

22.3 PETITION OF PROTEST: REV PA COETZEE AND DR HF VAN WYK AGAINST A DECISION OF SYNOD 2012 – HYMN 353 (Artt 33, 38, 239, 257)

- A. Rev PA Coetzee 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**
 - 1. **Decision objection against**
Herewith the undersigned's objection to a decision of Synod 2012:408, 3.1.

3.1 *Recommendation*
In the light of 2.3 the Synod rejects Hymn 353
Decision: Rejected. Hymn 353 is approved.

2. Background

During the discussion about this hymn in Synod 2012 heresy in this hymn was already pointed out by the objectors. The Commission Report admits that there are opposing viewpoints and recommends that the hymn is not approved. During the vote regarding the matter, the Commission Report's recommendation is rejected by a majority vote.

The essence of the objection is that this hymn preaches a strong Remonstrant theology, and also brings the doctrine regarding the two natures of Christ in jeopardy:

Remonstrantism is pointed out in the letter of objection through the words: "*Wie glo in Jesus Christus word nou sy eiendom*" (verse 3). Together with Jesus that *becomes Immanuel* (verse 1) and that He *becomes our Redeemer* (verse 2).

The doctrine of the two natures of Christ that is being brought into jeopardy, is pointed out in the words that Christ *becomes Immanuel* (verse 1) and that He *becomes our Redeemer* (verse 2).

Grounds of objection 1: We object against the words: "*Wie glo in Jesus Christus word nou sy eiendom*"

The use of the words "wie glo" that is followed by the word "nou" implies that the choice of faith lies in man, and if *one* believes in Christ he *becomes* the property of Christ.

Motivation

1. Canons of Dordt Chapter 3 and 4 rejects the error (paragraph 6) that says: The Synod rejects the errors of those who teach that: *in the true conversion of man new qualities, dispositions, or gifts cannot be infused or poured into his will by God, and indeed that the faith [or believing] by which we first come to conversion and from which we receive the name "believers" is not a quality or gift infused by God, but only an act of man, and that it cannot be called a gift except in respect to the power of attaining faith.*

The Synod teaches: For these views contradict the Holy Scriptures, which testify that God does infuse or pour into our hearts the new qualities of faith, obedience, and the experiencing of his love: I will put my law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring; The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. They also conflict with the continuous practice of the Church, which prays with the prophet: Convert me, Lord, and I shall be converted.

2. In Hymn 353 it is clearly stated that people have the choice to become the property of Christ. Thus it is a Remonstrant fallacy that cannot be part of our treasure of songs.

Grounds of objection 2: Isaiah 7:14 and 8:8 is used out of context – Hymn 353 is not a Scriptural Hymn, but is recommended as a Scriptural Faithful song and therefore the song must take into account the full revelation of God.

In the Commission Report that served before Synod 2012, these Scripture passages are used to support the idea that Christ became Immanuel. Isaiah 7:14 and 8:8 are used out of context.

Motivation

Hymn 353 has no reference that it is a Scriptural Hymn. The appeal to these verses alone is therefore not valid and may not be used as motivation. This is a “vrye lied” that is supposed to be a Scriptural Faithful song and must therefore take into account the full revelation of God.

Grounds of objection 3: The entire doctrine of predestination is compromised by the three allegations that Jesus *becomes* Immanuel and Redeemer.

Motivation

The Canons of Dordt clearly state that people were chosen to salvation before the foundation of the world (1.7 with reference to Ephesians 1) and that Christ was already destined as Redeemer before creation (1.7 clearly confesses that God *also appointed [Christ] from eternity to be the mediator, the head of all those chosen, and the foundation of their salvation. And so he decided to give the chosen ones to Christ to be saved.* Christ was thus Mediator and Redeemer before the creation of mankind. Therefore this hymn contradicts Scripture and Confession.

In Christelijke Encyclopedie (Section 3:584) Prof Oosterhoff writes the following regarding the word Immanuel:

“Daarom is dit woord in de komst van Jezus Christus vervul. Hij is de ware I. Hij is het teken in deze wereld, dat God met ons is. Het teken van zijn genade en trouw.”

As Angel of the Covenant Christ was already in the Old Testament the sign of God’s grace and faithfulness, He is Immanuel eternally. With his birth He did not become Immanuel, but He who is Immanuel, became flesh. He is the SIGN of God’s grace and faithfulness.

Viewed from the hermeneutically fact that the Bible contains a single-God revelation, the Messiah in the Old Covenant is severed from the Christ of the New Covenant, which is totally unacceptable.

Conclusion: Hymn 353 contradicts Scripture and Confession.

