

Appeal of Mrs. Connie Meyer to Classis East, January 10, 2018

Reconvening February 28, 2018

1

- I. Recommendation: That Classis East reject the appeal of Mrs. Connie Meyer concerning “a doctrinal position [she] contends represents a denial of the truth of the unconditional covenant of grace and therefore a denial of justification by faith alone...taught and upheld by the pastor and elders of Hope PRC, Walker, MI,” namely, “the concept that our obedience is a condition that we must perform in order to experience the fellowship of God” (30, 1).¹ Grounds:
 - A. Mrs. Meyer does not prove her accusation “that the teaching of Hope Consistory is the teaching of a conditional covenant and justification by faith and works” (30). Rather, Mrs. Meyer assumes what she must prove.
 1. Since there exists no succinct definition of each position, we present the following summaries:
 - a. Hope’s doctrine is that the elect, regenerated, justified child of God experiences the blessings of the covenant by the Holy Spirit in the way of (necessary way of) the exercise of faith in a holy life of obedience. “Those who experience the blessings of the covenant in the way of obedience are already the elect, regenerated, justified, covenant children of God in whom the Holy Spirit is working this obedience. ...God is pleased to have the elect experience the blessings of salvation in the way of obedience. God accomplishes this work by His Holy Spirit—who always ‘operates to assure the people of God...only in the sphere of holiness...’ God does not wait for us to obey or depend on us for Him to do some further work of saving us. But God actually works in us that obedience; and in the way of that obedience that He works in us, He wisely and sovereignly causes us to experience the blessings of salvation;... It is by the exercise of faith that this covenant life of friendship and fellowship is experienced and enjoyed” (32-33).
 - b. Mrs. Meyer contends this doctrine of Hope *necessarily* implies (i.e. regardless of explanation or context) that obedience (good works) are not then fruits, but the ground, reason, cause or prerequisite of covenant fellowship (a conditional covenant) and another means besides faith by which we receive the enjoyment of God’s covenant salvation and blessings (a denial of justification by faith alone).
 2. As proof, Mrs. Meyer presents numerous statements she claims teach salvation by faith and works as conditions. Each “proof,” however, consists entirely of her own assumptions: “**It appears to, seems to, and must somehow be...I can only conclude, I take it then, and I can only assume**” Hope teaches obedience “**brings us into, is the reason, a vehicle, a pre-requisite, of some account, contributes to, and is the way by which**”² we receive or enjoy covenant fellowship (3-4, 5, 16). Assumptions do not constitute proof.
 - a. Mrs. Meyer objects to the statement, “There’s not a thing we can do to add to Jesus’ work...there’s nothing left for us to do...He leaves us with a calling...We must believe in Him. We must with a true faith receive this Savior...Our Lord Jesus Christ comes in us and lives in us, and empowers us and strengthens us, so that we do what we cannot do” (4-5). Her response: “So is there something left for us to do in salvation or is there not?...**It appears there is...Jesus Christ saves me by working the good works in me that are necessary for me to do as part of my salvation...I take it then...they must contribute somehow to our salvation**” (4-5). Here, Mrs. Meyer assumes obedience must contribute somehow to salvation, and bases this assumption mainly on the fact the preacher issued the gospel call to faith and repentance.
 - b. Mrs. Meyer objects to the statement, “It is by the exercise of faith that this covenant life of friendship and fellowship is experienced and enjoyed...Scripture and the Confessions also emphasize the necessity of the exercise of faith in a holy life of obedience to enjoy the intimacy of the Father’s fellowship” (33). Mrs. Meyer first agrees with what Hope claims to teach. “**I agree that I enjoy the fellowship of God as I live a life of sanctified good works....**” Yet, Mrs. Meyer condemns the statement because, in her mind, it necessarily means obedience is the **reason** or **means** of access: “[But] obedience **does not bring us into** that experience of the fellowship of God...my life of good works **is not a reason** that I have fellowship with God...To teach that **we have access to God by** good works is not creedal” (31-32, 40).
 - c. Mrs. Meyer objects to the statement, “Obedience is required...obedience that I must perform in order to enjoy the fellowship of God” (30). She objects because, “What is performed ‘**in order to**’ **gain** some reward...**is a prerequisite condition to obtaining that reward**, whether one labels it as a condition or not” (31). Mrs. Meyer jumps to a conclusion that has to be proved. And, as will be demonstrated, her conclusion is wrong.
 - d. Mrs. Meyer objects to the statement, “**In the way of** that obedience that He works in us He wisely and sovereignly causes us to experience the blessings of salvation” (39). Her objection: “[God] **is using an instrument...**[But] faith is the only instrument...by which I may receive all the blessings of salvation...

