

# Debate: Protestant Antidote to Modern Disunity (1/5) Protestant Fundamentals of Separation and Unity

by Greg Barrow

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*The Protestant antidote to modern disunity is the doctrine and practice of our faithful Protestant forefathers concerning church membership and the Biblical requirements for coming to the Lord's table, which is rooted in the importance of private judgment.*

**Duration:** 1:22:53

**Scripture:** Jeremiah 6:16, Matthew 16:21-23, Ephesians 4:14, Philippians 3:16

**Topics:** "Church Unity", "Doctrinal Purity"

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## Description

In this sermon transcript, the speaker addresses the issue of misrepresentation and criticism towards the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton (P.R.C.E.). The speaker criticizes Mr. Bacon for misrepresenting the church's terms of communion as unscriptural. The speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the issues and studying the works of those being attacked before making judgments. They also highlight the need for scripture, light, and sound reasoning to awaken sinners and bring about a covenant testimony. The speaker concludes by stating that history, argument, and doctrinal declaration are essential in the conflict between truth and error, righteousness and unrighteousness, and Christ and Belial.

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## Transcript

The Protestant Antidote to Modern Schismatical Disunity being chapter 4 of Greg Barrow's book, The Covenanted Reformation Defended Against Contemporary Schismatics. Hello, I'm Larry Berger. You're about to hear the most clear exposition of the Biblical Protestant doctrine of terms of communion that I believe can be found anywhere today.

Regrettably, time and circumstantial restrictions have prevented me from giving a prefatory overview of this subject and its vital importance. However, as the title of these tapes indicates, the doctrine and practice of our faithful Protestant forefathers concerning church membership and the Biblical requirements for coming to the Lord's table are truly the Protestant antidote to today's schismatical practices. They sought for, and even vowed themselves to, true unity, that is, unity that comes, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1.10, from being of the same mind and in the same judgment concerning Biblical doctrine,

worship, and church government and discipline, in contrast to the false unity promoted today, which is but unity in name and utterly destructive of truth and godliness.

As you listen, please consider whether what you're currently being taught and what so-called Protestant churches today are practicing concerning the Lord's table are actually the Biblical Protestantism of the Reformation. If not, why not, and what then are we to do? As an introductory answer to these questions, I've decided to include here my narrator's preface for *Eschewing Ecclesiastical Tyranny, the Duty of Christ's Sheep*, which is Appendix G of the *Covenanted Reformation Defended*. Although this preface does not deal directly with the Biblical teaching on terms of communion, I believe it is nevertheless very relevant, and I trust it will prove a helpful forerunner to Barrow's treatment, one that provokes us to love and good works and a greater appreciation of our Savior's mercy.

May God richly bless you as you hear expounded the Biblical old paths wherein is rest for our souls. Jeremiah 6.16 Please note that Barrow's entire book is free on Stillwater's Revival Books website, [www.swrb.com](http://www.swrb.com). It is also available in hardcover from Stillwaters, along with a treasure trove of the finest Protestant, Reformed, and Puritan literature available anywhere in the world today. Stillwaters can be reached at 780-450-3730, or by email at [swrb@swrb.com](mailto:swrb@swrb.com). Let us therefore remember that whenever Church unity is commended to us, this is required, that while our minds agree in Christ, our wills should also be joined with mutual benevolence in Christ.

Paul, therefore, while urging us to it, takes it as his foundation that there is one God, one faith, and one baptism. Indeed, wherever Paul teaches us to feel the same and will the same, he immediately adds, He means that apart from the Lord's word, there is not an agreement of believers, but a faction of wicked men. We therefore conclude that among the godly, the communion of the Church ought not to extend so far that if it degenerates into profane and corrupted rites, they have to follow it headlong.

Some will therefore ask me what counsel I would like to give to a believer who thus dwells in some Egypt or Babylon, where he may not worship God purely, but is forced by the common practice to accommodate himself to bad things. The first advice would be to leave, that is to relocate if he could. If someone has no way to depart, I would counsel him to consider whether it would be possible for him to abstain from all idolatry in order to preserve himself pure and spotless toward God in both body and soul.

Then, since we are to abstain from all such idolatry, let him worship God in private, praying him to restore his poor church to its right estate. Hello, I'm Larry Berger. These powerful quotes from Book 4, Chapter 2 of John Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, and from his anti-Nicodemite writings, forthcoming from Protestant Heritage Press, demonstrate that while we are to place the highest premium on the unity of the Church, we must be certain that it is true scriptural unity we are promoting, and not a satanic substitute.

Indeed, this worthy Reformer is emphatic that true unity is so precious to Christ and his people, that if anything but the real thing is presented to the Church, she is to reject it, and wait prayerfully for such time that God will bring about true, lasting unity. To accept tawdry substitutes for biblical unity, those that promote unity at the expense of any of the least of the truths of the Word of God, those that make unity an end in itself, rather than subservient to the promotion and preservation of the truth and the pure worship of God, is not to preserve Christ's body whole, but to rip her into a thousand pieces, and to court the wrath of her jealous husband. Such is the state of affairs in the Church today, where it seems all schemes but the biblical plan for unity are championed, and where when so-called unity is attained, truth and purity are

always the losers.

One of the precious fundamental teachings of Scripture recovered in the Protestant Reformation was the doctrine of private judgment, that is, that each individual Christian has both the right and the responsibility to test all that is put before him for acceptance, and to believe and to practice that and only that which is agreeable to the Scriptures. Thus, the Westminster Confession of Faith asserts, God alone is the Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in anything contrary to his word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship, so that to believe such doctrines or to obey such commandments out of conscience is to betray true liberty of conscience, and the requiring of an implicit faith and an absolute and blind obedience is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also. That's chapter 20, section 2. In stark contrast, the Roman Catholic Church maintains the infallibility of the Pope in matters of faith or morals, and asserts that it is the domain of the Holy Mother Church, not that of individual believers, to determine the true sense or meaning of the Scriptures.

