

APPENDIX III

COMMITTEE CHURCH BOOK, PSALMS AND HYMNS SECTION

To the General Synod of Smithville, Ontario
1980

Esteemed Brethren,

Herewith we submit our report on our activities during the past years.

After we had received the mandate from the Synod Coaldale 1977, we considered what to do first, and we came to the conclusion that it would be best to work towards the revision and completion of the Hymn Section before reviewing the rhymings of the Psalms.

1. RHYMING OF THE HYMNS

As for the rhyming of the Hymns, we have considered all the changes that were suggested by church members who studied the Provisional Hymn Section and sent us their remarks, either because their own Consistories appointed them to that work or because they wished to serve the Churches by their personal, private advice.

In many instances the proposed changes were not acceptable because the wording was incorrect, or the prosody was unacceptable, or because we preferred the wording as it was given in the Provisional Section. It would serve no purpose if we mentioned the proposed changes and our evaluation of those proposals. A comparison of the Hymn Section as it has been printed and the list of changes which we adopted will show in how far we could go along with the criticism which was brought to our attention. We add this list of changes as *Appendix I*.

There is one point in this connection to which we wish to pay some more attention. It was the point in some of the letters received that the committee preserved somewhat "archaic" language in some verses, e.g. in Hymn 14 (the Song of Zechariah) and Hymn 60 ("Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation"). We were faced with a choice: either give a totally new rhyming or keep the rhyming as it is without any major change. We chose the latter course and do not think it to be so difficult that the congregations will have trouble with it. It does not hurt to have some "old-fashioned language" in the Church's songs once in a while.

2. CHOICE OF SONGS

Comparison of the new *Hymn Section* with the hymn section of the *Book of Praise* as it appeared in 1972 will show that we have deleted some of the songs which were found in the 1972 edition. Our reasons for deleting some songs were: this song is unnecessary, since we already have the very same song in the Book of Psalms (e.g. "old" Hymn 1); this song expresses thoughts which, even though not completely contrary to the Word of God, yet are a "borderline case" (e.g. "old" Hymns 20, 27).

The set-up of the *Hymn Section* according to the order of the Apostles' Creed resulted in our inserting some songs to provide a broader "coverage" of each part of that confession. We only remind your assembly of the section "Come, Lord Jesus! Maranatha!" to make clear what we mean.

3. NOTATION

The matter of the choice and notation of the hymn-tunes became a difficult chapter in our endeavours.

The many reactions, often critical, to the music-part of the provisional *Hymn Section 1979*, forces us to give some explanation, without going into technical details.

Because of the importance of the musical aspect and because only one member of our Committee was considered by us as an expert, we approached a number of brethren whom we considered knowledgeable in this field and requested them to serve us with their advice.

Although we are thankful for all the work these brethren did, and the information they gave, the end-result was not very helpful for us, not only because distances prevented them from meeting, but because they had divergent views on matters like notation of old melodies, rests and finales, and on the use of accidentals (Dutch: "toevallige verhogingen") in the Genevan tunes.

Time, however, went on, and the moment came that the Hymn Section had to be readied for printing and publication. At that time one opinion regarding these musicological matters found expression in a number of hymns in the green booklet; not all Committee members considered themselves responsible for the view which then prevailed.

The above-mentioned criticism was mainly directed at this specific music-notation. It was soon discovered that there was a clear difference between some tunes in the green booklet and the *music edition* of the *Revised Hymn Section 1979*. People asked: why this difference?

After much discussion, re-evaluation and re-consideration (the Committee for Advice had meanwhile ceased to exist) we met the received criticisms and requests for re-instating certain tunes as far as possible.

This revision was not completed without seeking professional help. De Vereniging van Gereformeerde Kerkorganisten (The Netherlands) was approached and found willing to help. We requested them to verify our work, and although complete agreement was not (yet) established, we are happy now to be able to present a copy of the final draft of the music of the Hymn Section, *Appendix II*. As you will see, a number of tunes have been replaced, in a few cases well-liked melodies from the present *Book of Praise*, which were first deleted, have been returned. Some tunes have been written in the old notation as was suggested, but only when this would not bring any confusion in congregational singing.

4. HARMONIZATION

Synod 1977 in its mandate, recommendation sub 7, also spoke about *Harmonizations*. Our Committee was urged "to seek ways and means to make available to the membership of the Churches the harmonizations of the Psalms and Hymns." It was even suggested "to insert those in the *Book of Praise*."

