



# "Reformed" Is Not Enough: Recovering the Objectivity of the Covenant

*Douglas Wilson*

Download now

Read Online ➞

# "Reformed" Is Not Enough: Recovering the Objectivity of the Covenant

*Douglas Wilson*

## **"Reformed" Is Not Enough: Recovering the Objectivity of the Covenant** Douglas Wilson

Suppose a husband is committing adultery. Is he still a husband? Being a husband is not just a state of mind; it's not just a private decision. Being a husband is a public relationship made from a public exchange of vows, an objective covenant. An adulterous husband is a covenant-breaking husband but still a husband. Being a husband is what makes his infidelity so horrendous.

In the same way, when people are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, they are ushered into an objective, visible, covenant relationship. Regardless of the state of their heart, regardless of any hypocrisy, regardless of whether or not they mean it, such people are now visible saints, Christians. A Christian is one who would be identified as such by a Muslim. Membership in the Christian faith is objective-it can be photographed and fingerprinted. In baptism, God names us and imposes gracious obligations upon us.

Multitudes of faithless, corrupt Christians show that they do not believe what God said at their baptism. They live like adulterous husbands. But the tragedy is that many conscientious conservative Christians also do not believe what God said at their baptism.

## **"Reformed" Is Not Enough: Recovering the Objectivity of the Covenant Details**

Date : Published October 22nd 2002 by Canon Press

ISBN : 9781591280057

Author : Douglas Wilson

Format : Paperback 208 pages

Genre : Religion, Theology, Christian

 [Download "Reformed" Is Not Enough: Recovering the Objectivity of ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online "Reformed" Is Not Enough: Recovering the Objectivity ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online "Reformed" Is Not Enough: Recovering the Objectivity of the Covenant Douglas Wilson**

---

## From Reader Review "Reformed" Is Not Enough: Recovering the Objectivity of the Covenant for online ebook

### Alasdair Peterson says

I find this a very hard book to review. On the one hand, I reject Wilson's starting point that the new covenant extends beyond the truly regenerate, and so I disagree with the majority of his conclusions. Nevertheless, Wilson writes well and, apparently, more carefully than some of his critics can read.

Anyone who actually reads the book must realise that Wilson does recognise that justification is by faith alone, and that we are not kept in the Covenant by our faithfulness. Instead Wilson's point is that, if you accept infants into the Covenant of Grace, you have to then treat them as members of the Covenant. When he speaks about Covenant keepers and Covenant breakers, he is referring to this objective aspect, not the subjective regeneration/salvation of the individuals concerned.

Personally, I think that Wilson's focus on the objective nature of the covenant of grace is practically unhelpful and, when extrapolated, leads to potentially dangerous consequences; but the only way to consistently critique it is, as Wilson recognises, from a Baptist view point.

I have enjoyed and benefited from much of Wilson's books and I was somewhat apprehensive about reading this book in case it undid that good work. Thankfully, after finishing it, I am content to read Wilson's other work as I always have: appreciating his, often wonderful, insights but straining out the extraneous matter first!

---

### Ryan Ray says

Wilson hits a home run in this easy to read book on reformed theology! The breakdown of the book, see below, was very helpful to understand the flow of the argumentation. In Part I he simply lays down the foundation that he is truly reformed. From there he begins to systematically work through where he "differs" with the Westminster Confessions of Faith (WCF). Of course Wilson does not believe he is in disagreement with the WCF, it would take someone much more familiar with the WCF than myself to be the judge of that. He asserts time and again that he agrees with much of what the WCF teaches. The problem, Wilson believes, is in the one sided interpretation of the WCF which does not represent the fullness of the WCF. Countless quotes are given from the WCF and other theologians. Wilson takes his task in affirming his position seriously and makes very persuasive arguments. I would highly recommend this book for anyone in the reformed faith. Wilson, in my opinion, has laid out a great case for the so-called Federal Vision. Now I know there are some disagreements in the FV, but if most of the FV guys are generally in Wilson's camp on theology then I can't understand what the big fuss is all about.

Book Breakdown:

Part I: Introduction & Bona Fides

Part II: Covenant, Church, and Sacraments

Part III: Apostasy and Assurance

## Part IV: Justification and Good Works

He also includes a brief discussion on The New Perspective of Paul in the Appendix.

While Wilson lays out a great case, it would be nice to see a book or debate on this subject. Maybe we can see that in the future

---

### **Darren Duke says**

When the whole Federal Vision controversy oozed onto the scene it became clear that there were several types of opponents: the Reformed Scholastics who were threatened by someone as persuasive as Wilson from outside the guild, the southern TRs who had trusted the Scholastics to keep everything stable, and a few others. The response by these groups has been fascinating. The Scholastics have refused to debate anyone on this topic at all, holed in the fortress academy. The TRs have gone on the war path, hunting down those who have attempted a continued reformation of the Church.

These groups may have good reason to oppose some or all of what the FV has said. Since all the "professionals" (save Carl Trueman who sat down with Dr. Leithart at BIOLA recently) have refused to talk about these issues unless they are prosecuting cases (all unsuccessful to date) before their presbyteries, we probably will never know. Rarely have minds been so closed on such a worthwhile topic.

In this work, Wilson lays out very clearly and helpfully what the problems are with modern American evangelicalism and how the loss of a collective Christian identity that is objective leads to a divided and impotent Church. You may not agree with all he has to say but it is hard to imagine that anyone can come away from reading this work and say that his position is confusing (a frequent word I hear from opponents). As I have spoken with FV opponents, I have found none - not one single soul - that has actually read a work by an FV advocate. Well, this is the place to start. I highly recommend this book for pastor/elder or lay-person alike who wants to know what all the fuss is about.

