

22.2 PETITION OF PROTEST: DR HF VAN WYK AGAINST A DECISION OF SYNOD 2012 – HYMN 348 (Artt 33, 37, 188)

- A. Dr HF van Wyk tables the Petition of Protest.
- B. **Decision:** The Petition of Protest are referred to the Commission Petitions of Protest 2 – Liturgical.
- C. Rev HB Hattingh reports on behalf of the Commission Petitions of Protest 2 – Liturgical.

D. PETITION OF PROTEST

Herewith the undersigned's objection to a decision of Synod 2012:396, 2.2.5:

2.2.5 Decision: Approved.

Grounds of objection 1: Declaring a night as holy

Three times the words "heilige nag" (holy night) appear in the song. With the approval of the hymn as a "Scriptural faithful song" has given substance to the fact that certain days can be declared "holy".

1. There are no exegetical grounds that Jesus was born at night. In fact, it cannot even be culture-historically determined which month or year Jesus was born in. So here is a specific image is brought in which is not and cannot be Scriptural faithful.
2. The word "holy" in the Old Testament:
 - 2.1 Is primarily used to describe the Being of God.
 - 2.2 Isaiah uses the term "Holy One of Israel" as reference to the redemptive work of Christ.
 - 2.3 The word is used to identify persons solely in the service of God. Examples are the priests that performed the Temple duties as well as Nazarites
 - 2.4 The word is used to describe objects used to glorify God. So we read of the temple objects that could only be used in the service of the Lord.
 - 2.5 There is no Scripture Reference to any night that would be "holy" or where any rituals would be to the honour of God.
 - 2.6 There are 15¹ Scriptures that can generate the idea of a holy day. Thorough exegesis of these passages show that the day is not holy, but the event and the interaction between God and man. God commands a ritual act that man performs, focused on the glory of the Lord.
 - 2.7 As God's property the people of the covenant, being elected unto salvation by God, are called 'holy'.
3. In the New Testament
 - 3.1 God is referred to as the 'Holy One'.
 - 3.2 Christ is called the "Holy One of God"
 - 3.3 We pray that the name of the Lord be sanctified.
 - 3.4 The elect are called holy ones.
4. Conclusion
 - 4.1 There are no Scriptural grounds that a day or night is sanctified.
 - 4.2 Only on the festive days to the honour of God, there were rituals to honour the holiness of God.
 - 4.3 The birth of Christ is the first stage of humiliation, and can therefore not be a holy day/night to the honour God.

Request: that the decision to include Hymn 348 in the hymnology of the GKSA be deleted.

¹ Exodus 12:16; 16:23; Leviticus 23:3; 7; 8; 21; 24; 27; 35; 36; 37; Numbers 28:18; 25; 26; 29:1; 2

E. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

1. Mandate

To advise the Synod in terms of the handling of the complaint from dr HF van Wyk against a decision of the Synod of 2012 to approve Lied 348 for the use in the church service (22.2). The complaint is addressed against the holy statement of a night. The following description is given:

“Three times in the song the words “heilige nag” (*holy night*) appear. The Synod, with the approval of the song as a “Skrifgetroue lied” (*Scripturally sound song*), gave substance to the song in the fact that certain days may be declared “heilig” (*holy*).”

Decision: Noted.

2. Argument

2.1 The complaint states in point 1: *There are exegetically no grounds that Jesus was born in the night. In fact, on a cultural historical basis there cannot be determined in which month or year Jesus was born. A specific image is thus being carried in that is not and cannot be Scripturally sound.*

The song however, does not connect the birth to a determined date. Furthermore, Lied 348:2 joins up with the angels' choir and the shepherds to which the message of the birth are brought to. Luke 2:8 connects this events to the night, whereas Luke 2:10 states the birth “vandag” (*today*). Since the Jewish day started at sundown, the indication is very strong that the birth was however in the night.

2.2 The complaint states in the first conclusion (4.1): *There are no Scriptural grounds that a day or night is hallowed.*

Exodus 20:11 however states: *Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy (ESV).* The word “holy” means dedicate/devote, set aside for special service (appoint, dedicate). In the Scripture the word is being used for anything that the Holy God devotes to his service. That applies to people and objects, but can also apply for a day like the Sabbath day that is being devoted by God to his service.

The day of the birth of Christ is a special day in the counsel of God. Galatians 4:4 states that He was born in the fullness of the time. When we call the day holy, it is an acknowledgement of the fact that the Holy God is mightily in control in the execution of his counsel and that He himself devoted the day and time to his service.

2.3 The third conclusion (4.3) states: *The day of birth of Christ is the first step of humiliation, and then therefore cannot be a holy day/night to the glory of God.*

The opposite however is that angels' choirs sang the praises of God that night and gave Him all the honour. Christ's humiliation can surely never be seen as unholy. It was indeed not the work of the devil, but of the Holy God. The Communion that commemorates the nadir/depth point of his humiliation is rightly called the “holy” Communion even though this concept does not appear as such in the Bible.

Decision: Points 2.1 to 2.3 noted.

3. Conclusion

3.1 There are however Scriptural indication that the birth of Christ took place in the night.

3.2 The day and time of the birth is determined in God's counsel and is therefore devoted by God self to his service.

3.3 To call the night “holy” is an acknowledgement that the Holy God is mightily in control of the execution of his counsel. It is thus being done to give glory to God.

Decision: Points 3.1 to 3.3 noted.

4. Recommendation

The Petition of Protest does not pass.

Decision: Approved.