

I. RICH LUSK¹ AND HIS VIEWS ARE NOT EASILY DISTANCED FROM DOUG WILSON.

- A. Lusk and Wilson contended side-by-side for the FV at the 2003 Auburn Avenue Pastor's Conference ("FV Examined"), the 2003 Knox Colloquium ("The Auburn Avenue Theology [AAT], Pros & Cons: Debating the FV"), a 2004 book entitled *The Federal Vision*, the 2005 Christ Church Ministerial Conference ("FV: Light or Dark?"), and the 2007 FV Joint Statement.
- B. Lusk and Wilson are both ministers in good standing within the Communion of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC), a denomination started by Wilson, which received Lusk and his congregation out of the PCA when the transfer of Lusk's credentials was blocked by the PCA's Evangel Presbytery over concerns regarding his Federal Vision theology.
- C. All of the subsequent quotations in this lecture were taken from Lusk's contribution to Knox Colloquium (2003), concerning which Wilson, speaking on behalf of the entire "Pro Federal Vision" side in that debate, stated that "we understand ourselves to be in the middle of the mainstream of historic Reformed orthodoxy."²
- D. Wilson's well-known blogpost on 1/17/17 ("Federal Vision No 'Mas"), in which he attempts to distance himself from the FV, is a clever smokescreen of ambiguous and empty words, which fails to retract any specific beliefs or assertions, including his positive affirmation of Lusk's contribution to the Knox Colloquium.³

II. LUSK DEFENDS N. SHEPHERD & DENIES THAT GOD'S LAW, REVEALED AT SINAI, REQUIRED PERFECT OBEDIENCE.

- A. "Opponents of Shepherd thought his insistence on the fruit of the Spirit as a requirement for eschatological justification was legalistic. But when one considers that Shepherd has totally purged his theological program of merit — and therefore of even the possibility of legalism — it becomes obvious how absurd this kind of objection is." [AAT, 145-146]
- B. "...the law did not require perfect obedience. It was designed for sinners, not uncalled creatures. Thus, the basic requirement of the law was covenant loyalty and trust, not sinless perfection. This is why numerous sinful but redeemed people are regarded as law keepers in Scripture." [AAT, 128]

III. LUSK REGARDS THE NEW PERSPECTIVE ON PAUL⁴ AS FULLY COMPATIBLE WITH THE HISTORIC REFORMED FAITH.

- A. "The best theologians in the so-called 'New Perspective on Paul' movement are simply recalling us to the original meaning of the texts in their historical setting." [AAT, 128]
- B. "Paul's anti-Judaic polemic thus cannot be equated with the Reformers' anti-Romish polemic. No doubt at certain points the Reformers succumbed to eisegetically reading their debates with Rome back into Paul's debates with the Judaizers. While there are analogies, there are also important differences. The Reformers were concerned with matters of individual soteriology and assurance. Paul's concerns included those things but were much broader. He was concerned to show that the great redemptive historical transition had taken place and the Judaic, typological, childhood phase of redemptive history had given way to the worldwide, fulfillment, mature phase. He was concerned with the new identity and configuration of the people of God. In Christ, all things were new; old things — including the good, but temporary Torah — were passing away... By refusing to acknowledge that the Torah had passed away in the death of Christ, the Judaizers were perverting its true intent. They were insisting that the new people of God continue to mark themselves out in the old way,

¹ Rich Lusk (Wikipedia Bio): *He received his B. S. in Microbiology from Auburn University and a M.A. in Philosophy from University of Texas at Austin. In early 2005 Lusk came to pastor Reformed Heritage Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Alabama, from Auburn Avenue Presbyterian Church in Monroe, Louisiana. Peter Leithart, a Cambridge-educated theologian was a former pastor of the church. Yet Lusk's transition affected the Church's denomination, name, and liturgy. The church moved out of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) and into the Confederation of Reformed Evangelical Churches (CREC) in October 2005 (see Douglas Wilson; Peter Leithart)., since the Evangel Presbytery would not accept Lusk's transfer from the Louisiana Presbytery based on the "status and nature of covenant children [which] was the real focus of the discussion... The Evangel Presbytery declined the transfer... After Lusk's arrival the church session voted to change its name to Trinity Presbyterian Church.*