Thus, in the Creed of Pope Pius IV, 1564, we find, I also admit the Holy Scripture, according to that sense or meaning which our Holy Mother, the Church, has held and does hold, to which Church it belongs to judge of the true sense and interpretation of the Scriptures, neither will I ever take and interpret them otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers. Notwithstanding these blasphemous and despotic assertions, however, private judgment, as will be shown, is the privilege and duty of all believers. Indeed, it is essential to the unity and purity of Christ's Church, so much so that there can be no biblical unity without it, and it also affords the last defense against the kind of arbitrary, soul-damaging, and even damning, tyranny and error exemplified by, but not limited to, the Roman Catholic Church.

Lamentably, churches wearing the name Protestant have, since the time of the Protestant Reformation, increasingly embraced numerous Romanist errors. These include a false and dangerous conception of the visible Church, tyrannical doctrines of ecclesiastical and civil authority, corruptions of the sacraments, false views of free will and the nature of man, and other points of Arminianism in doctrine, Arminianism in worship, such as the use of choirs, celebration of holy days like Christmas and Easter, Church calendars with their various days and seasons and pictures of Christ, and perversions of Church government and discipline, for example, Episcopalianism, Congregationalism, and Independence. As you will hear on this tape, some have even gone to the point of denying the fundamental doctrine of sola scriptura, that is, that the Bible is the alone infallible rule of faith and practice, by denying private judgment, which is a natural and necessary consequence of sola scriptura.

Because even this most vital teaching is being eroded and attacked, which, if it continues, will plunge the Church back into a full-fledged slavery to error and idolatry, as was the case before the Reformation, I'd like to spend a few moments considering how prominent the doctrine of private judgment is in the Scriptures. By so doing, I hope to fix more firmly in our minds the privilege and duty we have to eschew, or shun, ecclesiastical tyranny, and thereby to enhance the usefulness of Mr. Barrow's concise explanation and defense of private judgment. By giving careful heed to the Word of God and to the testimony of our faithful Reformed forefathers, to which testimony the Bible commands us to listen, Proverbs 1.8, Jeremiah 6.16, Hebrews 11.4, 13.17, and so forth, we will be led to a fresh appreciation of one of the chief benefits purchased for us by the blood and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to a renewed holy hatred of all that is contrary to this precious benefit.

By this means, we will be equipped to recover and maintain the true biblical unity of Christ's Church and end the multitudinous schisms currently afflicting her and grieving and dishonoring her Lord. The

Scriptures confirm and urge the right and duty of private judgment in numerous ways. First, we see it in the biblical conception of authority, where God alone bears absolute, unqualified rule over men's consciences.

The Lord commands us, Be not servants to men, 1 Corinthians 7.23, while insisting as the ultimate reason for believing and obeying Him that I am the Lord thy God, Exodus 20.2, and so forth. Thus the apostles expressly said they were only helpers of our faith and not lords over it, 2 Corinthians 1.24, and referred to their ministry as existing only for the purpose of edification, 2 Corinthians 10.8 and 13.10. They expressly taught they had authority only insofar as their officiations were according to the truth, 2 Corinthians 13.8, and not simply because they claimed a title and held an ecclesiastical office. We can only give implicit faith, then, to the Lord God and not to any, even the most faithful church or leader.

To do otherwise is to ascribe to them an incommunicable attribute of God, blasphemous, idolatrous, and perilous indeed. Moreover, every command to submit to church leadership necessarily implies this duty. The Bible tells us that we are to submit to, emulate, and follow faithful leaders and churches, for example, 1 Timothy 5.17 and Hebrews 13.17. Faithful is not here a meaningless adjective, but rather presupposes sound scriptural evaluation of this leadership on our parts.

The same applies to God's command to receive faithful doctrine. We are as well frankly and soberly told of the existence of false teachers not outside the church, but within the church. We must be certain here, however, to distinguish the various types of false teachers.

Some men, like Apollos, are godly and competent, but simply uninstructed in the whole counsel of God. Others, like Nicodemus, John 3, have no business teaching, not yet at least, as they are incompetent in their doctrinal knowledge. Others have been soundly instructed, but, like Peter, have fallen back into their old sin and errors.

Still others are described in the most fearful terms, Satan's ministers, 2 Corinthians 11.15, deceivers and being deceived, 2 Timothy 3.13, twice dead and clouds without water, Jude 12, and in the case of the man of sin, who the Reformers identified as the office of the Pope, one who exalts himself above God and is, like Judas, a son of perdition, 2 Thessalonians 2.3. Obviously, if we are to identify any of these errant teachers, we must judge them ourselves, individually, by criteria independent of their mere profession to be teachers and leaders or faithful churches and denominations, or their insistence that the Bible supposedly says we are to submit to them. And, in fact, this is exactly what we observe in the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit highly commends such examples for our imitation. Thus the Bereans are said to be more noble than the Thessalonians, because they not only heard the Apostle Paul, but heard him with a ready-minded, careful discernment, searching the Scriptures daily whether those things were so.

Acts 17.11 Likewise, the Ephesian elders in Revelation 2 were praised by Christ, because they tried them which said they were apostles and were not, and found them liars. Revelation 2.2 Whereas the churches of Pergamos and Thyatira were sternly rebuked for merely tolerating false guides, warning that those who tolerated these teachers, though they themselves were orthodox, were nevertheless subject to the judgments sent upon the false teachers. See also Revelation 18.4 Finally, as if these overwhelming scriptural evidences and arguments weren't enough, we have the plain command of God throughout the entire Bible.

