

## WHY WE STILL DISAGREE ON THE N.I.V.

### *The (Mis)translation of Scripture*

For most of us the matter of Bible translation is a rather difficult subject, or perhaps a somewhat intimidating topic. When we peruse the summary of the latest report of our Committee on Bible Translation (a) we note that the Committee “identified sixty-four instances where that Report (to Synod 1995, RD) records concern or criticism of the NIV” (New International Version). We also learn that the Committee reviewed the correspondence sent to this Synod, and “discovered twenty-nine criticisms of the NIV and nine other more general concerns.” Another piece of correspondence “drew attention to thirteen texts and raised one general point of concern.” One cursory look at the 253 page Report to Gen. Synod 1995 might be enough to deter and dishearten even the most avid and determined reader. Needless to say, for most of us, “reviewing specific concerns that had been raised against the NIV” is something we gladly leave to the Committee on Bible Translations. After all, they are the experts. Even when we have our concerns about the Committee’s choice of the NIV for use within the churches, we may deem ourselves, perhaps with some validity, incompetent to properly evaluate the contents of the Committee’s lengthy and elaborate report. We may find ourselves thoroughly intimidated by the complexity of the translation process.

In spite of all this, it is nevertheless prudent to take a closer look at the decision of our Committee on Bible Translations “to recommend the New International Version (NIV) for use within the churches,” particularly when we read that there were indeed many concerns or criticisms raised against the NIV. We recognize that a tremendous amount of work has gone into the Committee’s report to Gen. Synod 1995, and we are convinced that the brothers gave this important endeavor their best possible effort. Yet, as we already noted, many churches and church members still have their reservations about the Committee’s decision to “recommend the NIV for use within the churches.” The validity of these reservations is confirmed by the statements made in the writings of “other Reformed and Calvinistic scholars in this country and abroad.” These scholars definitely do not agree with the Committee’s recommendation. And when the experts disagree, it is perhaps wise to find out precisely why there is such pronounced disagreement.

In the article “The (Mis)translation of Scripture (b) we read that “other Reformed and Calvinistic scholars in this country and abroad have raised serious questions about the usefulness and accuracy of the NIV. An early critique was Prof. Jakob van Bruggen’s *The Future of the Bible* (Thomas Nelsons, 1978). More recently has come Robert Martin’s *Accuracy of Translation and the NIV* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1989).” Also, *New International Version* (G.W. Anderson / D.E. Anderson) has become available. Furthermore, in *Clarion* there appeared two articles by Prof. J. De Jong: *Which Version Now?* (*Clarion*, July 14, 1995), and *The End of Uniformity?* (*Clarion*, Dec. 1, 1995) The concerns or criticisms expressed by writers of these particular books and articles make it clear that these scholars would certainly not “recommend the New International Version for use within the churches,” nor would they readily concur with the Committee’s current mandate “to participate in a revision of the NIV.” In fact, some even suggest that the NIV is a mistranslation of Scripture, because the translators have “decided to use a theory of translation that in essence denies not only the inerrancy of Scripture, but also the need for Scripture to be inerrant.” (c)

Dr. J. Van Bruggen, New Testament professor in Kampen, in the introduction to his book "The Future of the Bible" (d) notes that "this book has been written to help Christians understand the history of the translation of the English Bible so they can do their part to influence its future development. This book does not deal directly with the question of choosing a translation. Rather, it is about the principles that must guide us in making such a choice... it is useful to explore the principles by which a translation must be tested, whether it be old or new" (introduction, p. xi).

Dr. Van Bruggen writes that "the tendency towards modern usage results from the attempts by translators to achieve an equivalent effect. This is a new factor in Bible translation. Formerly the central question was what one translated. Today the central question is for whom one is translating. The attention is shifting from translating into the English language to translating for English-speaking people (p.29). The attempt to achieve equivalent effect leads to the incorporation into the translation of the wishes, preferences, and restrictions of those for whom it is designed. The precise wording of the original no longer determines what is translated; but instead it is the wording that can be best understood by the intended readers" (p.30).

And so we note that "increasingly 'scholarship' is regarded as more important than adherence to the basic doctrines set forth in the confession of faith of the church. The belief in the Bible or not affects the way a person translates some passages (p.35, #2). Adapting the translation to the readers and striving after equivalence of effect leads to a new translation procedure - dynamic equivalence - and tends to give priority to 'selections' rather than complete Bibles. This raises the question of the right relationship between the translation and its receptor" (p.35-36, #4).

