of presenting God as the *Author* of man's moral actions; and yet, it leaves man utterly dependent upon God. Certain it is that the relation between God's providence and man's moral acts is such that on God's part it is one of absolute sovereignty, on man's part it is one of dependence. His freedom is never sovereign. It is a creaturely freedom, and, therefore, dependent. God is immanent, too, in the hearts and minds, the thoughts and inclinations, the desires and determinations of men, as the living Lord, governing them according to His will, so that, even though man remains the conscious and willing author of his own acts, it is God that brings them about, and thus accomplishes His eternal purpose.

This is the clear teaching of Scripture. The sons of Jacob certainly acted as moral agents, following the inclination of their own evil hearts, and seeking to accomplish their own purpose, when they sold their brother Joseph to the Midianites; yet God so controlled and sovereignly governed their every intention, that His purpose was accomplished, as Joseph later explains: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." Gen. 50:20. The sons of Eli certainly did wickedly, and "the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord," I Sam. 2:17; and deliberately they refused to hearken unto the voice of their father; "notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their father, *because the Lord would slay them.*" God so governed their sinful way, that in the way of their sin they should be slain according to His purpose. I Sam. 2:25. Sovereignly God hardens Pharaoh's heart, and the Word of God must even be proclaimed to him: "And in very

deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared in all the earth." Ex. 9:16. Nore dare it be said that Pharaoh was *first* hardening his own heart, and that God's hardening of the king's heart was merely an act of retribution, as is frequently alleged, for before Moses even reaches Egypt the Lord informs him that He will harden Pharaoh's heart, so that he will not let the people go. Ex. 4:21. The haughty ruler of the world-power boasts of his own strength, and intends to accomplish his own evil purpose: to destroy Jerusalem and the people of God; and he is not at all conscious of the fact that God uses him to cut off "nations not a few; yet, he is only the axe that boasts against the hand that heweth therewith, and the saw that magnifies itself against the hand that draws it. Isa. 10:5ff. There is no doubt about it, that Judas, and the Sanhedrin, and all the powers that rose against the Lord Jesus to slay Him, acted as moral agents, when they fulfilled their evil way upon the Saviour, yet they crucified Him through the determinate counsel of God. Acts 2:23. And so the Church confesses, when Peter and John return to them, being released by the rulers of the Jews: "Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven and earth, and the sea and all that in them is; Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." Acts 4:24-28. Indeed, "the kings heart is in the hand of the Lord as rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will." Prov. 21:1. In the light of all these passages, there can be no question about the Scriptural teaching on this point: God is the Lord, and He sovereignly governs and controls to His own purpose all the purposes and acts of men and angels, both good and evil. He sits enthroned on high in the heavens, and accomplishes whatsoever He pleases. And there is no power in heaven or on earth that can even for a moment take the reins out of His hand, or thwart His sovereign purpose.

H. H.

O Thou Jehovah, God of hosts,
What mighty one Thy likeness boasts?
In all Thy works and vast designs,
Thy faithfulness forever shines.

Debate:

AFFIRMATIVE REBUTTAL

(Resolved that a Local Consistory has the Right to Act Contrary to the Church Order)

In answering my opponent I first of all wish to state very emphatically that the statement made by him, that the origin and immediate cause of this debate was an action taken by the Consistory of Hudsonville. And the fact that he brings up this action in this debate is very unethical. In this debate I am not, and neither do I have the right to speak for my consistory. The truth is that the sole origin and the immediate cause of this debate is that the Editor of the Standard Bearer has assigned unto my opponent and I the abstract question, "Resolved that a local consistory has the right to act contrary to the Church Order." I also wish to inform our readers that we were both limited by the editor to five typewritten pages, which is equivalent to about four columns of the Standard Bearer. But lo, instead of four, my opponent used up more than eleven columns, or almost three times the space allotted him. By taking such undue advantage he has really forfeited all right of expecting an answer from me.

Further I wish to state that my opponent has taken upon himself the liberty to change the subject of our debate, so that according to him it now reads "Resolved that a local consistory has the right to *revise* or *change* the Church Order". By doing this he has made it very easy for himself to maintain the negative, and at the same time made my task an impossible one. That my opponent thus reconstrues the subject assigned to us is evident from his *Definition of Terms*, p. 123, as also from the last sentence of his so-called introduction, which reads as follows: "Not doing so (keeping ourselves strictly to the issues my opponent enumerated, B. K.) we sidestep the main question which is whether or no a *local consistory* has the right to act contrary to the Church Order, i.e. the private *right to revise* (or change) *its articles*". (I underscore B. K.). The reason that my opponent so reconstrues our assigned subject is because he argues that *to act contrary* to necessarily implies *to change* or *revise*. This I deny, and I also deny that we may so reconstrue the subject of our debate. Let me illustrate. A citizen may very well be in full agreement with our present speed law of 35 miles per hour. But suppose his child meets with an accident, and he is advised to rush the child to a distant hospital as quickly as possible, and doing so he greatly exceeds the speed limit, he will perhaps even run some red lights, and give no heed to stop signs. Now the fact that he acts contrary to these rules, does that necessarily imply that he wants to

revise or to *change* them? Not at all, for under normal circumstances he is perfectly agreed with them. Or to use another illustration. A Consistory is perfectly agreed with article 63 of the Church Order which reads, "The Lord's Supper shall be administered at least every two or three months." But suppose that a grave emergency arises in the congregation, so that the consistory feels that it is impossible to rightly celebrate the Lord's Supper under the circumstances, and *acting contrary* to this article of the Church Order, it decides not to celebrate the Lord's Supper at the allotted time. Now does the fact that the local consistory acted contrary to this article necessarily imply a *change* or *revision*? One more illustration. Imagine that Classis, because of the lateness of the hour, or for some other reason, decides to suspend the 'rondvraag' and thus act contrary to Article 41 of the Church Order, does this *necessarily* imply a change or revision of this article?

Besides it would be sheer folly to debate on the question whether or not a *local consistory*, or even Classis, or a Particular Synod, has the right to *change* or *revise* the Church Order. Assuming this to be the real issue in our debate it has led my opponent to the most foolish arguments and illustrations, even as we find under VII on page 129. There his imagination carries him so far, that to uphold the affirmative would even imply that a local consistory could even eliminate articles from the Church Order. Such foolish arguments are not even worthy of an answer. By thus presenting the issue he has succeeded in throwing up a smoke-screen for the less observing reader, and making it very easy for himself to maintain the negative, while at the same time making it an impossible issue for the affirmative.

What then is the sole issue in this debate? It is this whether or not the circumstances can ever be such that a local consistory is justified in taking an action which is contrary to Church Order. Must a local consistory always abide by the Church Order, no matter what the circumstances may be. Is it true that the Church Order is necessarily as binding upon the conscience as are the Holy Scriptures? This my opponent maintains, and I deny. He writes as follows: ". . . it follows that, in acting contrary to the Church Order, they before their consciousness, act contrary to the Scriptures, and commit a sin just as great." He then proceeds to put this to a test, when he continues as follows: "The very first article of the Church Order reads, 'For the maintenance of good order in the Church it is necessary that there should be: offices, assemblies, supervision of doctrine, sacraments and ceremonies, and Christian discipline.' Let anyone contradict if he can, this article without being accused and denounced by his heart of contradicting the Scriptures." I agree with my opponent that one