Examples are so numerous that we are forced to limit ourselves to just a few. In Deuteronomy 13, we are forewarned that God will test us by allowing false prophets to arise who will have every seemingly good

qualification to commend us to believe them, and yet whose doctrine will lead us away from the true God. Solomon is emphatic concerning the need to flee from error and erroneous teachers.

Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge. Proverbs 19.27 Both Isaiah and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself warn us that if we follow unsound instruction, we will suffer the severe consequences. For the leaders of this people cause them to err, and they that are led of them are destroyed.

His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark. Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. Isaiah 9.16 and 56.10, Matthew 15.14 And we should note here, as was alluded above, that it is not simply teachers who we regard to be non-Christians or obstinate opponents to the truth that we are to take heed of and avoid.

This ought to be evident, for a teacher as such should be judged by his teaching, not by whether we think he'll spend eternity in heaven, though this is obviously a vital matter. Just because he's qualified for heaven does not mean he's qualified to teach and lead Christ's sheep. It is also plainly taught in the verses themselves, for they do not say that the primary reason the people are being led astray is because the teachers are unsaved, though in many cases this is indeed the ultimate reason for their teaching error, but because they are blind to and ignorant of the truth, and their doctrine causes the people to err.

We are thus forbidden every bit as much from sitting ourselves under ignorant, unsafe teachers as we are from sitting under those who are likely unsaved, ravenous wolves. Many more instances can be found in the New Testament. Indeed, one need only consider that most of the New Testament itself was written to refute errors in erring teachers and thereby to confirm and protect Christ's sheep.

Thus, in a very real sense, the New Testament en masse is a direct commandment to judge and reject all false teaching and teachers. For the sake of brevity, however, we will consider only one more clear command, Romans 16, 17. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them.

Notice that there are three commands here, two explicit and one implicit. The implicit command is that we ensure that we ourselves know the apostolic doctrine, the whole counsel of God, Acts 20.26, the doctrine which we have learned. The first explicit command is to mark, that is, to identify, to make careful note of, those who deviate from this doctrine, thereby causing schisms and all manner of damage to the Church of Christ.

The second explicit command flows from it. We are to avoid, shun, or eschew all such teachers, churches, or denominations. For it is obvious that if one teacher who thus causes schism is to be avoided, how much more an entire church or denomination which is causing such division by its false doctrines.

Interestingly, the command to mark in this passage is the same Greek word used in Philippians 3.17, where we are commanded to mark faithful teachers and to emulate their faithfulness. Finally, note how serious a matter it is for us to identify and separate from such false teachers and teachings. Paul beseeches us, earnestly entreating that we do so, and commands us by invoking the terrible name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

This single consideration alone, the invocation of the name of the Lord, recall the language in Exodus, I am the Lord thy God, should overwhelmingly compel us to follow through carefully on this command. All the more should we do so when in conjunction with this we consider that it is taught either expressly or by implication from one end of the Bible to the other. Even from this cursory view of the doctrine of private judgment, its prominence in Scripture and the great care employed by the Holy Spirit in communicating it to us are manifest.

It is precisely because Christ's sheep do not use this precious gift and then separate from those who are ignorant blind guides or who are obstinately holding to error that the blindness, error, disunity, and decline in practical godliness characterizing the church today continue and thrive. With the exercise of private judgment these grievous sins could not continue. Without the exercise of private judgment they will not cease.

Dear brethren, we have a command not from the reformers, but from the Lord Jesus Christ to use this private judgment and to act on it accordingly. Indeed, we have more than a command. He has purchased it for us with his own blood and given us the Holy Spirit in order to employ it.

He will bless us if we practice it scripturally and his anger will follow us if we don't. He is honored greatly when we faithfully exercise it. It is the height of impiety and blasphemy when we neglect it.

Let us then not be those who maintain and even widen the breaches in the walls of Christ Jerusalem, but those who instead endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, Ephesians 4.3. May God bless all of us with peace and joy as we stand fast in the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free. The Protestant antidote to modern schismatical disunity being chapter 4 of Greg Barrow's book *The Covenanted Reformation Defended Against Contemporary Schismatics*. Misrepresentation number 4. The Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton, PRCE, is guilty of imposing the traditions of men upon the conscience by requiring terms of communion that are unscriptural.

Men are always inclined to be critical and misrepresentative when they haven't taken adequate time to understand the issues and study the works of those they are attacking. Mr. Bacon, as demonstrated in his defense *Departed*, is such a man. It is one thing to read carefully and digest the arguments of one's opponent, and another thing to read one or two short articles for the purpose of drawing numerous inaccurate inferences from them, though the articles in this case are exceedingly clear and in no way support Mr. Bacon's misconstruals.

Though there are obvious theological differences between Mr. Bacon and the PRCE, before continuing, I must address the issues of fairness and integrity. Has Mr. Bacon accurately represented what the PRCE believes, or has he built a caricature of our belief in an attempt to discredit us? I contend that Mr. Bacon has so severely, either intentionally or ignorantly, overlooked the plain statements of David Steele, the Reformed Presbytery, and the PRCE that he should be profoundly ashamed of himself. I have been involved in many debates over the years, and I can honestly say that never has an opponent so blatantly ignored our plainest statements.

Prejudice in this form and intensity must be directly answered by demonstrating that Mr. Bacon has possessed adequate information to leave him without excuse. I intend to do this by setting Mr. Bacon's statements directly against what Pastor Steele, the Reformed Presbytery, and the PRCE have said. We, as a session, sent Mr. Bacon many free books and articles to help him correctly determine what we believe.

