Esteemed friend,

Since the last time I was in the city [Groningen] and spoke to you, I am once again obliged after my visit to put down on paper and express to you my thoughts concerning your latest letter and our most recent discussion, although according to your last letter you did not want to pursue the matter further. May the Lord of lords so control my pen that if possible we may be united in the truth.

De Groot, it so pleases me that the Lord has preserved you from complete blindness and hardening, so that you were not embittered by my letter, as you mentioned, and you are satisfied with the straightforwardness of my explanation. However, I am also saddened, profoundly troubled, and indignant that you are so blind. This blindness is evidenced in your willingness to acknowledge that I am in agreement with the very learned and godly heroes of faith, Augustine and Calvin, who like sparkling stars of the greatest magnitude excel all others. Yet you assert that human cleverness has led me so extremely far astray from the divine wisdom in the gospel that you could commend me and my family and your former congregation only to divine grace. Is this judgment upon me and my poor congregation a judgment upon Augustine and Calvin as well?

Truly your judgment is nothing else than to condemn the workings of God’s Spirit in these heroes of faith, and to attribute the divine wisdom shining brightly in all their writings to human cleverness and subtleties. I ask, how far does this go, and how close does this come to defrauding the Lord? Whosoever speaks a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever

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7 De Cock addresses more issues with De Groot in this second letter than were addressed in De Groot’s second letter. Before De Cock wrote this second letter, he had visited De Groot in his home and discussed other issues with him. The issues were unfinished business in De Cock’s mind. He had to respond to some of De Groot’s oral assertions.—Trans.
speaks against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come. Oh, consider this once and request light and discernment from the Father of lights for that purpose.

De Groot, human wisdom dominates your thinking. It regards divine wisdom as foolishness, and because of that, your and my opinions are so very far apart that there is, as you say, no possibility of reconciliation, namely, unity in our convictions. However, you are mistaken in this: if the Lord reveals to you who you are, all the present difficulties you now have will fall away, and you also will become united, not just here and there, but completely with Augustine and Calvin and all believers. It is just as the little verse that you have from time to time quoted to me says: “The people may come from many lands, but the heart unites them all.”

Faith does not change either; whether we read Paul, or Augustine, or Calvin, or our fathers, or the present-day heroes of faith, it must be the same and remain the same. God’s Spirit enlightens and renews the understanding in the same manner, so that the true church of the Lord is always united in the truth and in love, being of one mind and one in endeavor, as the congregation of Jerusalem. In unbelief there is no real unity but a universal opposition to the truth, because the wisdom of God is foolishness with man. Oh, if only we may properly learn to understand and love one another in the Spirit, and learn to edify the congregation of the Lord in the Spirit.

You said you wanted to respond to me on two points. First, in response to my statements, you say you have not changed but still consider those people to be Christians whom you earlier received as such. You love them because of their hearts, for their sincerity, for their love for God and Jesus. Now if this is truly the case, De Groot (as I believe that in your own way you say such things with good intent), could the things you find in them, such as purity of heart, honesty, love for God and Jesus, be found in them without having been wrought in them by the Spirit of God? And is it not the promise of God that the Spirit will lead them into all truth?
And will not the Spirit teach these little ones to understand the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, which are hidden from the wise and prudent?

I cannot imagine that in such a manner you would divide these things that are indivisible. Therefore I have called your attention to this more specifically and pray that the light in you not be changed into darkness, for De Groot, God is accustomed in his righteous but inscrutable judgments to visit and to punish blindness with blindness and hardness of heart with hardening. Think about it once. Could they in whom you clearly see God’s image reflected, and whom you must love and esteem because of their heart, their sincerity, and their love for God and Jesus, err in the major issues? Does not God’s Spirit any longer lead into all the truth? Must you say that unity with them, unity of concepts, is no longer conceivable and you must pity them deeply and profoundly? Oh, let your attention be focused on whether you are truly led by the very same Spirit as they are, or if you are led by a spirit that fights against them and wages war with them, the spirit of this age. May the Lord cause you to see and to acknowledge it by the light of his Spirit, unto his glory and unto your restoration and salvation.

