

**An Introductory Statement by Carl W. Hayes  
at the Trial of Elder John O. Kinnaird  
Bethany OPC, Oxford, PA November 23, 2002**

**GREETINGS** in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank God that we are here today, for this is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. On the one hand the task before us is unpleasant, but on the other hand it is a necessary task as a matter of church discipline to maintain the purity, peace, and unity of the Church. The disciplinary process is important because it is one of the marks of a true Church of Christ.

The issue before this court is whether or not Elder John Kinnaird teaches a doctrine of faith plus works. This heresy has been a nagging problem in Christ's Church down through the centuries. It has been ably refuted and condemned by those who have gone before us. But alas, it has never been put to death and buried. And so we are here today, in this difficult hour, to deal with it again.

So it is our prayer that God will give these brothers on the court wisdom and courage to be God pleasers and not pleasers of men.

## **Regarding basic principles for theological dialogue**

In order to avoid any unnecessary misunderstanding which may lead the court, the accused, the council, and witnesses for the accused and any visitors to a false conclusion, we would like to stress the importance of understanding and applying certain basic principles that are necessary in all theological matters.

One should never assume that all parties involved understand the words, terms, and phrases in the same way. We acknowledge that there are times when an unintentional use of improper wording can be the cause of much misunderstanding regarding the other party's theological position. We also maintain that it is incumbent upon all TE's and RE's and all others who preach and teach to use customary theological words, terms, and phrases and plain speech.

We intend to apply the following basic principles and ask that the accused and his council and witnesses do likewise:

- 1) *Define key words, terms, and phrases at the outset.*
- 2) *Traditional theological words, terms and phrases must be used.*

- 3) *The words, terms, and phrases must be taken in their plain and ordinary meaning unless otherwise stated.*
- 4) *Their meaning must never change during the proceedings in a given context.*
- 5) *The main ideas must be demonstrably derived from the Word of God.*
- 6) *The phrase "That's your interpretation" is not a satisfactory conclusion for deciding the validity of a theological position.*
- 7) *Any intended playing on words, ambiguities, sophistry, or other techniques intended to mislead are a violation of the ninth commandment.*

Many theological controversies could have been averted by the careful and consistent use of these basic principles. How fruitless and frustrating to be in theological dialogue and not be on the same page and to be talking past each other.

We will make every effort to abide by these principles and ask the accused and his council and witnesses to do likewise. Failure to do so will greatly impede any progress toward and may even prevent getting to the truth of the matter.

It is our sincere belief that the work of the Westminster Assembly was a great move of God to further clarify and establish the doctrines revealed in Holy Scripture, in Creedal form, not only for that generation but for generations to come. From its inception until this day, the WCF has been recognized throughout much of Christendom as the Standard for all creeds. The authors took great care in arranging the WCF in the form of a mini systematic theology and also in selecting the words, terms and phrases to express and corroborate the Word of God in a clear and understandable way. It is our opinion that their work was a resounding success in formulating a confession of faith that avoids confusion and unites those of like precious faith. We are also of the opinion that the Larger and Shorter Catechisms are consistent with and strongly buttress the WCF. We further believe that the Westminster Standards are a faith alone system.

It is evident that the Westminster Divines had the reformation principle of the "perspicuity" of God's Word, which simply means clarity, firmly established in their minds while composing the WCF. This was the underlying principle guiding the reformers in their belief that the Bible should be in the hands of all the people not just in the teaching office of the church. This is the principle established in Chapter 1, Section 7 regarding the Word of God. It reads as follows, "All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all: yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for salvation, are so clearly propounded, and opened in some place of scripture or other, that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them."

Therefore, in order to facilitate the application of the seven basic principles previously enumerated, we will be using direct quotes from the Word of God and the Westminster Standards. We will be using the words, terms and phrases from the Westminster Standards and Reformed theology as they have been traditionally understood. We believe this approach eliminates the need for a word list with definitions. Additionally, we will present all material in a straightforward manner seeking to do all things decently and in order.

## Regarding the essence of peace and unity in the church

There are two primary distinctives of Presbyterianism. They are: Reformed in Doctrine and Presbyterian in Government. We believe that the Reformed doctrines are the purest, clearest, and fullest expressions of the teachings of the Word of God.