² Doug Wilson (Knox Colloquium, Opening Statement): "[I]n our view, all the positions represented in the current discussion, as well as some others not currently engaged, are part of the historic Reformed world and are orthodox and Christian... Moreover, we do not regard their positions as recent innovations. But we are also happy, not surprisingly, to accept our own position (call it what you like) as part of this historic Reformed mix... [We] understand ourselves to be in the middle of the mainstream of historic Reformed orthodoxy... For the particulars, we would refer the reader to the various papers."

³ Doug Wilson (1/17/17 ~ "Federal Vision No 'Mas"): "I have come to the conclusion that the phrase federal vision is itself a stumbling block that prevents far too many people from hearing what is being said.... I did find some things on the federal vision side of things worrisome, and in the same way as did some of our critics. I know that I acknowledged this at times, but I should have done a better job of acknowledging it. I should have acknowledged it with great clarity, and I should have been louder... But in distinguishing myself from the federal vision, I am accusing no one of heresy. I am simply saying that certain views are not the same kind of thing as what I am seeking to teach... This statement represents a change in what I will call what I believe. It does not represent any substantial shift or sea change in the content of what I believe."

⁴ NPP: (1) Judaizers = *ethnocentric, NOT legalistic*. (2) Works of the Law = *ceremonial badges, NOT moral law-keeping*. (3) Righteousness/Justification = *covenant membership (relational, corporate, ecclesiastical), NOT individual salvation (forensic, imputed, soteriological)*.

namely, by the now defunct badges of Torah... According to Paul, the Torah was good. But it could make nothing mature or complete (cf. Gal. 3-4; Heb. 10:1).” [AAT, 133-134]

- C. “WHY THE NEW PERSPECTIVE MATTERS—Going the corporate, redemptive-historical route with Paul does not mean the sixteenth century soteriological concerns get lost in the shuffle. Rather, it means they get recontextualized in a much larger, more holistic framework. The Reformers’ attack on late medieval semi-Pelagianism may be regarded as a second order application of the Pauline texts to a particular issue at hand.” [AAV, 135]
- D. “To the extent that Reformed Protestantism has individualized the message of salvation, and to the extent that N.T. Wright,⁵ J.D.G. Dunn, and others call us back to a corporate view of salvation, it does indeed look like a ‘different gospel’ is being proclaimed. But these ‘different gospels’ are not really at odds, any more than eggs and omelets are at odds (to steal another of Wilson’s illustrations). Wright gives the gospel a broader sweep (since he makes it clear the corporate includes the individual), but compared to our truncated version of the gospel it looks really different. The problem is our myopia. We’ve looked at the gospel from about two inches away for four centuries, and our long-distance vision is dysfunctional. Wright and others, meanwhile, are asking us to look at the gospel from 30,000 feet up... Sure, it looks different, but that’s to be expected. The ‘New Perspective’ never denies that Paul actually taught what Luther and Calvin claimed — namely, sola gratia and sola fide.” [AAV, 135-136]
- E. “It may calm fears to explain why some theologians today (e.g. Wright, Garlington), still squarely within the Reformational tradition, are suggesting the imputation of Christ’s righteousness isn’t a necessary formulation to preserve the purity of the Pauline and Protestant gospel.” [AAT, 141]

