

**Response to the Brief,
“Are Mr. Kinnaird’s statements in the specifications
in accord with the Standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?”
Submitted at the trial of Elder John O. Kinnaird**

**by Arlyn A. Wilkening
January 25, 2003 OBJECTION:**

By way of introduction, we would like to state that the question raised by Rev. Tyson and Elder Kinnaird in the brief submitted to the court changes the doctrinal focus of the trial proceedings. Rather than Elder Kinnaird proving to the court that he teaches the same doctrine of justification as the Standards, it is now acceptable only to prove his statements are “in accord?” We ask “in accord” to *what* in the Standards? What is *the doctrinal issue* now being tried before his court?

The change of focus from “contrary to” to “in accord with” might appear to be merely the defense’s way of stating the opposite of the charge. It is not so. It actually diverts attention away from the specific truths of justification given in the Bible and our Standards in order to explore something else, some other words in the Standards which they suppose support Elder Kinnaird’s view. We cannot break away from the contrast imposed by the charge, between the truths given in the Bible and our Standards, and Elder Kinnaird’s statements. The form of the charge and specifications determine the order of the trial and require this contrast. The whole point of the trial cannot be changed by an attempt to show that other words might be found which might be supposed to support Elder Kinnaird’s specific statements.

We know what the Bible and our Standards say about justification. Justification by faith alone, without works of any kind on our part, and only through the righteousness of Christ imputed to us; and this justification is a final and complete justification. We cannot redefine it. We know it, and we are all committed to it, as the Biblical teaching, and it is the doctrine of our Church. This is the truth which stands in contrast to Elder Kinnaird’s statements. Both cannot be true. If one is true the other is false.

It is our position that the focus of the trial cannot be change by substituting “in accord with” for “contrary to.”

RESPONSE:

We certainly understand the reasons why the defense wishes to avoid the real doctrinal issues before the court. First of all, the subject of the defense’s alternative question wipes away all reference to the specific charge brought against Elder Kinnaird, namely teaching a justification by faith and works. Additionally, Elder Kinnaird has refused to respond to the presentation made to the court on November 23rd. His reason is that we have made inferences from his statements that have not been “proven” to be arrived at by “good and necessary consequence.”¹ However, this is only an assertion. If spurious

¹ Kinnaird, John. “Are Mr. Kinnaird’s statements in the specifications in accord with the Standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?,” page 2.

inferences have been made by us from Elder Kinnaird's teaching, especially in an area so crucial to the Gospel as justification, the proper response should be to show what these were and so exonerate Elder Kinnaird. This technique of ignoring direct questions and redirecting them in order to evade answering is often used in debate, but is not suitable for discourse in a court of the church.

Thirdly, we note that in his arguments Elder Kinnaird does not defend the meaning his statements have from within the context of his own writings or sermon. For instance, the sections on the second and third specification are defended as isolated statements. In reference to the first citation in specification one, taken from his Theological Statements, Elder Kinnaird defends himself from a straw man position denying a venue we did not claim for that specific statement. In "A Proposal for the Session," that statement is written right after Elder Kinnaird has described the three absolute impediments which bar entrance to the Kingdom of God: actual guilt, imputed guilt and original sin. These impediments, he then states, are remedied by a complement of graces: justification, adoption, and sanctification.² The citation in our charge relates to Elder Kinnaird's emphasis that the removal of actual guilt is related to justification, while original sin's removal relates to sanctification. He then makes the statement cited in the charge which is his belief that being in God's presence in heaven depends upon both imputed and inherent righteousness. He writes, "*It is not possible that any could be a brother to Jesus Christ*"³ without having a real and personal righteousness like Christ's, which he further contrasts to imputed righteousness. It is the second citation in specification one which places inherent righteousness in the venue of 'justification' at the Last Day as, "*It is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous on the Day of Judgement.*" Elder Kinnaird's teaching is a denial of salvation by free grace and the doctrine of justification by faith alone taught in the Standards (ie. WCF XI.1 and WSC Q. 32, 33, etc.). These teach that the elect are accepted as righteous before God solely by their Mediator, through the imputation of His perfect righteousness received by faith alone. We agree that all the other graces do accompany justifying faith, including sanctification and glorification, but these are not their righteousness before God (WLC Q. 73).

