

22.4 REPORT STUDY DEPUTIES – QUESTIONS UNDERLYING THE GROUNDS FOR PROTEST 2001-VERSIFICATION (Artt 54, 318)

- A. Rev PA Coetzee delivers the Report.
- B. **Decision:** The Report is referred to the Commission Liturgical Matters 2.
- C. Rev AH Steyn reports on behalf of the Commission Liturgical Matters 2.

D. REPORT

1. Mandate (Acta 2006:740)

Study deputies are appointed to:

- 1.1 identify the issues underlying the grounds of appeal, to discuss it in depth and to advise the Synod on it so that the churches can have clarity on it and so that there can come peace on the matter in the denomination, and
- 1.2 to hear the considerations of all the involved persons as named in the approved suggestion and to incorporate this into the Deputy group's study and recommendations.

Decision: Points 1.1 and 1.2 noted.

2. Finding of Deputies regarding underlying issues

After thorough discussion with all the parties involved, the deputies find that the following seven points can be identified as the underlying issues

2.1 *What should be rendered?*

What should be rendered from the Hebrew source text in a versification? Must we go back to the sources text during versification, or can the poet make an own choice of the material he wants to use? The protest that the source text has not been used to the full in the 2001-versification flows from the above-mentioned.

Motivation

Omission of text material in the versification is a crucial problem. With that the indistinct rendering of the Name of the LORD. If we say that the OT is Messianic (and confess that Christ speaks through the entire OT), how can I leave something out?

2.2 *What is Messianic?*

What is Messianic and what not? Does Christ as prophet come to his right?

Motivation

What precisely is meant with the Messianity of Scripture, especially the Old Testament, even more so the Psalms? The term direct/indirect Messianic works with a different distinction than in Scripture and Confession. As a result it does not elucidate the matter regarding the Messianity of the Psalms.

The honour of Christ and his Spirit is robbed in different ways. Christ as highest Prophet and Minister (HC Su 12) are for instance endangered when his express statements on Him in the NT, especially what he Himself confesses, is not accepted as final, binding authority.

2.3 *How should Messianity be rendered?*

How should the Messianic be rendered? Do we relate with Messianity correctly Christologically?

Motivation

Just as argued in the previous point, Christ as highest Prophet and Minister (HC Su 12) is endangered when his express statements on Him in the NT, is not accepted as final, binding authority in the Psalms. These statements are not only what Christ says about Himself, but also what the apostles testify about Him from the Psalms, especially in Acta. Can (or may) we sing the Psalms as if we are still in the OT dispensation/

2.4 *Treatment of Christ's authoritative statements about Himself*

The treatment of Christ's statements the Word remains an underlying problem. How are Christ's statements incorporated? What does Christ say about Himself?

Motivation

The NT statement is a binding statement. Christologically the versification interacts differently from the Confessions with Christ and his Christologically character. There is not adequate interaction in the Psalms with the confession regarding the Christological character of Christ and his authority. The early church always worked with the authority of Christ and how the interaction is with the authority of Christ. In the versification there is a different interaction with it.

2.5 *Relationship between OT and NT*

The relationship between the OT and NT is an important matter in the understanding and versification of the Psalms. There is a problem with a statement such as: To use the NT's use of a text as point of departure with the reading of a text from the OT, is to move in the direction of Marcion, the allegorists and the liberal theology. This is also valid for Messianic texts such as Isaiah 53 and Psalm 110. A related problem is that the reformed exegetical point of departure has never been how the first hearers understood it, but what does the Lord say? To come to the last-mentioned, the exegetical method firstly looks at the direct context and co-text of the part of Scripture (for instance a psalm), but also the Scripture relation within a certain Bible book and Testament, as well as the entire Scripture. It does not agree with the reformed confession to deviate from the source text in the versification result, and to throw this over the mantle of the original hearers while it deviates from what the Holy Spirit said in the source text and expressly in other parts regarding the text.

2.6 *Ways of selection and versification*

How should churches take a mutual decision on what should be recommended for use? An underlying problem is that the versification was made available too soon, without the necessary testing by churches, only by deputies and commissions and not the full Synod.

Motivation

There has not been an independent Scriptural evaluation of the 2001-versification, outside of that which was done by the deputies and by those who were involved with the work on the 2001-versification. The deputies were therefore the judge in their own case. This differs from the treatment of the Afrikaans Psalm versification in 1936, which is a good example of how one should go about it. The Afrikaans Psalm versification was accepted in 1936 and the decision was "to delay its approbation until the following Synod" (Acta 1936:142).

2.7 *Treatment of protests during the Synod 2003 and afterwards*

Synod 2003 and 2006 rejected the protests and Petitions of protest that served against the 2001-versification without the content being thoroughly answered or refuted. In addition, it was weighed by the same persons that were involved with the versification. Can you judge your own case? Furthermore, the way of handling Petition of protest in general is a problem, which can also be applied by the versification.

Motivation

The way which Petitions of protest are handled, namely that the Petition is not discussed, but rather a commission report on the Petition, causes important core elements of the Petition of protest to be lost. The fear during Synod 2006 was that the implication of a Petition of protest that succeeds regarding the versification, would make the entire versification null and void. (The events surrounding the successful Petition of protest against the 2003 Synod decision regarding the women in the deacon office was in the memories of the Synod delegates.) This had a certain impact on the objectivity of the Synod's decision making in the opinion of the involved parties.

Decision: Points 2.1 to 2.7 noted.

3. Argumentation

3.1 From the above-mentioned findings the deputies are persuaded that there are indeed prima facie testimony that protests were handled doubtfully, and that above-mentioned

underlying matters carry weight. However, the question is if your deputies can put the matter on the table during Synod 2009.

- 3.2 Your deputies are under the impression of the seriousness of the matter. The underlying matters remain problematic for the persons whose protests did not succeed. The decision of Synod 2003 that the use of the 2001-versification are left to the judgement of the local churches with consideration of the art 69 CO, does not force any member of church to sing the versification. One can argue that a matter such as the Psalm versification according to article 30 CO can not be left to the judgement of local churches in this matter. The unity in the sermon and liturgy is endangered by this, which should not be the case.
- 3.3 The church orderly route of article 31 and 46 CO is there precisely to get matters on the table of the majority meetings in an orderly manner. If your deputies suggest another route in this report, this orderly route will be endangered.

Decision: Points 3.1 to 3.3 noted.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 That church meetings are once again directed to the seriousness of jurisprudence in meetings, because the core of jurisprudence is concerned with God's honour.
- 4.2 That church members who have protests against the 2001-versification follow the church route of article 31 and/or article 46 CO to get the matter on the table of majority meetings in an orderly manner.

Decision: Approved.