

## Remarks before Philadelphia Presbytery on Feb. 22, 2003

Fathers and Brothers,

The members of the trial judicatory, whose verdict you are here today to consider, thank you for this opportunity to summarize and explain our actions.

As a trial judicatory of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church we were tasked with the job of evaluating the three specifications brought by the accusers of Mr. Kinnaird. Those specifications are a declaration, a sermon and some e-mail postings. In some ways the work we did over the course of many months was a simple job ... not easy ... but simple in the sense that it was straight-forward: to evaluate whether or not any of the three documents teaches a doctrine of justification by faith and works. In other words, we were not permitted to consider the testimonies of those who affirmed many good and certainly truthful things about Mr. Kinnaird. We did not see our judicial duty as an opportunity to send a message about the theology of the men who signed Mr. Kinnaird's declaration. Nor was his personal piety or many years of service to the church before us as a trial judicatory.

And most importantly, we were not tasked with looking into Mr. Kinnaird's soul to determine what he believes or used to believe. Over and over and over the trial judicatory heard testimony about what Mr. Kinnaird believes. And we as members of presbytery are still hearing it. Men, when someone shows up at a meeting of session or presbytery the question of what he believes ought to be answered by appeal to the documents he stands by. The pertinent fact before us as a trial judicatory and before all of us as presbyters today is the collection of documents which Mr. Kinnaird is standing by ... today ... right now. If you want to know what he believes you can go ahead and interrogate men of academic standing about what they think ... you can listen to long-time friends ... you can consider the testimony of brothers known for their piety or defer to the opinion of prominent officials of our denomination. But for the trial judicatory to have done so during the months and months we wrestled with this would have been dereliction of duty. And that is no less true for us as a presbytery today. I respectfully submit to all of you that the only interrogation that is properly before this presbytery right now is an interrogation of the three documents that Mr. Kinnaird continues to stand by.

The members of the trial judicatory, were and are unanimously in agreement about four critical, non-negotiable truths of Protestantism. You should know this about us.

The first thing we all affirm is *sola fide*. We simply do not know anything about a justification that countenances a person's work. In fact, at the end of the day our identity is as "believers." Though all five of us work, we do not call ourselves "workers." Rather, each of us is like the servant who after a day of labor in the fields and then an evening of waiting on his master during dinner could only say, "We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty." Even at their best, our labors are always unworthy. Now this may seem so obvious as to risk being too trivial to mention in a gathering like this, but to us the doctrine of justification by faith and not works was a pillar of fire in the most difficult nights of our labors.

The second thing all five of us affirm is that saving faith is ever accompanied by works. In 1645 Samuel Bolton completed his "True Bounds of Christian Freedom." Here's how he put it: "Certainly God makes none happy hereafter but those whom he makes holy here ... He brings Heaven into the soul before He brings the soul to Heaven." Amen, Sam.

The third thing all five of us affirm is that justification is settled -- completely -- at conversion. And we all affirm this without equivocation or any evangelical kind of mental reservation. Just like our confession. Justification is irreversible and "un-improve-able" ... and

worth fighting for. Worth risking earthly friendships for ... worth risking vocations for.

The fourth thing all five of us affirm is that the judgment of the believer is an experience -- preeminently -- of the mercy of our God, not the justice of our God. Let's hear from Samuel Bolton again. Immediately after the quote I read a moment ago Bolton hastens to add these words, "If it be claimed that good works are to satisfy justice and to win Heaven and glory for us, we cry them down." Our judgment, the judgment of those who have been united to Christ, is not about justice ... it is about mercy.

So on the one hand, you have what the trial judicatory was genuinely tasked with doing - not all the extraneous things it had opportunity to do; and on the other hand, you have the spiritual commitment that bound and binds the hearts of these five men picked randomly to do a simple but difficult job. The upshot of those two factors, which I pray will be in evidence in this place, brought the trial judicatory to the same settled conclusion as the counsel for the accused came to in his closing remarks. Here's how the counsel for Mr. Kinnaird put it on behalf of his client: *I'm quoting from his closing remarks* "Mr. Kinnaird admittedly teaches a doctrine of acquittal 'according to works' on the future Day of Judgment."

The trial judicatory, after months of prayerful and conscientious investigation and evaluation, could not agree more.

But what the trial judicatory could not and cannot disagree with more is the attendant claim that this doctrine somehow sits well with either the Bible or normative, historic Protestantism. But don't take our word for it. We are, after all, men of no particular prestige or reputation. Rather listen to the evaluation of a Westminster Seminary professor who has analyzed carefully the declaration of John Kinnaird ... which by the way is the least pernicious of the three documents you are being asked to evaluate today. Here's how this Westminster Seminary professor put it:

"[Thus] Mr. Kinnaird's description of the righteousness of sanctification as 'true' is especially objectionable. Are we to infer that Christ's justifying righteousness imputed to us is *not* true righteousness?! I would certainly be inclined to give Mr. Kinnaird the benefit of the doubt and not press him to that inference, were it not for the fact that two sentences later he writes, 'Christ does not have an imputed righteousness; His righteousness is real and personal. If we're to be conformed to his image, we too must have a real and personal righteousness.' So we see that the characterization of the imputed righteousness of justification is 'not real' and 'not true' is not left as an inference, it is stated clearly by Mr. Kinnaird as a fact. And though it grieves me to say it, it is clear throughout his writings that that is his view of the righteousness of Justification. Again and again he insists that God's justification of sinners by faith alone must be *justified* by their sanctification!"

And again, in a subsequent e-mail to Mr. Kinnaird, Dr. Robert Strimple of Westminster Seminary in California says this: "My concern is that you limit justification to one divine act on the first day of the Christian life, and then go on to destroy the blessed blessing of justification by what you teach about sanctification, glorification and the Last Judgment."

Fathers and brothers, please do not aid and abet this destructiveness.  
Thank you, Mr. Moderator.