

SECOND REPORT: DEPUTIES LITURGICAL MATTERS & ASSIGNMENT ART 69 CO FORMULATION OF COMPREHENSIVE PRINCIPLE DESIGN

1. Matters of which the Synod can take note of:

1.1. Assignment: Acts 2009:743, pt 3.1:

To, considering previous Synod decisions (GKSA Potchefstroom and Midlands), the deputies' report and the commission report of 2009, formulate a comprehensive principle design against which existing and new hymns can be tested.

1.2. Synod decision of importance for the assignment of the deputies

1.2.1. An important benchmark for understanding the decisions of the synods are the decisions of Synod 1994 regarding the principles and guidelines for selecting Scriptural Hymns for the worship service (Acta, 1994:527-539), as well as the decisions on singable melodies (Acta, 1994:540-542). These two reports contain important information regarding the history of the matter of principles and guidelines within the GKSA, as well as a comprehensive study of relevant information from Scripture. The first set of decisions regarding principles and guidelines for the testing of Scriptural Hymns is of special importance and provides a broad framework on which one can expand. It also makes a new exegetical study unnecessary because the work has been done already. Consequently the most important Synod decisions in this regard will shortly receive attention. This includes the decisions on the Afrikaans versification of 1936, Scriptural Hymns, the 2001 versification, Scriptural faithful songs and the decisions on petitions of protests in which important principles for the evaluation of songs are investigated.

1.2.2. Synod 1920

The Synod of 1920 took the decision that an Afrikaans versification of Psalms should be compiled (Acta 1920, Article 129, page 55-56). Consequent Synods received reports on the progress, but no decision was taken on principles and criteria on the Synods of 1924, 1927, 1930 and 1933 (Acta 1924:37-38, Acta 1927:35, 36, 111-112, Acta 1930:50-51, 140-141, 1933:29-34).

1.2.3. Synod 1933

The Synod of 1933 accepted several description points regarding the expansion of the body of songs for discussion (Acta, 1933:43-44). The Synod decided that such songs should be made available to churches for evaluation. A commission was appointed to study the songs according to God's Word and our reformed principles and to advise the following synod regarding the matter (Acta 1933:50-51).

1.2.4. Synod 1936

The Synod of 1936 received a final report on the Psalm versification (Acta 1936:78-85) and also formally took the versification into use (Acta 1936:179-186). In the report an explanation is given of the history and procedures that were followed with the versification and evaluation of the songs. The commissions (deputies) worked on it, evaluated it and recommended it to synod, who accepted it.

At the Synod of 1936 several petitions of protest against or descriptions points regarding the decision of the expansion of the body of songs served (Acta 1936:162-166). A final decision on including the songs in the Psalm Book was postponed to the following synod in order to give the churches further opportunity for evaluation.

1.2.5. Synod 1939

This Synod approved the Scriptural Hymns (Acta 1939:95, 98-99) and utilisation of the songs were left to the discretion of churches. The decisions were confirmed in 1942 (Acta 1942:132-135).

1.2.6. Synod 1955

In 1952 Synod decided that there should be a revision of the music of the Psalms and Scriptural Hymns (Acta 1952:291-292). There was a report at the next synod (Acta 1955:64-70). In this regard four principles were laid down to serve as guideline for the revision of the melodies (Acta, 1955:65):

1. The content of the Psalm and the melody should not clash as far as possible.
2. The melody should be simple and within reach of the human voice so that it can be sung by the congregation with ease.
3. The melody should be ceremonious and exalted.
4. New melodies should adjust to the style of the existing psalm melodies.

This work was reported on in 1958 (Acta 1958:518-520), at which time not much progress had been made.

1.2.7. Synod 1961

In 1961 a longer report regarding the revision of the Psalm melodies served (Acta 1961:454-464). However, nothing had been added regarding the principles. A report on the revision of the melodies also served in 1964 (Acta 1964:507-511). Likewise in 1967 (Acta 1967:575-576).

