

III. Perseverance, Apostasy and Assurance

A. The Westminster Standards

1. *Perseverance*

WCF 17:1 states that those “whom God has accepted in His Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.”

Their perseverance is due not to “their own free will” (*WCF* 17.2), nor to their own perseverance of faith or good works (*WCF* 3.5), but strictly to “the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father.” *WCF* 17.2 adds that “the certainty and infallibility” of their perseverance is also based on “the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace.”

Moreover, the Standards are very clear that God has appointed only “the elect unto glory” and that they are “kept by his power.” “Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only” (*WCF* 3:6). “The rest of mankind [the non-elect] God was pleased...to pass by; and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, to the praise of his glorious justice” (*WCF* 3:7).

The Westminster Confession repeatedly teaches that the Holy Spirit applies the work of redemption efficaciously to all the elect and only the elect (8:8, 10:1, 14:1, *WLC* 32). Indeed, the “Spirit is the earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption” (*WCF* 18:2). The non-elect, however, “although they may be called by the ministry of the Word, and may have some *common operations of the Spirit*, yet they *never truly come unto Christ*, and therefore cannot be saved” (*WCF* 10:4, emphasis added). The faith which the non-elect sometimes have is from the beginning a dead faith which does not work by love (cf. *WCF* 11.2). The works performed by the non-elect in the church are not pleasing to God because they are not “the fruits and evidences of a true and lively faith” (*WCF* 16.2) and because “they proceed not from an heart purified by faith” (*WCF* 16.7).

All three of the Standards state that justification, adoption and sanctification are the benefits that flow from effectual calling (*WCF* 3:6, *WLC* 79, *WSC* 32).

And the benefits that flow from justification, adoption and sanctification include “assurance of God’s love” and “perseverance therein to the end” (*WSC* 36; cf. *WLC* 74, 77; *WCF* 11:5). In short, all those whom God elected, all those for whom Christ died, all those for whom Christ intercedes, all those whom the Spirit regenerates, all those in whom the Spirit dwells, and all those in vital covenant union with Christ, all those justified, adopted and sanctified, will persevere. All these benefits refer to the same specific set of individuals in history (*WCF* 17).

2. *Visible and Invisible Church*

As part of this teaching on perseverance and apostasy, the Standards distinguish between the visible and the invisible church. The visible church consists of all in the world who “profess the true religion [together with] their children” (*WLC* 62; cf. *WCF* 25.2). “The invisible church is the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one under Christ the head” (*WLC* 64; cf. *WCF* 25:1). *WLC* 61 states that not all those in the visible church are saved, “but they only who are true members of the church invisible.”

The Westminster Larger Catechism specifically addresses the issue of the difference between the grace experienced by the elect in the invisible church and the benefits available to all in the visible church. The elect in the invisible church “enjoy union and communion with him [Christ] in grace and glory.” This union is a “grace, whereby they are spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably joined to Christ,” based “in their effectual calling” (*WLC* 65-66). They also partake “of the virtue of [Christ’s] mediation, in their justification, adoption, sanctification, and whatever else, in this life, manifests their union with him” (*WLC* 69).

Both the elect and non-elect in the visible church have “the privilege of being under God’s special care and government; of being protected and preserved in all ages, notwithstanding the opposition of all enemies; and of enjoying the communion of saints, the ordinary means of salvation, and offers of grace by Christ to all the members of it in the ministry of the gospel, testifying, that whosoever believes in him shall be saved, and excluding none that will come unto him” (*WLC* 63). The benefits available to all within the visible church are sincere and genuine, just as is the grace of the free offer. Yet these benefits do not include that irresistible, efficacious grace which perseveres and which the elect alone receive. The teaching is not that the non-elect in the visible church receive irresistible grace and are saved but do not persevere in that salvation. The teaching is that the non-elect are not saved because they “never truly come to Jesus Christ” (*WLC* 68).