cannot contradict this article without also contradicting the Scriptures, because this article contains provisions which are directly taken from the Word of God. But does it follow that this is also true of all the articles of the Church Order? Indeed not. Let us put this to a test. Article 23 of the Church Order prescribes that the elders shall visit the families of the congregation both before and after the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Would my opponent maintain that not to do this, and thus act contrary to this article, is just as great a sin as to contradict God's Word? Article 37 prescribes that in large congregations the consistory shall as a rule meet once a week, would my opponent dare to maintain, that if a consistory of a large congregation deems it sufficient to meet once or twice a month would feel in their conscience that they acted contrary to God's Word? Is it just as great a sin for Classis to suspend the rule of Article 41 in a given instance, and thus act contrary to this Article, as it would be to contradict the Word of God? Article 67 prescribes that the Churches shall observe, in addition to the Sunday, also Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, the Day of Prayer, the National Thanksgiving Day, and Old and New Years Day." Is it my opponents "unwavering faith" that this article was actually taken directly from the Word of God, and that if a local consistory, because of some circumstances would not have services, let's say on Christmas, or on Old Year's Day, and thus act contrary to the Church Order, that that would be a sin, "a sin just as great as to act contrary to the Scriptures?" If for example a minister gives a more detailed explanation of the catechism so that he completes the catechism in two of three years, instead of in one year as prescribed in Article 68, would he be "accused and denounced by his heart of contradicting the Scriptures," as my opponent would have us believe? Article 70 prescribes that consistories shall attend to it "that the matrimonial state be confirmed in the presence of Christ's Church." Does every local consistory that does not attend to this, and thus act contrary to Church Order, "commit a sin just as great" as acting contrary to Scripture? Thus we have put the contention of our opponent to the test, and I am sure he himself is now ready to admit that every act contrary to Church Order, is not necessarily an act against the Scriptures. My opponent does not sufficiently distinguish between (*jus divinas*) divine laws, and (*jus humanas*) human laws. As I stated in my last article, "Indeed a Church Order must be based upon the Word of God, and contains many prescribed ordinances which do bind the conscience, not however because they are found in the Church Order, but because they are provisions taken directly from the Word of God. Even then it may not be said "Thus saith the Church Order," but "Thus

saith the Lord." Then it is not the Church Order, but the Word of God that binds the conscience."

My opponent is of the opinion that there is a certain spirit amongst us that scoffs at the Church Order. He writes "Isn't it about time that we refrain from scoffing at the Church Order. Isn't it about time that we stop saying, "Well brethren its only the Church Order." Methinks it is. Such talk is positively dangerous." If there is such a spirit among us, I am not aware of it. Of such a spirit I would not merely say that it is dangerous, but that it is positively wicked! But on the other hand it is extremely dangerous to hold the Roman Catholic position that any departure from an ecclesiastical decree, is necessarily *per se* wrong. We may not bind the conscience with the Church Order, for this prerogative belongs to God and to His Word alone. This is the great principle of the Reformation, and is part of that liberty with which Christ has set us free.

Our position is clearly stated by Voetius, Rutgers and Jansen, as well as by the following quotation from the "Church Order Commentary" written by Monsma and Van Dellen. "The Churches and Classis are therefore in duty bound to observe the rulings of the Church Order. The Church Order is not a book of iron-clad laws, it is not a set of legal laws which must be applied no matter what the result might be. These rules have been adopted to *build* the churches, not to *break* them. *Discretion* and *consideration* must always be used. But the Church Order does consist of rules of good order to which all have agreed and which all must keep, "until it be otherwise ordained by the General Synod." If in any particular situation the observance of the Church Order is a physical impossibility or would clearly create *harm* and *disorder*, a consistory or Classis is free to suspend the rule for that instant, if at least the article in question does not concern a definite principle of *Holy Writ*. But even so it would be well in most instances to gain classical or synodical approval for such exceptional procedure." (I underscore. B.K.) My opponent states my position exactly when he states, "But his stand is that a resolution of this character (that a local consistory may never act contrary to Church Order) is strictly out of order, that it should not be made, that in making it the Classis oversteps its bounds by interfering with what he considers to be the private and inalienable right of a local consistory." This is exactly my position, upon two conditions: (1) Unless Classis can show that the local consistory in acting contrary to the Church Order violated a principle of God's Word; (2) Or that the circumstances were not such that the consistory was justified in taking the action which was contrary to the Church Order.

I have come to the end of my allotted space of five typewritten pages. I hope my opponent does not

again take undue advantage of me, by taking more than his allotted space. This is my last word on the subject in the Standard Bearer.

B. K.

NEGATIVE REBUTTAL

The final paragraph of my introduction reads: "Now I believe that I have discovered all the issues in this disputation. If my opponent knows of others, let him advance them and I will be only too glad to consider them. If he knows of no others, he and I must keep ourselves strictly to these issues. Not doing so, we sidestep the main issue which is whether or no a *local consistory* has the right to act contrary to the Church Order, i.e., the private right to revise its articles."

The argumentation of my opponent does present issues which do not appear in "The statement of the issues" of my introduction. Some of these issues—the ones advanced by my opponent—I purposely eliminated as admitted material. I did so in order to place my opponent and myself close to the heart of the question which is whether a *local consistory* has the right to depart from the church order. However, as the elimination of what I termed "admitted material" was my doing and thus not also of my opponent (he had no opportunity as I did not beforehand come to him with my "statement of issues") I am obliged and am also very willing to carefully consider all the issues which he advances in his argumentation, also those which I eliminated.

Examining the argumentation of my opponent, I discover in it VIII issues. They are:

I. Do the authorities on the Presbyterian or Reformed system of Church government reason on the side of the affirmative proposition, i.e., does my opponent have these authorities on his side?

II. Are the articles of the Church Order binding upon the conscience?

III. May the Church Order be changed?

IV. Is it well possible that in a particular situation the observance of the Church Order would clearly create harm and disorder in the congregation?

V. Is the Church Order binding?

VI. Is the requirement of the negative proposition incompatible with Christian liberty?

VII. Does the requirement of the negative proposition place the Church Order on a par with the Bible?

VIII. Is the requirement of the negative proposition hierarchical?

Before I begin my rebuttal, I have need of making just one remark. My opponent tells us that (to quote his own words), "the question in this debate is not at all whether or not a local consistory may *arbitrarily and without good reason* act contrary to the mutually accepted Church Order," that, "if this were the question in our discussion it would be nonsense." (I certainly agree with him here). According to my opponent "the question in this debate is whether a local consistory is so bound by the Church Order, *that it may never, under any circumstances, make any decision, or take any actions which are contrary to the Church Order.*" My opponent goes on to say: "We of the affirmative maintain that it is very well possible that in a particular situation the observance of the Church Order would be a physical impossibility, or would clearly create hardship or disorder in the congregation, and that in such circumstances the consistory would be perfectly free to suspend the rule for that instant, if at least the article in question does not concern a definite prescribed principle in Holy Writ. The opposition must prove that under any and all circumstances it is always *per se* wrong for a local consistory to act contrary to the Church Order." (My opponent seems to be forgetting here that, as it is he who argues on the side of the affirmative, the burden of proof lies with him. "He who affirms must prove").

Thus my opponent wants to argue on the side of the positive proposition: Resolved that a local consistory has the right to act contrary to the Church Order *only* when and if it has true need and a very good reason. But my opponent should realize that not *he* but *logic* is master here. Now *logic* spurns this limitation, so that, in proving the proposition as he formulates it, my opponent, despite what he can do about it, will be proving that a local consistory has the right to act contrary to the Church Order for a good reason or a bad reason or no reason at all. I shall make this plain right here. Consider that implicit in the right to disregard the Church Order *for a good reason* is also the right to pass judgment on the reason. Therefore the synod could do nothing about it, if a local consistory disregarded the Church Order *for a very bad reason*, if it maintained that according to its conviction, the reason was *good*. It means that the contention to the effect that a local consistory has the right to go contrary to the Church Order *when it has good reason* is equivalent to the proposition that a local consistory has the right to do exactly as it pleases so far as the Church Order is concerned. So, we may just as well keep ourselves to the propositions as originally formulated, although I have no objections at all in proving the proposition that a local consistory has not the right to act con-

trary to the Church Order *ever*. In fact, this is exactly the meaning of the negative proposition. This is precisely what I am laboring to prove.