1.2.8. Synod 1967

In 1967 the matter of the revision of the text of the versification was presented through a letter from the Dutch Reformed Church (Acta 1967:452-454). However, the matter was presented to synod at a very late stage, so that it was referred to deputies.

1.2.9. Synod 1970

On this synod there was another report regarding the revision of the psalm melodies (Acta 1970:457-459). The work had progressed well.

A report regarding the revision of the text of the psalm versification was also presented (Acta 1970:459-461). The Synod rejected the matter of a revision of the text at that stage.

1.2.10. Synod 1973

At the synod of 1973 a report on the melodies was presented once more (Acta 1973:202-208). The revised melodies were accepted by synod. This matter was further reported on in 1976 (Acta 1976:567-569).

At this synod there was also a letter from the Dutch Reformed Church regarding the text of the versification (Acta 1973:407-408). Deputies were named for a discussion in this regard, and amongst other things also to explain the decision of 1970.

1.2.11. Synod 1976

At this synod the matter of the revision of the text was discussed again (Acta 1976:401-407, 417-421). The Synod decided to cooperate on a limited linguistic revision of the versification. The most important thing here is to take note of the matter of a limited linguistic revision of the existing versification.

1.2.12. Synod 1979

In 1979 the deputies Church Music reported on the Psalm Book with revised melodies again (Acta 1979:608-616). In spite of certain criticism on the new book the Synod did not accept a description point which asked that the melodies should be revised.

The synod also handled a report regarding the revision of the text of the versification (Acta 1979:616-618). The synod decided not to continue with the revision and to have discussions on this with the Dutch Reformed Church and the Hervormde Kerke again.

1.2.13. Synod 1982

The synod dealt with a short report on the text revision of the versification (Acta 1982:513). The NH Kerk was willing to cooperate further, but the Dutch Reformed Church deemed that the Totius text should be conserved unchanged. In the light of this fact the synod decided to step down from the matter.

1.2.14. Synod 1985

The Synod of 1985 decided to cooperate with a new versification of the psalms. A comprehensive report served on this matter (Acta 1985:747-762). In addition two description points served in this regard (Acta 1985:763-766). In the documents still no comprehensive guidelines were stated, and the deputies to be named had to pay attention to this. As basic point of departure it was stated that the new versification's content should be Biblically and doctrinally correct (Acta 1985:759, 6.2 first asterisk). The Hebrew text of origin had to serve as the point of departure, and the unity of the psalms had to remain while the content of the psalm is fully related, with a strong emphasis on the message of the psalm. Linguistically and literature-wise the versification had to be up to date, in modern Afrikaans with the necessary simplicity. The melodies also received some attention in the documents that served before Synod, but not at length.

The Synod also dealt with a report regarding the revision of the Psalm melodies (Acta 1985:767-771). In the process a few guidelines for melodies were formulated (Acta 1985:771). However, these guidelines were formulated very generally and links to the existing reformed legacy. In 1988 the deputies Psalm Versification reported on the execution of their assignment (Acta 1988:788-795). However, the report only dealt with formal matters and the principles and criteria did not receive attention. There was also a report of the deputies Liturgical Music in 1988 that includes an important study piece. However, this was only noted (vgl. Acta 1988:33-44).

1.2.15. Synods 1994, 1997 and 2000

The Synod of 1994 handled two important reports regarding principles and guidelines for the selection of Scriptural Hymns for the service and on singable melodies.

The first-mentioned report provides a broad background, followed by a discussion of important liturgical information as well as information from the Old and New Testament. After this a number of important liturgical principles are stated of which the Synod took note (Acta 1994:535). Important in this regard is the thought that the worship service should be a threefold meeting in which the congregation meets God, God the congregation and the congregation each other. Within this meeting occasion the song has a special function. After the Synod took note of a number of important considerations, the Synod approved a number of principles and criteria. This matters are documented in 3.2 the Acta (Acta 1994:538). Some of the matters deal with liturgical requirements for singing in the worship service, which can be kept as it is (3.2.3-3.2.7). Regarding the

language, it is only stated that the language should be simple and genuine and comprehensible to children.