The peace here at Bethany has greatly diminished, and there is a evident lack of unity which is marked by the division on the original Bethany Session and in the Congregation. We are very concerned about the current crisis situation and earnestly desire to see the Gospel blessings of peace and unity restored, and at last, to press on together and by God's grace work toward repairing the ruins.

However, we are called to be trustees of God's truth and must never approve of compromise. God's Word repeatedly warns us regarding false prophets, leaven, wolves in sheep's clothing, wolves that will come in among us and rise up within our ranks seeking to undermine God's revealed truth. We are called to be Bereans, testing all preaching and teaching against the only absolute standard, the Word of God. And for this we have God's approval.

In many Christian circles today, peace and unity are merely bywords. Many professing Christians today are opposed to any kind of conflict, especially those of a theological nature. They stress the need for religious tolerance. Oftentimes, they are content with their present religious beliefs and settle on the lowest common denominator, encouraging each other to just get along and quit all the fussing. There is great emphasis placed on love for each other while playing down the importance of doctrine. Appeal is made to 1 Corinthians 8:1 where we are told that knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. This is a typical example of taking scripture out of context and misapplying it. Philippians 1:9-11 teaches that there is an essential relationship between love and knowledge. There we are told that Paul's prayer is "... that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment..." We are to learn from the scriptures how to abound more and more in our love for God and each other. They seem to be oblivious to the spiritual warfare raging on each day and that Satan's master

strategy is to undermine the Church from within by twisting and distorting God's truth. There is little concern for sound doctrine and the pursuit of righteousness. Evidence of this mentality is so clearly demonstrated in many of the movements going on today such as the Ecumenical Movement, Evangelicals and Catholics Together, and Promise Keepers where doctrinal differences are glossed over and truth is sacrificed for the sake of unity.

The Word of God teaches us that in the true Church of Christ there can be no true peace and unity without purity. One of the questions asked of candidates for the office of ruling elder is, "Do you promise to seek the purity, peace and unity of the church?" It's not just peace and unity. These three stand together, but peace and unity are the fruit of purity. Without sound doctrine in faith (what we are to believe) and practice (what we are to do), whatever peace and unity that is achieved is counterfeit and of the world. Let us remember well God's Word declared to the people of Israel by the prophet Isaiah when the false prophets were assuring the people that all was well, "Peace, peace when there is no peace." Purity, peace, and unity are to be earnestly sought after on biblical grounds alone and are emblems of true Christian piety.

We believe that in all things necessary to the Gospel, there must be unity; in all things less than necessary there must be liberty; and in all things there must be love. We do not believe we are majoring in minors, addressing peripheral matters, or making much ado about nothing. The matter before us is necessary to the Gospel and at the very core of the Christian faith, the very heart of the Gospel. The justification of a sinner by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone and not by anything done by us is central to Christianity. We are justified by an alien righteousness imputed to us, not by any righteousness of our own. Martin Luther's phrase expresses it well, "Simultaneously just and sinner. "

## Regarding the charges – a theological overview in the Reformed Tradition

The following Biblical concepts are foundational to understanding the charges brought against Elder Kinnaird. This is not intended to be a thorough treatment of these concepts or of the Reformed Faith but only in so far as they relate to the charges. We are also presenting them so that the court, the accused, his council, and witnesses will be acquainted with our theological position at the outset, in order to minimize any opportunity for misunderstanding. We are endeavoring to speak the truth in love because of our love for Christ and His church and our concern for lost souls.

We begin with this syllogism: MAJOR PREMISE: Anything that voids the Covenant of Grace is a false and heretical doctrine. MINOR PREMISE: Justification by works of the law voids the Covenant of Grace. CONCLUSION: Therefore, to teach this is false and heretical. The validity of the minor premise, that justification by works of the law voids the Covenant of Grace, can be readily proven by the Word of God and the Westminster Standards.

There are only two methods proposed in the Word of God whereby man can be justified before the Righteous Judge of all the earth. The first is by law keeping (works) and the second is by faith.

These two methods are presented in the scriptures as Covenants, the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace. In the former, Adam was the federal head representing all mankind, and in the latter, Jesus Christ is the federal head representing the people of God.

