

**Report of the Ministerial Oversight Committee  
to the First Stated Meeting of Presbytery  
February 2-3, 2001**

On November 17, 2000 The Ministerial Oversight Committee met with the Rev. Lee Irons at his request. The meeting had also been encouraged by the overseeing session of Redeemer Chapel. Messrs. Laurie and Mueller, who have been assigned to conduct such visits in the northern part of the Presbytery, represented the Committee.

The meeting was occasioned by the expressed concern of two families in the congregation of Redeemer Chapel over Mr. Irons' views on the Sabbath. This concern had been discussed by the overseeing session.

After discussing the circumstances leading up to the meeting at some length, your Committee focused on the several questions which are to be asked of ministers during the required bi-yearly visit, as specified in the Presbytery's by-laws (Chapter IV, J.7.) These questions and the report of Mr. Irons' responses follow:

How have your doctrinal views changed since your ordination or since your last visit with the committee?

He stated that his doctrinal views, i.e. his interpretations of Scripture, have not changed in any significant way..

Have you become aware of any other exceptions that you would take to the Westminster Standards than those that you stated at your ordination or previously to this committee?

He stated that since the time of his ordination he has become aware of the words "by a positive, moral and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages" in Chapter XXI-7 and their reference, in context, to the Sabbath and that this discovery obliges him to declare a scruple with respect to this part of the Confession. He stated that he did not believe the Ten Commandments to be merely a condensation of the moral law, since numerous aspects of the decalogue are directed specifically to the covenant community, (e.g. Exod. 20:2, 5-6, 7, 8-11, 12b), whereas the moral law is binding on all men.

He stated that his scruple with respect to this part of the Confession would be erased if the language were changed to read "so, in His word by a positive and perpetual commandment binding the covenant community in all ages, He hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, etc."

He further stated that he knew that his present position regarding Chapter XXI-7 had implications with respect to Chapter XIX, wherein paragraphs 2, 3 and 4, taken together, contradict his understanding.

He also stated that he believes that, although the Westminster divines were right to interpret the Fourth Commandment in terms of its bearing on the public and private

worship of the covenant community, nevertheless this perspective needs to be supplemented by the Scripture's even stronger emphasis on the Sabbath as an eschatological sign that lights the believer's "road to heaven".

Although not a direct answer to this question, Mr. Irons' report of how he deals with requests from members of the congregation for a list of "do's and don'ts" for regulating their life on the Lord's Day is significant. He stated that he declines to give them any such list but rather urges them to make their own decisions about how the day is to be observed, being guided by the following questions:

Does the activity in question hinder or promote the purpose of the day? In other words, does it hinder or promote my participation in the corporate worship of God's people?

Does it hinder or promote a spiritually restful frame of mind in which I am reminded that I am a pilgrim on the way to the eschatological Sabbath rest?

How has your philosophy of ministry changed since your ordination or since your last visit with this Committee?

He stated that it had not changed in any significant way.

How has your understanding of worship changed since your ordination or since your last visit with this Committee?

He stated that it had not changed in any significant way.

How has any change in your understanding of worship affected the order of worship in the congregation that you are serving?

Not applicable, in view of (4)

Has the congregation you are serving adjusted your salary and benefits package such "that you may be free from worldly care and employment" since your ordination or since your last visit with this Committee?

He stated that this obligation had been met but that up to this time the Committee on Home Missions and Church Extension (CHMCE) has been instrumental in this regard. He stated that the congregation has been informed of the CHMCE'S contribution and seems to understand what their obligation will be when it falls upon them. (The fact that this mission work is running ahead of the support schedule should be noted.)

Your Committee understands that more could be said regarding Mr. Irons' position on the Sabbath and its place in the life of the congregation of Redeemer Chapel, but we believe our report is sufficient to inform the Presbytery of the essence of the concern that prompted our visit. If the Presbytery has a reason to make further inquiry regarding the matter we believe it should be done through another committee such as the Visitation

Committee. Although it is perhaps not sufficiently clear in our by-laws, we would remind the Presbytery that the clear understanding of the Committee, which has been expressed a number of times in our meetings, is that the reason for the Committee's existence is to make provision for keeping in contact with the ministerial members of Presbytery in order to be aware of significant changes in their doctrine or practice and to hear their concerns about the work of the church, all to the end of promoting deeper fellowship.

Respectfully submitted,

M. Laurie  
Mark C. Mueller

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