Elder Kinnaird's "new evidence" in his brief does not show him to be in accord with the Standards, but rather continues to illustrate our charge. The following three quotations illustrate Elder Kinnaird's rejection of the efficacy of the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

"The answer to our question, 'Why do the people of God need to be sanctified and glorified? The answer is that when Adam sinned, he and all descending from him (WCF VI.3) lost the righteousness wherein mankind was created and, thereby, mankind also lost communion with God. **If communion with God is to be restored, righteousness of a real and personal nature must be restored.**"⁴

² Kinnaird, John. "A Proposal for the Session," pp. 4-5.

³ Ibid., p. 6-7

⁴ Kinnaird, John. "Are Mr. Kinnaird's statements in the specifications in accord with the Standards of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?," p. 4. (Emphasis added.)

Elder Kinnaird's statement is misleading. The Word of God and the Standards do not teach that the communion with God that Adam lost is restored through sanctification and glorification. Christ through His atonement has done this. John Murray wrote, "... the work wrought by Christ was in itself intrinsically adequate to meet all the exigencies created by our sin and all the demands of God's holiness and justice."⁵ Not only must one be perfectly righteous to stand before God, but the penalty for sin - past, present and future- must be paid as well. A sinner saved by grace is justified by faith alone, and while he is in the state of justification, is further sanctified (WCF XI.5) and will be finally glorified. In this manner is Christ's redemption applied to the elect. To single out sanctification and glorification as the graces which are responsible for restoring fellowship with God is not correct. In his teaching, Elder Kinnaird does not recognize that justification is both declarative *and constitutive*.⁶ To avoid confusion, we realize this does **not** mean a transformation of character (this is rightly the work of sanctification), but the Word of God and the Standards do teach that the elect's standing in heaven as righteous before God has been settled. It is this aspect of justification which we believe that Elder Kinnaird misapplies to the grace of sanctification.

Another variance with the Standards is on the same page as the first quote, he says:

"We point to the fact that the final state of the redeemed is that of having a will that is perfectly and immutably free to good alone. This final condition, sometimes called the fourth estate of mankind, is to be compared to the state of redeemed mankind in this life, the third estate. The third state, although based on the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, is said to be less than perfectly righteous, as seen in the following quote ... [WCF IX.4] ... Clearly, **the final perfected state of man**, the fourth estate described in WCF IX.5, while based on the merits of Christ, **comes through sanctification and glorification, not through imputation.**"⁷

Chapter IX of the Confession is about Free Will, and concerns man's will in the four states described in the sections two through five. It is not concerned at all about limiting or denying the imputation of the righteousness of Christ. Why does Elder Kinnaird continue to derogate or limit imputation?

And again:

"Thus we again see from our Standards **the absolute necessity for our souls, our very basic nature, being made perfect in holiness if we would see God face to face.** The Confession speaks to our seeing God face to face **only** after we are perfected in holiness through glorification at death, completing what regeneration and sanctification began. The imputation of the righteous active and passive obedience of Christ did not accomplish this - regeneration, sanctification, and glorification did this

⁵ Murray, John. *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*, Chapter 3, "The Perfection of the Atonement," pp. 57-58.

⁶ *Ibid.* Chapter 5, "Justification," p. 123.

⁷ *Ibid.* (Emphasis added.)

according to God's intent and plan that we be fully conformed to the image of Christ in perfect righteousness."⁸

Elder Kinnaird's statements are a further illustration of what he teaches in the first citation of Specification one. He insists, that "*the imputation of the righteous active and passive obedience of Christ,*" which is justification, "**did not accomplish this,**" but "*regeneration, sanctification, and glorification did.*" We cannot see what truth there can be in Elder Kinnaird's insistence that the imputation of Christ's obedience does not accomplish a justification that is final and complete. As Calvin commented in his Institutes,

"It is entirely by the intervention of Christ's righteousness that we obtain justification before God. This is equivalent to saying that man is not just in himself, but that the righteousness of Christ is communicated to him by imputation, which he is strictly deserving of punishment. Thus vanishes the absurd dogma, that man is justified by faith inasmuch as faith brings him under the influence of the Spirit of God, by whom he is rendered righteous."⁹

Please study the quotations from John Murray in the appendix of this response, as compiled by Rev. Arthur Kuschke.

