

by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, as well as by the use of the sacraments.

**2. Nowhere do the confessions teach that repentance is necessary before we can believe and receive all the blessings of salvation by faith in Christ. Nowhere do the confessions teach that repentance is the way in which we receive mercy by faith or the activity man performs prior to receiving the gift of faith or any particular blessings that are received by faith. While the confessions do not teach that we need to repent before we can hear the gospel and believe in Christ, the confessions do teach that those who hear the gospel and believe in Christ also repent.**

### **Protest of Mr. Todd Ferguson**

Dear Brethren,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

I write to protest against two decisions of Synod 2020.

1. I protest 2020 Synod's decision to not sustain Mr. C. Doezema's appeal in his contention that Mr. Overway militated against the decisions of Synod 2018 when he said, "We do little. God rewards greatly. And yet there is a correlation so that we understand the less of a good work, or the less good that a good work is, the less or smaller the reward. The less the number of works, the less of a reward one receives. So too with regard to the more. The more that one walks in good works, the more of a reward is received..." (*Acts of Synod 2020*, p. 87-88, Art. 52, 2, A).

a. Synod is mistaken when it claims, "Rev. Overway's statement does not constitute militating against the decisions of synod" (p. 88). Mr. Overway clearly makes our good works (or obedience) merit or gain us something in the covenant of God. This makes him stand squarely in opposition with the conclusion of Synod 2018, p. 73, Art. 62, 5 (b), which states, "Obedience never gains us or obtains anything in the covenant of God." Synod 2018 makes the statement that "our obedience never gains us or obtains anything," not only concerning justification but rather applies this truth broadly to "anything in the covenant of God." To say our good works merit, gain, or obtain anything in the covenant of God is to literally militate against Synod 2018's decision.

#### **Documentation:**

**Acts of Synod 2020, Art. 52, 2, A, p. 87-88**

Synod returns to the recommendations regarding sermon 3 in number 5 of Mr. C. Doezema's appeal (alleged militancy against Synod 2018 in three sermons).

2. Recommendations

a. That synod not sustain the appeal of Mr. Doezerna in his contention that Rev. Overway militated against the decisions of Synod 2018 when he said, "We do little. God rewards greatly. And yet there is a correlation so that we understand the less of a good work, or the less good that a good work is, the less or smaller the reward. The less number of works, the less of a reward one receives. So too with regard to the more. The more that one walks in good works, the more of a reward is received...."

Ground: Rev. Overway's statement does not constitute militating against decisions of synod. There are fundamental differences between Rev. Overway's statement and the decision of Synod 2018.

1) Synod 2018 objected to the idea that "if we meet these requirements but a little, then we will enjoy a little of God's fellowship" and "if we meet these requirements a lot, then we will enjoy much of God's fellowship" (Acts, p. 66).

2) Although Synod 2020 does not render a judgment on the correctness of Rev. Overway's statement, the statement does not constitute militating against Synod 2018 because it does not speak of meeting requirements (a little, or a lot) in order to enjoy degrees of fellowship with God, but of receiving degrees of reward according to the quality and number of good works.

Carried

2. Secondly, I protest synod's decision to "approve the work of the Synodical Deputies from Classis West on March 17, 2020 with its grounds" (*Acts of Synod 2020*, Art. 21, pp. 33-34, Art. 54, 4, p. 90). I contend that the synod erred in upholding this work on several grounds.

a. Article 12 was misapplied.

Van Dellen and Monsma (p. 59) lays out clearly that the "weighty matters" of Article 12 is not intended to apply to ministers that have by the occasion of sin sought to leave their office:

We have already indicated some reasons for leaving the ministry which may be termed worthy and sufficient. But the motives of those who desire to enter upon a secular vocation are not always worthy and sufficient. As unworthy and insufficient reasons for leaving the ministry we note the following: seeking to escape the burden of the work of the ministry; aggravated by troubles in the consistory or church or both; desiring greater financial income and luxuries of life; craving for greater honor and social prestige; seeking to escape confession, etc, after one has fallen into sin and abuse of office.