3. *Apostasy*

The *Confession's* chapter on assurance refers to “hypocrites and other unregenerate men” who “may vainly deceive themselves with false hopes and carnal presumptions of being in the favour of God, and estate of salvation (which hope of theirs shall perish)” (*WCF* 18:1). The *Confession* refers to “notorious and obstinate offenders” who can profane the church, to “purging out of that leaven which might infest the whole lump,” and to “excommunication from the church” (*WCF* 30:3, 4).

Our Standards imply some truths about the grace lost in apostasy. It speaks of those who have experienced “some common operations of the Spirit” but have “never truly come unto Christ” (*WCF* 10.4). On the other hand, we are reminded that all those who have been “effectually called unto faith in Christ” are also “kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation” (*WCF* 3.6). Therefore, those in whom God has begun the effectual work of salvation cannot apostatize.⁶²

4. *Assurance*

True believers may have a confident, subjective assurance that “they are in the estate of grace, and shall persevere therein for salvation.” This assurance is for those who “truly believe in Christ, and endeavour to walk in all good conscience before him” (*WLC* 80, *WCF* 18:1). They receive this assurance “by faith founded upon the truth of God’s promises,” “by the Spirit enabling them to discern in themselves those graces to which the promises of life are made,” and by the Spirit “bearing witness with their spirits that they are the children of God.” Consequently, they may be “infallibly assured” that they will persevere (*WCF* 18:2; *WLC* 80).

The *Confession* emphasizes that this infallible assurance is “not a bare conjectural and probable persuasion, grounded upon a fallible hope” (*WCF* 18:2). It is a healthy confidence not based on any claim to know the secret things of God, but upon promises found in Scripture. One proper foundation of full assurance is “the inward evidence of those graces unto which these

⁶² An interesting observation in this regard was made recently by Wilkins in his 2007 response to Louisiana Presbytery: “When the Confession says that these non-elect people ‘never truly come unto Christ,’ it means that they do not receive Christ with a faith that perseveres unto final salvation” (<http://www.auburnavenue.org>). But that is not what the Confession means; rather, it means that the non-elect *never* come to Christ with a true and saving faith.

promises are made” (*WCF* 18:2). Among these inward graces are a respectful fear of God and a dread of falling into sin and error. An inner trembling at the warnings of Scripture should strengthen a sound assurance; the lack of such trembling should call into question a false assurance. Warnings are one of the means God efficaciously uses to enable the elect to persevere. The *Confession* teaches that a “true believer” responds in faith to the Scriptures and thus “trembl[es] at the threatenings” found in the Word of God (*WCF* 14.2; *WLC* 79).

The *Confession* also emphasizes that “this infallible assurance doth not so belong to the essence of faith, but that a true believer may wait long” for it. Nevertheless, “he may, without extraordinary revelation...attain thereunto.” Christians receive assurance through “the right use of ordinary means,” especially “the Word, sacraments, and prayer, all which are made effectual to the elect for their salvation” (*WCF* 18:3; *WLC* 154).

B. New Perspective on Paul

The doctrines of perseverance and assurance do not appear prominently in the writings of the NPP. In the section above on justification, we noted that proponents of NPP hold that justification is the status of covenant membership; that faith is the ‘badge’ for covenant membership; and that God’s righteousness has to do with God’s covenant faithfulness. According to N. T. Wright, “‘Justification’ is not about ‘how I get saved’ but ‘how I am declared to be a member of God’s people.’”⁶³ As a result, justification is a declaration concerning who belongs to the people of God.

The question is then raised, when does this justification occur? For Wright, justification is an eschatological judgment that is applied in the present time “as a proper anticipation of the eventual judgment which will be announced, on the basis of the whole life led, in the future.”⁶⁴ This “whole life” includes

⁶³ Wright, *Paul*, 122; cf. *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 119.