¹ Page references to the agenda will be located separately in parenthesis, and either be underlined or without underlines to reflect the two different numbering systems found in the agenda for this material.

² Bold type throughout the document is added for emphasis.

Appeal of Mrs. Connie Meyer to Classis East, January 10, 2018 Reconvening February 28, 2018

2

you are teaching obedience is **the way by which** we experience the blessings..." (39-40). Besides again imposing her own meaning, Mrs. Meyer twists the words "**in the way of...**" to "**the way by which.**"

- e. Mrs. Meyer objects to the statement, "The holy God can and will live in intimate covenant fellowship only with those that are holy as He is holy. For this reason the holy God in the establishment and maintenance of His covenant not only justifies His elect people in Jesus Christ but also sanctifies them unto a life [of] good works" (38). Again, Mrs. Meyer first agrees with what her consistory claims to teach: "**It is true** that a holy God can and will live in intimate covenant fellowship only with those that are holy as He is holy...for this reason...God in the establishment and maintenance of His covenant justifies His elect people in Jesus Christ. **I agree...**that God also sanctifies His elect people unto a life of good works." But, Mrs. Meyer condemns the statement anyway based solely on the meaning she imposes on it, that good works "account toward" fellowship: "**But I deny that this life of good works** that God sanctifies His people unto **is of any account** [i.e. merit or gain] toward their fellowship with God" (67).
- B. By arbitrarily imposing her own heretical meaning on these statements, Mrs. Meyer necessarily condemns as heretical all P.R. ministers and spiritual fathers who have used the exact same language in the same context.
 1. This is especially significant because Hope confronts Mrs. Meyer with some 160 such quotations (85-173), and Mrs. Meyer makes no attempt to demonstrate why the heretical meanings she imposes on her consistory do not also apply to these other men. This failure is also ominous because Mrs. Meyer goes on to charge that "this false teaching" of Hope "stems from a deep-seated theology." We hope Mrs. Meyer is not implying that she sees significant errors in historical P.R. theology that also need to be rooted out. Be that as it may, by her unfounded conclusions, Mrs. Meyer necessarily condemns many others besides her consistory.
 2. Mrs. Meyer condemns as "the doctrine of Rome" and "Federal Vision" the statement, "by the exercise of faith ...this covenant life of friendship and fellowship is experienced and enjoyed" (40). Mrs. Meyer: "To teach the experience of assurance ...by means of a...exercising,...faith is to use a tactic that Rome has employed for centuries and men of the federal vision have perfected. (69) If so, Mrs. Meyer also condemns these:
 - a. Prof. H.C. Hoeksema: "God has so arranged the affairs of...spiritual life that they grow in...**assurance of** all the blessings of salvation **only according to their diligent use** of God's divinely ordained means.... As soon as faith as a conscious activity fails, my assurance...fails. All other things being equal, the Christian who lives closest to the Word of God...will have the strongest assurance...**When I know his way of assurance and walk according to it, I can grow in assurance** day by day. For **to have assurance...I must walk by faith in the way** in which God always assures his children. (*Voice of Our Fathers*, 354, 463-469)...**The exclusive way of assurance is the way of sanctification**" (*Standard Bearer*, Vol. 64.12) (133, 156, 162).
 - b. Rev. H. Hoeksema: "**I can be assured from the fruits of good works** of the blessed fact that I am in the faith...He works that assurance of faith in our hearts, so that we are confident that we are in the faith... **only in the way of sanctification...**The assurance of faith **cannot be our experience unless we walk in sanctification...**the Holy Spirit makes us walk in the way of God's precepts and we walk (*The Triple Knowledge*, Vol. 8, p. 60-61) (151).
 - c. Prof. D. Engelsma: "There is some place in faith's assurance for...the 'practical syllogism' [that] refers to a certain confirming of assurance by the believer's notice of the evidences of salvation in his life... sorrow over sin, love for God, and good works...**The 'practical syllogism' is an argument on behalf of assurance** of salvation. It goes like this: 1) All who perform good works are saved; 2) I perform good works; 3) Therefore, I must be saved (*Standard Bearer*, V.80:19). "Assurance of the believer by means of faith is always a work that is accompanied and confirmed by [the Spirit's] sanctifying of the believer... **Only in the way of a holy life can, and do, believers enjoy the assurance that they are the children of God...as the believer obeys God's commandments, and only as he obeys God's commandments.** The believer has assurance as he walks in holiness of life and *only* as he walks in holiness of life. This is the truth of the 'practical syllogism.' Holiness is a confirming evidence of salvation to the believer, as good works are an evidence of justification" (*The Gift of Assurance*, pp. 50-51) (119).
 - d. Mrs. Meyer also contradicts our Confessions:
 - 1) Heidelberg Catechism: "Why must we still do good works?...that every one may be **assured in himself of his faith by the fruits thereof**" (Q&A86); and "**What purpose then do your good works answer?** That...**also I may be assured of the sincerity of my faith by good works** as the fruit thereof" (Compendium, Q&A65);