So then, my opponent gains nothing by adding to the positive proposition, "*only if it has real need or good reason.*" My opponent himself brings this out rather effectively. He writes: "Such folly (the folly of a consistory *arbitrarily* and *without good reason* acting contrary to the Church Order) would lead to chaos. Imagine what would happen, if in a congested city as Chicago, a driver of an automobile would *arbitrarily* and *without good reason* whatever, disregard the traffic rules, stop signs, traffic signals, and one way drives?" The thought of what would happen, I agree, is too horrible to contemplate. But wouldn't the resultant havoc be just as great should that driver disregard every traffic rule *for a very good reason*? Methinks it would. If some one sets fire to my house, the building burns, doesn't it, whether it was done for a most excellent reason or for no good reason at all. So, too, if our consistories departed from the Church Order, each from a different article, the result would be chaos, though the reasons were good. It is plain that my opponent gains nothing by limiting the positive proposition. Actually it is not limited by his addition. It means that the evidence I advanced to prove the negative proposition loses none of its cogency and force as indirect evidence of the falsity of the positive proposition as limited by that addition. My opponent therefore must still break it all down, if he will win in this debate. He can't dispose of it by simply saying that it does not apply to the positive proposition as he formulates it. It still applies in all its force. Now my rebuttal. I first strive to break down the evidence my opponent advances in proof of the positive proposition.

1. My opponent reasons: *A local consistory has the right to act contrary to the Church Order, for*

a. *The authorities on the Reformed System of Church government reason on the side of the positive proposition and thus I have these authorities on my side.*

Is my opponent correct in this his contention? Let us see. He quotes Joh. Jansen to the following effect: "Hier uit blijkt voldoende, dat de onderhouding der kerkenordening niet zoo streng werd voorgeschreven, dat er geene vrijheid van beweging overbleef. Wel ging die vrijheid niet zoo ver, dat ze in ongeregeldeheid en bandeloosheid oversloeg. Want de afwijking zelve was aan een drietal regelen gebonden: a) er moest reden voor afwijking zijn, de goede orde en stichting der gemeente moest er beter door worden bevorderd. b) Er mocht ondertusschen niet in de kerkenordening zelf veranderd worden, want dat mocht alleen door een generale synode geschieden; en

c) als er verschil over de afwijking rees, dan was de dienaar aan de kerkeraad, de kerkeraad aan de classes, de classe aan de provinciale en deze weer aan de generale synode gehoorzaamheid schuldig. Zoo bleef er ruimte, maar binnen zekere grenzen; en regelmaat zonder formalisme." The view here encountered is this: Only synod may change *the written text* of the Church Order. In the two years that intervene between the meetings of the general synod, a local consistory, may depart from the Church Order and thus change it *in practice* and as always ready to obey the classis in the event the latter disapproves the departure. Thus the view contained in this excerpt (from the Kerkenordening of Jansen) is this, "*A classis has the right to act contrary to the Church Order in subjection to Classis with the privilege of appealing its case to synod and, if need be, to the general synod.*" But is this the question in our dispute? Does this statement form the positive proposition on the side of which my opponent argues? Let me show that it is not. The contention to the effect that a local consistory has the right to act contrary to the Church Order *in submission to classis and synod* is equivalent in meaning to the negative proposition that *fundamentally and in the final instance a local consistory has not the right to act contrary to the Church Order*. But my opponent argues on the side of the positive proposition *that a local consistory does have this right and may exercise it independent of the classis*. And I will now show that I have every right to maintain that this is also his view and that he actually means to prove it.

1. My opponent and his consistory acted contrary to the Church Order in a manner explained in my introduction. Did they, thereupon, indicate in any way that they were purposing to have classis pass judgment on their action? They did not. Fact is that they even refrained from consulting with the consistory of the sister church with whom the person admitted by them to the Lord's supper had affiliated. 2. If my opponent is not arguing and did not intend to argue on the side of the positive proposition that was given him, should he not have notified me before hand? This he failed to do. Through his silence he actually agreed to strive to prove the positive proposition that was given him. 3. In all his disputes with the classis he at no time indicated by anything he said that what he contended for is that a local consistory has the right to go contrary to the Church Order *in submission to classis*. 4. How does the positive proposition, as *restated by my opponent read*? It reads: "Resolved that a local consistory has the right to act contrary to the Church Order *when it has true need for this and a good reason.*" Thus it does not read: "Resolved that a local consistory has the right to act contrary to the Church Order *in sub-*

mission to classis and synod." My opponent affirms even with great emphasis that he would strive to prove that a local consistory has the right in question *only when there is true need and a good reason.* In the paragraph in which he restates the positive proposition absolutely nothing is said about a local consistory having the right in question *in submission to classis and synod.* This is conclusive. So I shall have to ask my opponent to keep himself to the positive proposition *as he himself restated it.* Let us keep ourselves to the *question* in this dispute. If we don't we at last won't know any more whether we're coming or going or where to go or whether we go at all; nor will our readers know. In fine, I am satisfied that I have made very clear that my opponent does not have the so-called authorities he quoted on his side. Fact is that he has them against him. (But let no one conclude from this that I am agreed with Joh. Jansen's view. Fact is that I am opposed also to his view. But this is another question). Just what is the difference between the view of Rev. Kok and that of Joh. Jansen? Precisely this: according to Rev. Kok the consistory has the right to act contrary to the Church Order independent of the classis. According to Joh. Jansen, the consistory has this right only in submission to classis, which is equivalent to saying that fundamentally and in the final analysis it does not have this right.

(This argument, under issue I is cont. on p. 159)

II. My opponent argues: *A local consistory has the right to act contrary to the Church Order, for it is not binding upon the conscience, for its articles are but a collection of ecclesiastical rules, human regulations, and thus not the very infallible Word of God, which alone may bind the conscience of man.*

I maintain: This reasoning of my opponent is false. The Church Order does indeed bind the conscience, though not the very Word of God, for a) Its articles are not a mere collection of "human regulations," for in their aggregate they set forth the very and only system of Church government contained in and legitimized by God's Word. Therefore they bind the conscience of every local consistory that shares this conviction. A local consistory, of a contrary conviction, is in duty bound to withdraw from the denomination of churches organized on the basis of these articles and to select for itself a church polity other than the one set forth by our Church Order. B) The local consistory solemnly pledges (as has already been made plain) to show all diligence in observing not some but all the articles of the Church Order (also in practice certainly) until it be otherwise ordained by synod. Therefore on account of the sacred pledge but not, certainly, because they are the very infallible Word of God, the articles of the Church Order, without a single exception (the articles approv-

ed and adopted by all the churches on their broadest ecclesiastical meeting) are binding upon the conscience, for God's Word demands of us that we keep our sacred pledges.

And just what was promised? Exactly this: to show *all* diligence in observing the articles of the Church Order, until it be otherwise ordained by the synod. Is this promise so binding that it may never be broken? Absolutely. Do the churches make this promise on the condition that any one of their number may break it whenever this is deemed necessary? Absolutely not. What good is a mutual promise that a local consistory may break whenever it deems this expedient or necessary, thus whenever it chooses? such a promise is absolutely worthless. It is mockery to make a mutual promise on such a condition, and it is an insult to sanctified intelligence to say that it was or should be made on this condition.

My opponent classifies the articles of the Church Order as follows: Articles whose content is derived directly or indirectly from the Word of God; 2) articles whose content, though neither directly or indirectly derived from God's Word, are not contrary to it. The stand of my opponent is that a local consistory may depart only from the latter. Now I accept this classification of his, but add that it forms just one more reason why a local consistory has not the right to act contrary to the Church Order. For, certainly, it cannot possibly be the right and the task of a local consistory to classify the articles of the Church Order to determine to which of these articles exception may be taken. Yet such would needs be its right, had it the right to depart from the Church Order, for the latter right includes the former.

III. My opponent reasons: *A local consistory has the right to act contrary to the Church Order, for A) it may be changed, it may not be said with respect to its articles that they must be observed, for a) article 86 of the Church Order declares, "These articles, relating to the lawful order of the Church Order, have been so drafted and adopted by common consent, that they, if the profit of the church demands otherwise may and ought to be altered, augmented or diminished."* Breaking down this evidence consists in something more than simply quoting the rest of art. 86 (which reads): "However, no particular congregation, classis (or synod) shall be at liberty to do so, but they shall show all diligence in observing them, until it be otherwise ordained by the general synod." We will have to do some defining of terms here. I have already called attention to Joh. Jansen's distinction between "changing the written *letter* of the Church Order" and "departing from its articles," thus changing them *in the mind and in practice alone.* Jansen's view is that consistories have not the right to change

the written letter of the Church Order but that they do have the right to change the Church Order in practice. This is also my opponent's view, as it appears in precisely those excerpts of Jansen's Kerkenordering which he inserted in his argumentation. Hence, my opponent reasons thus:

A local consistory has the right to act contrary to the Church Order, i.e. to change its articles *in the mind* and *in practice*, for a) the written *letter* of these articles may be changed, for a) art. 86 expressly declares that the written *letter* of its articles may be changed.

