

20.6 PETITION OF PROTEST – GK PARYS AGAINST A DECISION OF THE NATIONAL SYNOD 2006 – CO, ART 48 (Artt 19, 36, 183)

- A. Rev BC Smit states the Petition of Protest.
- B. **Decision:** The Petition of Protest is referred to the Petition of Protest Commission 3.
- C. Rev LSD du Plessis reports on behalf of the Petition of Protest Commission 3.

D. PETITION OF PROTEST

1. Decision that is protested

- 1.1 Acts of Synod 2006:391, art 19.2.
“3.2 That the Synod approves the implementation of the proposed new system with other Synods.
Decision: Approved.”
- 1.2 This decision was made as a result of a Commission Report which reads as follows:
“2.3.3.2 (p188) 3.2 That the Synod approves the implementation of the proposed new system with the other Synods. The Commission proposes that this proposal be approved and that the following be added: the implementation of the proposed new system should, with consideration of the problem areas that have been indicated, be phased in orderly and gradually.
2.3.3.3 The Commission proposes that points 3.3 and 3.4 be added:
3.3 That the current system remains operative until the new system functions orderly and thoroughly.
3.4 That churches gather in language and cultural groups as arranged by CO, art 30 in order to deal with matters such as Bible translation, liturgy, song and mother tongue education” (our emphasis).
- 1.3 During the decision making process the Synod rejected the Commission’s recommendations, especially that meetings should take place within language and cultural groups.
- 1.4 The protest of the Church Council is aimed specifically at the Synod’s decision to give no recognition to meetings within language and cultural groups in future.

2. Grounds of Protest

- 2.1 With this decision a point of departure that is based on Scripture and which has been upheld in the GKSA since 1961, is disregarded.
- 2.2 With this decision CO, art 46 is endangered.

3. Argumentation

- 3.1 *For Grounds for Protest 2.1*
- 3.1.1 On the National Synod 1961 (Acta 1961:43–120) an extensive study on racial relations in the light of Scripture was on the table. Although only a short summary of the Report was approved (p115–119, D1), two lines stand out that have been maintained in the decisions of Synod ever since. These are the complementary principles of unity and diversity within the body of Christ (see Acta 1961:117, iv): “Also the redeemed humanity is a unity, and that in Christ. However, this does not uplift the natural distinctions. A Greek remains a Greek, a man remains a man, etc. In Gal 3:28 and Col 3:11 Paul teaches that the distinctions are not erased, but that these distinctions make no difference with incorporation into the body of Christ. It follows that other believers are one with us in the Lord and that they should be accepted as such, from whichever race or colour they might be.”
- 3.1.2 These two complementary lines regarding the church acknowledge both unity as well as differentiation amongst nations, languages and cultures, and they rest amongst others on the following Scriptural grounds: Gen 10 and 11; Acts 2:11; Acts 17:26; Matt 28:19; Rom 9–11 and Rev 21: 24 and 26.

- 3.1.3 In spite of protests and inputs from the side of the RES these two lines were maintained throughout (see Appendix A) and even confirmed on several Synods (see Acta 1976:386, 1 and also Acta 1985:426–448). At the urging of the CRC the decisions of 1985 were reformulated by the Synod of 1988 (Acta 1988:840-878), but even in the reformulation there is still acknowledgement of both unity and diversity within the body of Christ (Acta 1988:878, 4.3).
- 3.1.4 Even the Report that served before Synod 2006 takes note of the decision of Synod 1997 in which the same two lines of unity and diversity are clearly re-stated (Acta 2006:387, 2.3.2). “The unity that exists among believers does not revoke the God-given diversity in language and culture. Therefore the GKSA decides in Synod 1997 (Acta 1997:870, 4.2.1) that churches should support each other in church governance in both language and cultural context.” Under the same point the following is also stated: “Based on this churches can gather in an organic way, where the needs exists or where matters of shared interest are on the table that involve the geographically close-by churches, since matters (of shared interest) determine the Agenda of the majority meeting.”
- 3.1.5 With the Commission Report that served in front of the Synod in 2006 (see Appendix B), the emphasis that the Deputies placed on the restructuring of majority meetings are justifiably proposed. In order to assure that this emphasis of unity does not lead to the obliteration of the second line, namely diversity, which should find expression in meetings in language and cultural groups, the Commission proposed that there should still be room for meetings that acknowledge diversity within unity. However, this proposal was not accepted.
- 3.1.6 The result of the Synod’s decision is that the Scriptural principle, namely diversity within the unity of the body of Christ, is not adequately acknowledged. It is a disregard of language and culture (nationhood) that will in the long run hold negative consequences for the church of the Lord.