Regarding the matter of the versification itself, 3.2.1 in the Acta shortly states: “The versification should communicate the meaning and content of the part of Scripture purely and correctly in agreement with the church confessions.” What this involves in more detail, is not spelled out.

The report regarding the melodies (Acta 1994:540-541) offers a good overview of the way in which different synods dealt with melodies. The decisions of 1955 and 1985 regarding melodies were confirmed and no new matter was added.

This synod also decided to cooperate on a new versification after cooperation was stopped in 1991 (see Acta 1994:543-553). Part of the decision was that the principles and guidelines that were approved for Scriptural Hymns, should also be valid for the versification. In 1997 the deputies reported on the execution of the assignment (Acta 1997:785-788), and again in 2000 (Acta 2002:453-456).

1.2.16. Synod 2003

The synod of 2003 recommended the 2001 versification for use in churches (Acta 2003:642-643). In the process certain protests brought in against the 2001- versification were not regarded as sufficient to disallow it for use. In the eighth motivation for the decision the problems surrounding psalm versification is well explained (Acta 2003:64, 3.2.3 motivation 8): “The process of versification is a complex relationship between exegesis, the language register for contemporary speech from which words are selected for the versification, words and their meaning, poetic form, linguistic rhythm and phrase lengths, simple style and music rules that all have to be brought together to render the meaning of the original Hebrew psalms as accurately as possible.” In an addendum (Acta 2003:646-659) comments were made on matters regarding which protests against the versification had been brought and matters relevant for the evaluation of versification.

1.2.17. Synod 2006

The synod of 2006 dealt with several petitions of protest against the 2001-versifications (Acta 2006:650-740). The petitions of protest were all rejected. However, two further decisions were made which led to further discussion and study. They were reported on at the 2009 synod. The matters that the petitions of protest dealt with, are matters that have come to the fore in the past many times. The argumentation of the synod regarding the petitions of protest were considered with the formulation of guidelines.

1.2.18. Synod 2009

The synod again rejected a few petitions of protest. In follow-up of the two decisions of 2006 the synod assigned to the current deputies to formulate guidelines for the evaluation of versifications. The assignment also touches on the matter of article 69 of the church order and Scripture-bound songs.

1.2.19. Synod Midlands

The Deputies could not locate any decisions from Synod Midlands about this matter.

2. Matters about which the Synod must decide:

The following comprehensive design against which existing and new hymns can be tested, is proposed by the Deputies to the Synod for approval:

2.1. Introduction

- 2.1.1.** In the composing of a church song there is a complex relationship between (i) exegesis, (ii) the language register for contemporary speech in the relevant language from which words are selected for the versification, (iii) words and their meaning, (iv) relevant poetic form, (v) linguistic rhythm and phrase lengths, (vi) simple style and (vii) relevant music rules that all have to be brought together.
- 2.1.2.** There is a distinction between versifications of the Psalms, Scriptural Hymns, Confession songs and Scriptural faithful songs. Versifications of the Psalms and Scriptural Hymns are versifications of the text of the Bible. Confession songs are versifications of the confession of the church. Scriptural faithful songs are songs which are based on Scripture, but not a versification of a specific text.

2.2. General guidelines

2.2.1. Liturgical usefulness

- 2.2.1.1. The song should in all aspects be testable to the principle that the worship service is a threefold meeting in which the people meet their God, God his people and the people each other in the Lord.
- 2.2.1.2. The song should meet the character of a true worship service, including elements such as communality, festivity, genuineness, aesthetics, respect and humility.
- 2.2.1.3. With the selection of the song the nature of the song should be justified in light of the different elements of the liturgy through which the congregation speaks to God and each other, such as praise, thanks, confession, begging, praying, revealing, etc.

