

A PROPOSAL FOR THE SESSION

Main Motion - That the Session of Bethany OPC provide the following endorsement::

Procedural Motion - That a roll-call vote be taken on the main motion.

Procedural Motion - If the main motion carries, that the Declaration and Theological Statements be placed on file and not recorded in the minutes.

ENDORSEMENT

We, the Session of Bethany church, by roll call vote, endorse the following Declaration and Theological Statements of Elder John O. Kinnaird. We find them consonant with the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures and consonant with the expression of that system of doctrine found in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. We find the doctrine expressed by Mr. Kinnaird to be acceptable for teaching in Bethany Church; in fact, we commend it for teaching and preaching everywhere.

DECLARATION

SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

As to the salvation of any man, let it be known that salvation is totally a work of God's grace, freely given to the elect of God, through the alone instrument of salvation - faith. This faith is itself a gift of God lest anyone should dare to boast. To this faith nothing can be added. Nothing! By this faith the Christian believes to the saving of his soul and by this faith he lives his life on a day to day basis. I am not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. In my teaching I call people to the obedience that comes from faith. In the Gospel is revealed a righteousness from God, a righteousness that is by faith from beginning to end, just as is written, "The just shall live by faith". (Ephesians 2:8-10 and Romans 1:5 and 16-17) This Declaration speaks to God's use of faith as His alone instrument of salvation. However, we should not perceive of the gospel plan of redemption as being only about the salvation of mankind. Rather, we should see it as God's plan to glorify Himself through the redemption of mankind. The gospel is God centered; not man centered.

I declare myself, in the words of the Westminster confession of Faith: "The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts... By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word... [The] principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace." It is to be noted that true saving faith, in the words of the Westminster Confession of Faith, **rests** on Christ alone for three gifts -justification, sanctification, and eternal life. It is to be further noted that these three gifts are given to the Christian by virtue of the Covenant of Grace. (WCF XIV.I and II) To this saving faith, **nothing** can be added.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

ΔFor by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:8-10) Critical to the current situation is the question of whether it is true, as stated here in Ephesians, that the Christian, in this as well as all other ages, is God's workmanship, created in the new birth and empowered by the Holy Spirit according to the promises of Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36, for the purpose of overcoming sin in such a way that the Christian walks in good works -good works that God has from all eternity, as part of the Covenant of Grace, ordained that the Christian will walk therein. I declare that Christians are God's workmanship, so-created and so-

empowered. There is for each Christian a Grace of Justification and a Grace of Sanctification.

ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE A NUMBER OF STATEMENTS AS TO MY BELIEFS.

THEOLOGICAL STATEMENTS

THE SCRIPTURES

The 39 books of the Old Testament together with the 27 books of the New Testament (as listed in WCF I), in the original autographs, are the very words of the one living and eternal God. They are inspired, inerrant, authentic, infallible, and authoritative in all matters, whether of faith, life, or whatsoever, to which they address themselves. Though the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit be required to savingly understand them, no man living on this earth since the days of the Apostles, regardless of his office, receives any illumination such as to give that man higher or exclusive claim to authoritative teaching. Each of the 66 books is equally authoritative. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

THE INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE

"The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself; and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly." (WCF I.IX) Officers of the OPC do not subscribe to, and should not depend on, that methodology which is sometimes described as "literal-where-possible-figurative-only-when-necessary" (or a variant thereof); we are committed by solemn vow to God and His church to use the methodology of the Confession.