Regarding your second point, your defense for not quoting Bible texts, this is even less satisfying than your broader explanation of the first point. Even though you spoke a hundred times or more about a dominion; a kingdom of holiness; and perfection of faith, hope, and love, this cannot be satisfactory and cannot, as a whole, be called a quotation of Bible texts. In that sense there is no one who would be unable to make the Bible serve as support for his errors. Nowhere did you quote scripture, nor could you quote scripture with understanding and according to its sense, because the Bible contradicts your position. Try it once, De Groot!

You are surely in agreement with Van Zuylen’s presentation in the first part of his comparisons, where he reproduces erroneous propositions concerning our nature, in which our nature is very beautifully depicted. Now try to prove them by God’s word, as Van Zuylen proved the truth of the depravity of our nature from God’s
word. You will discover that the erroneous depiction of our nature is indeed the spirit of our age. It is the language of our sinful nature and darkened reasoning, but it is not the language of the Bible, and you will discover that it is foreign to scripture.

Further, De Groot, you think that my opinions, although they do not contradict this or that expression in the New Testament (that is, they do not contradict the letter), do contradict the whole, tender, abundantly loving spirit of Christianity. Yet you err in this grievously, and you follow only what pleases your heart and your darkened understanding. That darkened mind prefers a broad way; it wants to be king itself and to rob the Lord Jesus of his throne and crown. But truly this false doctrine is not found in the gospel. This is the truth: the way is narrow and the gate is strait that leads to life; and our corruption is of ourselves, but our salvation is from the Lord our God. Oh, think this over.

Further, that I think as did Calvin and Augustine I account not as a shame but as a marvelously great privilege. To be continually instructed, led, and ruled by the Spirit that led and taught and ruled them is my wish and remains my prayer. My belief is that he will not see life, no matter what name he may have, who has been led and ruled by another spirit.

But De Groot, what is your belief and what are your thoughts concerning those heroes of faith whom you call learned and pious, but regarding those who believe as they do, you think they have forsaken Jesus Christ as their only master? Are they really, according to your judgment, in opposition to one another and are the saints really pious? You should surely sense and acknowledge that you are misled and carried along by your darkened reason. Flee to the Lord Jesus, who alone can bestow upon you his Spirit, so that you may also be united in one Spirit with them.

You counsel me to read the gospel from beginning to end, and to do so without prejudice. I do this, but the more I do it, the more I am convinced that man is dead in sin and is a slave of sin, that a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruits, that God must work in us the willing and the doing according to his good pleasure, and
that the Reformed doctrine is true, wherein God is glorified to the highest and man is humbled to the very lowest.

Our differences have not been improved through our mutual discussions. And, De Groot, it has become clear to me from our past discussions that the greatest intelligence does not comprehend the importance of divine truth, which is given to the least to understand. It has become clear to me also that whatever in God’s word conflicts with our genius, we (although we may appear to others as God-fearing) change and twist for as long as we like.

We spoke at that time about the holy Trinity, which word you rejected. I know that this is generally the case in our day, but I discover more and more that he who rejects the word also rejects the reality itself. Such a one does not see any brilliance or glory in it. Yet I am convinced that whoever desires to be saved must know God and each of the three persons individually, as each person is necessary in and for his salvation.