I maintain: From the fact that according to art. 86 the written *letter* of the Church Order may be changed, it cannot possibly follow that a local consistory may depart from its articles, i.e. change them in the mind and in practice, for, whereas articles 86 explicitly declares that the *letter* of the Church Order may be changed only by the broadest ecclesiastical assembly, it must needs follow that the contention to the effect that a local consistory may change the Church Order in practice and in the mind, because art. 86 declares that its letter may be changed, is equivalent to saying that a local consistory may change the Church Order in practice because art. 86 declares that no consistory but only synod may change the letter of it. Such a reasoning certainly is sheer nonsense. Yet it is the reasoning of my opponent. Does it not follow from the fact that just because art. 86 declares that a local consistory shall refrain from changing the letter of the Church Order, a local consistory must also refrain from changing it in practice? Is not the one included in the other. Assuredly yes.

IV. My opponent argues: *A local consistory has the right to act contrary to the Church Order, for it is very well possible that in a particular situation the observance of the Church Order would be a physical impossibility, or would clearly create harm or disorder in the congregation.*

I maintain. a) The evidence here presented has no weight, for a) my opponent names no examples. He should have, for the statement is of such a character that it cannot be accepted on its face value. B) Though what he here says were very true, yet it would not follow therefrom that a *local consistory* has the right to act contrary to the Church Order, for a) my opponent himself admits that also the *synod* has this right.

Herewith I have dealt with the evidence my opponent advanced in proof of the positive proposition. I am satisfied that it is broken down completely, so that the positive proposition remains unproved.

I must now deal with the evidence advanced by

my opponent to prove the falsity of the negative proposition: Resolved that a local consistory *has not* the right to act contrary to the Church Order.

V. My opponent argues: *this negative proposition is false, for the Church Order is not binding.* I maintain that it is binding, for the churches solemnly promise to show all diligence in observing its articles until it be otherwise ordained by the general synod. That a local consistory does promise, I have already conclusively proved. I need not repeat myself. But I want to add that art. 86 allows no exceptions to this promise. Notice its language. *No* particular congregation, no classis. . . but *they* shall show *all* diligence in observing them, until it be otherwise ordained by the general synod. To get away from the absoluteness of this language, one must simply play with words. And to say that the promise not to change the *letter* of the church order does not include the promise *not to change* the Church Order in practice is simply *preposterous*. Assuredly, a local consistory *has not* the right to act contrary to the Church Order *ever*, I say *ever*. Art. 86 does not even read: "may not alter the *letter*, mark you, *letter*, of the Church Order," but simply, "may not alter." The distinction between altering the Church Order as to the written letter and altering it in practice is thoroughly nonsensical.

VI. My opponent argues. *The negative proposition is false, for its requirement is incompatible with the scriptural idea of Christian liberty.*

I maintain that this reasoning of my opponent is false. For according to Scripture a man is truly free if a) in obeying the rule he does so willingly under the impulse of true faith. b) if the rule that is obeyed is truly good. As to a local consistory, voluntarily and as constrained by the love of Christ, it takes upon it the yoke of the Church Order and as constrained by this same love it promises never to depart from any of its articles except in collaboration with *all* the churches on their broadest assembly (the synod). b) The rules of the Church Order are good, even though it cannot be said of all of them that their content is derived *directly* from the Scriptures. Hence, in obeying them, the churches are superbly free, in the true, Christian sense. B) If the promise to refrain from departing from the Church Order except in collaboration with all the churches on their broadest assembly (synod), is destructive of Christian liberty, the like promise made with respect to the Three Forms of Unity (the thirty seven articles, the Canons of Dord, and the Catechism) is likewise destructive of Christian liberty. Is my opponent maintaining that our local consistories are bound in the unscriptural sense because they have not the right to ever preach contrary to these creeds? If he is consistent he should.

The rule must be good. The Church Order is a

collection of good rules. Even my opponent is agreed to this. How he extols the Church Order. He writes: "A Church Order is very essential to the welfare of a Church denomination. . . In fact congregational and denominational life would be impossible without such rules and regulations."

These, certainly, are true words. Yet my opponent insists that a local consistory shall have the right to break these rules, whenever it deems this necessary.

VII. My opponent argues: The negative proposition is false, *for its requirement that a local consistory has not the right to act contrary to the Church Order ever, places the articles of the Church Order on a par with Scripture.*

I maintain: This reasoning of my opponent is false, for A) this requirement does not repose upon the dogma that the articles of the Church Order are infallible (we have no such dogma) but it proceeds, does this requirement, from the mutual, voluntary, promise, on the part of all the churches, to show all diligence in observing them until it be otherwise ordained by the broadest ecclesiastical assembly (synod). B) If the requirement of the negative proposition places the Church Order on a par with the Scriptures, then also the requirement of our Formula of Subscription places our creeds on a par with the Holy Scriptures. Yet, certainly, my opponent, would not maintain the latter. But if he is consistent, he must.

VIII. My opponent argues. The negative proposition is false, *for its requirement that a local consistory has not the right to act contrary to the Church Order is hierarchical.*

I maintain: This reasoning of my opponent is false, for A) this requirement is not imposed upon the consistories by a human power superior to them, (hierarchy) but it is a requirement that proceeds from the mutual, voluntary, promise of all the churches to show all diligence in observing the articles of the Church Order until it be otherwise ordained by the broadest ecclesiastical assembly (synod). B) If the requirement of the negative proposition is hierarchical, then also the requirement of the Formula of Subscription. Yet, certainly, my opponent would not maintain the latter. But if he is consistent, he must.

In fine, whereas my opponent failed to prove the positive proposition and whereas he failed to prove the negative proposition false both directly and indirectly through breaking down the evidence that I advanced to prove it true, it follows that we have arrived at the definite and unavoidable conclusion that a local consistory has not the right to act contrary to the Church Order. But, let the readers judge.

G.M.O.

Joh. Jansen's View

I shall now argue on the negative side of the positive proposition: Resolved that a local consistory has the right to act contrary to the Church Order in submission to Classis and Synod. I want to prove also this proposition false.

According to Joh. Jansen, though *fundamentally* and in the final *analysis*, a local consistory *does not* have the right to act contrary to the Church Order, it does have this right tentatively, for the time being, until classis meets, better said, until the synod meets, (which is every one or two years), for it can be expected that a local consistory, having departed from the Church Order, will, if rebuffed by classis, appeal its case to synod. But how does Joh Jansen succeed in circumventing art. 86 of the Church Order? By distinguishing between changing the Church Order as to its written letter and changing it in practice, and, secondly, by affirming that the article (86) forbids the former but not the latter. Now I have very serious objections also to this view of Jansen.

Firstly. As has already been pointed out, this distinction between changing the Church Order as to its written letter and departing from it in practice, is simply intollerable. The distinction, of course, is not present in art. 86. The article reads: They (the articles of the Church Order) have been so drafted that they may and ought to be altered, if the profit of the churches so require, but no particular congregation shall be at liberty to do so."

The distinction in question is simply a handy expedient for circumventing art. 86, but it is an expedient as dangerous and it is handy. And this brings me to my second objection to Jansen's view. According to this view, between the meetings of synod, the local consistories and classes, in a word, everyone, office-bearers and laymen alike may do exactly as they choose, so far as the Church Order is concerned. Once in a year or in two years, synod meets to restore order in the churches, if it can. After the adjournment of synod, a local consistory again goes to altering, augmenting, or diminishing the articles of the Church Order, in practice of course, exactly as it sees fit. It means that, in reality, the Church Order is a dead letter.

Finally, according to art. 86, the classis has no more right to change the Church Order than does the local consistory.

