

*“There is only one heresy, and that is antinomianism.” Rabbi John Duncan*

*“The Scriptures principally teach what man is to believe concerning God and what duty God requires of man.” WLC 5*

*“For they... seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God.” Rm. 10:3*

|                                          | INWARD MARKS OF GRACE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | VISIBLE FRUITS OF GRACE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <b>DEFINITION</b>                        | Biblical characteristics of a true Christian which may be discerned by the individual for the purpose of growing in personal assurance.                                                                                                                                                                      | Biblical characteristics of a true Christian which may be discerned by church overseers for the purpose of identifying a credible profession, pursuant to communicant membership.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>MANNER OF INQUIRY</b>                 | Self-Examination of Heart and Life<br>2 Cor. 13:5                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Ecclesiastical Evaluation of Profession and Life<br>Mt. 7:15-20; Lk. 3:8-14                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>OBJECTIVE STANDARD</b>                | Scripture Alone<br>1 Jn. 5:13                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Scripture Alone<br>Mt. 16:18-19; Acts 2:47; 10:47                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>KIND OF CRITERIA</b>                  | Inward Persuasion<br>Heb. 10:22                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Outward Credibility<br>Mt. 13:28-30                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>MAXIMUM DEGREE OF CERTAINTY</b>       | Infallible, Full Assurance<br>Col. 2:2; Heb. 6:11                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Fallible, Charitable Confidence<br>1 Tim. 5:24-25; Heb. 6:9-10                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>RELEVANT STATUS OR CLASSIFICATION</b> | Assurance of Salvation (2 Pet. 1:10)<br>Eligibility for Communion (1 Cor. 11:28f)                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Credible Profession of Faith (Jm. 2:14-19)<br>Eligibility for Communion (Ezk. 44:7-9; 1 Cor. 5:9-13)<br>Eligibility for Restoration (2 Cor. 2:5-11; 7:10-11)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>WESTMINSTER STANDARDS</b>             | WCF 18.2 “This certainty is... an infallible assurance of faith founded upon the divine truth of the promises of salvation, the inward evidences of those graces unto which these promises are made, the testimony of the Spirit of adoption witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God...” | WCF 25.2 “The visible church... consists of all those throughout the whole world that profess the true religion; & of their children.<br><br>WLC 173 “Such as are found to be ignorant or scandalous, notwithstanding their profession of faith, and desire to come to the Lord’s supper, may and ought to be kept from that sacrament, by the power which Christ hath left in his church, until they receive instruction, and manifest their reformation.” |
| <b>ADD’L SCRIPTURE REFERENCES</b>        | Ps. 139:23-24; Rm. 8:13-17; Gal. 5:19-24                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Ps. 15; Mt. 12:33; Lk. 6:45; Jn. 15:1-2                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

**I. SHEPHERD’S DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION LOGICALLY LEADS TO A CONSIDERATION OF PERSONAL ASSURANCE, SELF-EXAMINATION, AND THE INWARD MARKS OF GRACE, TO DETERMINE IF A ONE’S LIFESTYLE IS FAITHFUL ENOUGH, OBEDIENT ENOUGH, AND REPENTANT ENOUGH TO SATISFY THE REQUIREMENT FOR JUSTIFICATION.**

- A. “The point in all of this is that Jesus makes justification contingent upon obedience. The Lord God justifies the righteous and condemns the wicked... Jesus justifies the sinner who confesses his sin and repents of it.” [TWOR, 61]
- B. “The righteous mentioned in the preceding passages... are sinners who have confessed their sins and have turned from them in repentance. Daily they pray the Lord’s Prayer and ask for the forgiveness of their sins. They are righteous not because they are sinless but because they are penitent. They are righteous because they love the Lord who has forgiven their sin, and they seek to please him by walking with him in obedience.” [TCOG, 59]
- C. “Abraham is a God-fearing man who walked in the ways of the Lord. We do not need to think of him as without sin, but the Lord forgave his sin and Abraham did not live a sinful lifestyle.” [TCOG, 72]

**II. SHEPHERD’S DOCTRINE OF JUSTIFICATION LOGICALLY LEADS TO A CONSIDERATION OF THE VISIBLE FRUITS OF GRACE AS THEY RELATE TO THE CHURCH’S CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING A CREDIBLE PROFESSION OF FAITH.**

- “In Ephesians 1, Paul writes from the perspective of observable covenant reality and concludes from the visible faith and sanctity of the Ephesians that they are the elect of God. He addresses them as such and encourages them to think of themselves as elect. A Reformed pastor can & must do the same today... There is nothing unfortunate about the fact that we do not have insight into the eternal decree of God and therefore cannot make infallible judgments about the elect or reprobate state of people... Paul is right to address the saints & faithful in Ephesus as elect, & at the same time he is right to warn them against apostasy.” [TCOG, 87-88]

### III. SURPRISINGLY, SHEPHERD OPTS TO MISREPRESENT AND REJECT THE CONFESSIONAL MARKS AND FRUITS OF GRACE, AS APPLIED TO PERSONAL ASSURANCE, CREDIBLE PROFESSIONS OF FAITH, AND EVANGELISM OF THE LOST.