The final point of our response concerns the definition of being "in accord" with the Word of God and the Westminster Standards. To be "in accord with" is not proved by using similar phraseology, terms, or by quoting from the texts. In order to be "in accord" one must teach the same *content of the doctrine* as the Standards. This is not an arbitrary definition but one reflected in the Standards themselves. Chapter one, section nine, of the Confessions states :

"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**. Acts 15:15; John 5:46; see 2 Peter 1:20,21."

There is unity in the message of Scripture and one part of Scripture does not contradict another. Additionally, if an individual passage of Scripture is used to support a doctrinal position, that passage must be the clearest one which speaks to that area of doctrine and its interpretation should not confuse other doctrines as a result. This principle is particularly crucial to the present charge relating to the manner in which Elder Kinnaird interprets Romans 2:13,

"For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous."

The question is, do the Scriptures and the Standards *mean* in Romans 2:13 that it *is* those who *obey the law* who *will be* declared righteous on the Day of Judgment? John Murray writes,

⁸ Kinnaird, John. "Are Mr. Kinnaird's statements ...," p. 6 (Emphasis added)

⁹ Calvin, John. Institutes. III.xi.23.

“It is quite unnecessary to find in this verse any doctrine of justification by works in conflict with the teaching of this epistle in later chapters. Whether any will actually be actually justified by works either in this life or at the final judgment is beside the apostle’s interest and design at this juncture. The burden of this verse is that not the hearers or mere possessors of the law will be justified before God but that in terms of the law the criterion is *doing*, not hearing. The apostle’s appeal to this principle serves that purpose truly and effectively, and there is no need to import questions that are not relevant to the universe of discourse.”¹⁰

Romans 2:13 expresses the eternal principle of the law. As Paul says “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23) Therefore no one deserves justification. But for the elect, their Mediator, Jesus Christ, has perfectly obeyed the law on their behalf and in their place therefore they are justified. Elder Kinnaird’s teaching that the elect will be those found at the Last Judgment really and personally righteous, based on their own obedience to the law, is contrary to the doctrines of grace. We have no perfect righteousness of our very own in reference to the law with which to stand before God. The defense has used the above quotation from John Murray to suggest he would not oppose Elder Kinnaird’s viewpoint; however, not only does the quote not support their interpretation, but neither does Murray’s introduction to the section:

“It needs to be noted, however, that at this point [2:12-16] the apostle restricts himself to the judgment of condemnation.”¹¹

What is clearly at issue here is how Elder Kinnaird’s teaching of acceptance by God based on real and personal righteousness confuses and co-mingles justification and sanctification in a manner that Larger Catechism Q. 77 forbids. Both Dr. Lillback and Dr. Gaffin in their expert testimony on Elder Kinnaird’s behalf stressed that these doctrines need to be distinguished and not confused even while the benefits come to us inseparably from each other.

In closing I would like to place the following quotations from John Calvin in contrast to the above quotation as well as quotations in the charge, specifically in specification one.

¹⁰ Murray, John. The Epistle to the Romans. The New International Commentary on the New Testament, (Eerdmans, 1968), p. 71.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 69.

“Osiander objects that it would be insulting to God, and contrary to his nature, to justify those who still remain wicked. But it ought to be remembered, as I already observed, that the gift of justification is not separated from regeneration, though the two things are distinct. But as it is too well known by experience, that the remains of sin always exist in the righteous, it is necessary that justification should be something very different from reformation to newness of life. This latter God begins in his elect, and carries on during the whole course of life, gradually and sometimes slowly, so that if placed at his judgment-seat they would always deserve sentence of death. He justifies not partially, but freely, so that they can appear in the heavens as if clothed with the purity of Christ. No portion of righteousness could pacify the conscience. It must be decided that we are pleasing to God, as being without exception righteous in his sight”.¹²

¹²Institutes III.11.11

“To declare that we are deemed righteous, solely because the obedience of Christ is imputed to us as if it were our own, is just to place our righteousness in the obedience of Christ.”¹³

Elder Kinnaird having denied the efficacy of imputed righteousness of Christ alone, received by faith alone, to reckon us as righteous in the sight of God has substantiated the charge that he teaches a doctrine of justification by faith and works.