De Groot, you thought that one may and even must use these names: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But when I asked you what you understood by them, you answered that people should not want to know more accurately about them! I know also that we can know the mysteries of God only insofar as these have been revealed to us, but do we then serve and pray to an unknown God? Did not God in his word reveal himself to us: the Father as the judge, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the Holy Spirit proceeds; the Son as the deliverer and savior of his people, who is the eternal and only begotten Son of the Father, of one essence with him, from whom with the Father the Holy Spirit proceeds; the Holy Spirit as the sanctifier, who proceeds from both the Father and the Son, but who is a separate person with the Father and the Son, and is of the same essence and is of equal worth? Were the fathers of the third and fourth centuries completely wrong when, knowing that the salvation of eternally immortal souls was dependent upon it, they so specifically guarded the purity of this doctrine? I know very well what our darkened wisdom says are the problems with that.
Yet God’s word, which instructs us so often and so carefully about the Trinity, judges differently. Indeed, on the basis of that word we want to be judged; not otherwise did the truly God-fearing judge in all ages. The Arians may have thought it was impossible to know more, but the orthodox thought differently. They emphatically maintained one position in this matter against the Arians, and correctly so, as also our church acknowledges in article 9 of our Confession of Faith.

True believers today have the same convictions about this truth. To them has been given to understand and to acknowledge the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven and their significance.

The reformers did not have a different opinion, for believers are and remain the same in their convictions, because they have been taught by one Spirit, just as the world always wanders back again to the same errors. Yes, De Groot, these are the words of the extremely learned and pious Calvin, even as you identified him and as he undeniably has earned a reputation as belonging among the sharpest and keenest of the reformers. He was placed by God on the chandelier as a special light. He says:

What is taught in the scriptures concerning the immensity and spirituality of the essence of God should serve not only to overthrow the foolish notions of the vulgar, but also to refute the subtleties of profane philosophy. One of the ancients in his own conception very shrewdly said that whatever we see, and whatever we do not see is God...Wherefore, such forms of expression do not clearly explain the nature of God...But he [God] also designates himself by another peculiar character, by which he may be yet more clearly distinguished: for, while he declares himself to be but one, he proposes himself to be distinctly considered in three persons, without apprehending which, we have only a bare and

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8 De Cock’s keen insight here should be underscored: the one Spirit of Christ leads the one church of Christ of all ages, of all cultures, and of all races into the one confession of the truth of sacred scripture. Therefore in all ages the church of the present shares with the church of the past the one faith and one baptism and confesses one God and Father of all.—Trans.
empty name of God floating in our brains, without any idea of the true God.⁹

De Groot, if Calvin says here what he undoubtedly does, how important it is for you and for your students, for whose souls you will be accountable in the future. If they have been misled by you and their congregations by them, although it be through blindness, be afraid and tremble before the judgment that will come upon you when their blood will be required of your hand.

Oh, read Calvin once, I pray you, concerning this very important matter. Perhaps you will be healed from many prejudices and errors, and perhaps you will see that the errors generally sold nowadays by street peddlers are not newly discovered wisdom but old, worn-out errors that the God-fearing have already refuted long ago. Yes, I beg you to read him as before the face of God and as under the imploring of his Spirit for Jesus’ sake. Perhaps the Lord will cause you to see and to know the truth, and it may yet be for you a blessed means for his glory and your liberation from the bands of the prince of darkness.

Out of that workshop, De Groot, is also your confidence concerning 1 John 5:7, which is the clear text about the holy Trinity, and concerning which you confidently assert that it has been found only in a manuscript of the fifteenth century. This is, of course, what you teach to your students. Perhaps you heard this from one or another in whom you place your trust and have accepted it without any investigation, although a matter of such great importance merits thorough investigation. God does not tolerate any mocking of his person or of his word.