"The Synod of Dort decided to be as literal as possible in the new translation... The Synod of Dort wanted Bible readers to be able to read Scripture in the words God has chosen with as little intervention as possible by the translators... Thus, the Bible reader was encouraged to exercise his own judgment (p.51). The Reformation translations were literal as much as possible, but not if the literal rendering violated the nature of the tongue into which the Bible was being translated" (p.54).

Dr. Van Bruggen mentions that "the work of Bible societies has always received much appreciation and support from the churches. The societies considered themselves the 'handmaids' of the church... The independent status of the Bible societies, however, has become more evident in the twentieth century. This independent status of the Bible societies is valued by those denominations that support the World Council of Churches... The Bible societies have come to be viewed as a functional form of interdenominational cooperation. They are 'the oldest ecumenical organization of the world' (p.59). The emphasis (of the Bible societies, RD) is no longer one of merely distributing the Bible, but of putting across the 'biblical message.' This emphasis on the message is the reason for dynamic equivalent translations (p.62-63). Reasons of principle may soon make it impossible for those who hold conservative doctrinal and biblical viewpoints to use the translation work of the Bible societies (p.66).

The theory of dynamic equivalence leads to translations that remove themselves too far from the original form of the message... In addition, the theory of dynamic equivalence is based on the theory that there is a great gulf fixed between the ancient Bible and our new age, a gulf that can be bridged by reinterpretation. This theory rests on a misunderstanding of God, man, and the world." In his book, *The Future of the Bible*, Dr. Van Bruggen provides us with many examples of such

reinterpretation, and he notes that these examples clearly “demonstrate the inadequacy of dynamic equivalence for those who believe that the Bible is the inerrant word of God” (Conclusions, p.96).

“In the New Testament,” says Dr. Van Bruggen, “the NIV is... too free in its translation. To a lesser extent than in the case of the TEV (Today’s English Version), however, the NIV misuses this freedom for doctrinal purposes. Often the NIV does not transmit the intention of Scripture accurately. The NIV New Testament in its present form cannot be considered a reliable substitute for the KJV or even the RSV” (p.149).

In summarizing his sentiments on the subject Dr. Van Bruggen states that “idiomatic and concordant translations are to be rejected by an appeal to the intrinsic character of every language, and this is also recognized by modern linguistics. But this does not automatically imply that we must choose a dynamic-equivalent translation (p.154). The dynamic-equivalent method of translation can rightly appeal to linguistics for the purpose that the language-bound manner of expression cannot and may not be imitated in a formal-equivalent way in the receptor language. However, the dynamic-equivalent method extends this proposition illegitimately when it also applies it to the author’s form, the form the author chose for his text. The translation should not attempt to render sentences the author could have written in the original, but the sentences that he has in fact written... The neglect of the author’s form by a process of restructuring is nonlinguistic and tempts the translator to add more interpretation to the translation than is necessary for clarity’s sake” (p167-168).

When we, with Dr. Van Bruggen’s assistance, “explore the principles that must guide us” in choosing a Bible translation, it soon becomes clear that we cannot easily agree with our Committee’s decision to “recommend the NIV for use within the churches,” nor can we readily concur with the Committee’s current mandate “to participate in a revision of the NIV.” Dr. Van Bruggen’s book helps those of us who aren’t exactly experts or scholars, and who are easily intimidated by the complexity of the translation process, to come to a better understanding as to why we still disagree on the NIV. Consequently, the suggestion, by some, that the NIV is in fact a mistranslation of Scripture, does not seem as far-fetched as we may have initially thought. After all, when we decide to use a theory of translation (dynamic equivalence) that leads to translations that remove themselves too far from the original form of the message, then it is indeed possible that we run the risk of mistranslating Scripture.

“Happily, the NIV translators held to the basically conservative end in the dynamic spectrum. However, it is distressing that, despite signing statements that they believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture, they decided to use a theory of translation that in essence denies not only the inerrancy of Scripture, but also the need for Scripture to be inerrant.” (e)

More next time, DV

Ron Dykstra

- (a) Committee on Bible Translation summarized by Rev. Paul Aasman, Clarion, April 3/98.
- (b) The (Mis)translation of Scripture, Rev. K.A. Kok, Reformed Polemics, Nov. 12/94.
- (c) (e) New International Version, G.W. Anderson / D.E. Anderson, Trinitarian Bible Society, London, England, p. 4.
- (d) The Future of the Bible, Jacob Van Bruggen, (Nelson,1978).