⁶⁴ It would appear that Wright is inconsistent when it comes to his means for receiving present and future justification. In the present, Wright argues that the badge of justification is faith alone and that no works are involved in this (Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said*, 132). However, in reference to “final” justification, Wright argues that it is “on the basis of the whole life led.” But this is a contradiction: how can one be assured of “final justification,” if the final verdict is based on the whole life led (i.e. faith plus faithfulness/works)? Is there such a case as a person receiving present justification and not final justification? These inconsistencies seem to shift the means for receiving justification to works, since the only difference between one who

both the membership badge of “faith” as well as faithful responses by the individual to life among God’s people.⁶⁵

The place where Wright argues this most forcefully is in his exposition of Romans 2. There, Wright suggests that the justification of God’s people occurs “on the basis of works” (cf. Romans 2:6). When he describes what this “basis” represents, he suggests that it is not so much the accomplishment of particular works, but rather the “seeking for them”: the godly are “defined in terms of that for which they seek and the means by which that quest is pursued.” What God is looking for is not a “checklist of things done and not done”; and yet, “works” have some role to play in final justification. They serve to indicate a heart that is turned toward God, but they also serve some role in God’s final declaration of righteousness.⁶⁶

Because Wright bases justification on “the whole life led,” perseverance must of necessity be viewed in the context of a person persevering in faithfulness until the final day of judgment and then being declared justified. Wright’s view is not grounded on the imputation of the righteousness of Christ or in the alone instrument of faith (i.e., receiving and resting on Christ alone), but on the Spirit-produced works of the believer. Indeed, it shifts the basis for justification from the finished work of Christ to the faithful works produced by the believer.

C. Federal Vision

1. *Perseverance*

FV proponents have demonstrated a great desire to assure all those who have been baptized and are in the visible church that they are part of the elect of God. In the context of Romans 8, one FV advocate concludes that “clearly, Paul is not stating promises that are true only for some unknown group called the ‘elect.’ Nor is he speaking only to a portion of the congregation whom he judges to be ‘regenerate.’ Rather, he is applying these promises to all the members of the Church who have been baptized and united to Christ in his

receives present justification from one who receives final justification is that the latter works.

⁶⁵ Wright, *Paul*, 57.

⁶⁶ Wright, *Romans*, 438-9.

death, burial, and resurrection.”⁶⁷ Behind this statement is the common assumption of FV proponents that when the apostles – especially Paul – addressed their readers as “elect,” they intended this to refer to all members present in the church.

Further, they state their conviction that some individuals are elected from eternity past. And yet, some also proclaim that both elect and non-elect in the local church receive qualitatively the same grace. As Rich Lusk observed, “We need to be willing to speak of the undifferentiated grace of God (or the generic, unspecified grace of God).” In a similar fashion, other proponents view grace granted to biblical characters, such as Saul and David, as “the same initial covenantal grace”; interpret verses traditionally understood as referring to individual election in an undifferentiated fashion; and read statements from both the Gospels and epistles referring to the entire church’s salvation as a salvation that could be lost or the image of a branch that could be cut off.⁶⁸

A general theme of FV proponents is that “all those who are baptized are genuinely baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27), are brought into Christ’s body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:13), and are members of God’s covenant, at least until they are cut off, whether by Christ’s church (excommunication) or directly by Christ (death or judgment).” Many FV proponents view everyone in the covenant community, elect and non-elect, as having a common election as long as they remain in good standing in the covenant community. This occurs through individual “covenant-keeping”: “The covenant is not unconditional. It requires persevering faithfulness . . . Covenant life is always founded upon persevering faith in the faithful One.” What happens to those who do not persevere? It was “God’s choice to have them belong to His covenant . . . [in order] to show them grace and love [only] for a time.” In fact, “the elect are those who are faithful to Christ Jesus. If they later reject the Savior, they are no longer elect.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Steve Wilkins, “Covenant, Baptist, and Salvation,” in *The Federal Vision*, ed. S. Wilkins and Duane Garner (Monroe: Athanasius, 2004), 57.