Whatever the case may be, the truth of the matter is absolutely different, and it is thus. It appears that the Arians left this text out of some of the books, because it testified sharply and clearly against them, but it is found in almost all Greek codices. It is found even in the writings of many ancient and reputable teachers who lived before the Arians. And the opposition of the three witnesses

on earth (v. 8) shows clearly that this verse needs to be there, as appears from verse 9, where mention is made of this witness of God. In regard to this matter, a certain hero of faith of our time has given this witness:

Indeed, when anyone would quote 1 John 5:7 for a proof of the Trinity, the modernists (by claiming that this text had been inserted) by this imagine themselves as being so much more enlightened than our fathers. And they imagine to enrich the world with a treasure of learning, as if this text were unknown to our forefathers. But it was known to them since Cyprian and Tertullian and Vulgentius quoted this text in their writings, and this same text Athanasius used in the church assembly at Nicea against Arius. If in their crudeness, the boasters have no greater glory than in this erudition, it is truly of very little significance. For their great learning is comparable to a snowball that in the cold of ignorance possesses hardness, but diminishes and disappears through the rays of the sun of truth.10

De Groot, I have also discovered to be no less baseless your escape regarding the word orgee (wrath), which you claim means only “punishment” and in the New Testament must be translated as such. Immediately when I returned home, I consulted the dictionaries of Schoetgenius Stapula, who confirmed his translation from the writings of the Greeks, and I consulted Sneider. In all of them I found the first and most prominent meaning to be “wrath.” In addition, I examined the old and new translations, also by Van der Palm, also yours, and all unanimously translated that word in all texts as “wrath.” Besides, it cannot even be translated as “punishment” in many texts.

However, men fall into this error when they want to bring a compassionate, tender, and all-loving spirit into the gospel that is not in it. They want to poeticize for themselves a God who looks indifferently at sin, although God himself testifies that with flaming

10 De Cock provided no reference for this quotation.—Trans.
fire he will take vengeance upon all those who do not know him and who are disobedient to the gospel of his Son (John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; Rom. 2:15, etc). In our translators Beza and Van der Palm, I found as a second meaning “punishment,” which is used in other texts where it must be used.

You recognize therefore how wrongly you settled all issues, one after the other, through prejudice and bias. In such a manner people can make white into black.

Further, your position that the Old Testament is completely negative and unprofitable for us, and that the fathers of the old covenant were saved or died in an entirely different manner and along another pathway than we, originates from a workshop that is no better than the one mentioned above, although in the present day this is dished up as if it were new wisdom. Whoever has read, having only a little knowledge and with the capacity to judge and to discern, knows indeed that such ideas are old errors already condemned in Servetus and some of the Anabaptists. Calvin says of them that they empathize with the people of Israel no more than they would with a herd of hogs; the Lord has fed them [the Anabaptists] in this world without their having any hope of heavenly immortality. Many in our day would desire above all to have us take the position that the Lord Jesus was the first one who enlightened us regarding immortality. Therefore Calvin says it will be profitable and necessary to see briefly what similarities and what differences there are between the covenant God made with the Israelites and the one he establishes with us.

The covenant of all the fathers differed in substance and nature in no way from the covenant made with us, but it is one and the same covenant, although the administration is different. They are one in three major points: first, the Jews were adopted unto the very same hope of immortality; second, the covenant, through which they had been reconciled to the Lord, did not rest upon any of their merits but alone upon the mercy of God who called them; and third, they knew the Christ, the mediator, through whom they were united to God and were partakers of his promises.
The first is proven through the testimony of the apostle in Romans 1 and 2 and Romans 3:21. The second is clear from Christ’s word in John 8:56. And the same apostle teaches that they had the very same mediator (1 Cor. 1–4 and 9–10).

Further, you claim, De Groot, that the words *world* and *all* in the Bible have the same sense. It is foolishness to assert this without taking into consideration the context and the mutually interdependent relationships within the text, for then (let it be said respectfully) there is no book more self-contradictory than the Bible. Then we may boldly grant that the Romish have won the struggle when they say that God’s word is dark, that it is the occasion for all kinds of heresies, and that the common man of necessity finds the Bible impossible to read. The Lord Jesus as well is incorrect (it is said with reverence) when he says, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” The apostle Paul may have just as well stayed home with his praise regarding the Berean Christians, when he said that they were nobler than the Thessalonians, because they searched the scriptures whether these things were so.

