Modern Controversies on Justification: Federal Vision (Part One)

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I. What is Federal Vision theology?

A. Covenant and church membership.

i. They claim that every member of the covenant is _____, even those who later fall away.

1. "God addresses His people as a whole, and that includes each one in the covenant, head for head, as his elect" (John Barach in *The Federal Vision* [*FV*], p. 39).

ii. But they claim that there are _____ of election—decretal and covenantal.

iii. In their view, if someone isn't decretally elect, he is still _____ to Christ and justified.

1. "All who are baptized into the triune Name are united with Christ in His covenantal life" (Joint Declaration on Federal Vision [JD on FV]).

iv. The difference between the two elections isn't foundational, but depends on _____

1. Barach says that the only difference with someone who doesn't enter glory is that "[God] didn't predestine their perseverance" (*FV*, 45).

B. Baptism and Lord's Supper.

i. Like Shepherd and NPP, FV falls into _____: "God formally unites a person to Christ and to His covenant people through baptism into the triune Name" (JD on FV).

ii. This led to their view of _____: "We affirm that any baptized person, children included, should be welcome at the Table" (JD on FV).

II. Evaluating Federal Vision theology.

A. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

i. Baptism doesn't unite us to Christ, the Spirit does when he _____ us (WSC 30).

ii. The Spirit _____ faith through the Word, _____ faith through the Sacraments.

iii. Paedo-communion is clearly unconfessional: "The Lord's Supper is to be administered… only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves" (WLC 177).

iv. It is also clearly unbiblical: Paul requires those who partake of the Supper to do so in a _____ (1 Cor 11), which requires a person to know how to partake worthily.

B. Covenant and Church Membership.

i. The Reformed have always held that covenant membership is _____.

1. Internal and external covenant membership is _____ (WLC 31).

2. Twofold covenant membership is also biblical (1 Jn 2:19 & Matt 13:24–30).

3. FV fails to recognize that the church is _____, with true believers and hypocrites.

ii. We don't know who God elected, so like Calvin we give the judgment of _____.

1. The grave error of FV is to claim that even reprobates can be elect and justified.

2. They rejected twofold covenant membership, replaced it with _____ election.

iii. But it turns out, a twofold election is not a new error—this is what the Arminians taught.

1. The Synod of Dort clearly taught that "There are not various decrees of election, but one and the same decree respecting all those who shall be saved… according to which He has chosen us from eternity, both to grace and to glory, to salvation and to the way of salvation" (Canons of Dort [CD], 1.8).

2. The Synod rejected those "Who teach: That there are various kinds of election of God unto eternal life" (CD, Rejection of Errors [RE] 1.2).

3. And those "Who teach: That not every election unto salvation is unchangeable, but that some of the elect… can yet perish and do indeed perish" (CD, RE 1.6).