Appeal of Mrs. Connie Meyer to Classis East, January 10, 2018 Reconvening February 28, 2018

3

- 2) Form for the Administration of the Lord's Supper: "**Since we are** (by the grace of the Holy Spirit) **sorry** for these weaknesses, and **earnestly desirous** to fight against our unbelief, **and to live** according to all the commandments of God: **therefore we rest assured** that no sin or infirmity, which still remaineth against our will in us, can hinder us from being received of God in mercy..."
- 3) Canons: "**Believers for themselves may and do obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith...this assurance...springs from...a serious and holy desire** to preserve a good conscience and **to perform good works**" (5.9-10)..."[A] renewed confidence of persevering... renders them much more careful and solicitous to **continue in the ways of the Lord**, which He hath ordained, **that they who walk therein may maintain an assurance of persevering**" (5:13).
3. Mrs. Meyer condemns "in order to" as conditional: "What is performed '**in order to**' gain some reward...is a prerequisite condition" (31). Rev. H. Hoeksema writes: "**In order to** receive forgiveness of God, I must have receptivity for that blessed gift of grace" (*The Triple Knowledge*, 1990, Vol. 3, p. 605) (141).
4. Mrs. Meyer condemns "only in the way of repentance" as conditional: "We can agree and be clear on what the doctrine is whether one uses the word *conditional* or not to describe it. Another way to put it is simply in Rev. Overway's own words...'Only in the way of repentance will you enjoy the blessings of the covenant'" (72).
 - a. Prof. H.C. Hoeksema: "The way of life is the way of repentance...**only in the way of repentance can one have a sense of God's favor**" (*The Voice of Our Fathers*, p. 243) (155).
 - b. Prof. H. Hanko: Why is **repentance** of such great importance? In the first place, it is **the only way to Christ**....In the second place, **repentance is the way to the conscious experience of salvation**...the way to the consciousness of salvation is always the way of confession of sin...in this way, the way of repentance is the victory over sin" (*Mysteries of the Kingdom*, p. 150-151) (137).
 - c. Prof. D. Engelsma: "**Only in the way of...repentance**...does the Lord save them...[It] is **necessary as the way in which God is pleased to bestow his salvation** and in which elect sinners receive and enjoy salvation...but this **repentance is no condition to salvation**. It does not compromise in the slightest the sheer graciousness of God's salvation" (*Unfolding Covenant History*, Vol. 5, p. 38, 128-9) (134).
 - d. Mrs. Meyer also contradicts our Confessions: "By such enormous sins... they...sometimes lose the sense of God's favor for a time, **until, on their returning into the right way of serious repentance, the light of God's fatherly countenance again shines upon them**" (Canons 5.5).
5. Mrs. Meyer condemns "in the way of obedience" as heretical: "I do not accept your explanation and consider it to be an expression of **gross false doctrine**. I refer to the following: 'But God actually works in us that obedience; and **in the way of that obedience** that He works in us, He wisely and sovereignly **causes us to experience** the blessings of salvation.'...You are teaching that obedience **is the way by which** we experience the blessings of salvation...It is, indeed, **a false gospel**" (11). If so, then Mrs. Meyer also condemns:
 - a. Prof. H. Hanko and M. Hoeksema: "We may even say that **only in the way of a sanctified walk** can the elect child of God live in the assurance of his election in Christ...**Yet saying this by no means implies conditional salvation**" (*Corrupting the Word*, p. 101) (150).
 - b. Prof. H.C. Hoeksema: So it is **only in the way of holiness and piety** that this ineffable consolation of the truth of predestination is attained by God's people" (*Voice of Our Fathers*, 1980, p. 155)....**The exclusive way of assurance is the way of sanctification**. Outside of the latter there is no assurance possible. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord! And **without holiness, therefore, no man can be sure** that he shall see the Lord" (*Sanctification and Assurance*, Standard Bearer, Vol. 64.12) (133).
 - c. Rev. H. Hoeksema: "The apostle also connects the gift [eternal life] with the service of righteousness: 'being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life' [Rom. 6::22]. This is the connection between holiness and eternal life. **It is never wages, but it is the way. The service of righteousness is the way in which we become heirs of eternal life. As the gift is of grace, so the way is also of grace**...We cannot be justified without being sanctified... The assurance of our being in Christ is **in the way of sanctification**. The way of our being blessed is that we walk in sanctification" (*Righteous By Faith Alone*, p. 272, 308) (141). "**In the way of keeping His word, we taste His blessed fellowship... The way of sanctification is the sole way to the assurance of our calling and election**" (*Communion with God*, p. 15; 265-266) (141).
 - d. Prof. D. Engelsma: "Calvin used the word 'condition' to express that a certain act...or...**certain activity is the necessary way in which** the members of the covenant, by the grace of God, **abides in and enjoys** the covenant" (*Covenant and Election in the Reformed Tradition*, p. 152) (133, 147).