The careful reader will notice that in his defense departed, he cites two or three small sources of information, whereas he had been given many volumes for his perusal. The point I am making is this. If Mr. Bacon really cared to honestly and fairly debate this issue with us, he would never have been so foolish as to ignore our most explicit statements.

I conclude that Mr. Bacon really did not want to debate, but rather wanted to slander and abuse the PRCE in retaliation for our efforts in dissociating from his pretended presbytery. Considering that Mr. Bacon had been given free access to most of the cited works I am about to quote, I urge you, dear reader, to ask yourself these questions. Has Mr. Bacon been fair to the position he is attacking? Has he clearly demonstrated his opponent's position from their own works? Has he done his homework? Are these acts of poor scholarship or malicious intent, or both? The following scripture characterizes the substance of our response to this current misrepresentation.

Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou faintest them out of thine own heart. Nehemiah 6.8 A man that beareth false witness against his neighbor is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow. Proverbs 25.18 As we survey the evidence in the next several pages, I think the reader will be amazed at how completely Mr. Bacon has misled his readers.

I certainly had anticipated something stronger from a man of his gifts than outright denial of our explicit statements. That he has risen no higher than this is quite telling as to the bankruptcy of his positive position. To prove that Mr. Bacon has totally ignored our explicit statements while substituting his own fictitious fantasies in their place, please consider the following examples.

Mr. Bacon has not done his homework. 1. Mr. Bacon misrepresents how we view our own church standards when he says, quote, It must seem strange to some who are reading this to be faced with the fact that there are some who call themselves Protestants, yea, Reformed and Presbyterian Protestants, who appear to place their own traditions as the constitution of the church rather than Scripture. That's from Defense Departed.

Again, the national covenant or confession of faith is to be sworn not because the church has required it, but because it is an accurate representation of the sense of God's law. It is not, as the Steelites claim, because the church's testimony tells us what to believe. The church's testimony must be judged according to the word of God and not vice versa.

Defense Departed. Do we, the so-called Steelites, claim that the church's testimony tells us what to believe? Has Mr. Bacon honestly represented our position? The Reformed Presbytery of Scotland responds directly to this absurd notion. Quote, Convinced of the self-evidencing power, intrinsic worth, and divine excellencies of the holy scriptures, we ever wish them to be considered as a complete and sufficient rule in themselves, independent of oral law, tradition of the fathers, or any human invention, whatever, and in opposition to that absurd notion that the true sense depends upon the church.

Can it be stated any more clearly than this? asks Mr. Barrow. At the same time, in our practical application of the inspired oracles, we consider them to be a rule as consistently understood and properly applied. For though they be an absolutely perfect and sufficient rule in themselves, yet it is possible to mistake their true meaning.

But this we endeavor to guard against, the conduct of those who, while they pretend to believe in the divine authority of scriptures, do meanwhile evidently wrest them, imposing glosses which make one part

of the sacred volume to contradict another, and which lead us away from the true scope and design of the whole. And that's from the Reformed Presbytery's explanation and defense of the terms of communion, page 161. Speaking of using confessions of faith and covenants as a term of communion, the Reformed Presbytery states, quote, It is only after mature deliberation, carefully comparing them with the word of God, and receiving full conviction in our own minds of their being wholly founded upon it, that we consider the confession and catechisms, or any other human composition whatsoever, as properly entitled to our belief, and deserving to be ranked amongst the subordinate standards of our church.

But after being convinced of their agreeableness to the infallible rule, we cheerfully receive them. It is not with the remotest intention of supplying a defect in the oracles of truth, which we ever consider a complete rule in themselves, nor is it at all in the view of putting either the confession, or any other book in the world on a level with the Bible, that we adopt these explanatory standards. But purely to ascertain the true meaning of Scripture, help us to understand one another in our church fellowship, and through these mediums to transmit a faithful testimony for truth from generation to generation.

Again, the explanation in defense of the terms of communion, page 161. A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape. Proverbs 19.5 2. Mr. Bacon says, The Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton has adopted this entire line of thinking by the approach of first accept the doctrine, then you can understand it later.

But this is the very kind of implicit faith required by Rome and condemned by our confession. Again, from Defense Departed. Is it true that David Steele, the Reformed Presbytery, and the PRCE require implicit faith? In their preface to the Arkansas Renovation, a committee of the Reformed Presbytery made up of David Steele, Robert Alexander, and John Clyde, state, Quote, The reader may be assured that neither we nor the Reformed Presbytery, whose committee we are, claim papal infallibility or Christian perfection, nor do we ask implicit faith in our documents.

But we sincerely believe ourselves that the Arkansas Renovation and the bond to which the foregoing statements are prefixed will be found on examination to be sound, faithful, and in nothing contrary to the Word of God. As from the Arkansas Renovation. And again, beware of acting implicit faith.

It is long since the error falsely imputed to us was broached among professing covenants. For example, we heard from the mouth of a minister in that body more than a quarter of a century ago the declaration in the pulpit, Quote, The first term of communion is the only proper term of communion in the Church, and the time is not distant, we trust, when she will have no more. The first term of communion being that the Bible alone is the infallible rule of faith and life.

That is, when all the displays of a covenant God's justice, mercy, faithfulness, etc., in dealing with the Church and her anti-Christian opposers, shall have passed into oblivion an unbelieving and ungrateful hope or desire. The Protestant world is so denominated because simply of a solemn protest against Rome's impious claim to infallibility and cognate invasions of Messiah's prerogatives. Attach the attribute of infallibility to any of the subordinate standards of our Christian profession, and we are instantly deprived of them all as a near and necessary consequence.

