

Subject: Re: Responses to Wingham charges

This reply is in response to a paper titled "A History of the Controversy." In this document I am charged with promoting doctrinal error: "Rev. Griess continues in a pattern that has come to mark the manner in which PR ministers discuss good works: do this, get this. His emphasis is that, without the obedience, the blessing is not able to be granted. The blessing is conditioned on the obedience. "Because some come through that instrument after our obedience..." is still conditional theology." There are three charges here: 1. That I am teaching a "do this, get this" theology. 2. That I teach God cannot grant a particular blessing apart from our obedience. 3. That because I teach that some blessings come after a God-worked activity of ours I am guilty of teaching conditional theology. These accusations are false and slanderous and were made in pursuit of the evil goal of rending asunder the body of Christ. May God cause it to cease! Nowhere did I teach or imply a "do this, get this" theology. As though life with God is a mathematical formula of meritorious working! Are the Canons teaching a "do this, get this" theology when they say, "The more readily we perform our duty, the more eminent usually is the blessing of God working in us" (3/4th Head, Article 17). Nowhere did I teach or imply that God cannot grant a particular blessing apart from our obedience. God can grant any blessing He desires anytime He wants. As I state in the article itself, "One can say, 'God grants us this blessing in the way of our God-worked obedience.' This does not make man's obedience a gate that prevents or allows God to carry on with His work, but rather it communicates the way God confers the work of Christ upon us, while maintaining the truth that the obedience is really our obedience which He works in us." The fact that God chooses (normally) to grant some blessings after some

God-worked activity on our part does not mean that God is dependent upon our obedience to grant the blessing. But if he reveals that normally a particular blessing will come after a certain work of obedience then that is His prerogative. To revolt is to revolt against God. This does not make the blessing dependent upon, merited by, earned by, or obtained through the instrument of, that activity. Most importantly, nowhere do I teach conditional theology. The theology I taught is the theology of scripture, the creeds, and the Protestant Reformed Churches. My articles in the SB showed this. Anyone who takes the time to read them and understand what they are saying will see this for him or herself. The former office bearers' accusations hinge upon an errant definition of a "condition." Namely, that a condition is any God worked activity of ours that comes before a blessing from God. I quote from the former office bearers, "'Because some [blessings] come through that instrument [faith] after our obedience...' is still conditional theology." No it is not! 1. The assumption is that if a God-worked activity of ours comes before a particular blessing of God, then that God-worked activity of ours is earning, meriting, gaining, causing, or is the instrument to obtain, the blessing that follows. That this is the assumption of the former office bearers is proved when they ask regarding this particular teaching, "does the believer have all things in Christ or doesn't he? Is there still some earning that needs to take place?" As though a God-worked activity of ours preceding a blessing automatically means that that blessing is not from Christ! As though a God-worked activity of ours preceding a blessing necessarily means that one has "earned" it! The articles I wrote themselves show this is not the case. 2. Hoeksema: "That something precedes something else does not mean that it is a condition to something else" (Very Clear, SB, 6/15/1952). Mere order is not what makes something a prerequisite or condition. 3. If a God-worked

activity of ours that comes temporally before some other aspect of salvation is automatically a condition, then the Holy Spirit Himself teaches conditions. Does the Holy Spirit teach conditions and a pattern of “do this, get this” when He says in Malachi 3:7 “Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.” And in Matthew 11:28 ‘Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ And in Zechariah 1:3 “Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.” Of course, God comes to us to turn us to Him. God is first. Nonetheless, there is a real blessing that follows His turning of us so that we do turn. This does not mean our turning causes the blessing, or earns the blessing, or is the instrument to obtain it. 4. The former office bearers’ definition of a condition makes the Canons teach conditional theology. “The more readily we perform our duty, the more eminent usually is the blessing of God working in us” (3/4th Head, article 17). 5. The former office bearers’ definition of a condition makes them themselves teach conditional theology. a. Heaven is a blessing. It is a blessing of salvation earned by Christ. It normally (aside from infants who die in infancy and those who are converted at their last breath) comes to us after a life of good works. The life of service is normally our pathway to glory. If the definition of condition the former office bearers’ use is valid, then the bare fact that the blessing of heaven comes to us (through the instrument of faith) after a life of obedience, must mean good works are conditions unto heaven. b. In addition, the former office bearers’ definition of a condition necessarily turns faith into a condition. It is the plain teaching of scripture and the creeds that faith embraces Christ’s righteousness as one’s own righteousness and then one knows forgiveness and the right to eternal life in one’s own heart and soul. Luke 18:13-14 “And the

publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” The Belgic Confession teaches this scriptural truth in Article 23 “...relying and resting upon the obedience of Christ crucified alone, which becomes ours when we believe in Him.” The former office bearers’ working definition of condition would have to charge these statements as being conditional. c. If the definition of a condition is merely that it is a God-worked activity of ours that occurs prior to another aspect of our salvation, then one of these two things must be true with respect to Justification to avoid teaching conditional theology: 1. Either, there is no sense in which we are justified by faith. 2. Or, there is no sense in which justifying faith is a God-worked activity in us (not work, activity). But to teach either of those two things is also to deny scripture and the Reformed creeds. “What is required in the ninth commandment? That I bear false witness against no man, nor falsify any man’s words; that I be no backbiter or slanderer; that I do not judge, nor join in condemning any man rashly or unheard; but that I avoid all sorts of lies and deceit as the proper works of the devil, unless I would bring down upon me the heavy wrath of God.” (HC LD