

2C. The FV is a fleshing out of Shepherd's work (143).

FV is fundamentally covenantal (federal theology is covenant theology) with a distinct perspective (vision) that leads to a recasting of aspects of the reformed tradition.

Within this perspective are the following: a strongly stated view of the efficacy of baptism. Picture a pendulum among FV thinkers from mainstream reformed to quite suspect forms, such as the view of Lusk. On baptismal efficacy, Lusk expresses concern that 19th century revivalism in America put covenant children (infant baptized covenant children) on the margins of the church because of its emphasis on individual "narratable conversion experience" ("Paedobaptism and Baptismal Efficacy: Historic Trends and Current Controversies" in *The Federal Vision*, 76). The very practice of paedobaptism declined within paedobaptist communities (71-75). The 19th century Enlightenment, emphasizing human autonomy (cf. Kant), generated influential presuppositions that rendered infant baptism "preposterous" since children must "be allowed to grow and make their own decisions to join the Church" (81). Religion became private, individualistic, and baptistic. Lusk criticizes the way Warfield connected a direct and personal relationship with God to Calvinism. Lusk thinks that the "reformed" view of a covenant of works expresses the influence of Enlightenment autonomy (82) and tends toward a depreciation of the sacraments in their ordinariness as means of grace, so they become mere teaching aids (82). Therefore, paedobaptism fell into decline within Presbyterianism and the idea that the children of believers are "covenant children" was obscured (83-88). According to Lusk (per Nevin), "...the real issue underlying the loss of infant baptism was the loss of baptismal efficacy" (88).

However, but consider how the WCF states efficacy in strong terms in 28.6: **The efficacy of Baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Spirit... according to the counsel of God's own will, in His appointed time.** This efficacy is parallel with the Spirit's work with the preached word. Problematically, Lusk confuses the analogy with preaching and he does so by appeal to Calvin and Augustine (104). For example, he says that Christ himself is offered and given to the one baptized (103). Christ is offered to all in preaching, but is He given to all? Lusk therefore uses confusing language: covenant children are not born as Christians in the full sense, they are made Christians at the font (88, citing Nevin), new life begins at baptism but "only the elect received new life in an indestructible sense" (92), saving grace is truly conferred by baptism but it does not guarantee eschatological salvation (95, citing Gerhart), baptismal regeneration is taught in the WCF with qualifiers and most Presbyterians focus on the qualifiers rather than the central thrust that God works "efficaciously through the water of baptism to regenerate and justify believers" (96), and "a sacrament, by definition, includes the bestowal of the thing signified" (100). Losing this center, "we have drifted far from our Reformed heritage" (96). My assessment is that Lusk confuses (conflates) the efficacy of baptism with the instrumentality, objectivity, and validity of baptism. Much clarification is needed to get the good.

Many FV folk practice paedocommunion (participation in communion as early as practicality allows). They emphasize the conditionality of the covenant (but legalism is avoided by the denial of merit); justification does not involve the imputation of the active obedience of Christ to His people, and yet some in the FV camp argue for a transformatory dimension to justification.

3B. The Repristinationist [defensive/counterattack]Wing-Westminster California, 145-47

Good motive: to guard the doctrine of justification by grace through faith.

1) They maintain a Law/Gospel distinction (with emphasis on the "third use" of the Law)

2) They defend the bi-covenantal framework of WCF

They defend the pactum salutis and they are suspect of the Vosian Biblical Theology view.

3) On the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation) they give priority to justification in the application of redemption. Thus, definitive justification produces sanctification.

4) They seek to defend the reformed tradition of the past with no substantial role for historical development according to Evans. Hence, they are classified as the “defending the status quo” wing of reformed theology today.

2A. Observations by Evans

Wrestling with these issues in the reformed tradition is not new; largely, it is “*deja vu* all over again.” The controversy raises a number of important questions.

1) What is the normative center of the reformed tradition?

Some say the Westminster Standards, but from what angle (of three) do we read them? And we should recall that they themselves are transitional documents wrestling their way to formulation.

2) How do we do reformed systematic theology with biblical theology?

Key Q: what is the relationship of the covenants (a Biblical Theology/history of redemption category) to the covenant of redemption (a Systematic Theology/topical category)?

What is the role of a confession, of prescription to a confession, and the place of Scripture relative to confessional prescription?

3) Are there really three schools of thought given the similarities (with big or not so big differences)?

4) What is the role of the covenant theme in reformed theology?

It is important to recognize that debates over definitions and applications of the covenant theme have a long history.

Some argue that the word covenant has begun to lose definition (150).

Debate is not necessarily a bad thing. It should humble us and drive us prayerfully to Scripture and to one another with open-minded humility. Evans: “careful discussion of theological method is required. A key challenge is the integration of biblical-theological insights into the dogmatic tradition” (150).

3A. Application to our history