

20.8 PETITION OF PROTEST GK OOS-MOOT REGARDING AMENDING CHURCH ORDER, ARTICLE 69 (Artt 39, 201)

- A. Dr GJ Meijer tables the Petition of Protest.
- B. **Decision:** The Petition of Protest are referred to Commission of Protest 3 – Church Polity.
- C. Dr JH Howell reports on behalf of the Commission of Protest 3 – Church Polity.

D. PETITION OF PROTEST

The Church Council requests on the recommendation of Classis Pretoria Moot and according to the established procedures (Acta 1991:526-528) to place the following Petition of Protest on the Agenda of General Synod 2015.

1. The decision against which the Petition of Protest is made

The Petition is against a decision made by the Synod of 2012, as reflected in the Article 22.1, Report 1 of Deputies Liturgical Affairs and the decision (Acta:384-385):

Matters about which the Synod decide

2.1 The following formulation of amendment to CO, art 69 is proposed on the ground of above-mentioned by the Deputies to the Synod for approval:

2.2 “In the churches only the 150 Psalms and the rhymed versions of the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostolic Confession, and the Hymns of praise of Mary, Zacharias and Simeon shall be sung. The use of other rhymed versions of Bible verses and Scriptural faithful hymns which have been approved by the Synod, is left over to the jurisdiction of each church council.”

Decision:

1. In the proposed wording of CO, art 69 the word “church councils” is replaced with “churches”.
2. In principle it is approved that Scripturally faithful hymns can be sung in the churches.
3. The amendment that the words “that the Synod approved” in the proposed wording in 2.1 for CO, art 69 is deleted, is not approved.
4. The proposed wording in 2.1 for CO, art 69, as amended according to point 1 of decision, is approved.

2. Objection and motivations

2.1 *Objection 1*

On the basis of Scripture and Confession, the Synod fails to show why the existing Church Order, article 69 is not sufficient.

Motivation

In the entire Report, only once it is indirectly referred to the Scriptures in Colossians 3:16 without interpreting and applying the given Scripture (1.6.6). Nowhere else in the Report based on Scriptural or Confessional grounds is indicated why such a drastic decision is made on such a weighty matter as hymns and that while the Bible clearly expresses itself regarding the church song (Ephesians 5:19).

2.2 *Objection 2*

The Synod was led by current practices in taking the decision.

Motivation

The Reports clearly expressed how important it is that unity in the church should be promoted (1.6.8). The different historical backgrounds in the GKSA and its establishment history as evidenced by various bundles must be offset. Unity despite the diversity as indicated in the Report will not be maintained and promoted by one group in the GKSA on historical background to be normative or prescriptive for all churches in the GKSA (1.6.9). Accordingly, article 69 is now open to accommodate songs from various churches/languages and communities. This is a purely pragmatic motivation, which is not sustained in the Scriptures.

3. Request

Synod 2015 is requested to:

- 3.1 Recall the decision taken by Synod 2012 (Acta:384-385);
- 3.2 Promote the unity in the churches by reforming the church song in accordance with the pronouncements of God's Word and not merely by existing practices or for the sake of unity.

E. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

1. Mandate

Petition of Protest GK Oos-Moot.

Decision: Noted.

2. Matters that the Synod take note of

- 2.1 The Petition of Protest is directed against the of Synod 2012, art. 22.1, Report 1 of the Deputies Liturgical Matters point 2.1 (Acta 2012:384-385).
- 2.2 The following persons met with the Commission: Dr GJ Meijer and elder DJ de Kock.

Decision: Points 2.1 and 2.2 noted.

3. Background

To consider this Petition of Protest it is necessary to take into account the historical course of the matter. We refer to the full background as contained in point 2 of the Commission Report dealing with the Petition of Protest Regional Synod Pretoria against amendment of CO, art 69.

Decision: Noted.

4. Grounds of Petition

4.1 *Ground of Petition 1*

The Synod omits to indicate on the basis of Scripture and Confession why the existing CO, art 69 is not sufficient.