In the Covenant of Works, the condition required of Adam was perfect obedience, and the standard was God's law. Adam, in his original righteousness, was able to comply with the requirement and having done so would have merited justification and the promised reward of eternal life. Everlasting death was threatened for disobedience. God established the principle of law at the outset; without it there is no sin, and there is also no righteousness. No other condition or standard was proposed by God in this Covenant but Adam's obedience to the law, because none was needed.

In the Covenant of Grace, faith in Jesus Christ is the condition required, and the standard is the Gospel. In order to be justified and receive the promised reward of eternal life, a sinner must believe on Jesus Christ as He is presented in the Gospel. The Gospel presents Jesus Christ as the Savior who came to save His people from their sins. He accomplished this by doing for us what Adam failed to do by fulfilling the Covenant of Works. He perfectly kept the law, i.e., the precepts and also paid the penalty for our sins, fully satisfying the law and justice of God only for the sake of the elect, meriting eternal life for them. No other condition or standard but faith in Jesus Christ was proposed by God to receive the promised reward because none is needed.

Both of these Covenants agree in one common end, namely, the Glory of God in man's justification and the reward of eternal life. However, they disagree in the means by which the end can be obtained. In the Covenant of Works the means was by law keeping on the part of Adam. When Adam sinned, law keeping as the way of salvation was abolished for evermore. In the Covenant of Grace the means is by the Gospel, the law keeping of Jesus Christ on behalf of His elect. This is the essential difference between the Law and the Gospel. Under the Covenant of Grace, the law has a different function and is no longer

the way of life but rather the way of death. All who are outside of Christ are under the law and its curse – the condemnation and wrath of God. Law and Gospel must never be mixed or separated but only distinguished from each other. When law and gospel are mixed some form of faith plus works will result, and when they are separated, antinomianism (faith minus works) will be the result.

Romans, Galatians and Ephesians in particular are very clear in emphasizing that faith and works are opposed to each other for justification. Faith is the alone instrument, the empty beggar's hand reaching out to take hold of Christ's righteousness imputed to the sinner for justification. Galatians 2:16 tells us that "...a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ..." Therefore, adding works of any kind to faith for justification is a denial of the all sufficiency of Christ's everlasting righteousness and voids the Covenant of Grace.

Only two men in all of human history were able to merit justification and eternal life by obedience to the law, the first and second Adam. The first Adam failed by transgressing the law of God and plunging himself and, by imputation, the whole human race into sin. Adam's sin forfeited any further opportunity to merit eternal life by law keeping either for himself or on the part of any of mankind descending from him. All mankind, fallen in Adam and born in original sin, are unable to keep the law perfectly. Hence, the need for the Second Adam, promised in Genesis 3:15, the God-man, Jesus Christ.

We affirm, as the reformers did, that justification is by faith alone, but not by a faith that is alone. Works are connected to saving faith in our sanctification. During the process of sanctification the Holy Spirit transforms us to the image of Christ by grace, not by our lawkeeping. The Holy Spirit works in the believer to cleanse away the remaining pollution of sin and enable him to overcome the power of sin. As the process of sanctification continues, our hearts are moulded and our minds renewed more and more so that our prevailing desire is to submit to God's law, out of love and gratitude, in order to please Him. God's making us holy during sanctification, and the good works that proceed from it, never contribute to our justification. Justification and Sanctification, like law and gospel, should never be mixed or separated but only distinguished from each other. Our good works are all imperfect in this life and are never the basis for, never maintain a hold on, and never in any way contribute to justification. Consider this, if God were to measure our good works by the law they would be sin, and we would daily be exposed to the wrath and judgment of God. But, thanks be to God, we are not under the yoke of the law for judgment; rather, we are under the yoke of Christ, by grace, and He accepts our faulty works as a loving Father.

## REGARDING THE FINAL JUDGMENT:

The terms salvation and justification must be distinguished in theological discussions also. Salvation encompasses the whole plan of God, while justification is but one stage in the order of salvation. That justification secures salvation is clear from God's Word.

However, they must be used carefully in order to avoid confusion.