¹³Institutes III.11.25 emphasis added

APPENDIX
 "Elder Kinnaird's Reference to John Murray's
Redemption Accomplished and Applied"
 Comments by Rev. Arthur Kuschke
 January 25, 2003

In Mr. Kinnaird's testimony on November 30, 2002, he refers to the book by John Murray, Redemption Accomplished and Applied, on which Mr. Kinnaird "patterned" his teaching at Bethany Bible Institute. He said, "I made one major deviation from that book in that I put union with Christ first."

It appears that he is associating his teaching with that of John Murray. If so, it may be pertinent to quote just a few passages from the chapter on Justification in "Redemption Accomplished and Applied" (the whole chapter is relevant).

The question is this: is Mr. Kinnaird's teaching on justification basically in harmony with that of Mr. Murray, or in contrast?

Quotations from Redemption Accomplished and Applied
 (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1959)

I. "Regeneration is an act of God in us; justification is a judgment of God with respect to us.... The purity of the gospel is bound up with the recognition of this distinction. If justification is confused with regeneration or sanctification, then the door is opened for the perversion of the gospel at its centre. Justification is still the article of a standing or falling Church". - Page 151

II. "In God's justification of sinners there is no deviation from the rule that what is declared to be is presupposed to be. God's judgment is according to truth here as elsewhere. The peculiarity of God's action consists in this that he causes to be the righteous state or relation which is declared to be..... Therefore what God does in this case is that he constitutes the new and the righteous judicial relation as well as declares this new relation to be. He constitutes the ungodly righteous, and consequently can declare them to be righteous....

This conclusion that justification is constitutive is.... expressly stated in Scripture itself. It is with the subject of justification that Paul is dealing when he says, "For as through the disobedience of the one man the many were constituted sinners, even so through the obedience of the one the many will be constituted righteous" (Rom. 5:19).... It is clear that the justification which is unto eternal life Paul regards as consisting in our being constituted righteous, in our receiving righteousness as a free gift, and this righteousness is none other than the righteousness of the one man Jesus Christ; it is the righteousness of his obedience. Hence grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21). This is the truth which has been expressed as the imputation to us of the righteousness of Christ. Justification is therefore a constitutive act whereby the righteousness of Christ is imputed to our account and we are accordingly accepted as righteous in God's sight. ... The

constitutive act consists in the imputation to us of the obedience and righteousness of Christ.” - Pages 153 and 154

III. “Justification is not by the righteousness of performance on our part; it is not of works (Rom. 3:20; 4:2; 10:3-4; Gal. 2:16; 3:11; 5:4; Phil. 3:9). The Scripture is so insistent upon this that it is only by ... distortion of the most aggravated type that justification by works could ever be entertained or proposed in any form or to any degree. The Romish doctrine bears the patent hall-marks of such distortion.” - Page 156

IV. “It is by the righteousness of God that we are justified (Rom. 1:17; 3:21-22; 10:3; Phil. 3:9). In other words, the righteousness of our justification is a God-righteousness. Nothing more conclusively demonstrates that it is not a righteousness that is ours. Righteousness wrought in us or wrought by us, even though it be altogether of the grace of God and even though it be perfect in character, is not a God-righteousness. It is, after all, a human righteousness. But the commanding insistence of the Scripture is that in justification it is the righteousness of God which is revealed from faith to faith, and therefore a righteousness which is contrasted not only with human unrighteousness but with human righteousness.” - Page 157

V. “The righteousness of justification is the righteousness and obedience of Christ (Rom. 5:17-19) ... This is the final reason why we are pointed away from ourselves to Christ and his accomplished work.... It is the righteousness of Christ wrought out by him in human nature, the righteousness of his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. But, as such, it is the righteousness of the God-man, a righteousness which measures up to the requirements of our sinful and sin-cursed situation, a righteousness which meets all the demands of a complete and irrevocable justification, and a righteousness fulfilling all these demands because it is a righteousness of divine property and character, a righteousness undefiled and inviolable. Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 5:21).” - Pages 157 and 158