Thus all that a classis can say to a local consistory that has departed from the Church Order is, "you have broken your sacred pledge. Return!"

The classis then has not the right and duty to ascertain whether circumstances justified the departure or whether the article negated, is, as to content,

of such a character, as to forbid the temporary negation, and, on the basis of its findings approve or disapprove the departure. Doing so the classis by implication declares that it has the right to change the Church Order tentatively and in practice and likewise a local consistory. And if Classis, on the basis of its findings, approves the departure, it actually changes the Church Order in practice tentatively, of course.

So then, though a local consistory were able to show that the departure was fully justified by circumstances and was perfectly allowable so far as the article that was negated is concerned, the classis would still be in duty bound to censure the doing and advise a return to the Church Order, and this on account of the sacred pledge to refrain from private revision of the Church Order at all times. There is indeed a principle involved here. It is this. May a believer break his sacred pledges, or is he in duty bound before God to do as he vowed. Certainly the latter.

Not even synod has the right to investigate whether circumstances justified the departure from the Church or whether the article negated forms a rule to which no exceptions may be taken ever in that its content is either directly or indirectly derived from God's Word, so that in negating the article a local consistory is pitted against God's Word—not even synod has the right and duty to investigate or allow itself to be informed whether such is the case and then on the basis of its findings either approve or disapprove the departure. For doing so, the synod declares by implication that a local consistory and a classis has the right to tentatively change the Church Order in practice. Thus, all that even the synod (the broadest assembly) may say to such a consistory is, "You have sinned; for you have broken your sacred promise. Undo your action. Return to the Church Order." And in so admonishing, the synod does not declare that the Church Order is the infallible Word of God, but that a local consistory is in duty bound before God to keep its sacred promise. A sinful corrupt promise must be broken but a sacred promise never.

But someone may ask, what is a local consistory to do, if it discovers that an article of the Church Order ought to be changed for the profit of the churches? Rev. I. Van Wellen, who understands our Church Order, but who once upon a time tried so hard to free himself from the binding power of one of its articles,—the reverend points out the way in his "Commentary On Church Order" (I. Van Dellen. Martin Monsma). He writes: "When a change in the Church Order is deemed necessary, the matter ought to be discussed in our Church Papers, and at Elders conferences, Men's societies, etc. Then the matter should be brought to classes. If the classes agrees that the matter is worthy of Synod's consideration, the classis should overture synod. Matters may, of course, be brought

to classis forthwith. But we deem a discussion and a careful consideration of the issues involved to be desirable in most cases. Matters concerning changes in the Church Order may also be brought directly to Synod by individual consistories."

This is the right way. It is the only lawful way on account of the pledge. We may deal with the Church Order no differently than we may with our Three Forms of Unity.

G. M. O.

The Analogy Of Scripture

The Bible has been received by the church of Christ from the first ages as the Word of God, the great fountain of truth. As such it has been the object of wider, deeper, more earnest, and more assiduous meditation and study than any other book whatever; yea, even more than all other books combined. Thousands upon thousands of works have been written, to unfold its truths and apply them to the hearts of men. The amount of Biblical literature during the four centuries since the Reformation is prodigious. The labor of a lifetime would not suffice for a bare perusal, much less for a careful study of all its manifold varieties, in criticism, history, doctrine, ethics and practical applications to the religious life. It has been translated into more than two hundred languages, and circulated in many millions of copies; and hence has arisen a still further amount of critical labor and learned industry altogether unique in the history of the world.

This immense accumulation of Biblical literature, whatever its source may be, may supply a skeptical spirit with large quantities of material for casting doubt and suspicion on the Divine message. Man touches nothing that he does not defile. The gift of revelation to a fallen world implies that men are prone to go astray, and lose themselves in the thick mists of religious error. The world was full of Gentile idolatry when the Gospel appeared. Its presence brought light into the thick darkness; but it did not seal up the sources of delusion in the human heart. The course of Divine truth, in every age, has been a constant warfare, and not a triumphal progress. In that way the interpretation of the Bible has had a checkered course. Much precious truth has been unfolded; but no slight amount of human error, in various and divergent forms, has mingled with these expositions. The stream, however pure its source, has become turbid in its pro-

gress, and stained by the soil from the river-bed in which it had to flow.

It is easy to dwell on the human side of the literature of the Bible until the real excellency of the Word of God is quite obscured from view. The trifling of mere verbal critics and grammarians, the strifes of interpreters, the dreams of mystics, the subtilities of schoolmen, the confusing influence of the mental process in ten thousands of minds of different ages, countries and modes of thought more often than not indicates a departure from the fundamental principle of approach to the Bible as the Word of God and in no sense the word of man. It is not a mixture of the Divine and human, but it is purely Divine; from beginning to end a Divine book. We do not deny thereby the secondary authors, but affirm that they were organically and completely inspired to write for God, His Word. That Word is the product of the One Divine Mind of Him who in His eternal council conceived of the whole of Scripture as a living organism. In that same council He determined all the authors of Holy Scripture with regard to their personality, character, talents, education, mode of thinking, style of writing, personal experience and historical circumstances so as to fit authors each in his own place, in the organism of Scripture. The Holy Spirit prepared these authors and inspired, moved, illuminated and guided them to write infallibly the Divine Word with its one purpose — the Glory of God, and one great message in the organic whole — the revelation of God in Christ, His Son.

The Scripture, therefore, is one. It has one Divine author; one purpose; one message. As such it is truly inspired, bearing everywhere the impress of its Divine Author. It is pure, for God is pure, and Holy, for God is Holy. It is marked by unity, for "known unto God are all His works from the beginning." It is consistent and complete, for "the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, even the deep things of God." It is an harmonious whole for its Author is the Spirit to whom all things are revealed and whose messages are of no private interpretation, but a consistent revelation of good things to come.

In that unity, however, there is diversity. Its thirty-nine books of the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New are the work of some forty different writers. The whole is collected into one volume whose composition is spread over the long interval of fifteen hundred years. It is not, however, the variety of a mechanical instrument that pervades the Bible, but the diversity of a living organism growing out of a common principle — the revelation of God in Christ. This unity of thought, purpose and message in the diversified organic whole is referred to as the Analogy of Scripture. The subordination, correlation, and co-operation of all parts to the general effect of the

organic whole form the contents of this analogy.

The importance of maintaining that principle as the fundamental approach to the Bible, as the Word of God, becomes evident to every Christian student of the Bible when he realizes how often it is denied or forgotten in the exposition of Scripture. There are fundamentally two errors which are more or less prevalent. Rationalism, on the one hand, undermines the authority of God's Word; either by rejecting it as an external revelation or by accepting it and making human reason the sole arbiter of its meaning. Traditionalism, on the other, makes the Scripture only a standard parallel with the living tradition of the Church. Both, though in opposite ways, take from the Bible its dignity, deny the analogy of Scripture and sever it from its connection with the Holy Spirit as the supreme instrument of His operation in things spiritual forever.

Extreme rationalism finds its expression in the so-called Historical School of Higher Criticism. To them the Scriptures are simply an historical record, and at times even less; mere mythology, perhaps, registering the gradual development of the world's religious instinct. Evolution governs all things in the Spiritual as well as the physical domain; and the Old and New Testaments only mark the stages through which the spiritual faculties of earlier races had passed. The ever developing reason of man must make their doctrine—has in all ages made it—the starting point for further evolutions; the end of which is not yet. This theory forever vacillating between Theism and Atheism, has no place save among the enemies of the Christian faith, for it denies the Word as Divine Revelation in which unity and harmony prevail and is soon lost in maze of human reason which it exalts to sit as Judge over the Word of God.

Traditionalism, which finds its zenith in the hierarchy of Rome, accepts the two elements: Scripture and the oral tradition of the church. This necessarily requires as its final judge an infallible regulative authority in the church itself and once again loses the principle of the one Divine Word sufficient unto all salvation.