⁶⁸ Rich Lusk, “Covenant and Election FAQs (Version 6.4),” http://www.hornes.org/theologia/content/rich_lusk/covenant_election_faqs.htm; AAPC Session, “Summary Statement of AAPC’s Position on the Covenant, Baptism and Salvation (Revised),” item 10; Douglas Wilson, “The Objectivity of the Covenant,” *Credenda Agenda* 15:1:5, <http://www.credenda.org/pdf/15-1.pdf>; Wilkins, “Covenant, Baptism, and Salvation,” *Auburn Avenue Theology*, 260-5.

⁶⁹ Barach, “Covenant and Election,” 150, 154; Wilkins, “Covenant, Baptism, and Salvation,” *Auburn Avenue Theology*, 261, 266-7. Compare with Rich Lusk, *Baptismal Efficacy and the Reformed Tradition: Past, Present, and Future* (2002);

2. *Visible and Invisible Church*

Our *Standards* use the visible and invisible aspects of the church to help explain the difference between the grace received by the elect and the benefits available to all in the visible church. Some FV proponents have questioned this distinction. Doug Wilson has promoted the use of the alternative terms the “historical” church and the “eschatological” church.⁷⁰ Similarly, the Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church’s session has stated, “It seems better to us to speak of the ‘invisible’ church simply as the ‘eschatological’ church—i.e., the church in its perfection as it will exist at the last day.”⁷¹

Furthermore, some FV writers have also denied that the covenant can be viewed from two different aspects. John Barach observed that “the Bible doesn’t know about a distinction between being internally in the covenant, really in the covenant, and being only externally in the covenant.” Likewise, Steve Wilkins argued that “all in covenant are given all that is true of Christ.”⁷²

3. *Apostasy*

FV proponents have emphasized that the apostate has suffered a loss of real grace and have argued that this implies that he must have possessed the same grace as the elect who persevere. According to Steve Wilkins, “Because being in covenant with God means being in Christ, those who are in covenant have all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places.” This includes all the blessings listed in Ephesians 1:3-14: election, adoption, justification, forgiveness of sins, sanctification, regeneration, possession of the Kingdom, and so forth. “It is not accurate to say that they only ‘appeared’ to have these things but did not actually have them—if that were so, there would be nothing to ‘forsake’ and apostasy is bled of its horror and severity.” Nevertheless, the elect may “later reject the Savior” and “they are no longer elect—they are cut off from the Elect

http://www.hornes.org/theologia/content/rich_lusk/baptismal_efficacy_the_reformed_tradition_past_present_future.htm.

⁷⁰ Douglas Wilson, *Reformed Is Not Enough* (Moscow: Canon, 2002), 69-78 See also his article in *Federal Vision*.

⁷¹ Session, “AAPC Session’s Response to Charges of ‘Heterodoxy’” (Monroe, Louisiana: Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church, 8 June 2006), http://www.auburnavenue.org/Official%20Positions%20and%20Statements/AAPC_Heterodoxy_Response.htm;

⁷² Barach, “Covenant and History,” quoted in *Auburn Avenue Theology*, 309; Wilkins, “Covenant, Baptism, and Salvation,” 263.

One and thus, lose their elect standing. But their falling away doesn't negate the reality of their standing prior to their apostasy. They were really and truly elect of God because of their relationship with Christ." The point is that, for the FV writers, the elect can become non-elect, the elect can possibly fail to persevere.⁷³

4. Assurance

FV proponents have argued that the warnings against apostasy cannot seem real to the elect if the elect have an infallible assurance that they will indeed persevere. In the words of John Barach, "When you proclaim the warnings, people brush them off because they figure that if they're elect they can't incur God's wrath and if they aren't, there's nothing they can do about it anyway."⁷⁴