We sincerely hope that the Covenanter, that is, James M. Wilson, will arrive at clearer light on the general subject of creeds and confessions, and if so, we are sure he will come to a better temper. It is part of the known character of the two witnesses that they contend for the faith once delivered to the saints as the nearest and surest way to victory. Again, we would say to the reader, beware of exercising implicit faith in

human authority as well as testimony, and hold in dread all assumptions of infallibility by Pope, Prelate, or Presbyterian, and especially Reformed Presbyterians standing by the exclusive supremacy of Zion's King.

And that's from David Steele's *The Two Witnesses*, page 41. David Steele adds, Let no one imagine that I defend symbols of faith from force of habit, or because they are old, perfect, immutable, or infallible, for I have for many years repeatedly said the contrary, that no document framed by wisdom, learning, or piety of any uninspired man or body of such is either perfect or immutable, and much less infallible. No, I do not plead for immutability, but for the faithfulness of subordinate standards, both of doctrine and practice.

And that's from Steele's *Reminiscences*, pages 135 and 136. Now, does David Steele or other so-called Steelites even remotely resemble Mr. Bacon's caricature? Do we teach implicit faith? If the reader had access to this information, as did Mr. Bacon, would he have written what Mr. Bacon wrote? All he had to do was read the books we provided or listen to Pastor Price's set of tapes on our Terms of Communion, nineteen cassettes available at Stillwater's Revival Books, to be forever convinced of the contrary. Instead, he ignored the evidence and printed his vain imaginations.

This clearly shows a serious lack of scholarship and integrity. These six things doth the Lord hate, yea, seven are an abomination unto him, a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, and heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren, Proverbs 6, 16 through 19. Three.

Speaking of the solemn league and covenant as a term of communion, Mr. Bacon says, quote, So the Steelite turns that which was good and useful and lawful for the Church of Scotland to use in a time of national and ecclesiastical distress to that which is nothing more than the imposition of traditions upon the conscience. That's from *Defense Departed*. On December 18, 1996, in an email, Mr. Bacon writes, Necessity implies some rule other than Scripture which binds the conscience.

If you wish to take the solemn league and covenant, which I assume you have done, no bother to me. However, the term necessity implies precisely the position that you all have now taken, which I believe to be directly contrary to the doctrine of sola scriptura. Close quote.

Does the PRCE impose the traditions of men upon others when they require the solemn league and covenant as a term of communion? Is this a denial of sola scriptura? The Reformed Presbytery responds, quote, Concerning these covenants, some have proposed the query, in what sense can they be said, as they are in our testimony, to be of divine authority or obligation? We reply, the divine authority of heaven's great sovereign is evidently interposed in requiring us to enter into such covenants, vow unto the Lord your God, and when once we have entered into them, the same divine authority binds us to performance, hey that, which thou hast vowed. Add to these that the great and dreadful name, the Lord our God, is invoked in the solemn transaction, while His declarative glory among men is deeply concerned in the faithful fulfillment of our engagements. So that, besides the intrinsic obligation of the covenants, viewed simply as human deeds, whereby men bind their souls, there is in all such covenants an obligation of divine authority, requiring first to make and then to perform our covenants, from the invocation of the divine name, considering Jehovah as witness and avenger, and from the interfering with the divine glory in the keeping or violating of our oath.

Hence in the Scripture the same oath is, in one respect, considered as the covenant of the man giving his hand, and in another respect as the Lord's covenant, whose glory is concerned in it. See, for example, Ezekiel 17, 11-21. Our testimony, if properly attended to, explains itself, telling us that covenants are of

divine authority or obligation as having their foundation upon the word of God.

And that, again, is from the explanation and defense of the terms of communion, page 161. David Steele adds, quote, Even the doctrinal propositions of our confessions and catechisms are received not because they are inspired or infallible, but simply because they are, in the apprehension of the Christian, agreeable to the Holy Scriptures. Much more does this obviously apply to our solemn covenants as embodying the heroic achievements of our martyred and witnessing fathers.

Add to these all the real attainments of those who survived the overthrow of the Second Reformation. And that's from Pastor Steele's printed correspondences with the editor of the *Covenanter* magazine, that is, James M. Wilson, which is published by Stillwater Survival Books under the title *Apostasy in the RPCNA*. The evidence thus far is compelling and clear.

Mr. Bacon was not even trying to accurately represent David Steele, the Reformed Presbytery, or the PRCE. Though this should be enough to convince those who are open to hard evidence, I intend to belabor this point so that Mr. Bacon's dishonesty and irresponsibility will become abundantly evident, and so that none will ever have any justifiable reason for concluding that the so-called Steelites teach anything but historic Reformed doctrine. What more can be done than to prove that the Covenanters have, for hundreds of years, been saying the exact opposite of what Mr. Bacon represents them to say? If our public and explicit statements will not be accepted as our statement of belief, then what can be done to convince the gainsayer? Let the proud be ashamed, for they dealt perversely with me without a cause.

But I will meditate in thy precepts. Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known my testimonies. Psalm 119, 78, 79 4. Mr. Bacon writes, Quote, But one must remember that the Steelites invest a similar meaning in the term historical testimony that the Romanist does with his inspired tradition of the fathers.

That's from *Defense Departed*. Pastor David Steel aptly answers Mr. Bacon, rightly dividing that which is our alone infallible standard in matters relating to salvation from the fallible standards which are to be included in terms of communion. Quote, No symbols of faith and order framed by uninspired men are faultless, much less infallible, either in substance or form.

Otherwise, they would not be subordinate. Divine truth is the sole ground of saving faith and is not to be confounded with terms of communion as ignorance and presumption commonly do, and as Mr. Bacon has overtly done. Again, the testimony of Christ's witnesses in all its integral parts is always and necessarily progressive until it shall have been finished.