GOD THE FATHER'S COVENANT WITH HIS SON

Before time began, God the Father entered into covenant with God the Son to make provision for a people to glorify His name. This covenant is sometimes called the Pre-temporal Covenant due to being made before time began. Others call it the Covenant of Redemption since it pertains to the plan of redemption. For a similar reason, some call it the Covenant of Grace (not to be confused with the covenant given to Abraham nor with the covenant that God makes with the individual Christian). I sometimes call it the Eternal Covenant since it was made in eternity past and will carry on to eternity future, governing all of redemptive history in between. The basic content of this covenant requires the Son to commit himself to do the will of the Father pertaining to the Son coming down from heaven, becoming the incarnate Messiah, preparing Himself (the Son) by fulfilling all righteousness, offering Himself on behalf of man, presenting Himself before the father as a sacrifice, enduring the judgement of the Father, etc. The Father, for His part, promised the Son the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish those tasks pertaining to redemption, a people of His own upon success, and the Holy Spirit to give to those people to enable them to overcome sin in this world. The sanctions of the covenant were life to Christ and those united to Him upon success and death were there to be failure. There was (and could be) no failure. It is similar to God binding Himself to Abraham by an ordeal oath covenant ratifying ceremony (walking between the pieces of bloodied carcasses) in Genesis 15:17 (interpreted for us in Hebrews 6:16-19). God thereby was saying that He who could not die would die if he failed to keep the covenant. Since He could not die, He was binding Himself to keep the covenant. The resurrection is proof of success. Just as there is but one Covenant of Redemption covering *all* of human and redemptive history, there is but one way man can be saved throughout the whole period from Adam to the Second Coming (after which there will be no further opportunity for salvation -only the Final Judgement). All other covenants, including the pre-lapsarian (before Adam's sin) Covenant of Works with Adam, are but sub-parts of the Covenant of Redemption. All of history is one redemptive history. Those who teach otherwise, such as the Dispensationalists, are mistaken.

THE FALL OF MANKIND

The history of redemption starts with the fall. "Our first parents ..sinned ...God...having purposed to order it to his own glory. By this sin they... became dead in sin, and wholly defiled...the guilt of this sin was imputed and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all...descending from them by natural generation. From this original corruption. ..proceed all actual transgressions. Every sin, both original and actual...bring[s] guilt upon the sinner. .." (WCF VI) From this we notice two problems with which we enter this world and one more that is not far beyond birth. First, we enter with the guilt of Adam, an imputed guilt, and, secondly, we enter with Original Sin. The imputation of Adam's guilt deprives us of any right to inherit the Kingdom of God. Original Sin is a condition of our being whereby we are totally without original righteousness and are wholly disposed to unrighteousness. Thirdly, shortly after birth we, due to original sin, commit the first of many actual sins. These three - the guilt of Adam's sin, our sinful nature, and the guilt of our actual sins -each and all, keep us out of the Fellowship of God, out of the Kingdom. These three define mankind's common problems.

We see these problems summarized in the Q&A of Shorter Catechism 18:

"Q. 18. Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?"

"A. The sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it. "

GOD'S ANSWERS TO MANKIND'S PROBLEMS

These three impediments (absolute impediments unless dealt with by God) to our entry into the Kingdom of God are, for the elect, addressed by the work of Christ and applied by the Holy Spirit, working through God's alone instrument of salvation which is faith. The Q&As of the Shorter Catechism also enlighten us on this score.

The Holy Spirit, through faith, applies the redemption purchased by Christ in our Justification.

"Q. 33. What is justification?"

"A. Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone, "

The Holy Spirit breaths life into a dead soul bringing us to faith and applying the redemption purchased by Christ whereby we become adopted children of God, begotten by the seed of the Father, with restored inheritance rights.

"Q. 34. What is adoption?"

"A. Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of, the sons of God. "

The Holy Spirit, through faith, applies the redemption purchased by Christ to bring about our Sanctification (and ultimately, our glorification).

"Q.35. What is sanctification? A

A.A. Sanctification is the work of God's free grace, whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness. "

The Confession, in chapters XI, XII, and XIII addresses the same three answers (Justification, Adoption, and Sanctification) to the three problems (actual guilt, imputed guilt, and original sin) and that is what I will shortly address. These are the same three graces of saving faith mentioned in my opening DECLARATION and in WCF XIV.II. There, the third one is called "eternal life"; here it is referred to as having been begotten by God and adopted. God is the God of the living. Those who are begotten by him and adopted by him belong to Him and they have eternal life and will inherit the Kingdom -the Kingdom lost by Adam. But first we need to look

at God's eternal plan and at the work of Christ.