To a greater or lesser degree all heresy is guilty of the same practice of refusing to acknowledge the Analogy of Scripture as it seeks to maintain itself on the basis of only a portion of the whole; which part is again warped to suit its purpose. Dr. Bavinck expresses this thought most succinctly in his great work on Reformed Dogmatics when he affirms: "It is a distinguishing mark of many sects, that they proceed from a small part of Scripture and for the rest leave it severely alone."¹ We, who maintain the historic Reformed position in respect to the Sov-

1. Dr. H. Bavinck: "Gereformeerde Dogmatiek;" Vol. 1, Par. 22, Page 587

ereignty of God over all His creatures, are well aware of this denial of the Analogy of Scripture among our erring brethren of the Christian Reformed Church. Upon the dictum of the highest ecclesiastical authority of that body and upon the basis of a few apparent proof-texts, they attempt to maintain and defend the theory of a common grace. When confronted with the current teaching of the unity of Scripture, they assume the unreasonable and naive position of a dualism in that revealed unity. Under the cloak of a pious humility, they must necessarily maintain that the Bible contradicts itself, and receive as truth the speech of the Church as the final authority.

It is essential, therefore, for those who would maintain the integrity of the Scriptures to understand the importance of the Analogy of Scripture. That the Scripture is centrally the Revelation of God in Christ must always be remembered. It is an arganic whole, from which it follows that it may not be treated as a mere collection of writings without relation to one another and perhaps in mutual conflict. The writings of the prophets, the apostles and evangelists are together the vehicle for the one Word of God, the revelation of Jesus. Christ is everywhere and yet Christ is nowhere. He is in the Gospels but not apart from the Old Testament prophets, or exclusive of the Revelation of St. John. Only all together do we get the complete Christ. We must, therefore, ever seek the unity in the diversified whole and only by applying the analogy of the whole shall we determine what is the particular Word of God at any certain place. Only then do we realize that there is development, but no discrepancy. There are partial contrasts, adding life to the whole by the diversity of the parts, but no contradiction. There is a manifest and undeniable harmony of thought, tone and doctrine which animates and pervades the whole.

As a principle for use by the sincere student of Scripture, the Analogy is indispensable and has always been regarded as such. From the earliest Church Fathers down through the ages the Christian theologian has recognized this principle as fundamental. We limit ourselves to but three quotations to substantiate this fact. The first is by Thomas Hartwell Horne in his "Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures." He writes thus: "The sense of any prophecy is not to be determined by an abstract consideration of the passage itself, but by taking it in conjunction with other portions of Scripture relating to the subject, 'comparing things spiritual with spiritual;' a rule, which though it be especially applicable to the prophetic writing, is also of general importance in the exposition of the Sacred Volume."² In the same manner Dr. Bavinck declared: "Not on the basis of a few separate texts, but on 2. Vol. II; Part II, Chap. III, Sec. VIII, page 556

that of the Bible in its entirety a dogma must be built; it must evolve organically out of principles which are everywhere present in Scripture."³ And finally, the noted Dutch theologian, Dr. A. Kuyper affirms: "If hermeneutics (which is the science of interpretation) deposits rules for exegesis that proceed from the presupposition that each book stands aphoristically by itself and that therefore we can only apply the analogy of Scripture to the writings of the same author, for example those of Paul and John, then she would abandon thereby, in principle, the unity of Scripture, consider that unity something contingent even when it is not contradicted by the results of exegesis and deny in fact that one and the same Higher Consciousness speaks through all these Scriptures together to the Church of Christ."⁴

There must be, therefore, the perpetual reference to the universal harmony of Scriptural truth as given by the one inspiring Spirit. This analogy of Scripture must govern the interpretation of the Divine Word as being a gradual development of one harmonious Truth. That Analogy is not and cannot be based upon a few proof texts, but must be the result of exegesis of extensive passages throughout Scripture so that we may come to the perfect and complete revelation of God in Christ. Dogmatics and exegesis must not and may not dominate our interpretation of Scripture, but must be dominated by Scripture. Scripture must interpret itself or remain uninterpreted.

Following this principle, we walk in the footsteps of the earliest defenders of the Sovereignty of God. Both Augustine and Calvin, when confronted by the heretics who presented the apparent contradiction of God's Word with itself, took refuge in the Analogy of Scripture. When faced, for example, with such passages as 1 Timothy 2: 3 and 4: "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to knowledge of the truth," which according to their opponents plainly teach that God wills that all men shall be saved and is merciful to all men, they replied that it cannot be interpreted by itself. They replied, according to the analogy of Scripture, that God is in the heavens and doeth all His good pleasure. Hence, this passage will have to be interpreted in such wise that it agrees with the other, viz. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and show mercy to whom I will show mercy.⁵

By the same proper use of the Analogy of Scripture, the Church today may defend itself through the unity of the Divine Word and Revelation against all

3. "Gereformeerde Dogmatiek," Vol. I; Par. 22, page 586

4. *Encyclopaedie der Heilige Godgeleerdheid*, Vol. III, Chap. II, Par. 106

5. See H. Hoeksema: "God's Goodness Always Particular," Chap. IV, pages 61-63.

heresy and unfold its organic beauty. And thus, as someone has said: "by due attention to these principles, and with humble supplication to the throne of grace for a blessing on his labours, the diligent searcher after Scripture truth may confidently hope for success. The design of every portion of Holy Writ, its harmony with the rest, and the Divine perfection of the whole, will more and more fully be displayed and thus will he be led, with increasing veneration and gratitude, to adore Him, to whom every sacred book bears witness, and every divine dispensation led the way; even Him who is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever."⁶

6. Quoted in T. H. Horne: "An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures," Vol. II, Part II, Chap. III, Sec. VIII, page 562

W. Hofman

Why An Educated Clergy

That is: why is it necessary that a minister of the Gospel acquire an education and be a graduate from a seminary?

Perhaps if we put it in conversational form, letting the first speaker each time present the objections to an educated clergy, and the second speaker represent the view of the undersigned in answer thereto, we could make the matter clear.

First Speaker: I believe that if God singles out someone to preach the Gospel, He puts the message into their hearts. For we read in Mark 13:11 "Take no thought what ye shall speak, neither do ye pre-meditate, but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye." Then they speak that which they heard from God and not something which they memorized at the feet of some professor.

Second Speaker: In Mark 13:11 Jesus is not prescribing what preparation is or is not necessary to the ministry, but is assuring His persecuted followers that He will not forsake them in the hour of trial for He will give them His Spirit and they shall testify. Besides that, however, God does not put messages into our hearts. God has put His whole message in the Scriptures and if we will have His message in our hearts we must get it, not out of the air, but out of His word. Then Paul says, "Study to show thyself approved unto God" and, again, "Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them." In the effort to do this more efficiently and whole-heartedly an educa-

tion is an absolute requirement. Gold is beautiful but it requires mining, God's message is beautiful but it requires study. A man one time said, the Bible was not written for lazy people.

First Speaker: We need ministers such as Amos, the prophet, he said, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son, but I was a herdsman. . . and the Lord took me as I followed the flock." Amos did not go to school a few years, instead, the Lord prepared Him in His own way. Amos could say, all I know is what the Lord taught me.

Second Speaker: Every godly minister is taught of the Lord, according to Isa. (and John 6:45). But you forget two things. First of all you forget that the O.T. days of shadows and types are terminated, the days of special revelation and inspiration have passed. To wait for their return is to tempt God. God still teaches His ministers but He does this through the means, preparation and education under godly teachers, ministers and professors. But you also forget that Moses had preparatory training, so did Samuel and Joshua, and don't forget the Apostle Paul. Long ago the churches realized that preparatory training was necessary in order that a minister might rightly divide the Word, defend and preach it with all the talent at his command. Therefore in 1618-1619 they penned these words: "The Churches shall exert themselves as far as necessary, that there be students supported by them to be trained for the ministry of the Word." And, again, "The consistories shall see to it that there are good christian schools." (D.K.O. Arts 19, 21 resp.).

First Speaker: A minister is called to preach the simple Gospel. If he have the gift of reading he can read it for himself for the Bible is so simple that a child can understand it. Coming from schools our ministers often preach big words, latest ideas, modern views and they treat us to indigestible pieces of philosophy. Besides, we read in I John 2:27, "ye need not that any man teach you."