Article 12 may not be appealed to, or applied as a form of church discipline for when a minister is guilty of the sin of preaching false doctrine.

b. Classis East Jan. 8-9 2020 decided that Rev. Overway erred, but then did not apply any discipline, require any form of apology, and so has disregarded the key of Christian discipline, and by this allowed the key of preaching to become tarnished. (CE 2020 Jan. 8-9, Art. 24, p. 9; CE 2020 Jan. 8-9, Art. 25, pp. 10-11.)

1) As demonstrated in my first point of protest, I contend Rev. Overway did indeed militate against Synod 2018 and made our works gain or obtain us something in the covenant of God, which proves this is no new thing but a continuation of the same error or false doctrine or heresy that he was forbidden by Synod 2018 from preaching.

2.) Articles 79, 80 ought to have been applied instead, as it is the church orderly way of both rejecting heresy in our churches and maintaining the purity of preaching from the pulpit, as well as putting our erring brother under discipline for the good of his soul, to be able to rightly know and understand his sin, repent, turn from it and through it can work to clear his name in the church. Prof. Hanks in his *Notes on the Church Order*, Articles 79 and 80, states, "4) If an officebearer is deposed from office but repents of his sin he must not be further censured. He may become unworthy, through his sin, to hold an office in the church of Christ, but repentance makes further censure impossible." [http://www.pca.org/books/Notes%20on%20the%20Church%20Order%20by%20Herman%20Hanko/CHURCH%20POLITY.htm#ARTICLES\\_79,\\_80](http://www.pca.org/books/Notes%20on%20the%20Church%20Order%20by%20Herman%20Hanko/CHURCH%20POLITY.htm#ARTICLES_79,_80)

It is not Mr. Overway's inability "to explain the relationship between justification and sanctification without making errors that makes him unfit to preach (Acts 2020, Art. 21, p. 33)"—it is his *sin* of continuing to preach the same false doctrine of meritorious good works that makes him unworthy to hold an office in the church of Christ.

To allow false doctrine to be preached and to go undisciplined is to say there was no false doctrine at all; it is to say that preaching false doctrine is no sin at all.

May God bless synod with wisdom in your deliberation and decisions regarding these matters.

**Documentation:**

**Acts of Synod 2020, Art. 21, pp. 33-34.**

**A. Information**

2. The Synodical Deputies attended the meeting of Classis East on March 17, 2020. They concurred with the decision of Classis East to advise Hope PRC in Walker, MI to release its pastor, Rev.

David Overway, according to Article 12 of our Church Order with its grounds:

a. The requirements of Article 12 have been met, namely that there are "weighty reasons" that Rev. Overway should be released from the ministry.

1) Rev. Overway has demonstrated and acknowledged that he does not possess the spiritual gifts necessary to continue in the office of the ministry. He is unable to explain the relationship between justification and sanctification without making errors and without creating controversy.

2) Rev. Overway's doctrinal errors have caused considerable unrest in Hope PRC and in the denomination.

a) These errors have generated numerous protests to the Hope consistory and appeals to the broader assemblies that have sapped the energy of Hope's consistory and consumed a great deal of time and energy of the denomination.

b) The result is that the congregation of Hope PRC is divided in its support of and trust in her pastor.

3) It is evident that he will not be able to lead Hope PRC through her present struggles. Further, Rev. Overway's pattern of unclear and erroneous statements call into question his ability to serve effectively another congregation in our denomination.

b. Although both Classis East and synod have ruled that Rev. Overway has made repeated doctrinal errors, he acknowledges the erroneous character of his teachings, and his request for release from the ministry demonstrates that it is not his desire "consciously and deliberately" to maintain or promote his errors (VDM, p. 331). On these accounts, he is not "worthy of discipline" (VDM, p. 331).

c. This is the recommendation of the Special Synodical Committee to assist Hope (SSCAH, as appointed by Synod 2018) and the Church Visitors of Classis East.

**B. Recommendations**

4. That synod approve the work of the Synodical Deputies from Classis West with regard to the release of Rev. D. Overway from the ministry.

It is moved to postpone action until synod treats the advice of Committee 4 regarding Mr. Chuck Doezema's appeal regarding three sermons (cf. Art 54, p. 90).