While they all affirm that individuals are elected by God from eternity past, nevertheless, they find pastoral problems with holding simply to this view. Problems surface because "we cannot know the secret decrees of God or the hidden operations of the Spirit. The secret things belong to God (Deuteronomy 29:29)." Steve Wilkins has said, "Whenever you focus on subjective experience as the basis of assurance of salvation, you are ultimately undermining assurance. You ask questions that cannot be answered with any certainty. Have you truly believed? Are you really converted? The decree of election is no ground since no one can know if they have been chosen for salvation."⁷⁵

For FV proponents as a whole, God establishes His covenant with all who have been baptized. In baptism, a person is united to Christ and is cleansed, regenerated, forgiven, justified and sanctified. As John Barach proclaimed,

⁷³ Ibid, 261, 262, 264; cf. Barach, "Covenant and Election" in *The Federal Vision*, 28. FV writers frequently refer to John 15, where they use the allegory of the vine to make the point that the elect can be "cut off" (e.g., Wilkins, "Covenant, Baptism, and Salvation," in *Federal Vision*, 62ff.; Barach, "Covenant and Election," in *Federal Vision*, 37). Their reasoning is based on Norman Shepherd's (see Shepherd, *The Call of Grace* [Phillipsburg: P&R, 2000], 89-90). For a biblical response, see E. Calvin Beisner, "Concluding Comments on the Federal Vision," in *The Auburn Avenue Theology*, 312ff.

⁷⁴ Barach, "Covenant and Election" in *The Federal Vision*, 33.

⁷⁵ Wilkins, "Covenant, Baptism, and Salvation," 267; Gerry Wisz, "The Monroe Four Speak Out," *The Counsel of Chalcedon*, June 2004, [Http://www.counselofchalcedon.org/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=15](http://www.counselofchalcedon.org/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=15).

“How do you know [the promise of election] is really for you? The answer is that you’ve had the special experience. You’ve been baptized.” In pushing forward baptism as a “special experience,” the FV writers set it over against “subjective experience”: “Men must have something objective and certain. But if you refuse to look to your baptism, then all you are left with is experience.”⁷⁶

D. Comparative Analysis

1. *Perseverance*

In the *Westminster Standards*, the elect and non-elect in the church do not receive the same non-differentiated, homogeneous grace. There is a definite distinction between the irresistible saving work of the Spirit and the resistible common operations of the Spirit. The reason, therefore, that some persevere and others do not is not an unrevealed mystery. The elect alone persevere because of the distinctive quality of the grace which the elect alone receive. God has decreed not only the elect’s final state of salvation but also the efficacious application of all the means to the final state by the Spirit (*WCF* 3:6). The elect, with the non-elect, experience the common operations of the Spirit, but the non-elect never experience the efficacious work of the Spirit which actually saves. From regeneration to glorification, the Holy Spirit applies the redemption accomplished by Christ to the elect in terms of the secret decree of election. The non-elect may have a form of faith, but they never have saving faith and never bear the fruit that is evidence of a lively faith and a vital union with Christ (*WCF* 14:2, 16:2; *SC* 86).

One of the common arguments of FV proponents, drawn from their presupposition that election should be viewed from the standpoint of the covenant, is that when the apostles addressed their readers as “elect,” they intended this term to refer to “all in the church,” both those who would inherit eternal life and those who would not. This view underlies their claim that “all in the church” receive the saving benefits of being in union with Christ, that is, until and unless they apostatize. However, this assumption claims too much. The apostles clearly recognized that while the churches to whom they wrote included “saints” and those who were “faithful in Christ Jesus” (Eph.

⁷⁶ Gerry Wisz, “The Monroe Four Speak Out,” *The Counsel of Chalcedon*, June 2004, <http://www.counselofchaLcedon.org/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=15>; John Barach, quoted in Guy Prentiss Waters, *The Federal Vision and Covenant Theology: A Comparative Analysis* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2006), 134; Wilkins, “Covenant, Baptism, and Salvation,” 267.

