

22.8 PETITION OF PROTEST REGIONAL SYNOD PRETORIA AGAINST DECISION REGARDING THE GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSING PSALMS AND SCRIPTURAL HYMNS (Artt 33, 41, 197)

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

D. PETITION OF PROTEST

1. The decision against which the objection is made

The objection (Gravamen) is against a decision made by the Synod of 2012, as reflected in the article 22.2, Report 2 of Deputies Liturgical Matters, namely 2.3 and the decision (Acta:390):

2.3 Guidelines for the testing of versifications of the Psalms and Scriptural Hymns

2.3.1 As basic guideline holds good that the versification should relate the meaning and content of the part of Scripture purely and in agreement with church confessions.

2.3.2 The versification should be aimed at expressing God's revelation in his Word.

2.3.3 A versification should take the structure of the original text into account and should attempt to link to this in the verse division.

2.3.4 The broader meaning and content of the text should be related regarding the basic content, important concepts and basic progression of the text without every detail of the original text having to be included. This touches on matters such as important revelation-historic lines, important phrases and concepts, the judgement of God and the covenant.

2.3.5 With regard to the rendering of the Messianic Psalms, it must be taken into account that the possible messianic thread in a Psalm can be expressed in different ways. Footnotes can be used to indicate the link to New-Testamentical texts.

2.3.6 New versifications of texts (especially from the Old Testament) should aim to uphold the distinction between the different names of God as far as possible.

Decision: Points 2.3.1 to 2.3.6 approved.

2. Objection and motivation

2.1 *Objection*

Point 2.3.4 is in conflict with 2.3.2. This narrows the contents of 2.3.4, which is arbitrarily and can cause confusion.

2.2 *Motivation*

The Synod rightly decided that the Psalms and Scriptural Hymns must be addressed according to God's revelation embodied in His Word (2.3.4). It is objectively measurable and visible to the revelation of God and manifested in the particular rhyming. Matters are however different to the degree when the qualification of 2.3.4 is added, as the rhymer only reflects a broad account of the basic content of selected detail. This is not objectively measurable, but can lead to subjective and arbitrary exclusion of certain leads in the Scripture. Point 2.3.4 is therefore in contrary to 2.3.2 and moreover an unnecessary addition to clause 2.3.2.

3. Request

Synod 2015 is hereby requested to remove 2.3.4 of the Guidelines for the assessment of Psalm- and Scriptural hymns (Acta 2012:390).

E. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

1. Mandate

To advise the Synod with regards to the handling of the complaint from the Regional Synod Pretoria against the decision of Synod 2012, article 22.2, Report 2 of the Deputy Liturgical Matters, by names of point 2.3.4 of the decision as taken up in Acta 2012:390 regarding the guidelines for the judgement of Psalms and Scriptural hymns. The complaint is that 2.3.4 narrows/attenuates the guidelines in 2.3.2.

Decision: Noted.

2. Argument

- 2.1 Point 2.3.2 of the decision indeed states the principle guideline, namely: *The hymn must be aimed to manifest God's revelation in his Word.*
- 2.2 The guideline is however already implemented in the history by not articulating the detail. An example of this is Totius' hymn of Exodus 20 whereby detail of the second, fourth and tenth commandments are being omitted.
- 2.3 The question is however, how much detail is omissible? Point 2.3.4 of the Synod decision gives answer upon this. The *basic contents, important concepts and the basic advancement of the section* must be given through. Basic contents that may not be omitted, *involve aspects such as important revelation historical lines, determined phrases and concepts, the judgement of God and the covenant.*

Decision: Points 2.1 to 2.3 noted.

3. Conclusion

Point 2.3.2 of the synod decision sets the principle guideline. These broad guideline is however prone to various possible interpretations. Point 2.3.4 of the decision really wants to set order on that which is not to be omitted. It is therefore an important particularization of point 2.3.2.

Decision: Noted

4. Recommendation

The complaint does not pass.

Decision: Approved.