- A. "Is it possible to have assurance of my salvation from condemnation? The Roman church answered the Reformers by saying, 'No,' because no one ever knows whether he will be in a state of grace at the hour of his death. The only exceptions are those who die by martyrdom & those who receive some special revelation from the Lord. The Puritans a century later also answered "No," unless you are by some unusual experience of grace (corresponding to Rome's idea of special revelation), or unless you have the good works to prove that you are actually justified. They taught that we are justified by grace through faith alone, & not by works, but then proceeded to make works a basis for assurance. But just as we cannot be justified on the ground of our sin-stained works, so also we cannot really be assured on the ground of our sin-stained works. That is why assurance became as problematic for the Puritans as it was for Rome." [TCOG, 87]
- B. "When evangelism is oriented to regeneration as the point of transition... it is necessary for the evangelist or pastor to begin by making some kind of judgment with respect to the spiritual condition of those whom he is addressing. If they are perceived to be regenerate, there is no need to say things that would lead to their regeneration. These people must be addressed differently from those who are not perceived to be regenerate..." [TCOG, 94]
- C. "Problems with the method of regeneration-evangelism emerge right at the start. Judgments have to be made that belong properly and exclusively in the hands of God. No person can judge the heart of another person. To presume to do so is to yield again to the primal temptation to be as God. This objection is valid even when a judgment is hedged by the acknowledgement that final judgment belongs to God, and that what is attempted is only an approximation of God's judgment. No one should even attempt to approximate God's judgment." [TCOG, 95-96]
- D. "When Jesus spoke of the new birth & compared the Spirit's operation to the wind (Jn 3:8), he made clear that regeneration is a secret work of God & therefore cannot be used by us as a point of orientation for evangelism." [TCOG, 96]
- E. "Once the judgment is made that a given person is unregenerate and therefore a candidate for evangelism, the evangelist adopts a procedure to secure his regeneration... After the law has done its work of convicting the sinner, so that he is utterly humbled before the wrath of God... Jesus is held forth as the one who offers forgiveness on the basis of his death on the cross... While there are obvious biblical motifs evidenced in this preparatory phase, there are also serious questions that have to be raised. For example, if regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit, does not a method of evangelism geared to result in regeneration and the evoking of a corresponding crisis experience begin to encroach upon the work of the Spirit? To labor for a specific result that is beyond the pastor's power to bring forth can be frustrating, if not even paralyzing." [TCOG, 97-98] 2Co. 2:16

### IV. PERHAPS SENSING THE INHERENT TENSION IN HIS VIEWS, SHEPHERD ATTEMPTS, ALBEIT UNSUCCESSFULLY, TO REINTRODUCE SANCTIFIED OBEDIENCE INTO HIS THEOLOGY OF ASSURANCE.

- "It is not an assurance that I have independently of my response to the gospel with a true and living faith. Therefore this assurance does not stay at the same level all the time... Because obedience is the fruit of faith, my assurance will rise as I walk closer to the Lord in my love for him and surrender to his will. And because disobedience is the fruit of unbelief, my assurance will diminish as I wander away from the Lord in disobedience. We must cultivate assurance of grace and salvation in the same way that we cultivate faith, namely, by attention to the word of God, by the use of the sacraments that sign and seal the truth of that word, and by faithfulness to that word." [TCOG, 88-89]

### V. SHEPHERD REPLACES THE VISIBLE FRUITS OF GRACE WITH THE VISIBLE SACRAMENTS, ESPECIALLY BAPTISM.

- A. "...baptism, the sign and seal of the covenant, marks the point of conversion. Baptism is the moment when we see the transition from death to life and a person is saved. This is not to say that baptism accomplishes the transition from death to life, or that baptism causes a person to be born again. That is the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, which is rightly rejected by Reformed Churches... From the perspective of election, regeneration is the point of conversion. Regeneration, however, is a secret work of the Holy Spirit, and so we do not know when it takes place. We do not have access to the moment of regeneration. What we hear from the converted sinner is a profession of faith, and what we see is his baptism into Christ. This covenant sign and seal marks his conversion and his entrance into the church as the body of Christ. From the perspective of the covenant, he is united to Christ when he is baptized. When evangelism is oriented to regeneration as the point of transition, rather than to baptism as the mark of transition, it is necessary for the evangelist or pastor to begin by making some kind of judgment with respect to the spiritual condition of those whom he is addressing. If they are perceived to be regenerate, there is no need to say things that would lead to their regeneration. These people must be addressed differently from those who are not perceived to be regenerate and from whom the fruits of regeneration cannot be expected." [TCOG, 94]
- B. "In contrast to regeneration-evangelism, a methodology oriented to the covenant structure of Scripture and to the Great Commission presents baptism as the transition point from death to life... Baptism marks the entrance into the kingdom of God and the beginning of life-long training as kingdom subjects... A sinner is not "really converted" until he is baptized... Christians are those who have been baptized. Unbelievers are those who have not been baptized... Baptism is therefore to be understood as of a piece with the total transformation that is salvation. It is the sacramental side of the total renewal (regeneration in the broad sense) of both the inner and the outer man." [TCOG, 100-102]