---

### **Devan DeCicco says**

I'll first say that reading Doug Wilson makes me smarter, and as someone who studied English literature for 4 years, I am impressed with his prose. This observation is merely stylistic/aesthetic about the writing as an object, not so much that content of the claims herein.

I think my limited background in Reformed Theology kept me from truly grasping the import of Wilson's claims. I enjoyed what I read and was helped at times. Most helpful was the discussion of those who are on the wrong track in the faith and how they are still a part of the covenant community, not banished never-were-Christians. This results, for me, in a high view of the Church and the importance of my duty to be patient and honest with those with whom I disagree. They may be wrong, but they are still Christians.

This book is written in the maelstrom of controversy regarding the Federal Vision within confessionally Reformed churches. I am beginning to read the books of those who are a part of what is identified as the FV movement, so I can't comment on this book in relation to other FV books or criticisms of the FV.

What I can say is that I don't think what is contained herein is heresy, as some have suggested. It is one thing to say it falls outside the bounds of historic Reformed theology (which I am not saying it does or does not), it is quite another to say it falls outside the bounds of orthodoxy (which it clearly does not).

Again, I'm not as well versed in Reformed theology, so all the wrangling with presuppositions and such contained in this book are somewhat lost on me. That's why I gave it three stars - not because it doesn't merit 4 or 5, but because it was pretty heavy lifting. I'm glad I got the job done, but it gave me a sore back.

---

### **Clayton Hutchins says**

This was interesting. Wilson makes it pretty clear that he's not a heretic. Not sure why paedobaptists would disagree with him on the objectivity of the covenant.

---

### **Michael says**

Wilson, once again, has opened my eyes to the Bible in a way I have never seen before.

In our day in age most Christians tend to approach the Faith in individualistic terms. We tend to separate our individual "walk with God" from those around us and from our membership with the Church. The Bible, while distinguishing between individual and corporate faith, never separates the two. Our salvation is "in Christ" and the Church is "the Body of Christ". To separate salvation from the church is a grievous error and unfortunately in our day it is a rampant error.

What Wilson calls for is a recovery of the objectivity of the covenant. We so often tend to see covenant membership in subjective terms. Especially in Reformed and Presbyterian circles, we see "true" membership in the covenant being based on someone's regeneration and election. These are two things that we cannot see with our eyes and the God says that they belong to him (Duet. 29:29). We should instead pursue an objective view of the Covenant, much like Paul. Paul addressed the Corinthians (the most unfaithful church in the New Testament) as saints. The fact that the members of the Corinthian church were covenant members was the grounds for Paul's admonitions and exhortations to them. Not once does Paul question the Corinthians inclusion in the Body of Christ in his letter. Instead Paul tells them that they are not being faithful to their baptism (their right of entry to the covenant).

The prevailing, and most helpful, illustration that Wilson employs is the illustration of marriage.

Take a second to think about it. If a husband commits adultery against his wife he is still a husband covenantally. Much less than excusing his behavior this understanding brings further condemnation upon the husband for breaking his vows. When we say that someone who is walking in disobedience with the covenant is not a Christian it is like saying a husband who commits adultery is not a husband. The obvious problem here is that you cannot commit adultery unless you are a husband.

We are in desperate need for a recovery of the covenant's objectivity in our day and age mainly because we have accepted, hook line and sinker, in the enlightenment's tenets of individualism. The covenant brings us in to communion with Christ and one another. When we loose this understanding we are parting with the great and glorious promises God has for us and we are doing so as a bunch of individualists.

---

### **Steven Wedgeworth says**

Would have been aided by greater familiarity with the older Protestant divines. Still, the basic thesis is

orthodox and closer to Calvin and co. than Wilson's opponents.

---

### **Paul says**

Too many people will dismiss this book because of what they've heard about the author or the theological circles it's associated with. Don't.

---

### **Corey says**

Wilson at his keenest and most eloquent. Brilliant stuff.

---

### **Noah Nevils says**

A lot in here I don't agree with, but a well-written and persuasive book nevertheless.

---

### **W. Littlejohn says**

To which I say, "Reformed Is Not Enough is not enough."

---

### **Brett McNeill says**

The goal of the book is to prove that Wilson is still reformed while arguing that there is more needed. Using the Westminster Confession, Wilson goes through many of the issues surrounding the Federal Vision controversy and 'sets the record straight.'

While it must be noted that Wilson is the least radical of the Federal Visionists, it ought also be noted that he simply is not reformed. This book, wrought through with inconsistencies, argues for a view of Christianity much more sympathetic to Rome than to Calvin.

It takes a wise reader as it is written to appease those who are sympathetic to Reformed theology. However, the truth of Wilson's convictions does shine through and demonstrate that he is not happy with or comfortable with historic reformed Christianity. Watch for redefinitions and vagueness as they techniques employed to equivocate.

---

### **Peter N. says**

One of the clearest statements on how the decrees of God intersect real life in the Church. He dusts off some reformation doctrines that need to be revived/remembered. He also exposes some areas of reformed theology

that need to be refined and jettisoned all together. The section entitled "Apostasy and Assurance" was the one I learned the most from and I think will be most helpful in discussing FV theology with its detractors.

---

## **Sydney Kirsch says**

3.5 stars

---

## **Jacob Aitken says**

I think everyone overreacted. Wilson was on to a few things but the context in American Calvinism didn't let him formulate it without everything turning into a big food fight.

Objectivity of the covenant: I suppose it's true on one level, though I was never quite persuaded that these guys integrated that belief within the larger Reformed spectrum.

Historical/Eschatological Church: I actually like this. It gives you what the visible/invisible distinction promises without some of the difficulties. I do wonder, though, if there is an incipient Hegelianism lurking within that no one notices: the historical progresses and unfolds into the Ideal.

---