IV. LUSK DENIES THE IMPUTATION OF CHRIST’S ACTIVE OBEDIENCE TO THE BELIEVER.

- A. “Those who advocate a meritorious covenant of works put a great deal of weight on the so-called ‘active obedience’ of Christ. I remember hearing sermons in which I was told ‘Jesus’ thirty-three years of law-keeping are your righteousness. They were credited to you! He kept the law, the covenant of works, on your behalf!’... But the notion of his thirty-three years of Torah-keeping being imputed to me is problematic. After all, as a Gentile, I was never under Torah and therefore never under obligation to keep many of the commands Jesus performed. Moreover, much of what Jesus did was, in the nature of the case, not required of others. Surely God does not require everyone to work as a carpenter or to turn water into wine or to raise a twelve year old girl from the dead. These works were not accumulating points that would be credited to Jesus’ people... The active obedience itself, then, is not saving in itself.” [AAV, 140]
- B. “Is this really the way the beloved Son related to his Father during his ministry? As an employee earning wages? As a hired gun fulfilling the terms of a contract? Certainly this is not the picture we get from the gospel accounts... The gospels make it clear that Jesus never had to earn the favor of God. He was never a ‘Dutiful Employee’ but always a ‘Beloved Son.’ He had the Father’s favor in his youth (Lk. 2:40, 52)... He had it through his temptation in the wilderness... (Matt. 4:11). Most importantly, after the cross, just when we might have expected to hear that the Father justly rewarded him for his meritorious suffering with a name above every name, Paul writes the Father graced him with such a name as a gift (Phil. 2:9). Even his exaltation was of grace, not of merit! ... Similarly, Paul could say, ‘I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day’ (2 Tim. 4:7-8). Paul was not saying he had earned the crown. He was not suggesting he had merited final justification apart from grace.” [AAV, 137-138]⁶
- C. “Many of us have heard the touching story of a dying Gresham Machen telegramming John Murray, ‘I’m so thankful for [the] active obedience of Christ. No hope without it.’ I would suggest (I hope with appropriate humility!) that Machen

⁵ NT Wright: (1) “If we use the language of the law court, it makes no sense whatsoever to say that the judge imputes, imparts, bequeaths, conveys or otherwise transfers his righteousness to either the plaintiff or the defendant. Righteousness is not an object, a substance or a gas which can be passed across the courtroom... If we leave the notion of ‘righteousness’ as a law-court metaphor only, as so many have done in the past, this gives the impression of a legal transaction, a cold piece of business, almost a trick of thought performed by a God who is logical and correct but hardly one we would want to worship.” [WSPRS, 98] (2) “The idea that what sinners need is for someone else’s ‘righteousness’ to be credited to their account simply muddles up the categories, importing with huge irony into the equation the idea that the same tradition worked so hard to eliminate, namely the suggestion that, after all, ‘righteousness’ here means ‘moral virtue,’ ‘the merit acquired from lawkeeping,’ or something like that... ‘Imputed righteousness’ is a Reformation answer to a medieval question, in the mediaeval terms which were themselves part of the problem.” [JUST, 213] (3) “It is therefore a straightforward category mistake, however venerable within some Reformed traditions including part of my own, to suppose that Jesus ‘obeyed the law’ and so obtained ‘righteousness’ which could be reckoned to those who believe in him. To think that way is to concede, after all, that ‘legalism’ was true after all—with Jesus as the ultimate legalist.” [JUST, 232]

⁶ “This is not to say that the grace Jesus received is identical to the grace sinners receive in and through him. Obviously, that isn’t the case. Nor is it to say that Jesus’ covenant faithfulness works in the same way and at the same level as ours... But this does show us that systematic constructions that forbid applications of the term ‘grace’ to the sinless Mediator simply aren’t conforming to Scriptural thought patterns. The biblical vocabulary should be allowed to force us to rethink our notion of grace, rather than our pre-fabricated theological grids being allowed to foist themselves onto Scripture.” [AAV, 138] “Christ ‘deserved’ to be rewarded after he suffered and died, not because of some abstract justice (or ‘merit’), but because the Father had freely promised him such (cf. Isa. 53:10-11; Php. 2:9).” [AAV, 147]

would have been more true to Paul if he had telegraphed, 'I'm so thankful for [the] resurrection of Christ. No hope without it.' ... It is not Christ's life-long obedience per se that is credited to us. Rather, it is his right standing before the Father, manifested in his resurrection. His resurrection justifies us because it justified him. Again, it is not that his law-keeping or miracle-working are imputed to our account; rather, Christ shares his legal status in God's court with us as the One who propitiated God's wrath on the cross and was resurrected into a vindicated, glorified form of life." [AAV, 141]