First, if the word *all* must be taken without any limitation in the sense of each and every man without exception, the consequence would follow, in contradiction of the entire Bible, that the way of life is broad and that it is impossible for anyone to depart from this path; the godless as well as the righteous will be saved, hell is an illusion, and the Lord Jesus died in vain. Many other absurd ideas would be implied that diametrically contradict scripture, of which nonsense I am unable to hold you suspect, although this and similar foolishness is publicly sold on the streets in our day as if it were great wisdom (see our *Theological Contributions*).11

If the little word *all* in the second part of Romans 5:18 must be taken without definition in the same sense as in the first part, then all who were condemned in Adam are saved by the Lord Jesus. But who is so foolish as to take it in this way and not with

11 A religious periodical of that day.—Trans.
fixed stipulations, as the context indicates in verse 17 regarding those who received the gift in and by the Lord Jesus Christ? See also 1 Timothy 2:4 compared with verses 2 and 6, which I hope will be sufficient to cause you to see the issues in this matter. It would be foolishness to understand all in Matthew 4:33, Luke 11:42, 1 Corinthians 6:12, 1 Corinthians 10:25, and Ephesians 1:3 without limitation and not to take it as meaning “all kinds of.”

Second, the same is true of the word world, except that in a multitude of texts it is used according to the same proper sense for the entire structure—the heaven and the earth, or for the earth alone, as in Ephesians 1:4, Hebrews 4:13, and 1 Peter 1:2. Texts such as John 5:39, John 10:36, John 11:9, 27, and James 2:5 must be understood as the context undoubtedly indicates. So too world is used in many texts in a figurative (nonliteral) sense for the people in this world. As such it is used of believers and the elect, then of unbelievers and unregenerate persons, as the context in each case clearly indicates. In regard to believers and the elect, the Lord Jesus is called the Savior of the world; in regard to unbelievers and unregenerate persons, Satan is called the ruler of the world. In regard to believers it is, God so loved the world that he has given his only begotten Son. Regarding the unbelievers the Lord Jesus says, “I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me.”

If we do not keep this distinction before our mind’s eye, it can be no other way than that the Bible becomes unintelligible and contradictory. See with respect to the one: John 6:33, 51; John 8:12; John 12:47; John 14:31; Romans 11:15; 2 Corinthians 5:19; and 1 John 2:2. See with respect to the other side: Matthew 18:7; John 12:31; John 14:17, 27; Romans 3:6, 19; 1 Corinthians 1:20–21; and Ephesians 2:2.

Think about this in an unprejudiced manner and let the context and the natural sense of God’s word, De Groot, heal your abhorrence in this regard. May the Lord Jesus himself give you eyes to see and a heart to understand.

Your prejudice and abhorrence, De Groot, regarding these things that strive against our fleshly sagacity is also the cause of
your very strange ideas and evasion in connection with the words *election* or *elect*. Are these words concerning the certain condition of believers as saved made completely and absolutely powerless because in John 6:70 we read: “Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?” Think about this: must one be determined to find inventions and pay no attention to the context? Just as with the words *all* and *world*, the interpreter must take note of the proper and the figurative meanings and keep in view the context and the relationships of the text. This is the situation here as well. The matter is not dark but bright and clear, if only our corrupt minds, which have been darkened, and our naturally resistant intelligence do not seek contrivances and deny and contradict God’s word, even where that word speaks so very clearly.

Properly and according to the nature of the word, *election* means “to take one in preference to another out of a common lot,” as it is used in Luke 10:42, Acts 15:40, Philippians 1:22, and Hebrews 11:25.

Moreover, one is chosen to an office, as is clearly the case in Matthew 12:18 and Luke 6:13. This is true of the text you have misused in order to make powerless God’s election of his own unto eternal life, namely John 6:70, which speaks of the choosing of Judas to the apostleship, as the context and the words themselves sufficiently indicate. In that sense it is taken in John 15:16, 19; Acts 1:2, 26; Acts 6:5; Acts 9:15; Acts 15:25, 40; Acts 15:7; and 1 Timothy 2:4, as is obvious to everyone who is unprejudiced.12 Further, one is chosen to the community of the covenant (Acts 13:17; 1 Cor. 1:27–28; Isa. 2:5, etc.).