2.2.2. Literary quality

- 2.2.2.1. The text of the church songs should have esthetic integrity. It should not rely on the music to carry it. The same goes for the music against the text. The two matters should supplement each other and should show balance, unity, variety, harmony, structure, rhythm, conservation and suitability.
- 2.2.2.2. Regarding the language in general, the following could be stated: The versification should contain (i) simple, (ii) pure, (iii) clear language, (iv) that is suitable for the presence of God and (v) which expresses community with and/or longing for the God of the covenant (vi) and is understandable to children as far as possible.

2.2.3. Musical quality

- 2.2.3.1. The content of the song and the melody should as far as possible be in harmony. The text and the melody should form a close unit.
- 2.2.3.2. The melody must support the genre of the song.
- 2.2.3.3. The melody should be simple and within reach of the human voice so that it could be sung by the congregation with ease.
- 2.2.3.4. The melody should be fit for liturgical purposes.

2.2.4. Choice of songs for the compilation of a hymnal

- 2.2.4.1. In the choice of songs for the compilation of a hymnal a balance in content must be maintained in accordance with the church's confession.

- 2.2.4.2. In the choice of songs for the compilation of a hymnal attention must be given to the different elements of the liturgy through which the congregation communicates to God and each other through jubelation, worship, praise, thanks, confession of faith, confession of guilt, calling, begging, praying, revealing etc.
- 2.2.4.3. In the choice of songs for the compilation of a hymnal the known limitations and needs of the church liturgics must be taken into account. Not the quantity of hymns but the quality and liturgical functionality are important.

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-Testamental 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.

2.4. Guidelines for the testing of Confession songs

- 2.4.1. Confession songs must be based on the revelation of God and the confession of it as a Scriptural truth (dogma).
- 2.4.2. The songs must express the meaning and content of the part(s) of confession in a pure and correct manner in accordance with the Church confession.

2.5. Guidelines for the testing of Scriptural faithful songs

- 2.5.1. The following guidelines are essential for a Scriptural faithful song:
 - 2.5.1.1. A Scriptural faithful song should relate Biblical content purely and correctly in agreement with the church confessions and with consideration of the revelation-historical lines in the Bible.
 - 2.5.1.2. A Scriptural faithful song should in response to God's revelation be focussed on God, who revealed himself in his Word or in response to God's revelation be focussed on mankind or world in accordance with what God reveals in his Word.
 - 2.5.1.3. A Scriptural faithful song must reveal a Scriptural faithful concept of God.
 - 2.5.1.4. The inequality between the eternal, holy God and the weak, sinful man who meet in the worship service, should in no way be compromised.

- 2.5.1.5. Where ever the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament is raised in a song, it should be clear that the Old Testament and the New Testament are equally the Word of God, that there is a distinction between the two testaments, that the two testaments form a unit and that the relationship between the two testaments can only be understood from the fulfillment in Christ.
- 2.5.1.6. The Scriptural faithful song should (explicitly or implicitly) be in accordance to the wider revelation-historical lines of Scripture, like creation-sin-redemption, the Kingdom of God and the covenant.
- 2.5.1.7. The Scriptural faithful song should not impact negatively on the Scriptural balance between indicative (salvation), imperative (duty) and promise.
- 2.5.1.8. The song should functionally establish a meeting or interaction of the congregation with God and with each other as believing community.
- 2.5.1.9. The church song should be a testimony of the believers to the world.
- 2.5.2.** Where applicable the following guidelines apply:
 - 2.5.2.1. When the words of the song speak to God and worship Him, it should be with regard to the things He prescribed and through which He wants to be called upon, served and thanked.
 - 2.5.2.2. The language and thread of the song should express the basic certainty of the congregation regarding Gods love, loyalty and grace to which He has committed himself and the believer's smallness, need and misery before God.
 - 2.5.2.3. When the song expresses the Christian religious experience, it should be in accordance to the full will of God.