Second Speaker: Your interpretation of I John 2:27 proves exactly that the Gospel is not so simple and if our ministers would all read the whole Bible as wrong as you read that text would deceive the church of God by our lack of learning and failure of knowing how to read the simple Word. It is not a simple thing to read the Word of God, much less to preach it. The ministers must do both.

Here I would like to emphasize three things. First the the preaching of the Gospel is so immense and so sacredly holy a work that the preparation for it cannot be too thorough and careful. Even the barber has to take a preparatory course. You would not want your horse treated by any but a certified vet-

erinarian. Is God then so careless of His Holy Word that He will have it administered by men unskilled therein? Consider that the Gospel is the Word of the eternal God, the power of God unto salvation, a Key of the Kingdom. How serious to mis-read and mis-interpret it. I know, the most skilled and highly talented are continually capable of error, and everyone of us makes errors, but if these errors are due simply to negligent preparation and faulty training the matter is that much worse.

Secondly, the minister must be able to interpret Scripture with the Scripture. And then, as Terry says in his Biblical Hermeneutics, "A thorough acquaintance with the genius and grammatical structure of the original languages of the Bible, is essentially the basis of all sound interpretation." A little later he says, "A translation, however faithful, is an interpretation, and cannot safely be made a substitute for original and independent investigation" (P. 69). We see thus that acquaintance with Hebrew and Greek is essential and whoever has seen an Hebrew Bible will admit that it might take a few years of study before you will read it.

Finally, the minister's work is not merely to talk about an isolated text for a while and probably later draw some valuable lessons from it, as is the habit of many. But he is called to preach the Whole Counsel of God. To preach the text, in the text to preach Christ, in Christ to preach God, and in that to preach the way of salvation so earnestly and convincingly that even the devils will say, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation." Acts 16:17. The preparation for this mighty work cannot therefore be too thorough.

First Speaker: I believe so much education spoils them. They learn creeds and doctrines and their preaching is cold. I believe "Hij moet eerst 's doorbreken, dan kan hij wat vertellen." Then it comes from the heart, not merely from the head.

Second Speaker: I grant that there are many so-called pre-seminary courses which fill ministers with science, falsely so called. But the fault lies not in education and instruction but in the instructors themselves who evidently were not educated of God. I know, many schools and universities have become ashamed of the doctrines of the Fathers. But the true idea of education along this line has been preserved for us in The Ordination and Installation of Professors of Theology. (Which you may read for yourself in the rear of our Psalters). Let me quote Paul, he writes to Timothy: "And the things which thou hast heard from many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others." The form packs this all together as follows: "It follows therefore that the Church has the divine mission to proclaim the Word

of God, to collect from that Word of God her standards of faith, to study theology according to these words." A seminary which commits itself faithfully to this high calling, will, by the grace of God send forth from her halls men who know the truth and love it, and who with head and heart shall defend and preach it.

First Speaker: But it is much better that a minister know the needs of the sinner than that he know all the languages and creeds.

Second Speaker: Certainly no one can be a true minister of the Gospel except he know himself as a sinner and know the needs of sinners in general. That is the principle of all sound wisdom. But since our knowledge of sin comes from the Word of God, what could be better for the minister than that he be able to read and interpret that Word skillfully? The more he does that, the more he and the congregation will begin to know the true heights of grace and fathom more fully the depths of sin. There are men who have visited the depths of sin, walked therein for years, were then converted and later became ministers. But it is to nobody's honor, least of all to God's, that he spent the first part of his life in sin. Our pre-seminary course follows the covenant way of gradual development in sin-consciousness and grace-consciousness. The minister does not lose these by acquiring an education, rather he is strengthened in them and then becomes "apt to teach" others in them later.

M. G.

The King James Version And The American Revised: A Comparison

The subject assigned to the undersigned is far more interesting than the title might suggest. As a rule an article which contains comparisons of two or more things does not make pleasant reading. Yet a comparison of the two versions of our English Bible is both interesting and profitable. It is interesting because of the history back of these two versions but also and above all because it deals with different versions of the Word of God. As Reformed people we are interested in pure doctrine and are zealous to know the real meaning of Scripture. Therefore we are also eager to know which version, the King James' or the American Revised gives us more purely the English equivalent of the original Hebrew and Greek.

A comparison of these two versions must begin with a comparison of their origin. "What," you say,

"is there not one Word of God, one origin of both versions?" Indeed there is. Nevertheless these two versions are not translations of the same document. Let me explain this briefly.

You realize of course that the original document written by Moses, the prophets, and even those of the Apostles in the New Dispensation, are no longer in existence. Through much use they have long ago perished or become lost. However copies were made of these original writings by the Church. The churches which received epistles from Paul for example, would read them, make copies of them and send the original to a neighboring church. This church would follow the same procedure. Thus we read in Col. 4:16, "And when this epistle is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans: and that ye likewise read the epistle from the Laodiceans". The original soon became soiled, cracked and unreadable. But by God's providence there were many copies of these epistles in circulation.

These copies that had been made from the original in turn were re-copied by some others. You can readily understand that discrepancies and variations soon crept in. In copying there is always the danger of omitting a word, misspelling or even repetition. Especially was this danger present with making copies from the original, for at that time the Greek was written entirely in capital letters, and the words were connected on to each other. In John 1:1 you would find this in the Greek; only of course in Greek letters and wording: **INTHEBEGINNINGWASTHEWORD**. Besides this many of the copyists were not any too sincere and honest in their work and often doubting that the copyist before them had copied his manuscript correctly, these copyists would change the words to make a difficult passage easier to read and understand. You have a striking example of this in James 1:19. The King James' Version following one of these copies has, "Wherefore, my beloved brethren". The American Revised Version following another copy reads, "Ye know this, my beloved brethren". The difference is due to the changing of the first letter of the word in the Greek even as the meaning of our English word is changed entirely by substituting a "b" for the "I". Then the word "look" becomes "book". Thus also in the Greek "wherefore" becomes "ye know".

In other instances a copyist would forget where he left off the previous day and would begin at the wrong place omitting sentences and phrases. In many other ways variations appeared in the copies that could be found.

Now it stands to reason that the older the copy is the more reliable it is apt to be, for each copying carries the danger of more variations and errors.

These copies for the greater share were either in

the Hebrew or the Greek. Many Latin translations were made of them later. But it was not until the year 1382 that the entire Bible was translated into the English language. This was the work of John Wycliffe. In 1526 an English version of the New Testament appeared as the work of Wm. Tyndale. Then in the 17th Century the King of England, James VI appointed fifty-four men to translate the Old and New Testament into the English language. Since King James had appointed and authorized these men, the version was called the King James' or Authorized Version. This version of the Bible was accepted and cherished by all English speaking peoples and is still highly prized today, so well was it translated by these fifty-four men.

This King James' Version was completed in the year 1611. That same year a very old copy of the original was found by the famous German scholar Dr. Tischendorf in a convent at the foot of Mt. Sinai. The translators of the King James' version had no access to this copy, their work being completed before this copy was brought to light. The style of this copy shows plainly that it was a very old one. It was called the Sinaitic Manuscript. In 1628 another very old copy of the original was presented to King Charles I of England. It had formerly been kept in the Library at Alexandria. It therefore acquired the name Alexandrian Manuscript. Needless to say the translators of the King James Version had no access to this copy either. There was also in the Vatican at Rome another very old copy called the Vatican Manuscript which the Roman Catholic Church prizes highly and which the translators of the King James Version were unable to consult. In time copies were printed of both the Sinaitic and Vatican Manuscripts and kept in the British Library at London.

In 1870 it was decided in England to make a new version of the Bible in the English language making use of these very old copies which they now could consult and the many other copies which were not quite as old and which were the sources used by the translators of the King James' Version. In June 1870 ninety-nine men began this work. Of these ninety-nine men, thirty four were scholars from America. The work was finished in the year 1880 and was called the Revised Version of the Bible.

After the work was completed, the thirty-four American revisers decided not to disband but to continue working having disagreed with the English revisers on certain points. They changed the wording and punctuation together with other changes to make it more suitable for American reading, removing such obsolete English words as magnificent, neesings, and the like which the English translators preferred. The work of this American Committee is called the American Revised Version of the Bible.