Even their statements of doctrine, their abstract and distinctive principles may and often must be restated in diversified language to meet the ever-shifting position and subtle sophisms of adversaries. Also, our covenants, National and Solemn League, may and ought to be renewed, not that they have become old, as many say, but that they are to be owned as obligatory upon us and a sense of their permanent obligation deepened upon our own souls and exhibited to others by the solemnity of an oath. That's from the Reformed Presbytery, *A Short Vindication of the Covenanted Reformation*, page 19.

And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand, two hundred, and threescore days clothed in sackcloth. Revelation 11.3 Commenting on the two witnesses of Revelation 11.3, Pastor Steele says, Quote, Consider the number of these witnesses. They are two, as this is the smallest number that can establish truth, Deuteronomy 17.6, 19.15. The lawgiver himself, addressing the

Jews, says, It is written in your law that the testimony of two men is true, John 8.17. Not that we are to receive the testimony of every two men.

The experience of all men is that a false witness will utter lies, and it is sometimes found that two may agree together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord, Acts 5.9. But on the supposition that the witnesses are competent and credible, then it is the decision of Christ, endorsed by the common sentiment of mankind, that we receive the witness of such men, 1 John 5.9. And although the witness of God is greater than that of any number of men, still human witnesses do not need to be inspired to render their testimony credible, for then, if the witnesses are inspired, as the reader will perceive, the testimony is that of God, and, of course, ceases to be human testimony. This point is of the greatest moment since not one word uttered by these two witnesses is inspired in the proper and formal sense of inspiration. This is too great an honor to confer upon the very chiefest of our covenanted confessors or martyrs.

It savors too much of Rome. And that's from Steele's *The Two Witnesses*, page 7. Human witnesses do not need to be inspired to render their testimony credible. When did right testimony ever oppose one jot or tittle of the Word of God? Is all human testimony to be rejected because some men lie? Will we throw away the gold because it's mixed with the dross? We do not plead for an infallible testimony since that is both unscriptural and impossible for mere men.

That which we plead for is a faithful testimony which is in agreement with the alone infallible standard for faith and practice, the Word of God. That does not mean, however, that we cannot use credible testimony subordinate to the Word of God to aid us in determining agreement in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government. The Reformed Presbytery explains, quote, Meanwhile, in exhibiting our testimony, we make no pretensions to infallibility or perfection.

Our design, we hope, is good, but we are very sensible that human weakness and infirmity must always be discernible in our best performances. We do not assert, either with respect to our own or the other testimonies which we approve, that there are no incautious expressions in these compositions. Considering the time and the peculiarly trying circumstances in which the compilers of them existed, and considering that they were men of like passions with others, it would, perhaps, be rather unreasonable to expect so much.

But if none of the precious truths stated and vindicated in these testimonies be given up, if none of the errors or immoralities which they condemn be countenanced, or, in other words, if the whole substance be conscientiously retained, we mean not to differ with those who may plead that some particular modes of expression might be altered for the better. Let it also be carefully observed here that, with regard to the deeds of which we speak, that is, the scriptural testimonies and earnest contendings of Christ's faithful witnesses, we wish to be understood in the same sense as before concerning the confession of faith and the covenants. It is only after diligently perusing, pondering, and comparing these testimonies with the word of God, and after finding them to be founded upon and agreeable unto it, that we mean to rank them among the subordinate standards of our Church.

But as two or more cannot consistently walk together in Church fellowship unless they be agreed in sentiment concerning the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Church, and concerning the proper way of glorifying God upon earth, we reckon it exceedingly requisite that this agreement should be properly ascertained. For that important purpose, amongst others, these testimonies seem to be very much calculated, and it is only to such of them as truly deserve the characteristic epithets of scriptural and

faithful that we require the assent of our Church members. If any are disposed to question the propriety of applying these designations, either to our own or to the rest which we approve, we are always ready, as opportunity offers, to reason the matter with them.

If we can agree it is well, let us strive together for the faith of the gospel and continue steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. If we cannot agree, we must part in peace, for we never entertained the remotest thought that these matters were to be adjusted by any other weapons than those of Scripture and reason under the influence and direction of the Holy Spirit. Again, the explanation and defense of the terms of communion, pages 188 and 189.

Now, compare the above statements of the so-called Stealites, who plead for fallible historical testimony subordinate to God's word, with the doctrine of tradition in the Roman Catholic Church, who pleads for oral and papal infallibility equal to God's word. Lorraine Bettner defines the doctrine of Roman Catholic tradition as follows, quote, We have seen that the most controversial issue between Protestants and Roman Catholics is the question of authority. What is the final seat of authority in religion? And that Protestants hold that the Bible alone is the final rule of faith and practice, while Roman Catholics hold that it is the Bible and tradition as interpreted by the Church.

In actual practice, the Roman Church, since the infallibility decree of 1870, holds that the final seat of authority is the Pope speaking for the Church. That's from Bettner's book Roman Catholicism, page 89. Steal, to the contrary, comments, quote, Let no one, however, imagine that we consider our testimony infallible.

No, it still ranks among the subordinate standards of our covenanted profession, and for years we have asked cooperation in its readjustment, cooperation by those possessing scriptural and covenant qualification. And that's from The Reformation Advocate, volume 1, number 9, page 259. Has Mr. Bacon been fair? Has he made an honest and accurate comparison between us and the Papists? As the reader examines the statements produced by faithful covenanters, the so-called Stealites, is it his impression that we want to put the Bible on a par with anything? In contrast to Mr. Bacon, how does the reader interpret our first term of communion, an acknowledgment of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God and the alone infallible rule of faith and practice? What does the phrase alone infallible mean to him? Does it mean one among many infallible rules? Mr. Bacon is either guilty of willful ignorance or malicious intent.