To be honest, we were surprised by this suggestion from Synod.

The reasons why we did not meet with this urgent request are:

First, Psalm-harmonizations for organ are readily available; we were even informed that a new set of such harmonizations is being prepared privately, specifically for the Canadian Reformed Churches. Then, for the Hymns the *Publication Committee* has made available the *Music Edition of the Revised Hymn Section 1979*, which in nearly all cases fits the revision of tunes mentioned above.

Secondly, Reformed churches have never produced Psalm books with four-part setting. Apart from forbidding costs for our small community, and apart from whether this is an "ecclesiastical matter" according to Article 30, Church Order, the following quotation from one of our advisors may be of interest:

Our Churches have since the Reformation of the 16th century always insisted on congregational, unison singing. Printing the melody only, clearly indicates such a preference. We do not have choirs in our worship services, but in showing a four-part setting in our church-book we could be opening a door for such choirs, which will make the congregation less active.

Thus we present to Synod and to the Churches the Psalms and Hymns with only the melody.

5. PSALMS

Summarizing, we may state that we have been helped by the remarks which came from Churches and church members, although the remarks on the rhyming of the Psalms were very few. We have scrutinized all the rhymings of the Psalms as they appear in the *Book of Praise*, and there is practically no Psalm which has remained "untouched," so to speak. We attach as *Appendix IIIa* a list of those Psalms which have been changed substantially or even have been replaced completely as far as rhyming is concerned. With each and every Psalm it has been and remained our endeavour to stay as close to the unrhymed text as we could. We are encouraged in this respect by the fact that none of the remarks about the rhymings which we presented was of such a nature that deviation from the literal text of God's Word was charged. Final corrections made in response to suggestions and criticism submitted are added in *Appendix IIIb*.

6. DEFINITIVE ADOPTION MOST DESIRABLE

It is our sincere wish that the work which has now been presented to your assembly in the revision of the Psalm rhymings and in the revised *Hymn Section* may appear acceptable so that, at least as far as the songs are concerned, the work may be considered concluded. It is imperative, in our opinion, that the "definitive text" be approved, for our children are learning the rhymings by heart at the various schools, and it is utterly frustrating if every so often they have to re-learn certain songs because a change has been made. Besides, if we keep changing the rhymings, the rhymed Psalms and the hymns will never become "part and parcel" of the lives of believers and they will never become such an integral part of the knowledge-of-faith as we have seen it with our older brothers and sisters who knew almost the whole Dutch Psalm book by heart.

Although we are the first ones to recognize that all our work is imperfect and that there is always room for improvement, yet we wish to say that we have done the best we could as far as rhymings are concerned. The result we now present to your assembly for final approval.

7. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

It is with great joy and thankfulness to the Lord that we stated the above.

In the course of the years many brethren were involved in the work of our Committee. Some of them were appointed to its membership, others became involved upon the request of the Committee. Some of them are already with the Lord, others are still with us. It is a great privilege to us that we are permitted to recognize all those who in one way or another have contributed to the progress of our work and were instrumental in paving the way for the presentation of the final proposals as we submit them to your assembly.

We do wish to honour all those who contributed and we wish to do so especially in two of our brethren who have been a member of our Committee from its very beginning. We refer to the brethren M.M. deGroot and G. VanDooren. They were appointed by the National Synod of Homewood 1954, and have been re-appointed by each subsequent General Synod. It is difficult even to estimate the number of hours that they have spent in their capacity as members of our Committee. For them in particular it is an occasion for rejoicing that the Lord has enabled them to work during all these years and now has given them the privilege that they arrived at this point, this goal. Much work will still have to be done, but the goal has been reached: A complete Psalm book and Hymn book in the English language, with preservation of the Genevan tunes.

It behooves us to give humble thanks to the Lord our God Who has enabled these two brethren to do all the work they have been doing, and it is also fitting

that, as a Committee, we express our gratitude and appreciation to the brethren for the work which has been blessed so abundantly for the benefit of the Churches. We deem it proper that also your assembly recognizes the brethren in its evaluation of the Committee's achievements.