## The Secession of 1834 and Hymns—Revisited 25 Years Later

The Secession (Afscheiding) of 1834 was the first of a string of Reformatory movements in the Netherlands since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. As you may know, the Secession occurred because of the influence of modernism in the Dutch State Church (Nederlands Hervormde Kerk). Leaders such as H. De Cock, H.P. Scholte, S. Van Velzen, A. Brummelkamp and many others opposed the introduction of various modernistic influences, including unscriptural preaching and abuse of the sacraments. Something else that was opposed by the Secessionists was the introduction of the so-called Evangelical Hymns (Evangelische Gezangen) in 1807. These 195 hymns (most of them of questionable, modernistic and Arminian character) were foisted upon the Dutch State Church.

When you read the modern histories of the Secession, you often get the impression that these hymns were opposed because of their unscriptural content. For the most part, this generalization is indeed correct. Most Secessionists realized that the Evangelical Hymns were brought into the church as part of the modernist deformation. But it does not follow that the Secession may be characterized as being opposed to hymns as such.

This is the point which the late Rev. G. VanDooren validly raised in his 1973 articles, “The Secession and the Hymns” (“De Afscheiding en de Gezangen,” *Clarion*, Vol. 22:1, 2). At the same time, Rev. VanDooren confessed that the same may not be said of Hendrik De Cock. He writes, “The struggle was not against hymns as such, that was the problem with Klok, and also De Cock.” It is therefore evident that De Cock was unique in this respect. Most others in the Secession opposed the Evangelical Hymns on the grounds that their content was unscriptural. De Cock had other reasons. He opposed hymns as such. But why did he do this?

De Cock wrote several documents against the introduction of hymns, but it is usually the preface to the pamphlet of Jacobus Klok that receives the most attention since it was this writing which further precipitated his deposition as a minister in the Netherlands Reformed Church. The over-attention given to this one little writing is regrettable, since De Cock’s own reasoning is not fully presented therein. For that it is better to take a closer look at a lengthier writing from De Cock’s own hand: The so-called ‘Evangelical hymns’, the apple of the eye of the enraptured and misleading majority in the Synodical Reformed Church...(Groningen: J.H. Bolt, 1835).<sup>1</sup>

In the first chapter of this pamphlet, De Cock gives his objections against the introduction of hymns. The very first sentence is hard-hitting: “Hymns are never introduced into the church, except to cause degeneration and contempt for the welfare of the church, or perhaps in cases of incomplete Reformation.” He then gives the example of the Jews who apparently introduced songs that were not ordained by God into their worship, resulting in the words of Amos 5:23: “Take away from Me the noise of your songs, for I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments.” De Cock cites Deut. 12:8, 32 as a sharp command from God not to worship Him according to our

own devices: “You shall not at all do as we are doing here today— every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes...’Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.” De Cock also argues “that in the best of times, and in the purest churches, hymns are never found or tolerated.” He cites the various heretics who used hymns to bring in their errors and he also refers to the decisions of the several Dutch Synods which rejected hymns in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He also mentions the Synod of Dort 1618-19 which for the most part rejected hymns, but did allow several such as the Song of Mary, the Ten Commandments, and the hymn before the sermon (Bedezang Voor de Predikatie). De Cock also makes a reference to Abraham van de Velde’s book the Wonders of the Most High which likewise rails against hymns.<sup>2</sup> He concludes the positive statement of his position (that uninspired hymns have no place in the worship of the Church) by referring to Prov. 24:21, “Do not associate with those given to change.” The Church in its purest forms has not been given to change, but has followed the commands of the LORD and maintained that uninspired, human compositions have no place in public worship.

De Cock evidently has three main positive reasons for his position: 1) The sufficiency of Scripture—we should not be as the Jews who were not satisfied with the song book which God gave them. Moreover, we should not be as those who had itching ears in the New Testament, who wanted to add to what God has commanded. 2) The negative witness of history—hymns have been associated with heretics. Heretics such as Arius and Paul of Samosata used hymns to bring their errors into the church, just as the modernists of De Cock’s day did. 3) The positive witness of history—the Reformed synods of years gone by have almost unanimously required the use of the Psalms of David and the omission of hymns. There is also the witness of other Reformed churches which have likewise rejected hymns.