4.1.1 Argumentation

- 4.1.1.1 From the historical background (cf. Point 2 of the Petition of Protest Regional Synod regarding CO, art 69) it appears that the decision of Synod 2012 cannot be viewed in isolation. The proposed Scriptural grounds were tabled, dealt with, and adjudicated upon by way of Points of Discussions, Petitions of Protest, and the Reports of two Deputy groups by a number of Synods (National and General) (cf. especially Acta 1997:806-809 and 2009:726-730). To thus allege that the decision that eventually led to the amendment of CO, art 69 was not taken based on Scripture and Confession, is not correct.
- 4.1.1.2 Scriptural passages such as Eph 5:19 and Col 3:16 were among others dealt with as Scriptural grounds. The Confession was also investigated, as well as the Church Order itself. (See Acta 2009:726-730.)
- 4.1.1.3 The proposed amendment of CO, art 69 (as approved by Synod 2012) rests on the study from Scripture and Confession as contained in the Point of Discussion in *inter alia* Acta 1997 (806-809) and the Deputies Report in Acta 2009 (726-730).

4.1.1.4 The insufficiencies (if any) in the proofs from Scripture and Confession are not indicated.

4.1.2 Finding

Ground of Protest 1 does not sufficiently prove that Synod 2012 omitted to indicate on the basis of Scripture and Confession why the approval of the amendment of CO, art 69 is not sufficient.

4.2 *Ground of Petition 2*

In the taking of the decision, the Synod allowed itself to be led by practice.

4.2.1 Argumentation

4.2.1.1 The historical course (cf. Point 2 of the Petition of Protest Regional Synod regarding CO, art 69) indicates that the decision to amend CO, art 69 already started in 1997. The motivation of the Point of Discussion that served during Synod 1997 (Acta 1997:806-809) clearly indicate Scriptural grounds why CO, art 69 must be amended (although the Point of Discussion was not given effect to in 1997).

It is on the basis of this that the Petition of Protest against this decision at Synod 2000 succeeds, since Synod 1997 did not dismiss the Point of Discussion on Scriptural grounds (see Acta 2000:458-462).

4.2.1.2 It is clear, however, from the historical section that the First General Synod 2009 finds a new situation with regard to hymns being sung for years in Synods Middellande and Soutpansberg. This practical situation clearly played a role in the taking of the decision to amend CO, art 69. This is clear from Acta 2009 (p743) where it is mentioned that the Synod is aware of the necessity to protect and promote unity despite differences. But to allege that the new practical situation is the only or biggest reason why CO, art 69 was amended, is not correct. As indicated in the argumentation at 4.1.1. and 4.2.1.2. it appears that the Scriptural grounds as indicated in the Point of Discussion of Synod 1997 (against which a Petition of Protest succeeded during Synod 2000 because the Point of Discussion was not given effect to and the Scriptural grounds were not considered), as well as the study in the Deputies' Report of Synod 2009, were the decisive factor in the taking of the decision at Synod 2012. The long historical course of the matter that led to the amendment of CO, art 69, thus has many facets to be taken into account. CO, art 86 also allows the freedom to sometimes bring about amendments to the Church Order in the interest of the churches (also on the basis of practical considerations), as long as Scripture and Confession is not compromised. In this case there are Scriptural evidence led for possible amendment but the contrary was not proved. These facts are not accounted for in the Petition of Protest.

4.2.2 Finding

The Petition of Protest does not sufficiently indicate that the amendment to CO, art 69 was "*a mere pragmatic motivation that does not pass the test of Scripture.*"

Decision: Points 4.1 to 4.2.2 noted.

5. Matters that the Synod decide on

5.1 *Recommendation: Ground of Petition 1*

The Petition does not succeed on this ground.

5.2 *Recommendation: Ground of Petition 2*

The Petition does not succeed on this ground.

5.3 *Summary Recommendation*

The Petition does not succeed in its entirety.

Decision: Points 5.1 to 5.3 approved.