Perhaps his intellect is so clouded with anger and emotion that he has abandoned all desire to argue with integrity. Dear reader, can anyone fail to see how Mr. Bacon has grossly misrepresented the position of the PRCE, the Reformed Presbytery, and our faithful covenanted forefathers? If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong, then both the men between whom the controversy is shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days. And the judges shall make diligent inquisition and behold, if the witness be a false witness and hath testified falsely against his brother, then ye shall do unto him as he had thought to have done unto his brother, so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.

Deuteronomy 19, 16-19 Consider the testimony for which the faithful and honorable martyr James Rennick suffered and died, and note the similarity between his dying testimony and our terms of communion, and ask yourself, has Mr. Bacon faithfully represented Rennick's position? Dear friends, I die a Presbyterian Protestant. I own the word of God as the rule of faith and manners. I own the confession of faith, larger and shorter catechisms, sum of saving knowledge, directory for public and family worship,

covenants, national and solemn league, acts of general assemblies, and all the faithful contendings that have been for the covenanted reformation.

I leave my testimony approving the preaching in the field and defending the same by arms. I adjourn my testimony against poppourri, prelacy, Erastianism, against all profanity and everything contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness, particularly against all usurpation and encroachments made upon Christ's right, the Prince of the kings of this earth, who alone must bear the glory of ruling his own kingdom, the Church, and in particular against the absolute power affected by his usurper that belongs to no mortal but is the incommunicable prerogative of Jehovah and against his toleration flowing from his mouth. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

Jude, verse 3 What are terms of communion? The Bible is my creed, shouts the untutored professor, but such a principle as following the law False. The Bible is no man's creed. It is the very truth itself.

Since nearly every man who exhibits his intention to join the Church of Christ will make a claim to believe the Bible, we must expect that something more than the expressed words of Scripture are necessary to determine with whom we agree. Terms of communion are terms of agreement in doctrine, principle, and practice, that is, doctrine, worship, discipline, and government. They are statements and explanations of the doctrine and principles necessary for harmonious association.

They are not a substitute for Scripture, but rather a summary explanation of what we understand Scripture to mean. By this means, we testify as to why we have a separate existence from other churches within the nation. If our terms of communion were the same as those of any other known church in our nation, we would be duty-bound to immediately seek to unite into one body.

It is by means of explicitly stated terms of communion that we may glorify God and honestly try to obey His commandment to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, Ephesians 4.3. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, 1 Corinthians 1.10. Using terms of communion to secure harmony and cooperation within the membership of the Church of Christ is an inescapable concept. Whether implicitly or explicitly, every church has terms that extend beyond the expressed proclamations of the Word of God. Those who are deluded into thinking that no further explanation of Scripture is necessary to establish and maintain harmony in the Church will be found among those groups who allow persons of diametrically opposed faith and practice to break down all distinction between truth and error.

Such pretense is satisfied with a mere worshipping together and sitting within the same building, whether or not union of sentiment exists to any significant degree. The aim of such pretended union is finding a way to teach those with few fixed beliefs that true unity consists in learning how to agree to disagree. The way of peace they know not, and there is no judgment in their goings.

They have made them crooked paths. Whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace. Isaiah 59.8 The Reformed Presbytery comments, The doctrine of modern forbearance among persons of opposite belief, inducing them to form a compromise in which they mutually agree to differ, and never more to mention discording tenets, leads, in its native tendency, to the suppression of the truth and the lasting concealment of so many articles of faith as the jarring sentiments may happen to hinge upon.

And what is the amount of this but to banish forever from the faith of the church a great number of precious truths contained in the word of God and designed by Him for the spiritual comfort and edification of the people? And all this to obtain a Catholic union amongst professing Christians at the expense of losing sacred truth? An agreement to divide in matter of faith and practice sounds ill with the injunction to be perfectly joined together in the same mind. And that's from the Reformed Presbytery and Defense of the Terms of Communion, page 152. On the other hand, those who understand that an honest and explicit expression of the meaning of God's word, both stated and applied, is a necessary mean to accomplishing the end of promoting God's glory through unity of doctrine and uniformity of practice, will be found insisting that distinct and clear testimony be asserted prior to any membership or association.

And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers, Acts 2.42. That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the slight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie and wait to deceive, Ephesians 4.14. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing, Philippians 3.16. Our testimony is framed in statements of doctrine, argument, and application of principle to the facts of history. Doctrinal statements such as creeds and confessions exhibit and confirm our agreement in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government. John Anderson explains, Quote, It is vain to say that the confession of our particular church is a human thing, for, candidly interpreted, it may be found to contain nothing but the undoubted truth of God's word.

It is either possible for men to express these truths in their own words, or it is not. If it is not possible, then his words cannot be understood, and all attempts to state, explain, illustrate, or apply them, as in public preaching or writing, are vain, a supposition grossly absurd. But if it be possible for men to express the truths of Scripture in their own words, then the doctrines or instructions contained in the confession may be no other than the truths of God's word, and if they are actually no other, then a church may warrantably require of her members, and of such as desire admission to her communion, a public assent to her whole confession, nor can that assent be refused without impiety.

No church has a right to require her members to receive any of the doctrines or commandments of men, but her Divine Head authorizes her to exact of her members an adherence to all His truths and institutions. In this case, He is saying, He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me. And that's from Anderson's Alexander and Rufus, page 36.

David Steele comments, quote, Even our doctrinal standards we receive from our fathers through history alone. Now I desire the reader to see with his own mental eye that our faith in the genuineness of these doctrinal standards rests solely on human testimony. That is, we believe on the evidence of the generations who have lived before us that our confessions, covenants, and so forth are true copies of those documents.

But our belief, so far, is not saving faith, the faith of God's elect. Having these documents handed down to us through history alone, then we compare them with the Bible. Can we perceive their agreement or disagreement without reasoning? No, surely.