GOD'S PURPOSE AND PLAN

God had a purpose and a plan for all of creation and history, including the fall of Adam, before he brought any of it to pass. Insight into this purpose and plan is received from Scripture, one notable place being Romans 8:29-30, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." It is to be noted from this text that God's stated purpose here is to establish His Son as "the firstborn among many brethren". To that end he had to create people who would "be conformed to the image of his Son". It is not possible that any could be a brother to Jesus Christ and enjoy with Christ, in the Kingdom of Heaven, the presence of God the Father except that one be fully conformed to the image of Christ in true and personal righteousness and holiness. Neither the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, which all Christians receive at justification, nor the infusion of the righteousness of Christ (a false and non-existent concept taught by the Roman Catholic Church) -can suffice for that purpose. Christ does not have an imputed righteousness; His righteousness is real and personal. If we are to be conformed to his image, we too must have a real and personal righteousness.¹ Furthermore, it is to be noted that this passage does not say that we are predestinated to Heaven. It says we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son. Heaven is consequent to that which follows upon the predestination. It is to be noticed in this passage that there is an unbreakable chain of events starting with God having a love beforehand for certain people ("whom He did foreknow"). Each and every one, with no exception, who was foreknown, was then predestined, called, justified, and glorified. Not one of those who were foreknown failed to be glorified. This glorification of which Paul speaks is the final step in the process of conforming them to the image of Christ.

Those glorified are conformed in righteousness and holiness (the word I use is conformed, not confirmed). They cannot die because they are brothers to Christ, inheriting the Kingdom with Christ. They are crowned with Glory (I Peter 5:4), Righteousness (II Timothy 4:8), and Immortality (James 1 :12). This Glory, this Righteousness, this Immortality, will not fade away (I Peter 5:4), and they are incorruptible (1 Corinthians 9:25). They will last forever. Those who share in the glory will be righteous and immortal; these three are inseparable because he who has one will have the others; it is not possible to have one without the others.

THE WORK OF CHRIST

The task and objectives of the work of Christ, including that of the Holy Spirit, are well seen in Section VI of chapter III of WCF. "As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Wherefore, they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ by his Spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only." One will note that the chain begins with the appointment of the elect unto glory and proceeds to the foreordaining of the means of getting them to glory. Then, starting with those who are elect among the fallen (the fallen being all mankind), we see them redeemed by Christ, called to faith, justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by Christ's power, all through faith, unto salvation. From Scripture we know that faith is an instrument used by the Holy Spirit in applying salvation to the individual throughout the ages of history. And so we understand that the Holy Spirit called and caused us to respond in faith. The Holy Spirit gave to us faith in the atoning death of Jesus unto justification. The Holy Spirit through

¹ The first citation in specification one of the Wilkening charge.

faith grants us adoption. The Holy Spirit through faith sanctifies us. The Holy Spirit through faith keeps us. All of this unto salvation. Those who teach that these (calling, faith, adoption, sanctification, perseverance) are not all of the essence of Christ's accomplished salvation as applied to us by the Holy Spirit of Christ, teach incorrectly.

JUSTIFICATION

All those whom God calls he freely justifies, not by infusing righteousness into them but by imputing the righteousness of Christ to their account by virtue of the merit of the life and death of Christ. Neither faith, nor the act of believing, nor any other evangelical obedience, is credited to them, only the active and passive obedience of Christ. The Christian receives and rests upon Him and His righteousness alone, by faith alone, which is a gift alone of God and nothing of man. Faith is the alone instrument of justification. Yet, faith is never alone in the person justified but is always and ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but always works by love. WCF XI.I and II James 2:8;26 Galatians 5:5-6

ADOPTION

All those that are justified are, for the sake of Christ and in fulfillment of the terms of the Covenant of Grace, adopted as the Children of God. As heirs of everlasting life, they inherit the promises. Christ declared that it is the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. These are those who have within themselves a new man created after the image of God by means of being begotten from above by the seed of God -the new birth. We, all Christians, truly are Children of the King; our spirits now, our bodies at the resurrection. We are no longer merely sons of Adam; we are Sons of the Living God, Brothers of Christ Jesus. Children who are being and will be fully conformed to the image of Christ Jesus. WCF XII.I

SANCTIFICATION

All those who are called and justified in Christ Jesus, all those who are begotten from above by the seed of the Father as applied by the Holy Spirit, have a new heart created within them and are given the gift of the Holy Spirit, in fulfillment of the promises of Ezekiel 36:16-28 and Jeremiah 31:31-34. God causes them to be really and personally sanctified, not by infusion of the righteousness of Christ nor by imputation of the same, but by the action of the Holy Spirit upon them, through faith, based on the virtue of Christ's death and resurrection. This Holy Spirit dwelling within them causes them to walk in righteousness before the Lord, keeping His laws and His ordinances. This promise, and its fulfillment, is for the Christians of this age. It does not await either a partial or a total fulfillment in some supposed future millennial age. Sanctification is the gift of God given through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ based on the merits of Christ to all the Children of God in this day and age. Through this sanctification the dominion of this body of sin (original sin dwelling therein) is destroyed and the people of God are, in this life, now, quickened and strengthened to the practice of true holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. This sanctification is imperfect in this life and yet through the continual work of the Holy Spirit the new man does overcome the flesh and so we grow in grace perfecting holiness in the fear of God. The process of sanctification will be completed at the Glorification. WCF XIII.I to III Hebrews 8:1-13 Hebrews 12:14