But commonly one is chosen to eternal life, as the context and the relationship of the passages teach in innumerable texts such as Matthew 20:16; Matthew 22:14; Matthew 24:22, 31; Mark 13:20, 22, 27; Luke 18:7; John 10:16; John 13:18; John 15:16; Acts 13:48; and Romans 8:28–30. Our fathers were in the habit of calling the last text the golden chain of salvation. There are many

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12 De Cock, or Keizer when quoting De Cock, gave the wrong reference. Keizer writes Acts 13:25, 29 and 1 Timothy 2:9, but these texts do not apply. Thus my changes.—Trans.
more texts I could quote, but I cannot be confident that they will satisfy, if you cannot nor will not rest in these texts that I have cited and that are so clear. I hope that God by his Spirit, however, will teach you for Jesus’ sake and unto his glory and your salvation.

Finally, you said that it was advantageous, fortunate, and best that the Reformed had the victory and the Remonstrants tasted defeat, but now the opposite is true. You should, it seems to me, view and acknowledge that statement as foolish, after gaining a more mature insight through deeper reflection. The truth always remains superior to the lie. Both cannot be truth, because they stand in direct contradiction to one another.

If, in your judgment, the one who preaches Reformed doctrine is a liar, it cannot be good, advantageous, and fortunate that the Reformed had the victory. Then thousands of our fathers, who were certain that they would go to heaven while cleaving to the lie in their right hand, actually descended into hell, which has been prepared aforetime for the devil and his angels. Then it was neither advantageous nor best nor fortunate that Reformed doctrine prevailed.

Or if (in your eyes and in your judgment because of your rearing) the Reformed doctrine is still true, it was good that it had the victory, but that victorious outcome even now would be most advisable and desirable. Then the doctrine that stands in opposition to it, the Remonstrant doctrine, is deceitful, false doctrine by which people must perish. With it they perish, walking along while cleaving to a lie in their right hand. These lies people must forsake and throw far away. Men cannot expect the Lord’s blessing when walking in this lie. Rather, they must anticipate the whip of chastisement and plagues of different kinds (as we have experienced for years). Finally for ourselves in particular or generally speaking for the nation, we must expect complete devastation and ultimate ruin temporally and eternally.

We see this in all of history! Especially Israel and Judah are for us a very instructive example in every way. Turning from the lie to the truth was never bad for them, as we are taught by the history of the God-fearing kings of Judah, such as Hezekiah, Jehoshaphat,
and Josiah among others. Numerous times a general divine help, deliverance, and restoration attended a general reformation. In contrast, it was never good, that is, never crowned with the Lord’s blessing, when they fell away from the truth to the lie, or having fallen, remained therein. Always they fell headlong into catastrophe and misery, both temporally and definitely eternally. Finally, by these judgments during the Babylonian captivity, Samaria and Jerusalem were wiped out like a dish; as also the Jews, after the death of the Lord, were scattered, despised, and known as such among all the nations of the earth until the present day.

Therefore cleaving to a lie is never good for us. Sadly, we experience the very same consequences in our day in an oppressive and exhausting manner. Oh, if we could by God’s grace prevent our destruction by learning, both generally and in particular, to return to the true and genuine worship of God! Let us do that according to the example of our fathers, forsaking the idol of free will (which Luther, Calvin, and other of our fathers have done according to and by God’s word) and turning again to God’s grace in Christ alone. This is, dear friend, my heartfelt wish respecting our fatherland, my prayer concerning you, and with you, should it be God’s counsel. I pray to be strengthened in that service of God regarding my own person.

Your friend!

H. de Cock