Let me give you a few more differences between the King James' and the American Revised versions. In contrast to the King James Version the American Revised Version has all the poetic passages such as the Psalms and Proverbs written in poetic style. The American Revised Version has simplified the punctuation and altered the paragraphs very often shortening them.

A few very noticeable differences between these two versions is that the American Revised Version throughout the Old Testament uses the name Jehovah where it is so used in the Hebrew while the King James' Version translates it Lord. Similarly the American Revised Version consistently speaks of the Holy Spirit where the King James' Version always calls the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Ghost. The American Revised Version also is more correct when it makes a distinction in the New Testament between Hades and Hell. Hades is the place of the dead, the grave, while Hell is the place of eternal torment. The King James' Version makes no distinction between the two using the word hell regardless of the fact that the original uses two separate words. The American Revised Version likewise uses the word sheol in the Old Testament which means the place of the dead, literally a cavity or hollow place, in the place of the word hell which appears in the King James' Version. In the King James Version a Greek word was often translated differently in two separate places. You find for example in Hebrews 10:23 in the King James' Version, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith." The American Revised Version is correct when it translates, "Let us hold fast the profession of our hope." The King James' Version has in Philippians 3:20, "For our conversation is in heaven." Again the American Revised Version is the correct one when it reads, "For our citizenship is in heaven." These are only a few of the many places in which the American Revised Version presents the original words correctly.

Perhaps you are ready to say, "I think I had better see to it that I invest in an American Revised Version of the Bible." Do not be too hasty. There is at least one serious weakness, if we may so call it, in the American Revised Version which to the mind of the undersigned far outweighs any of the improvements that might have been made. The American Revised Version has omitted many passages of scripture which should be included. In the American Revised Version you do not find the complete Lord's Prayer, to mention only one example. The beautiful close, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen" is not found except as a footnote. Many other passages are omitted. Matthew 18:11, Acts 8:37 and 1 John 5:7 are a few of these passages.

It would indeed be profitable to have both the

King James' and the American Revised Versions to compare them as you read at the table or study your lesson for society. But if the choice must be made between the two the undersigned would choose and recommend the King James' Version.

Another criticism might be added to substantiate the view of the undersigned. No less an authority than Dr. Hastings who is known for the Bible dictionary he wrote has this to say of the American Revised Version, "The principles of classical Greek were applied too rigidly to a Greek that was not classical."
J.A.H.

DEBATE

(Continued from page 150)

Let us examine the other excerpts from the works of the authorities quoted by my opponent. Hodge is quoted to the effect that "there are certain things prescribed, to which every church ought to conform, and many things as to which she is at liberty to act as she deems best to God's glory." So far Hodge. This sentence, certainly, contains not a shred of evidence in proof of the affirmative proposition. The "certain things prescribed to which every church ought to conform, are of course, the articles of the Church Order," and, says Hodge, "every church ought to conform to them. This is exactly the requirement of the negative proposition. We can also agree with Hodge when he says that there are many things as to which the (local) church is at liberty to act as she deems best, but, certainly, they cannot be the things prescribed, the rules that all the churches conjointly adopted. The Church Order itself takes cognizance of the fact that "there are many things as to which the local church is at liberty to act as she deems best. A few examples. Art. 4 reads: "The lawful calling of those who have not been previously in office, consists: First, in the election by the consistory and the Deacons, after preceding prayers," and now take notice of the phrase that follows, "with due observance of the regulations established by the consistory for this purpose." This same phrase is contained in articles 5, 22, 37. We also, assuredly, agree with Hodge when he writes (my opponent quotes Hodge also here): "We must indeed be able to produce a 'Thus saith the Lord' for everything, whether a truth, or a duty, or mode of ecclesiastical organization or action, which we make obligatory on the conscience of other men." What Hodge of course means is that we must be able to produce a "Thus saith the Lord," for everything which we make obligatory di-

rectly and per se on the conscience of men. This is precisely what he *must* have meant. For Hodge was a man of Reformed persuasions. He was thus no Bolshevist. So construed, this teaching of Hodge agrees perfectly with what Joh. Jansen teaches in the following excerpt (quoted by my opponent); "Allereerst ontkennen wij dan, dat de kerkenordening eene conscientie bindende kracht zou hebben, zooals de Roomschen beweren. Zij toch zeggen, dat alle menschelijke wetten, zoowel kerkelijke als politieke, met goddelijke wetten op een lijn staan, en daarom de conscientie binden. De Gereformeerden onderscheiden echter met Voetius tusschen goddelijke en menschelijke wetten. De goddelijke wetten zijn *direkt en per se* van conscientie—bindende kracht, omdat God de Heere der conscientie is, de Eenige Wetgever, die het geweten binden kan (i.e. *per se* of course, G.M.O.) . . . en de geloovigen mogen geen dienstknechten van menschen worden. Zelfs die artikelen eener kerkenordening, welke rechtsreeks aan de Schrift ontleend zijn, hebben alleen conscientiebindende kracht (*per se*, of course, G.M.O.), omdat God zelf ze voorgeschreven heeft, en niet omdat ze in de kerkenordening staan; dus niet in qualiteit van kerkelijke, maar goddelijke bepalingen."

With this teaching we are certainly in hearty agreement. But let us see just what this teaching is. We have need here of the distinction; 1) ecclesiastical and political laws, ordinances or rules whose content is directly or indirectly taken from God's Word. 2) Ecclesiastical and political laws, ordinances or rules, the content of which, though not directly or indirectly derived from God's Word, is nevertheless not contrary to God's Word. The latter are merely human ordinances. We find many such human ordinances on the statute books of the civil magistrate. For example. That motorists, when driving on the streets of Grand Rapids shall not exceed 25 miles per hour, is such a human ordinance. Likewise the mandate of a parent that that son of his—a lad of sixteen years old—will be home at eleven o'clock when he goes out for an evening. Likewise article 50 of the Church Order which reads; "The general synod shall ordinarily meet once every two years unless there be urgent need to shorten the time."

What now is the teaching of Hodge and Jansen and Voetius? Precisely this. Only those laws whose content is directly or indirectly derived from God's Word are binding on the conscience *per se as such*. The reason is that in these laws we have to do with the very Word of God. But do these authorities also teach that those human ordinances of which it cannot be said that their content is derived from God's Word but of which it can certainly be said that their content is not contrary to God's Word—I ask, is it also the teaching of these authorities that these human ordinances are *not* binding on the conscience? Such cer-

tainly is not their doctrine, but this; that these human ordinances are not *per se, as such*, binding on the conscience. But these human ordinances *are* binding on the conscience. To deny this (and my opponent does deny it) is to be pitted against the plain teachings of Holy Writ. "Submit yourself to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake," mark you, for the Lord's sake, which is certainly equivalent to saying, for conscience sake (1 Pet. 2:14). The apostle continues; "Whether it be to the king as supreme or unto governors. . ." And why must these human ordinances be obeyed? Not because they are binding on the conscience *per se* but because they are imposed upon us by powers ordained of God, so that, to be pitted against these ordinances, is in the final instance to be pitted against God. The teaching of my opponent is thoroughly revolutionary. It is heretical through and through. If practiced, it would lead to the rejection of all the divinely ordained powers both in church and state in so far as they stand before us in their human ordinances. If Hodge and Jansen and the others could know that my opponent quotes them in support of his revolutionary opinions, they would turn over in their graves.

G. M. O.

IN MEMORIAM

After a few days illness, the Lord removed from our midst our beloved Wife and Mother

MRS. BERTHA SCHAAFSMA

at the age of 54 years.

In our grief we are comforted in the assurance that she has gained the hope eternal.

Mr. Sybrant G. Schaafsma
Mr. and Mrs. Gerrit Schaafsma
Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Schaafsm
Sybrant J. Schaafsma

2 grandchildren.

Grand Rapids, Mich.

December 4, 1943.

Editor's Note.

We have a couple of questions and an "Ingezonden," to which we have as yet not been able to give the required attention. Please, have a little patience. In due time the material will appear, the Lord willing.

H. H.