Appeal of Mrs. Connie Meyer to Classis East, January 10, 2018 Reconvening February 28, 2018

- e. Rev. H. Veldman: "Our spiritual righteousness is for us the proof of our legal righteousness. Our spiritual righteousness means that we have been redeemed and justified, that it has been purchased for us. And it is **only when we walk in God's commandments** that we will be able to taste and experience this blessed love of God in Christ; in fact, if we walk in ways of sin and evil we do not even care for this breastplate of righteousness" (*The Standard Bearer*, V. 52:482-484).
 - f. Again, Rev. H. Hoeksema: "What is the relation between...the act of God in preservation and the act of the believer in perseverance? Is it such, that in the power of God **the believer is utterly passive**? Does God preserve him as a stock and block unto the final salvation...that God simply holds his hand and therefore he is perfectly safe? May the preservation of believers...be compared to a man that buys a ticket in a Pullman car and simply goes to sleep until the angels wake him up at the station called heaven? Some seem to think that this conception of preservation and perseverance is very Reformed indeed. God, they say, must do it all, and **any conception as if man himself must put forth effort in order to be saved and to persevere** in the midst of the world is considered Arminianism. Yet this is not the case. The grace of preservation never works this way. God's part of the covenant, although He performs it alone and unconditionally, **never excludes man's part for the simple reason** that the grace of God always works in and through man as a rational, moral agent (*The Standard Bearer*, V.26:239).
 - g. Mrs. Meyer also contradicts the Canons: "He hath chosen us from eternity...to salvation and **the way of salvation, which He hath ordained that we should walk therein**" (1.8); "Remissness in the observance of the divine commands or...carnal security...in the just judgment of God are the usual effects of rash presumption or of idle and wanton trifling with the grace of election **in those who refuse to walk in the ways of the elect**" (1.13); "[a] renewed confidence of persevering...renders them much more careful and solicitous **to continue in the ways of the Lord, which He hath ordained, that they who walk therein may maintain an assurance of persevering**" (5:13).
- C. Mrs. Meyer errs in her conclusion that "in the way of obedience" means "obedience is the way [instrument] by which" we experience blessings; and therefore is a "condition" and "another instrument than faith alone."
1. This is the basis for her charge of gross false doctrine in the statement, "*But God actually works in us that obedience; and in the way of that obedience that He works in us, He wisely and sovereignly causes us to experience the blessings of salvation.*" Mrs. Meyer: "Whenever the tool is works, conditions are taught... What you mean by '**in the way of**'...**is an instrument**...You are teaching obedience **is the way [instrument] by which** we experience the blessings of salvation...[But] we experience the blessings of salvation...by faith only...I consider [this]...gross false doctrine...not creedal" (31, 39-40).
 2. Mrs. Meyer's conclusion is entirely wrong, unjust, and unwarranted:
 - a. Mrs. Meyer admits the statement could be orthodox: "Is this the **way in which** we are commanded to walk in thankful obedience...the **way in which** we will walk by the grace of God because this is what God works in those whom He has made to be His covenant friends? If that is all that is meant I heartily agree...**The way in which** God's chosen and redeemed covenant friends show gratitude to God is by **walking in His ways**...is how God's covenant friends must live. It is commanded. **Walking in this way** glorifies his name...God gives grace to us so that we make progress in that godly walk...If that is all that is meant...I heartily agree" (38). Yet, Mrs. Meyer condemns the statement anyway.
 - b. Mrs. Meyer not only again imposes her meaning on the consistory, but worse still, uses it to change their words, so that "**in the way of obedience**" is turned into "**obedience is the way [instrument] by which.**" Furthermore, Mrs. Meyer does this in the face of repeated denials that obedience is "an instrument, is of some account, contributes to, brings us into, is the reason, a vehicle, pre-requisite that obtains, or means by which" covenant blessings or fellowship are enjoyed (32, 89-91; 132ff).
 - c. Mrs. Meyer imposes on her consistory a meaning that is **neither its natural nor historical** meaning. In fact, our fathers adopted the phrase to avoid the notions of "condition" and "instrument." Rev. H. Hoeksema: "Let me suggest that instead of the Pelagian term 'condition'³ we use the term 'in the way of'...This term is capable of maintaining both the absolute sovereignty of God in the work of salvation and the responsibility of man...**we are chosen to faith and to the obedience of faith**, and therefore, we are saved through the **instrument of faith, and in the way of obedience**. That, and that only is Reformed language" (*As to Conditions*, Standard Bearer, Vol. 26:4, 77; 26:6, 125).

³ Hoeksema refers to the word "condition" as used in an orthodox manner by older Reformed theologians, but suggests it be avoided because Pelagians (Arminians) had corrupted the term.

Appeal of Mrs. Connie Meyer to Classis East, January 10, 2018 Reconvening February 28, 2018