Grounds of objection 4 : Our Confession regarding the two natures of Christ is brought into jeopardy.

The hymn alleges dat Christ only *becomes Immanuel and Saviour* with his birth, but this is in contradiction with our confession regarding the two natures of Christ:

Motivation

In the Korte Verklaring (1952:36) Ridderbos explains the section from Matt. 1 23 as follows: “..... de Messias is Zelf de God-met-ons. Hij is de vervulling van al de beloften Gods in den loop der eeuwen, omdat in Hem God Zelf bij de mensen leeft en woon.” Thus, Christ is in the course of the centuries, also in the Old Testament, God with us, Immanuel.

1. In the Athanasian Creed (par 34-37) we confess : “Who although He be God and Man yet He is not two but one Christ; one however not by conversion of the GodHead in the flesh, but by taking of the Manhood in God; one altogether not by confusion of substance but by unity of Person. For as the reasoning soul and flesh is one man, so God and Man is one Christ..”
2. In the Heidelberg Catechism Sunday 18 we confess the following (answer 48) : ‘...His divinity has no limits and is present everywhere. So it must follow that His divinity is indeed beyond the human nature which He has taken on and nevertheless is within this human nature and remains personally united with it.”
3. In the Belgic Confession art 18 we confess that Christ is Immanuel and not that he became Immanuel.

4. In art 19 of the Belgic Confession we confess the relationship of the two natures of Christ among others as follows: "But these two natures are so united together in one person that they are not even separated by his death". In this regard the Synod of Chalcedon in 451 rejected the viewpoints of Eutyches and Nestorius by declaring that the two natures of Christ are unconfused and unchangeable (against Eutyches), as well as indivisible and inseparable (against Nestorius). Prof Johan Heyns writes the following regarding this matter in the 1978 (p 249) issue of his book *Dogmatiek*: "Dat die twee nature van Christus in die vereniging ongedeel en ongeskeie gebly het, beteken dat die handeling van Christus nie aan die twee nature afsonderlik toegeskrywe mag word nie, maar aan die één persoon waarin hulle verenig is. Die twee nature mag nie van mekaar losgemaak en dan gesê word: van bepaalde dade is die menslike natuur as sodanig die handelende Subjek of dat ander dade deur *die Goddelike natuur verrig is nie. In al Christus se dade gaan dit om die dade van één Persoon. Hy is geen dubbelwese nie, want daar is net één Middelaar tussen God en die mense, die mens Christus Jesus (1 Tim 2:5). In Hom is daar nie twee subjekte nie, maar één Subjek uit wie al sy handeling in die twee nature ontspring.*"
5. From the above mentioned it is clear that it is false doctrine if the hymn alleges that Christ became Immanuel or even became Redeemer. In this way the two natures of Christ are separated, while it may only be distinguished. This we also confess in the Belgic Confession Article 10 and Sunday 13 of the Heidelberg Catechism. Article 10 of the Belgic Confession confesses the following regarding the Godliness of Christ: "We believe that Jesus Christ, according to his divine nature, is the only Son of God-- eternally begotten, not made nor created,..." and further "He is the Son of God not only from the time he assumed our nature but from all eternity,..." Without any doubt we can thus confess: He is Immanuel from eternity and did not become Immanuel when he assumed our nature.
6. In dogmatics it is taught that the two natures in one Person has a fourfold communication as consequence, namely *communicatio idiomatum*, *communicatio charismatum*, *communicatio apotelesmatum* and *communicatio adorationis*. (Note especially point 6.3)
 - 6.1 *communicatio idiomatum* deals with the communication of divine and human properties to the *one* Person of Christ.
 - 6.2 *communicatio charismatum* deals with the communication of Spiritual gifts.
 - 6.3 *communicatio apotelesmatum* deals with the communication of results received through the mediation work; this means that the works of Christ was indeed established through the collaboration of his divinity and humanity, but that the result forms an indivisible unity. As Mediator he finished all the work. We then say that our sins have been paid for through the death of the Son of God (Heidelberg Catechism, answer 40), though we know that God does not die.
 - 6.4 *communicatio adorationis* deals with the communication of worship or honor.
7. In his book *Dogmatiek* (p250) Prof Heyns writes : "*Ons sal moet aanneem dat die vereniging van die twee nature 'n toedrag van sake is wat ewig sal voortduur. Die kruiswoord van Christus: My God, my God, waarom het U my verlaat? (Mark 15:34) dui nie op 'n tydelike beëindiging van hierdie vereniging nie*". This we also confess in art 19 of the Belgic Confession: "*So then, what he committed to his Father when he died was a real human spirit which left his body. But meanwhile his divine nature remained united with his human nature even when he was lying in the grave;...*"

With this the undersigned reckon that we adequately motivated and indicated that Hymn 353 is not suitable to be part of the treasure of songs of the GKSA.