But De Cock does not stop there. He also deals with two objections that people are expected to bring forward. The first is that Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 clearly speak of “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.” Doesn’t that mean that we can have hymns not found in Scripture? De Cock responds: “To those who say thus I would ask that they show me, clearly and in a well-grounded fashion, not by means of surmising or guessing, but in a concise and thorough manner, that the Apostle speaks of hymns and songs outside of God’s word.” De Cock also throws a barb at the simplistic people who right away point to the “new songs” of Revelation and content themselves with that. De Cock says that his argument will do nothing for those who argue in such an ignorant way. To support his position, De Cock appeals to the notes of the Staten Bijbel<sup>3</sup> on Ephesians 5:19. These notes state that Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, in speaking of “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs,” are in fact referring to the book of Psalms, rather than psalms and a variety of other uninspired human compositions. This is based on the Greek terms used in the original New Testament Greek text which are in turn found in the headings of the Psalms in the Greek version of the Old Testament. Paul was thus telling his readers to sing Psalms, not Psalms plus a variety of human compositions. This understanding of Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 is not well-known among us, but it can be found among many other Reformed writers, both of a Presbyterian and a continental Reformed background.<sup>4</sup> The 1927 Christian Reformed Psalter stated: “The hymns, songs, and psalms of Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 evidently do not refer to NT compositions but to the OT Psalms which in the Greek version bear the titles above given.” De Cock mentions this in connection with objections which might be raised, but if we combine this with what de Cock

wrote earlier concerning the sufficiency of Scripture (especially his reference to Deut. 12:32), we have a virtually unassailable argument for the exclusive use of psalms in worship. The objection which is often raised from Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16 turns out to be a strong argument in support of De Cock's position.

The second objection to which De Cock responds is that "certain others say, 'Luther was surely a man of God, and he brought hymns in to the church!'" De Cock points out that Luther was not entirely free of the influence of the Roman Catholic Church, and besides, even godly men make mistakes. The fact that Luther (or any other godly man) wrote hymns does not make the use of human compositions in public worship acceptable.

Much of De Cock's pamphlet deals with the specific content of the Evangelical Hymns. He points out where these songs clearly contradict Scripture and the Confessions. In so doing, he adds a second prong to his argument against the introduction of the Evangelical Hymns. He first argues on the basis that hymns as such have no place in the worship of the Church, and then he argues that the Evangelical Hymns have no place because of their unscriptural and anti-confessional content. If someone would oppose him on one front, he could therefore appeal to the other.

However, what is especially striking about De Cock is his insistence on the singing of Psalms to the exclusion of hymns and his strong Scriptural arguments for that position. His insistence is the product of a well-thought out argument based on Scripture and historical precedent. His insistence on excluding hymns does not appear (as has been argued) to be the product of someone who is not completely all together.<sup>5</sup>

This insistence did cause strife among the Secessionists. H.P. Scholte was in agreement with De Cock, but many others were not. S. Van Velzen, writing some years after the Secession, said that "The writing of De Cock about the hymns has done much harm to the good cause."<sup>6</sup> Perhaps the openness to hymns as such among some Secessionists was a result of the leaven of the Reveil, a romantic movement which pushed for pietistic reform. Regardless of the explanation, it is clear that there were many among the Secession churches which did not hold to the position of De Cock. But De Cock's position did have influence, and even to this day, some of the churches which are more directly descended from the Secession maintain (at least in practice, if not in principle) the exclusive singing of Psalms. For example, a recent issue of the Protestant Reformed Standard Bearer employed much of the same reasoning of De Cock in arguing for the exclusive use of psalms in worship.<sup>7</sup> So De Cock's position is not dead within churches claiming the Reformed name.

It is imperative that we reconsider De Cock's arguments nearly 165 years later. In the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (Liberated), who trace their descent back to the Secession, there is currently a movement underway to introduce 255 new hymns into the worship of the church. How long before the same spirit is found among us? The same spirit to a lesser degree has been present since the first full edition of the Book of Praise with its 62 hymns, but what will the future bring? De Cock's short little pamphlet is a powerful antidote to that way of thinking which suggests that God's Word is not sufficient and that we may do as we please in worship, so long as it is in general agreement with what the Bible says. Have we really progressed so much further beyond our forefathers in our understanding of what God requires of us in our worship of Him?