1:1; et. al.), they also included those who may be false professors (Romans 8:9: “However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him”). In fact, while Paul does not feel the need to qualify every broad claim regarding his letter’s recipient, it is striking that nearly every Pauline letter includes some qualification (e.g. 1 Corinthians 15:1-2; 2 Corinthians 13:5-6; Galatians 3:4, 29; 4:11,20; Ephesians 4:20-21; Philippians 2:16; Colossians 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 3:5).

The committee sees this FV claim—that the elect and those united to Christ can “lose” their election and union—as doing major harm to the system of doctrine contained in the Standards. If their claim stands, it would practically reverse the relationship between election and perseverance. The Confessional view and the FV view cannot both be held at the same time.

2. *Visible and Invisible Church*

While FV proponents raise important questions about the way Christians today may hear the term “invisible” in reference to the church, the committee holds that the Standards’ distinction between the visible and invisible aspects of the church has important theological and pastoral implications. First, we would point out that our Standards already recognize a future, “eschatological” aspect for the church; however, this is not separated from the past or present reality of the “invisible church” that God alone sees (*LC* 64).

But even more importantly, the committee notes that the FV proponents merge the visible and invisible aspects of the church into the “body of Christ.” To belong to the visible church is to belong to the “body of Christ” and to share in all the benefits of “Christ’s body” (i.e. election, justification, adoption, and sanctification; but see *WCF* 25:1). This claim stands against the Standards’ teaching that “all that hear the gospel, and live in the visible church are not saved; but they only who are true members of the church invisible” (*LC* 61). This also fails to reckon adequately with the reality that the visible church is always “more or less pure” in every age (*WCF* 25:4).

The issue is joined with perseverance in this way: according to FV proponents, when someone forsakes the visible church, they lose all the benefits of “Christ’s body”—the elect become non-elect. This contradicts our Standards by misapplying the benefits of Christ’s mediation to everyone who “profess[es] the true religion and...their children,” instead of to those who are elect, who have received God’s effectual calling, and who share in union and communion with Christ (*LC* 63-67). Moreover, this contradicts our Standards by divorcing election from perseverance; for the FV, election becomes a benefit that can be lost (*WCF* 17:2).

As a result, this failure to hold the distinction between the visible and invisible aspects of the church leads to a position on the perseverance of the saints that contradicts the Standards and does damage to the spiritual confidence of God's people.

3. *Apostasy*

Building from their understanding of the visible and invisible church, FV proponents stress that those who leave the visible church lose real grace—the grace of election, forgiveness, justification, and sanctification. However, the Standards make plain that the proper categories for these apostates are “hypocrites” and “unregenerate” (*WCF* 18:1), those who only experience the “common operations of the Spirit” and “who, for their wilful neglect and contempt of the grace offered to them . . . do never truly come to Jesus Christ” (*WCF* 10:4; *LC* 68).

By failing to use the *Confession's* language, the FV proponents move in directions that contradict the *Confession's* teaching on perseverance: those who are accepted in the Beloved, effectually called, united to Christ, and sanctified by his Spirit “can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace” (*WCF* 17:2; *LC* 66).

The committee does agree that those who forsake the visible church do lose “special benefits”: namely, coming under God's special care and government; being protected and preserved from enemies; enjoying the communion of saints, the ordinary means of salvation, and the free offer of the Gospel in the ministry of the Word (*LC* 63). Nevertheless, these privileges are not the same as the benefits of Christ's mediation to those who are effectually called to salvation.

4. *Assurance*

We recognize that FV proponents point to a major failing in the modern evangelical church: the easy terms upon which a Christian's assurance may rest. Yet in seeking to challenge these terms, these writers overstress the objective means of salvation and underplay the subjective aspects of “an infallible assurance.”