**Carried**

**Acts of Synod 2020, Art. 54, p. 90**

Synod returns to the report of the Synodical Deputies from Classis West (Supplement 27, p. 319).

It is moved to return to recommendation 4 that was postponed in Article 21 (p. 34). **Carried**

4. That synod approve the work of the Synodical Deputies from Classis West on March 17, 2020 with its grounds. **Carried**

**CE 2020 Jan. 8-9, Art. 24, p. 9**

Recommendation

B. That classis sustain objections #2 and #6 of Mr. Bleyenbergs protest, namely, that Rev. Overway's statement in his sermon that "we are rewarded according to imperfect obedience" is not the teaching of Christ (objection #2) and that Rev. Overway's 12-30-18 announcement that "the truth that God in grace rewards our imperfect works" is in error (objection #6).

Grounds:

1. Rev. Overway's statement is erroneous when compared to Scripture and the Confessions.
2. Rev. Overway's announcement of clarification does not properly acknowledge and refute the error. It is correct to state as Rev. Overway does that "the basis for that gracious reward and therefore the reason why we receive that reward of grace is only the perfect work of Christ." However correct that statement may be, he still insists that God rewards our imperfect works. No amount of explanation regarding the basis of the reward being Christ makes correct the erroneous statement that God rewards imperfect works. God never rewards imperfect works; only perfect works as they are found in Christ.

Motion to recommit to the committee for reformulation. **Failed**

1) Classis votes on the motion. **Carried**

**CE 2020 Jan. 8-9, Art. 25, pp. 10-11**

25. Classis treats the recommitted material regarding the appeal of Mr. Wayne Bleyenbergs, namely, his objection #3.

C. Recommendation: That classis sustain objection #3 of Mr. Bleyenbergs that Rev. Overway's presentation of the degrees of reward leaves his sermon susceptible to the interpretation that the believer is left with no comfort or assurance of grace.

Grounds:

1. Although Hope's consistory rightly explains the 'degrees of glory' taught by Scripture and provides a logical interpretation for Rev. Overway's "correlation between good works and the reward of grace," there is insufficient evidence from the sermon itself that this is what Rev. Overway was trying to teach.
2. The sermon misrepresents the main point of Heidelberg Catechism Q&A.63, which is to stress the truth of the reward of grace, does not qualify the truth of justification by faith alone, and not to present a

## Protest-B. Hilt (1)

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defense of good works or the reward of grace.

- a. This is demonstrated by Hope's decision to sustain objection 4 of Mr. Bleyenberg.
  - b. Rev. Overway erred when he taught that the Heidelberg Catechism does not use a "justification template" to teach the reward of grace.
3. Rev. Overway errs in using the comparison without explaining the difference between the reward of punishment and the reward of grace. Rev. Overway preached: "The same thing is true, of course, with regard to punishment. Those who sin greater are punished more greatly. The same, too, also with regard to the reward of grace...."
- a. When Rev. Overway preached these words, he left the impression that the believer's works are meritorious. The unbeliever earns or merits or deserves the punishment he receives according to the strict execution of the justice of God.
  - b. However, the good works that God rewards are never earned or merited. It is all of grace. For Rev. Overway to make this comparison in the way that he does implies that the reward is earned, which in turn leaves the believer with no assurance. **Carried**

Cordially in Christ,  
Todd Ferguson

## Protest of Mr. Brian Hilt (1)

March 13, 2021

To: Synod 2021 of the PRCA

Dear Synod of the PRCA,

It is with a heavy heart that I bring to you a protest regarding a decision of Synod 2020 of the PRCA. It is with a heavy heart, but I bring it after much prayer and consideration as I believe it necessary.

The protest is regarding the decision Synod 2020 took not to print certain materials of the SSCAH. It must be protested, I believe, as it stands ungrounded and is in opposition to the Rules for Synodical Procedure. I will demonstrate as such in my protest.

You are in my prayers, and that of the church, as you deliberate.

In Christ,  
Brian Hilt

### Decision Protested

I am aggrieved by, and protest, the decision found at the top of page 92 of the Acts of Synod 2020. That decision is, "It is moved not to include the SSCAH's report in the printed *Acts of Synod 2020*."