1 This pamphlet may be found in the Verzamelde Geschriften (Collected Writings), Vol. 2, D. Deddens, W. van't Spijker et al. eds., Houten: Den Hartog B.V., 1986, pp.129-174. An English translation (of the first two chapters) is forthcoming, Lord willing, in the summer of 1998.

2 Van de Velde's book has recently been translated into English: The Wonders of the Most High: 125 Years History of the United Netherlands, Abraham Van de Velde (G. Zekveld, trans.), Newcastle: Semper Reformanda, 1997.

3 The Staten Bijbel was a Bible translation produced under the authority of the Synod of Dort, 1618-19. It contained copious notes and is comparable to the English Geneva Bible.

4 A modern Reformed exegetical defense of this understanding can be found in The Songs of Zion, Michael Bushell, Pittsburgh: Crown and Covenant Publications, 1977 (second edition, 1993), pp.83-93. Older exegeses can be found in The Psalms in Worship, J. McNaugher, ed., Edmonton: Still Waters Revival Books, 1992 (1907), pp. 128-168.

5 This idea is derived from a later comment of De Cock's wife in a letter to her grandson where, in speaking about the pamphlet of Klok to which De Cock wrote the preface, she wrote: "...hij was het ook daarmee niet geheel eens." (Quoted by VanDooren, Clarion, Vol. 22, No.2, p.6). This ad hominem reasoning could be applied in reverse: Mevrouw De Cock was not entirely with it when she wrote this letter as she was getting on in years.

6 Quoted in de Reformatie van '34, B. Wielenga, Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1933, p.51.

7 "The Songs of Zion, What Shall the Church Sing?" Herman C. Hanko, Standard Bearer, Vol. 74, No. 8 (January 15, 1998), pp. 178-184.

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## Confessing our Faith

### TRUE WORSHIP - CALL TO WORSHIP

From God's holy and infallible Word, the Bible, we learn that all people must worship God in Spirit and Truth (Ps. 66: 1-4, Ps. 100: 1, 2, Rev 14: 6, 7). This God has given His revelation in Holy Scriptures through holy men who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21). These Holy Scriptures are the sole and final authority for the true worship of God (2 Tim. 3: 16,17). We receive these books, and those only, as holy and canonical for the regulation, foundation and confirmation of our faith ( Art. 5, B.C. ).

### TEACHING NECESSARY FOR TRUE WORSHIP

We are to worship God in no other manner than he has commanded in His Word. (LD 35, Deut. 4 : 5-19, Is. 40: 18 -25, Acts 17 :29, Rom. 1 :23). Holy Scripture instructs us that it is unlawful to teach

any other gospel than that which the apostles have preached (Gal 1:8). Since it is forbidden to add or take away anything for the Word of God (Deut. 4:2, Deut 12:32, Rev. 22:19), it is evident that the doctrine of scriptures is most perfect and complete in all respects (Art. 7, B.C.) From this it follows that the faithful teaching of the pure doctrine of God's Word is indispensable for the true knowledge of how to worship God.

#### HOW TRUE WORSHIPPERS CAME INTO EXISTENCE

The true worshipper came into existence when the LORD spoke His Word directly to Adam in Paradise (Gen. 3:15). He later had this Word of promise proclaimed by patriarchs and prophets to His chosen covenant people, Israel (LD 6). He called them from their false idol worship turning them to the true worship of Himself. Revealing Himself as "I am that I am," the LORD instructed his covenant people to worship Him according to His law. Yet time and again Israel broke his covenant of grace and served other gods. But God in his mercy sent His prophets to call His people to repentance. In this way, He gathered and later re-gathered a remnant to true confession of His Holy Name. He did so to make His people ready for the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.

#### HOW THE TRUE WORSHIPPERS ARE ESTABLISHED

It is only because of the sacrificial work of our beloved Saviour, our LORD Jesus Christ, that we and all believers are enabled to worship God in Spirit and Truth. Christ, the Mediator of the covenant of grace, who fully paid for all our sins, has made it possible for all believers to appear righteous and holy before God. Through a true faith in Him alone, God not only imputes to us the forgiveness of sins, everlasting righteousness and salvation out of mere grace, but He also works in our hearts by His Holy Spirit to make us ready and willing to worship Him out of gratitude for the salvation we have received.