Of the members appointed by Synod 1977, the Rev. C. VanDam had to terminate his cooperation due to his moving to British Columbia. The Canadian Mails are not the most suitable means of entertaining a fruitful cooperation. Besides, work of this nature can be done more properly and speedily as well as thoroughly when proposals and criticism can be discussed orally. We wish to thank the Rev. C. VanDam for the work which he did while he was still in Ontario and faithfully attended the Committee's meetings.

As for the rest, the Committee could meet regularly, although not at regular times. Many hours were spent in meetings; countless more hours were spent in the preparation of the meetings. Be assured that all this work was done with joy and gratitude for the privilege that in this way we were permitted to contribute towards the edification of the Church of Christ.

8. CONTACT WITH OTHERS

Our work and contacts have not been confined to the members of the Churches in Canada. We may even say that there is some international recognition.

A letter was passed on to us in which Dr. Bruce C. Stewart of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh, Penn., draws our attention to a possible conference on Psalmody. The following sentence may be quoted, "We would anticipate also that representatives from your Synod would be welcome to attend the study conference." We as your Committee would appreciate Synod's judgment on the desirability of representation at such a conference. We enclose a photocopy of the above letter for your information. *Appendix IV.*

There was some contact with the Australian Deputies and we also have sent them in the course of the years our revisions and adopted rhymings. They sent their remarks on those revisions and rhymings, which we took into account when considering whether any changes should be made. We also followed some of their suggestions regarding rhymings of Old and New Testament passages. Further we sent them our evaluation of some "Bible Songs" which they composed.

We already mentioned the contact with the Vereniging van Gereformeerde Kerkorganisten. More such contacts could be mentioned.

For your information we mention that an independent church in California purchased fifty copies of our *Book of Praise* and are using it in their services. Upon their request we were also instrumental in providing them with a book with harmonizations of the Psalm-tunes.

Further some copies have been ordered from Curacao and Surinam, while also in Presbyterian circles in the United States interest is growing, as may also become evident from the above-mentioned letter.

Our Committee also had contact with a committee of the Reformed Churches in Australia: they wish to use some of our rhymings in the hope that this will lead to acceptance of the whole Genevan Psalter. We have given them permission to do so on certain conditions.

9. COPYRIGHTS AND INCORPORATION

This brings us to our next point.

Our Committee holds the copyright to the rhymings insofar as they have not been taken over from other sources. Most of the rhymings have been produced "by order" of our Committee. As far as we know, that is a unique phenomenon, since practically all other books with Psalms and Hymns have been put together by collecting rhymings from all sorts of existing collections.

In some instances remuneration was given for that work, so that those rhymings are the property of our Committee and, in this committee, of the Churches. In other instances no remuneration was given, but the rights were transferred to our Committee nevertheless. In other cases the versifier retained the right and only gave permission to the Committee, and therein to the Churches, to use his rhymings without any further charge.

Now that the work as such has come to an end, the Churches are to ensure that they keep the rights which are now held, in their behalf, by the Committee. If in any way some financial benefits should be derived from others using our rhymings, the Churches should be the beneficiaries. Our Committee does not wish to say that we should try to "make money" out of our rhymings; we only wish to stress that it would be no more than proper if the Churches received back some of the considerable sum of money they have given for this purpose in the course of these past twenty-six years.

In order to safeguard the rights of the Churches and in order to keep control over the contents of the *Book of Praise* also in the future, it will be necessary that a Standing Committee is appointed by Synod and that such a Committee be incorporated, so that it can take all measures necessary to safeguard the rights of the Churches and can make necessary arrangements for the distribution of the *Book of Praise* and possible changes in the contents of that book, such under instruction from General Synod and under the obligation to report to each General Synod on its activities.

We have already obtained legal advice regarding this matter and have been advised in the above direction. It is proper to mention to your assembly that the substantial legal fee (which was paid by your Committee) has been returned to us as a donation.

For the benefit of your Advisory Committee which will deal with the matters concerning the *Book of Praise* we enclose four photocopies of the advice in its entirety. *Appendix V.*

For the benefit of your assembly we also enclose a draft instruction for the to-be-appointed Standing Committee. *Appendix VI.*

10. CONTENTS BOOK OF PRAISE

The Synod of Coaldale 1977 appointed our Committee to coordinate the work of all committees working on the contents of the *Book of Praise*. It decided "to add to its mandate the charge that it coordinate the work of the committees to be appointed and instructed hereafter." (*Acts*, Article 60).