SAVING FAITH

Faith is a gift of God to the Christian given by virtue of the Covenant of Grace and based on the merits of Christ. It is a work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the Christian both drawing him to Christ and sustaining him in Christ throughout his earthly journey. It is God's alone instrument of salvation but it is never alone but is always accompanied by all those other saving graces given by God to each and every one of His Children. Of this faith the Westminster Confession of Faith rightly declares:

"XIV.I. The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word, by which also, and

by the administration of the sacraments, and prayer, it is increased and strengthened.

"XIV.II. By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein; and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands, trembling at the threatenings, and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come. But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace."

To this faith, **nothing** can be added.

SUMMARIZING GOD'S ANSWER TO OUR PROBLEMS

Thus we see that the Covenant of Grace produces the graces of salvation addressing not only man's actual sins committed, but also his sinfulness (the original sin with which he was individually created by natural generation) and his loss of an inheritance right to the Kingdom due to the imputed guilt for Adam's sin. We see that all three of God's solutions for our problems are given by grace through faith and that all are none of ourselves. Before I conclude, I wish to speak briefly of Good Works, of The Final Judgement, and of The Ordinances.

GOOD WORKS

Good works always adorn the profession of the gospel and they serve the purpose of glorifying God. Believers are the workmanship of God. They are created in Christ Jesus unto good works that God has before ordained that they should walk therein, that, having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end, eternal life. The good works of a Christian are not meritorious toward salvation but they are intrinsically good, for they are a work of God the Holy Spirit who both causes God's Children to will and to actually do them. (WCF XVI. I through VI) God's people walk with God by faith in this world. This walk is not perfect (due to indwelling sin) but it is real. Good works are not added to faith for salvation. Good works are the certain fruit of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit working through faith in the life of the believer and will be the evidence on the Day of Judgement that God is righteous and just in all His judgements. (Romans 2:1-16)

THE FINAL JUDGEMENT

God has appointed a day when he will judge the world in righteousness. All persons who have lived upon the earth shall appear before the tribunal of Christ to give account of their thoughts, words, and deeds; and to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether good or bad. On That Great Day, the Day of Judgement, God's righteous judgement will be revealed. God will then give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good {we Presbyterians call this perseverance} seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life. For those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be eternal wrath and anger and destruction from before the face of the Lord. It is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous on that Day of Judgement.² WCF XXXIII.I and II Romans 2:1-16

Those who teach that the purpose of the Day of Judgement is not to reveal God's righteousness in His judgements (judgements that will be unto eternal life or death in accord with what men have done on this earth), but rather only to determine types and degrees of rewards to be given to Christians, are in error.

² The second citation in specification one of the Wilkening charge.

When Scripture says that the judgement will be "in accord with" what they have done, it is saying that the judgement will be consistent with what they have done. The Scriptures ascribe no merit to the works of a Christian, nor do I. The Scriptures do not lie when they declare that God's righteous judgements will be revealed.

THE ORDINANCES

I really cannot improve on or add to what is already written in the Westminster Confession and the catechisms. Their position is my position. I would commend the reader to Chapter XXV, *Of the Church*, Chapter XXVII, *Of the Sacraments*, Chapter XXVIII, *Of Baptism*, and Chapter XXIX, *Of the Lord's Supper*. One thing I would say is that no man can add any of these ordinances to faith for salvation. Rather, it is as the chapter on Justification says. "Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and his righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love." (WCF XI.II) I would expand this statement of the Confession to say that faith is the alone instrument of salvation including our calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, perseverance, glorification, etc. The graces found in the ordinances of God flow from God through faith; not from or because of evangelical obedience to the ordinances. (WCF XI.I) None of these ordinances, nor evangelical obedience to them, can be added to faith for salvation. Obedience to and participation in the ordinances are acts of faith in the Christ of the ordinances. One does not add to faith by being baptized. One does not add to faith by participating in the Lord's Supper. One does not add to faith by joining the church.