E. REPORT OF THE COMMISSION

1. Mandate

To advise the Synod in respect of the handling of the complaint of reverent PA Coetzee and dr HF van Wyk against a decision of Synod 2012 to approve Lied 353 for use in the church service after talking with the objectors first.

Decision: Noted.

2. Working method

Rev PA Coetzee and dr HF van Wyk were given the opportunity to talk to the Commission. Their point of view as well as their argument was taken into consideration.

Decision: Noted.

3. Argument of the ground of objection

3.1 Grounding of objection 1: *We have objection against the words: Those who believe in Jesus Christ now becomes his property. The use of the words "those who believe" and followed by the word "now" implies that the choice to believe lies at the human, and if the human believes in Christ he becomes the property of Christ.*

3.1.1 Argument

The objection states with all correctness that God works the faith in the heart and that the humans' ability to grip onto faith is in the first place the work of God. This is confirmed through the exegesis of John 1:12-13 that was handed in at the Commission. Faith is indeed both a gift as well as a grip/grasp. The human being are called up to believe, but can't do it if God did not work the gift of faith in him. In the Bible both sides of the faith are not always set in relation to one another. There are Passages in Scriptures that sets the gift of faith as preconceived. But there are also passages that focus more on the grip/grasp side of faith. When the prison guard for example asks Paul what he should do in order to be saved, he replies: "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your family." (Acts 16:31)

Lied 353:2, 3 is based upon John 1:9-13 with the insertion of John 3:16. The line of thought of John 1:9-13 is the following: Christ came as the Light of the world to his property. His property however did not accept Him. Verse 12 states the contrary: *But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God (ESV).* This order in the sentence is not according to time, as it can also be indicated exegetically from the following section. The right to be child of God is alone possible through the act of salvation of God in the incarnation and sufficient act of Christ, where the acceptance of the Gospel is a deed of faith.

Although the hymn places the focus on the grip/grasp side of the faith, it cannot be declared that it proclaims the doctrine of the Remonstrant. The believer can gladly sing about Gods' grace by acknowledging of the salvation that God worked that is grasped in the first words of the hymn. It can at most be said that the hymn lacks the words of John 1:13. The question is if the word "now" not places the human in the midst? The hymn is however about the salvation acts in the human incarnation of Christ. The "now" is not the now of humans' decision, but the "now" of Gods' salvation act. It stands in accordance with John 4:23: "There comes a time, and that is now".

3.1.2 Conclusion: The hymn does not finish the line of John 1:7-13 by bringing forward the gift character of the faith. The hymn emphasises in this manner the grip/grasp side of the faith. The hymn is however not a Scriptural rhymed hymn.

It cannot be determined with certainty if the hymn is Remonstrant or not, seeing that the Bible also places such emphasis sometimes and because the doctrine of the Remonstrant does not present its consequences in the hymn. It is not proved that it is a Remonstrant heresy that can't be part of our hymn list.

Decision: Points 3.1 to 3.1.2 noted.

3.1.3 Recommendation: The objection does not pass on this ground.

Decision: Recommendation not approved and ground of protest succeeds.

3.2 Grounding of objection 2: *“Jesaja 7:14 and 8:8 are being used out of context – Lied 353 is not a Scriptural hymn, but is being recommended as a Scripturally sound song and therefore the song must keep the full Revelation of God in consideration. (Conclusion: It is a Remonstrant heresy that cannot be part of our hymn index)”*

3.2.1 This ground of objection is directed against a reasoning of the Commission Report that served before the Synod 2012 that the Synod (Acta 2012:408, 2.2.1a) just noted. There are however now indication in the decision that the Synod took the reasoning for his account and therefore objection cannot be made against the (*this*) reasoning. This ground of objection is thus not acceptable.

Also if the contents should be considered, the objection does not pass. The objectors' claims: “In the Commission Report that served before the Synod of 2012, these passages are being used to support the idea that Christ became Immanuel. Jesaja 7:14 and 8:8 are used out of context.” The call upon these Scriptural passages are however not the only grounds for the recommendation in relevant report. Even if it could thus be proven that it is used out of context, it would only mean that a piece of the ground be taken out, seeing that it was not indicated that the rest of the grounding is invalid.

3.2.2 Conclusion: The objectors does not indicate with this that the hymn is a Remonstrant heresy.

Decision: Points 3.2 to 3.2.2 noted.