- D. "The 'active obedience' construction also sometimes glosses 'God's righteousness' (e.g., Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21-22, etc.) as Christ's personal obedience... God's righteousness is his own righteousness, not something imputed or infused. God's righteousness is simply his covenantal trustworthiness; specifically, it is his saving activity on behalf of Israel, 'setting the world to rights' in accord with the prophetic promises (cf. Isa. 51)... Paul is not identifying the gospel with the doctrine of imputed righteousness." [AAV, 141]
- E. "We know from the rather detailed account of the [Westminster] Assembly's proceedings, written up by Alexander Mitchell, that the divines intentionally and charitably removed the word 'whole' from the phrase 'whole obedience' in the draft of WCF 11. This was done in order to accommodate the minority views of Twisse, Vines, and Gataker, allowing these men to sign the Confession in good conscience. That is to say, the Confession was deliberately written in such a way as to provide a range of views on the matter of Christ's justifying obedience (active, passive, or both), and Westminster churches must do the same today if they desire to be faithful to their heritage." [AAV, 147]

V. LUSK REJECTS THE NEED FOR ANY IMPUTATION OF CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS AT ALL IN JUSTIFICATION.

- A. "[New Perspective] theologians focus on union with Christ. They suggest justification presupposes union with Christ. If I am in Christ, he is my substitute and representative. All he suffered and accomplished was for me. All he has belongs to me. With regards to justification, this means my right standing before the Father." [AAV, 141-142]
- B. "His status is now my status. This justification requires no transfer or imputation of anything. It does not force us to reify [redefine] 'righteousness' into something that can be shuffled around in heavenly accounting books. Rather, because I am in the Righteous One and the Vindicated One, I am righteous and vindicated. My in-Christ-ness makes imputation redundant. I do not need the moral content of his life of righteousness transferred to me; what I need is a share in the forensic verdict passed over him at the resurrection. Union with Christ is therefore the key." [AAV, 142]
- C. "I would suggest the [traditional understanding of imputation] is not necessarily wrong, though it could leave adherents exposed to the infamous 'legal fiction' charge... It could become, as [N.T.] Wright has said, 'a cold piece of business.'...the union with Christ picture seems more consistent... It does not necessarily employ the 'mechanism' of imputation to accomplish justification, but gets the same result. Just as one can get to four by adding three plus one or two plus two, or just as one can get home by traveling Route A or by Route B, so there may be more than one way to conceive of the doctrine of justification in a manner that preserves its fully gracious and forensic character." [AAV, 142-143]

VI. LUSK ASSERTS THAT THE REAL HERETICS ARE THOSE WHO DEFEND THE GOSPEL AGAINST THE HERETICAL TEACHINGS OF NORMAN SHEPHERD AND NT WRIGHT.

- "We have used our attack on individual self-righteousness to shield criticisms of our corporate self-righteousness, sectarianism, denominational pride, etc. It's acceptable in many Reformed circles to ruthlessly attack other ministers, split churches, criticize other Christians mercilessly, and basically act 'fleshly' (cf. Gal. 5:19ff) because, after all, the 'gospel' is at stake. In reality, it is the 'gospel' that is being flatly denied every time such attitudes and postures prevail (Gal. 2:11ff). In other words, heresy is not only a matter of ideology and doctrine; it can also be a matter of attitude and action." [AAV, 135]

QUESTION: WHY WON'T DOUG WILSON (OR THE CREC) GO ON RECORD TO CONDEMN RICH LUSK'S FALSE TEACHINGS?

ANSWER: BECAUSE THEY REGARD LUSK'S VIEWS NOT AS FALSE TEACHING, BUT AS ORTHODOX REFORMED TEACHING!

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Official CREC Statement on FV (2004): "The CREC is a broad confederation of Reformed churches and thus it represents a variety of views within the scope of historic Reformed thinking. While some of our member churches, and some of the officers in these member churches, hold to various aspects of the Federal Vision school of thought, other members hold differing views. Nevertheless, both positions fall within the pale of historic Reformed theology. The CREC, like other Reformed denominations, represents a range of theological thought and practice. The constitution and confessions of the CREC define the parameters of our confederation."