#### HOW CHRIST GATHERS THE TRUE WORSHIPPERS

This same Jesus Christ, who is risen and seated at the right hand of the Father as eternal King, not only took care of our salvation, but He also takes care that this message of salvation is faithfully preached throughout all times and places. For our benefit, He is continually active throughout history gathering, defending, and preserving for Himself, by Spirit and Word, in the Unity of the true faith, a Church chosen to everlasting life (L.D. 21).

Before Christ ascended into heaven, He not only equipped His disciples with His Word of Truth but He also promised them His Holy Spirit. He opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures - all that was written in the law of Moses, the prophets, the Psalms concerning Him (Luke 24 :44-45). With this understanding He left them with specific instructions. He said, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you to the end of the world (Matt. 28:18, 19)."

#### THE CRITERION SET FOR THE TRUE WORSHIP

This word "whatsoever" draws our attention to the criterion set by Christ for gathering true worshippers. We see in the book of Acts what affects obedience to this criterion of Christ had on

the people after the apostles were endowed with His Spirit of Truth (John 14:17). We read, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in the breaking of bread and in prayers." We also read, "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple,"... "And the LORD added to the church such as should be saved (Acts 2:42, 46, 47)." Through the pure preaching whatsoever Christ has commanded and the operation of His Holy Spirit, Christ gathers and binds together, with gladness and singleness of heart, both Jews and Gentiles in the true worship and confession of His Name.

Later in scripture, we see how the LORD guided His apostles by His Spirit, according to the criteria He set in His Word, to obtain elders in every town (Titus 1:5) and institute local churches throughout Asia Minor. We also learn about the appointment of pastors and teachers such as Timothy and Titus who, having heard the words of the apostles, are to teach others also (2 Tim 2:2). Scriptural Church polity is already taking form. We find in Scripture a confederation of local churches whose office bearers and members, being instructed by the apostles in the Faith, hold fast their profession (Heb 4:14).

#### CHRIST'S DEFENSE AND PRESERVATION OF THE TRUE WORSHIP

The Faith, according to scriptures, means all the doctrines of Holy Scriptures as they have been defended and preserved by Christ in the history of His Church. It includes all Christ's deeds of His gathering (present tense for He is still actively gathering today) a communion of saints who are established by His Spirit and Word over against those who are not (LD 21).

This is evident from the many warnings the Church receives in scripture to continue in the Faith. The apostle warns the Church at Colosse, "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the LORD, so walk ye in Him: Rooted and built up in him and established in the faith as ye have been taught (Col. 2:6-7)." To the congregation of Galatia, Paul twice states "if any man preach any other gospel unto you then that ye received then let him be accursed (Gal. 1:8,9)." To Timothy Paul writes, "charge some that they teach no other doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3)." Later, the apostle confirms the seriousness of this charge by instruction Timothy to withdraw himself if any man teach otherwise and consent not to the doctrine which according to godliness (1 Tim 6:3-5) Similar admonitions are given to the Church of the Thessalonians when the apostle says, "Therefore brethren stand fast, hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by epistle (2 Thess. 2:15)." He confirms this message when, in the next chapter, he commands the brethren, "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the traditions which he received of us (1 Thess. 3:6)."

From these and other proof texts (Jude 3), we learn how Christ defends the true worship over against the false worship. He charges first of all the pastors and teachers to hold fast their profession without spot, not rebuke-able until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 6:12-14). He charges the elders to hold fast the faithful word as they have been taught, that they may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers (Titus 1:9). He charges the members of the congregation to hold fast their profession (Heb. 4:14), and to remember them who had the rule over you, who have spoken the word of God: Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation (Heb. 13:7).

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). Therefore His Church may never be carried about by strange doctrines. Rather it is commanded by Christ to ward off any doctrines and errors that constitute a danger to the purity of its doctrine or conduct. For this the ministers and the elders (who are bound by oath to the subscription form which states they declare all articles and points of doctrine, contained in the doctrinal standards of the Churches, do fully agree with the Word of God) shall use the means of instruction, of refutation, of warning, and of admonition, as well as the ministry of the Word as in Christian teaching and family visiting. (Art. 27 C.O. ). In this way, Christ Himself preserves the Unity of the Faith in this His Church of which I am a member. In so doing He leads me with all His chosen ones in the everlasting way (Ps. 139:24).

Collaboration between the late Rev. P. Kingma and Theo Kingma