Once a believer is justified and adopted, he is no longer a child of wrath (Eph. 2:3), but a child of God. God is no longer the believer's Judge, but a loving Father. The assurance we have from God's Word is this: John 5:24, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my Word and believes Him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."

Consider this also: John 6:28,29 when Jesus was asked, "What must we do to be doing the works of God?" Jesus replied, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." And there are many more verses which would be impossible to enumerate at this time.

The inexorable law of God will be the standard for the judgment of the wicked. They will be condemned on account of their sinful works cited as evidence of their lack of perfect conformity to the law and their lack of union with Christ, and the measure of their punishment will be according to their works.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ, His law keeping for us, will be the standard for the judgment of the righteous. They will be acquitted on account of their being clothed in the righteousness of Christ, imputed to them, and by virtue of their union with Him. Their good works will be cited as evidence of their union with Christ and rewarded accordingly. God's rewarding their foreordained good works is the crowning of His grace from which they sprang.

## IN SUMMARY:

The Word of God does not teach that believers are justified by what they are or what they do. The believer's justification is not on account of any righteousness inhering in him produced during sanctification and completed in glorification, nor is it on account of or in accord with his good works accomplished during sanctification. Justification is a singular act of God done outside the believer whereby God legally pronounces a sinner just by virtue of the righteousness of Christ imputed to him by faith alone. It does not affect the nature or character of the sinner but only his legal status. Justification occurs at the moment of belief and is not an ongoing process; it occurs only once, is irreversible, and is perfect in this life. Once justified, God treats the believer as if he had never sinned and treats him as if he had perfectly kept the law. Romans 11:6 says this, "But if it is by Grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise Grace would no longer be Grace." Therefore, if we add anything to the righteousness of Christ, we make void the Covenant of Grace, pervert the Gospel, undermine assurance of faith and the perseverance of the saints. It also brings the highest degree of reproach upon the dignity of Christ and is a pernicious heresy.

Jesus tells us in Matthew chapter 7 that those who acknowledge His Lordship and boast of their gifts and works are hypocrites. Jesus goes on to explain that He is not their Savior for He never knew them. He further explains that they have built their hope upon a sandy foundation, and when judgment comes, oh, how great will be their fall. Salvation is a free gift from God. First Corinthians applies these penetrating questions to us, "What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?" First Corinthians also gives us the answer, "God is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore as it is written," Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord."

Let us now proceed to our next speaker continuing to keep our eyes on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, boasting in what Christ has done for us and remembering this: God will not share His glory with another.

## Defining Terms

### Justification

We affirm that the opposite of *condemn* is *justify*, and that justification is an act of God's free grace whereby He declares, in Heaven's Court, that a sinner who deserves only the full measure of His wrath, and who, having rested on and received by faith alone, the righteousness of Christ alone, is acquitted of all charges and all guilt, and is consequently relieved of all punishments due. God then treats the believer as if he had never sinned and had perfectly kept the law, and as a loving Father, adopts him into His kingdom as a son. We also affirm that justification constitutes only a change in the believer's legal status (standing) before God at the moment he believes and forevermore. We further affirm that justification is perfect in this life.

We deny that anything other than the righteousness of Christ is needed for justification. We also deny that there is more than one justification or that it is a process. We further deny that there is any change in nature or character in the believer which takes place to make him holy.

### Sanctification

We affirm that the opposite of *pollute* is *sanctify*, and that sanctification is the ongoing work of regeneration by the effectual working of God's all sufficient grace in the believer by the Holy Spirit to make us further holy in heart and character (conduct), strengthening the believer to overcome the power of sin, and for the continual purging of the remaining pollution (corruption) of sin. We also affirm that sanctification is (follows) consequent to (upon) justification, and that it is an ongoing work (process) that is never perfect in this life and is at various levels in believers. We further affirm that the goal of sanctification is to conform the believer to the image of Christ, making him progressively fit for heaven, and is completed in glorification.

We deny any Biblical warrant for separating or mixing sanctification and justification, but only that they may be distinguished. We also deny that the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in us conforming us to the image of Christ, or the good works done by the believer during sanctification in any way constitute the ground or basis of our justification in this life or at the final judgment, or further contribute to it in any way. We further deny that we are sanctified by law keeping.