3. This error is significant because it is **the main ground** for her case. “I limit this...to **one main issue...**[this] is **the definitive explanation I was waiting for...**What you mean by ‘in the way of’...**is an instrument...**You [teach] **obedience is the way by which...**I consider this...**false doctrine...not creedal**” (37-39).
 - a. That this is the main ground for her case is evident from the fact that this “one main issue” is Mrs. Meyer’s only significant objection to Hope Consistory’s rejection of her protests (March 22, 2017).
 - b. Mrs. Meyer here also admits she filed her protests without definitive proof for her charge. She was “waiting for” it because she lacked it. This is why Mrs. Meyer could only assume what she needed to prove, and imposed on her consistory that which, by her own admission, they never definitively said. But this “definitive explanation,” which also turns out to be an assumption, is proven false.
- D. Mrs. Meyer errs in her understanding of what constitutes a condition in the covenant. This error largely explains why Mrs. Meyer impugns many statements as conditions, that are in fact, not conditions at all.
 1. Mrs. Meyer defines a condition as, “what is performed ‘in order to’ gain some reward...a prerequisite to obtaining....The decisive factor that defines a condition is that there is something we must do in order to get something else” (31, 74). For support, Mrs. Meyer quotes Prof. Engelsma: “There is no work of the sinner that is a condition he must fulfill in order to have the covenant or to enjoy its blessings” (*The Unconditional Covenant in Contemporary Debate*, 4). But, Mrs. Meyer ignores the actual and more precise definition of a condition given later by Prof. Engelsma in this same book, which definition also exposes the deficiencies in Mrs. Meyer’s understanding of a condition in the covenant.
 2. If Mrs. Meyer’s definition is true, then faith itself would necessarily be a condition for “without faith it is impossible to please Him. For he that cometh to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). If so, Jesus taught conditions for He said, “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matt. 6:19-20). If so, Paul taught conditions for he said: “Know ye not, that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain...I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ” (1Cor. 9:24; Phi. 3:14).
 3. The fact is, orthodox fathers like Calvin and Turretin, used the word “condition” to teach exactly what Mrs. Meyer condemns. As Prof. Engelsma points out in this same book: “Condition...**does not mean** what some...earlier Reformed theologians meant by ‘condition:’ **a necessary means by which God bestows** His salvation upon the elect sinner, **without which God does not save the elect sinner** and which God Himself works within the heart” (*Ibid*, p. 40). In other words, such “conditions” are no “conditions” at all.
 4. Prof. Engelsma’s definition: “The conditional covenant means by ‘condition’ **an act of the sinner himself upon which the covenant promise, the covenant itself** as regards its continuance and final perfection, if not its establishment, **all the covenant blessings, and the covenant God Himself depends,**” and depends because, as further explained, God does not decree it in His counsel, nor include it in His particular promise to the elect, nor provide and work it by His irresistible grace (*Ibid*, p. 40) (133).
 5. Hope Consistory does not teach such “conditions” upon which God depends, but insists it teaches the unconditional covenant of grace as historically maintained and taught faithfully in the PRC (33). Hope: “We do not deny that God rewards our good works, but...it is through His grace He crowns His gifts” (B.C., Art. 24); “good works are not conditions of salvation...but ‘fruits’ and themselves the work of God’s grace in his people...the work of the Holy Spirit” (90-91). “God does not wait for us to obey or depend on us [to obey] for Him to do some further work of saving us” (32). Further, good works cannot possibly be conditions when the reward is of grace, not merit (H.C. QA63); and when we are indebted to God for anything we do, and not God to us (Canons 2.7; 3-4.14-15).
 6. In 1953, the PRC defended the truth of an unconditional covenant not by impugning the necessity of faith, the activity of faith, or its fruits, good works, but by proving that faith itself is unconditional because it is included in a particular covenant promise of God to the elect alone, and is conferred, breathed into, and infused by an irresistible grace (see Declaration of Principles). If so, as Rev. H. Hoeksema put it, “**It is impossible to speak of faith as a condition in any sense of the word...How...can a gift of salvation be a condition unto that gift...**Moreover, by this gift of justifying faith bestowed upon us unconditionally by God, He leads us infallibly unto salvation” (As to Conditions, *Standard Bearer*, V.26:6). If faith itself is unconditional, then faith’s activity and its fruits are unconditional.
- E. Mrs. Meyer errs in ignoring the important implication that the statements in question all refer to an elect, regenerated, justified, child of God, who is already a member of the covenant and enjoying its blessings.