3.2.3 Recommendation: The objection does not pass on this ground.

Decision: Recommendation not approved and ground of protest succeeds.

3.3 Ground of objection 3: *The entire doctrine of the election is jeopardized by the accusations that Jesus becomes Immanuel and Saviour (Conclusion: Hymn 353 contradicts Scripture and Confession).*

3.3.1 Argument

The objectors' states with this ground the truth of the doctrine of election and that Christ was destined before the foundation of the world to be Redeemer and Mediator. They conclude from that that the idea that Christ becomes Redeemer and Mediator jeopardises the doctrine of election. They also claim with that that a division between the Old and New Testament exists. The opposite however is that the hymn preconceives the unity between the Old and New Testament by indicating in the first line the human incarnation as the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophesy.

Hymn 353:2, 3 follows the line of argument of John 1:9-13. John 1 has the point of departure in verse 1 that the Son self is God and that everything that exists came into existence through Him. Yet, the salvation of people to be children of God only realises in his human incarnation (Jh. 1; 12, 13). The eternal Creators' Mediator/Intercessor thus 'becomes' our Saviour in the realisation of his human incarnation in the (this) time.

3.3.2 Conclusion: The hymn does not contradict Scripture and does not bring the entire doctrine of election in jeopardy.

Decision: Points 3.3 to 3.3.2 noted.

3.3.3 Recommendation: The objection does not pass on this ground.

Decision: Recommendation not approved and ground of protest succeeds.

3.4 Ground of objection 4: *Our Confession regarding the two natures of Christ is jeopardised. The hymn claims that Christ becomes Immanuel and Saviour only at his birth, but it is in contradiction with our Confession about the two natures of Christ.*

3.4.1 Argument

The Confession of Athanasius states in article 29-35:

29 Maar vir die ewige saligheid is dit nodig dat hy getrou aan die menswording van ons Here Jesus Christus moet glo.

30 So is die opregte geloof dan: Ons glo en bely dan dat ons Here Jesus Christus, die Seun van God, tegelyketyd God én mens is.

31 Hy is God uit die Wese van die Vader, voor alle tye gegeneer, en mens uit die wese van sy moeder, in die tyd gebore;

32 volkome God, volkome mens met 'n redelike siel en menslike vlees;

33 na die Godheid aan die Vader gelyk, na die mensheid minders as die Vader.

34 En alhoewel Hy God en mens is, is Hy nogtans nie twee nie maar een Christus.

35 Hy is een, nie deur verandering van die Godheid in die vlees nie, maar deur die aanneming van die mensheid in God.

The two natures of the Son of God that is God from eternity, thus first exists since his human incarnation. Since he took on the humanity in the Deity, the two natures can never be divided again. The fact that He would have become human was already determined in the council plan of God. Therefore it is already clearly prophesied in the Mother promise. It however only realised when it physically happened in the time. These salvation acts were essential for the realisation of all Gods' promises of salvation and redemption that would never have happened if He did not first become true human. Revelation 5 sketches these events. John cries when no one can be found worthy to open the book. If this is the book of life or the book of Gods' council plan is not certain. The meaning however stays the same, namely that the human being is doomed if this book is not opened. It is only the Lamb that was slaughtered that is qualified/worthy to open the book seeing that the salvation of the human is subject to the fulfilment of Christ in his humanity.

The word '*word*' (*becomes*) in this sentence is not used to indicate the beginning, but to indicate the fulfilment and/or the completion of God's promises and the Old Testament prophecy that is written in Mathew 1:21, 22. The scope of Hymn 353 thus follows in junction with John 1:14 the revelation historical line of our Saviour's coming:

<i>"So lief het God die wêreld,</i>	<i>For God so love the world</i>
<i>Hy gee vir ons sy Seun –</i>	<i>He gives us his Son</i>
<i>só word Hy ons Verlosser,</i>	<i>So he becomes our Saviour</i>
<i>ons Middelaar en Steun"</i>	<i>our Mediator and Support</i>

3.4.2 Conclusion: The "becomes" of the hymn is not a maltreatment of the two natures of Christ, but a recognition of the necessity thereof.

Decision: Points 3.4 to 3.4.2 noted.

3.4.3 Recommendation: The objection does not pass on this ground.

Decision: Recommendation not approved and ground protest succeeds.

4. Conclusion

Not one of the ground of objection passes.

Decision: Recommendation not approved and ground of succeeds.

5. Recommendation

The Petition of Protest does not pass in its whole.

Decision: Recommendation not approved and ground of Protest succeeds in its entirety.