While we know the importance of “improving our baptism” as a “needful and much neglected duty . . . to be performed by us all our life long, especially in the time of temptation,” and we know that there is a confirming and assuring grace offered in baptism to those to whom it belongs, the committee reminds the church that our infallible assurance of faith rests upon “the divine truth of

the promises of salvation, the inward evidence of those graces unto which these promises are made, [and] the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God” (*LC* 167; *WCF* 18:2; 28:6). This assurance is both “objective” and “subjective”; it rests upon the work of the Word and Spirit in the life of the believer.

The Committee views the FV position as ultimately leading to presumption or despair, not assurance. At the heart of their belief is the view that water baptism serves as the means for uniting each participant to Jesus; those baptized receive all the benefits of Christ’s mediation except final perseverance. Our concern is that some of those who are baptized will simply presume on God’s grace, “continuing in the covenant” without “apostatizing” but also without justifying faith (cf. Matthew 22:1-14); others will be driven to despair, working for a salvation out of “covenant faithfulness” instead of resting and receiving Jesus alone for their salvation.

IV. Declarations

In light of the controversy surrounding the NPP and FV, and after many months of careful study, the committee unanimously makes the following declarations:

1. The view that rejects the bi-covenantal structure of Scripture as represented in the Westminster Standards (i.e., views which do not merely take issue with the terminology, but the essence of the first/second covenant framework) is contrary to those Standards.
2. The view that an individual is “elect” by virtue of his membership in the visible church; and that this “election” includes justification, adoption and sanctification; but that this individual could lose his “election” if he forsakes the visible church, is contrary to the Westminster Standards.
3. The view that Christ does not stand as a representative head whose perfect obedience and satisfaction is imputed to individuals who believe in him is contrary to the Westminster Standards.
4. The view that strikes the language of “merit” from our theological vocabulary so that the claim is made that Christ’s merits are not imputed to his people is contrary to the Westminster Standards.
5. The view that “union with Christ” renders imputation redundant because it subsumes all of Christ’s benefits (including justification) under this doctrinal heading is contrary to the Westminster Standards.

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6. The view that water baptism effects a “covenantal union” with Christ through which each baptized person receives the saving benefits of Christ’s mediation, including regeneration, justification, and sanctification, thus creating a parallel soteriological system to the decretal system of the Westminster Standards, is contrary to the Westminster Standards.
7. The view that one can be “united to Christ” and not receive *all* the benefits of Christ’s mediation, including perseverance, in that effectual union is contrary to the Westminster Standards.
8. The view that some can receive saving benefits of Christ’s mediation, such as regeneration and justification, and yet not persevere in those benefits is contrary to the Westminster Standards.
9. The view that justification is in any way based on our works, or that the so-called “final verdict of justification” is based on anything other than the perfect obedience and satisfaction of Christ received through faith alone, is contrary to the Westminster Standards.

V. Recommendations

1. That the General Assembly commend to Ruling and Teaching Elders and their congregations this report of the Ad Interim Committee on NPP, AAT and FV for careful consideration and study.
2. That the General Assembly remind the Church, its officers and congregations of the provisions of *BCO* 29-1 and 39-3 which assert that the *Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms of the Westminster Assembly*, while “subordinate to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the inerrant Word of God,” have been adopted by the PCA “as standard expositions of the teachings of Scripture in relation to both faith and practice.”
3. That the General Assembly recommend the declarations in this report as a faithful exposition of the Westminster Standards, and further reminds those ruling and teaching elders whose views are out of accord with our Standards of their obligation to make known to their courts any differences in their views.
4. That the General Assembly remind the Sessions and Presbyteries of the PCA that it is their duty “to exercise care over those subject to their authority” and “to condemn erroneous opinions which injure the purity or peace of the Church” (*BCO* 31-2; 13-9f).
5. That the Ad Interim Study Committee on NPP, AAT and FV be dismissed with thanks.

PART IV

CORRECTIONS TO PREVIOUS MINUTES OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

No corrections to the *Minutes of the Thirty-Fourth General Assembly* have been reported.