We have been keeping in constant contact with the various committees (Confessional Forms, Liturgical Forms, Church Order), which contact was greatly facilitated by the fact that most members of our Committee also held membership in one or more of the other committees. Sometimes a brief meeting was held with members of one of the other committees.

From these contacts and from the tangible results of the labours of the other committees it has become evident that our Church book cannot be issued as yet in such a form as we should like to see it: with the Psalms, the Hymns, the Confessional and Liturgical Forms, and the Church Order. Even if — which we hope and expect — your assembly approves the rhymings as we have now presented them to you so that this part of the work may be considered to have been concluded, there remains much work to be done on the other sections. It may even take six or more years before we can finally be presented with a complete and acceptable revision of all the parts which should be included in our *Book of Praise*.

For that reason it does not appear advisable to us to include in the next printing of our *Book of Praise* those revised forms or parts of forms as may be approved by your assembly. We consider it necessary that we wait with publication in that form until all the revisions have been concluded and have been approved by a future General Synod. If we should include every three years those parts which

have been approved and adopted, the previous edition of the *Book of Praise* would have to be discarded and confusion would reign.

The proper course of action as we envisage it would be: to have the revised rhymings of Psalms and Hymns as adopted by Synod in one book with the Confessional and Liturgical Forms as we have them at this moment.

As the various Synods adopt or approve revisions of all or part of the Forms, that part which has been approved could be issued in a separate booklet. It would then be in the liberty of the Churches to use either the "old" forms or the new ones *insofar as they have been approved by Synod*.

Once a General Synod has definitely adopted all the revisions, subsequent editions of the *Book of Praise* should then contain only the adopted and approved revisions.

In that manner confusion is prevented and the cost reduced to a minimum.

In our opinion, your assembly should express the advisability of that course of action, or perhaps even order it to be done that way.

11. ORDER OF WORSHIP

We consider it advisable that a "Suggested Order of Worship" be inserted. The Orders as they are in use among us roughly speaking come in two different forms. In our opinion they should be inserted, but then as "Suggested Orders of Worship," for we do not wish to claim that a General Synod should adopt a specific order and make it mandatory for the Churches.

We enclose two such suggested orders as *Appendix VII*.

12. FINANCES

Various General Synods have empowered our Committee to appeal to the Churches for financial means whenever this appeared necessary. Happily, we did not find ourselves oftentimes in such a position. In the beginning money was needed for the purchase of copyrights, purchase of rhymings, and so on. The actual printing of the *Book of Praise* has never been part of the finances of our Committee but was, instead, being taken care of by a separate Publication Committee. It has been our contention from the very beginning that the Churches should not become involved in the business aspect of this matter, not even via their Committee. Thus the money which was received from the Churches was used solely for the contents of the *Book of Praise*, not for its printing or distribution.

During the past three years we were convinced that we should approach the Churches again. Our revision of the hymn section was completed, and the only way in which the Churches could test the result of our labours was by having sufficient copies so that the songs could be used in the services. With a view to the very temporary character of such a booklet we decided to ask the Churches for a collection or an equivalent amount, and we are happy to report that only one Church refused to cooperate. From all the other Churches we did receive what we had requested.

The amount received from the Churches did not cover by far the cost of the new *Hymn Sections*, as may be evident from *Appendix VIII*. The rest of the money needed was donated by the Publication Committee from the reserves it had been building up through the sale of the present *Book of Praise*. Thus the Churches could be provided with the requested number of copies without further charge.

For the costs of our regular meetings, of postage, stencilling, etc., we were reimbursed by the General Fund as administered by the Church at Carman, Manitoba.

13. PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

In order that the matter of our *Book of Praise* and related questions may be

dealt with to the best advantage of the Churches, we request that two of our Committee be given the privilege of the floor when Synod discusses this point.

14. CONCLUSION

After all the above our conclusion of this report can be brief.

It has been a great privilege and pleasure for us to serve the Lord in His Churches in this capacity. We may assure your assembly that the work entrusted to us by the Churches has brought us closer to the songs with which the Church has praised her God and Saviour for all the centuries of her existence.

It is our sincere wish that these songs may be as dear to all the members as they are to us and that in the singing of Christ's Church on this earth may be heard the "beginning of eternal joy."

Respectfully submitted,
Yours in the Lord,
M.M. DE GROOT
W. HELDER
G. VANDOOREN
W.W.J. VANOENE, Secretary