Appeal of Mrs. Connie Meyer to Classis East, January 10, 2018

Reconvening February 28, 2018

1. Hope Consistory points out this fact and its important implications to Mrs. Meyer: “That a ‘condition’ is different than ‘the necessary way of the covenant,’ is clear from the very fact that those who experience the blessings of the covenant in the way of obedience are already the elect, regenerated, justified, covenant children of God in whom the Holy Spirit is working this obedience...God is pleased to have the elect experience the blessings of salvation in the way of obedience. God accomplishes this by the work of His Holy Spirit—who always operates to assure the people of God, therefore, only in the sphere of holiness...God does not wait for us to obey or depend on us for Him to do some further work of saving us. But God actually works in us that obedience, and in the way of that obedience that He works in us, He wisely and sovereignly causes us to experience the blessings of salvation” (32).
 2. Mrs. Meyer errs therefore in assuming the statements in question **necessarily** imply that obedience or good works are ‘conditions’ that, in her words, “are the vehicle, means, or instrument that bring us into, or are of some account, or the reason” for the enjoyment or experience of covenant fellowship.
- F. Mrs. Meyer errs in her inference that since we are justified by faith alone without works, the activity and fruits of faith, and sanctification are excluded from the experience and enjoyment of fellowship with God.
1. This inference is evident from the following: Her objection to the statement, “It is by the exercise of faith this covenant life of friendship and fellowship is experienced;” and her statements “one can have fellowship with God only through a justifying faith without works” (33); “To experience justification is to experience the fellowship of God (31); “To experience the blessing of justification is to experience the blessings of salvation” (39); “This justification without works is our experience of standing before God in fellowship with Him” (37);
 2. The confessions show clearly that the activity and fruits of faith belong to the experience and enjoyment of fellowship with God, yet by no means does this fact deny the truth of justification by faith alone.
 - a. The faith whereby we are justified is an upright faith that **embraces** Christ, **appropriates** Him, and **seeks** only Him (B.C. Art. 22); **regenerates**, **makes us** new, **causes** us to live in a new life, and **frees** us from the bondage of sin, **works by love** which **excites** man **to the practice** of (good) works God has commanded (B.C. Art. 24), and **draws near** Him (B.C., Art 26); We are said to be righteous before God **inasmuch as we embrace** such benefit with a **believing** heart (Q&A60); and faith **receives and applies** to ourselves the righteousness of Christ (Q&A61).
 - b. These confessions deny that we are justified by any of this activity. So also, enjoying the friendship of God through the exercise of faith, in no way implies that the exercise of faith itself justifies us (faith and works), or for that matter, is the ground, cause, or reason for our fellowship with God in sanctification.
 - c. The explanation for this is the nature of true faith: Even as “the sole means of justification, faith, renounces its own working, its own works, its repenting, its loving God, its loving the neighbor... everything except Jesus Christ, his working, and his works outside the sinner” (David J. Engelsma, *Gospel Truth of Justification*, p. 204), so also faith renounces its own working and works as the ground, basis, cause, or reason for fellowship with God and experience thereof. That is, the good root of faith and grace of God (B.C., Art. 24), do not allow its own activity or fruits to be “conditions” to covenant salvation. Mrs. Meyer ought consider her own words: “We enter into the presence of God entirely in Jesus Christ alone, our sanctified good works...**being wholly pushed aside as any reason we might enter** into His holy presence, **pushed aside by the gift of faith that clings to Jesus Christ alone** for all our salvation” (67).
- II. Further Recommendations Re Mrs. Meyer:
- A. That Classis East advise Mrs. Meyer that she must retract her accusation against her consistory “that the teaching of Hope Consistory is the teaching of a conditional covenant and justification by faith and works” and do so in writing both to her consistory, pastor, and congregation. Grounds:
 1. Mrs. Meyer has accused her pastor and her consistory of teaching “gross false doctrine,” (38), “a false gospel” (44) and “rank heresy” (45). Mrs. Meyer has not proven that what her consistory actually teaches is contrary to Scripture, the Creeds, or the historical understanding of Reformed doctrine as maintained in the PRCA, but rather her accusation is based upon her own conclusions and characterizations of what they teach.
 2. The way of reconciliation with her consistory and pastor is the way of repentance and confession.
 3. By way of appeal, Mrs. Meyer made the accusations of heresy against her pastor and her consistory public.
 - B. That Classis East advise Mrs. Meyer that she must apologize in writing to her consistory for her conduct, namely, Mrs. Meyer did not always deal charitably and respectfully with her elders as the proper authority Christ placed over her and who therefore love her and take seriously their calling to oversee the flock of Jesus Christ. Grounds:

Appeal of Mrs. Connie Meyer to Classis East, January 10, 2018

Reconvening February 28, 2018

7

1. Mrs. Meyer judged and condemned Rev. Overway and her consistory “rashly and unheard:” To support her charges of “gross false doctrine” (38), “a false gospel” (44), and “rank heresy” (45), Mrs. Meyer without proof consistently imposed her own meanings on statements of her consistory, changed the words of her consistory, and assigned heretical meanings to statements that by her own admission, could be orthodox.
2. Mrs. Meyer made little attempt to “finish this matter” with her consistory, but instead labored to bypass her consistory in order to appeal to Classis:
 - a. Mrs. Meyer filed multiple protests with charges of heresy against 17 sermons without ever indicating that there were problems, or even meeting once with her consistory or pastor to raise or discuss issues; threatened multiple times to appeal, and did appeal to Classis, without waiting for any decision from her consistory or meeting with them; met only once with her consistory during this process; and refused to discuss 15 of the 17 sermons she protested (17-20).
 - b. Mrs. Meyer gave only cursory attention to the lengthy, well documented doctrinal position Hope Consistory placed before her in its March 22, 2017 letter. Instead of interacting with the doctrinal position of Hope she simply picked out two statements made in it with which to take issue (35).

III. Recommendations Re Hope:

- A. That Classis East advise Hope Consistory to rescind its Nov. 21, 2017 decision to adopt “The Doctrinal Statement: Re Experiencing Fellowship with the Father” (28). Grounds:
 1. This document does not help clarify the issues because it uses the same language in question.
 2. The document is unnecessary: Hope has sufficiently proven on the basis of Scripture, the Confessions, and quotations from Reformed men, the orthodoxy of its position in its March 22, 2017 defense.
 3. Adopting this document is unwise because it constitutes maintaining a position independently from our churches as a whole.
- B. That Classis East declare that Hope Consistory failed in its oversight of Rev. Overway’s preaching with regard to the following:
 1. Rev. Overway deviated from using “in the way of” (deliberately used in the PRC because it does not naturally denote conditions) to use “in order to,” which although it can be defended, is typically avoided because it strongly suggests conditions since its natural meaning is “with the intention or purpose of” (See “Prayer: Required of Baptism” (5); “Requisites of Prayerful Fellowship” (9)).
 2. Rev. Overway preached the necessity of good works or obedience in texts and places in sermons that are unnatural and forced (See “A Complete Savior” (20); “Justified by Faith” (50-51); Forgiveness Known Through Prayer, (10); Victory by a Mother in Israel, (55)).
 3. Rev. Overway used ambiguous language without clearly defining or explaining what is meant or what is not meant, which left his intentions and meaning in doubt and open to interpretation, particularly that a new “necessity” or purpose for good works was being introduced in Hope Church. For example:
 - a. Rev. Overway: “We do good works so that we can have our prayers answered...We do good works so that we can receive God’s grace and Holy Spirit in our consciousness. So that we can consciously and with awareness receive the grace and Holy Spirit of God” (6-7)...“Obedience is required here, obedience that I must perform in order to enjoy fellowship with God” (9). “We do good works. We can look at them. We see them. They’re obvious. They’re evident, much more so than faith is” (6).
 - b. Rev. Overway: “Are we assured of the forgiveness of our sins without good works? Do good works do nothing to assure me of forgiveness, that I’m justified? Of course they do. Jesus says it in plain English in the passage before us. And for one to hold otherwise simply contradicts the plain words of Jesus Christ our Savior” (10).
 4. Hope Consistory failed to recognize these weaknesses (as noted above) when brought to light by way of protest, and instead focused exclusively on defending or explaining the protested statements.
 - a. Hope Consistory did not recognize that the ambiguous statements could be taken to mean that the good works of faith *themselves* obtain the blessings of fellowship with God, and that this also is the motivation for doing them.
 - b. Hope Consistory did not require Rev. Overway explain very clearly what his beliefs are concerning the necessity of good works in relationship to justification and the experience of fellowship with God.