3.2 *For Grounds of Protest 2.2*

- 3.2.1 The decisions taken based on Scripture were confirmed at several Synods. In fact, as recent as 1997 there is confirmation of the fact that the model that the Deputies proposed, which proposed a two-stream practice according to which ecclesiastical support inside and outside of language and cultural divisions come to its right, is a Scripturally tested model (Acta 1997:870, 3.2).
- 3.2.2 Since the Synod of 1997 there has not served any protest in which the Scriptural grounds that lie at the foundation of support in and out of language and cultural divisions, are questioned.
- 3.2.3 Notwithstanding this, Synod 2006’s decision reduced the mutual support of churches to support only outside of language and cultural groups without any Scriptural grounds.
- 3.2.4 With this, a decision that is fixed and binding and which has been confirmed in practice over more that 5 decades is changed without an indication of that which is required by CO, art 46.

4. Request

The Church Council of the GK Parys hereby requests the General Synod to recognise the principle of both unity and diversity in the majority meetings of church based on this protest. We want to make it very clear that we are not opposed to the idea of majority meetings outside of language and cultural divisions. However, our request is that also the first line of meetings within language and cultural groups should receive recognition and that churches should be allowed to meet within these groups according to the model of 1997 regarding matters that are of shared interest. Examples for matters on such an Agenda of a meeting in language and cultural groups can be found in the Acts of Synod 1997 (Acta 1997:866-867, 2.1.3.2).

E. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

1. Reasoning

1.1 Introduction

The Petition of Protest states two grounds for the request that the General Synod “should again acknowledge the principle of unity and diversity in the greater assemblies of the churches.”

1.2 Ground of protest 1

1.2.1 The petition of protest quotes from Acta 2006:387, 2.3.2 that “The unity that exists among believers, do not abolish the God-given diversity of language and culture, therefore the GKSA Synod 1997 (Acta 1997:170, 4.2.1) decides that churches should support each other in and out of language and culture in the church government.”

1.2.2 Under the same point it is also quoted that the Synod noted the fact that: “On these grounds churches can assemble in a organic manner, when the need exists or when issues are tabled involving various churches from a close geographic vicinity, since issues (of mutual interest) determine the agenda of a greater assembly.”

1.2.3 These quotes of the petition of protest proof that the 2006 Synod does not neglect the points of departure on the grounds of the Scripture maintained since 1961, since it leaves space for the principles of both unity and diversity.

1.3 Ground of protest 2

1.3.1 The petition of protest refers to the Report of the Deputies for Correspondence with other National Synods, Acta 1997 Synod:170, 3.2, in which it is set that the way in which support of churches in major assemblies as seen in 2.1.2 and 2.1.3 abovementioned Deputy report, a Scriptural justified way of church government.

1.3.2 Points 3.3 and 3.4 of synod 1997 should actually be read with this, and reads as follows:

“3.3 The Synod judges that the principles were set in pt. 2.1.2 by the Deputies Scriptural justified.

3.4 The practical implementation of these principles, as stated by the Deputies, may be a good point of departure for further discussion with other National Synods.”

1.3.3 This information, when read as a whole, shows that CO, Art 46 is not altered by this. From the set and accepted principles, practical implementation is organised.

1.3.4 The Scriptural grounds were kept, also in the practical implementation.

Decision: Points 1.1 to 1.3.4 noted.

2. Finding

2.1 Ground of protest 1

The motivation given in the ground of protest does not show that the decision of Synod 2006 maintained since 1961 do not disregard the points of departure that rests on the Scripture.

2.2 Ground of protest 2

The motivation of the ground of protest does not deliver proof that the decision of Synod 2006 is contradictory to art 46 CO. The scriptural grounding of previous decision, was also maintained in this decision.

Decision: Points 2.1 and 2.2 noted.

3. The Synod decides

3.1 Recommendation: Ground of protest 1
The protest fails.

Decision: Approved.

3.2 Recommendation: Ground of protest 2
The protest fails.

Decision: Approved.