Well, now, if two persons at first sight take different views of any doctrine, will they not at once enter into discussion and their future agreement result from honest argument? Yet neither their agreement in believing the symbols of their profession to be true copies, no, nor even their belief that a certain doctrine is scriptural, constitutes the faith of God's elect. But it does constitute that kind of faith or agreement by

which they can walk together. He's referring to Amos 3.3. I hope the reader can now perceive that the faith of God's elect is not the condition of fellowship in the visible church, and that the visible is distinct from the invisible church.

There are few delusions more prevalent and popular than the old error revived that assurance of grace and salvation is essential to saving faith, and that it is or ought to be one of the terms or in fact the only condition of fellowship in the visible church. The first judicial testimony sanctioned by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in 1761 at Ploughland Head, Scotland is the only one that has the formal nature and possesses the essential parts of such a document. These parts are three, history to supply facts, arguments to test the character of the facts, and doctrinal statement as the rule of trial.

Is it not the function of a witness to state facts? Yes, certainly. And what is history but a statement of facts? These may be true or false. The character and competence of the witness is also to be considered.

The function of the judge is to state and apply the law, and in the application of the law he is assisted by others called jurors or associates. Arguments are addressed by advocates to judge and jury. Now, I hope the reader will see that the greatest, the most important cause in the universe, the conflict between truth and error, between righteousness and unrighteousness, between Christ and Belial, which has been on trial since the time of Cain and Abel, cannot be conducted without history, argument, and doctrinal declaration.

All testimony bearing which lacks any of these three cardinal and essential elements is not merely defective, but decidedly pretentious and unfaithful. And that's from Steele's Reminiscences, pages 202 to 205. Furthermore, Pastor Steele adds, quote, History is a record of past events, and to deserve the name of history the events recorded must be authentic, for cunningly devised fables are not history.

Authentic history is of the essential nature of testimony. A witness on the stand gives a statement of facts, evidence, testimony. So true is it that not only minor matters of litigation but even death and life are in the power of the tongue, Proverbs 18, 21.

A very large portion of the Bible is historical. The first words in it announce one of the most important of historical facts. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

The great importance of this statement appears from the speculations of heathen philosophers and self-styled scientists in our own age. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, 2 Peter 3, 5. Also, many of the psalms are historical, epitomizing the previous facts recorded in the Old Testament that these might be more indelibly impressed upon the mind and heart of God's people, and that they might not forget his works, for then they forget God their Savior, Psalms 16, 13 and 21. Moreover, the origin and progress of the visible church in the world under different dispensations of mercy is matter of historical record.

She is on earth the only immortal corporation, and since the canon of inspired scripture closed, she has had no one infallible historian. Many, indeed, have undertaken to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among the disciples of Christ, but their witness agreed not together, Luke 1.1, Mark 14.56. Those who take as guides in searching the history of the church, Mosheim, Milner or many others, are following false guides whose delineations portray the features of the scarlet lady rather than the lamb's wife. In this historical fact, the almost universal misrepresentations of the spouse of Christ, the intelligent reader may discover the reason for a select class who the Lord Jesus expressly

distinguishes from all others as his witnesses, Revelation 11.3, and the necessity for their testimony.

These and these only are children that will not lie, Isaiah 63.8, and in their mouth is found no guile, Revelation 14.5, hence the necessity of historical testimony. Again, history interprets prophecy, which is an ever-increasing evidence that the Holy Scriptures are from God. How could it be known when the canon was settled but mainly by history? Or how can Antichrist be identified or the witnesses themselves be identified but by history? For the doctrines, the worship, government and discipline of the church have all been misrepresented, counterfeited and even the church herself, Revelation 17.18. Thus it is apparent that the only way by which the witnesses can identify the true church is by comparing doctrine and order with the alone infallible rule, the Bible.

And this comparing involves reasoning, argument. History and argument do, therefore, constitute the church's testimony and supply her terms of communion by which she is distinguished from the flocks of the companions. Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon? For why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? Song of Solomon 1.7. And I remind the listener that I'm still quoting Steele.

Reader, where did you get all the subordinate standards of your published faith, your confession, catechisms and so forth? You will probably say from Westminster, England and from Scotland. But how do you know? For about 46 years ago, had you been a member in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, this question might have puzzled you. About that time we received new light on that matter when the following startling statements were first published by professing Covenanters.

Quote, Even the fact of the existence of the Westminster Assembly has been for several generations a matter merely of human history. Such a faith, that is, in the existence of the Westminster Assembly, could not be the faith of God's elect. Again, that such covenants were ever entered into has no other evidence than mere historical record and consequently ought not to be made an article of the believer's faith, a term of communion.

We have often said, and we now repeat, that there are two kinds of faith by which society is held together. Faith and belief are convertible terms. The kind of testimony, in any case, determines the kind of faith.

Divine faith is founded and rests on divine testimony alone. Whereas, human faith needs as a foundation only human testimony. All human relations in this world are grounded on human evidence, testimony.

Does a husband identify his wife or the wife or husband by divine testimony? Can the parents know their child or the child the parents by the Bible? We insist upon this point, giving precept upon precept, simple though it be, because we know with absolute certainty that even learned divines, including many theological professors, doctors of divinity even, of the covenanting name, have forsaken the covenant cause of Christ through their sinful and shameful ignorance of this matter. Our Reformed ancestors thoroughly understood this point before there was ever a DD known among them. Why did they attach the word infallible to the first term of communion? Because it, and it alone, demands divine faith, all the rest requiring human faith only, because they are fallible, subordinate to the first term.

Did our truly learned and godly progenitors stultify themselves by contradicting their own confession? All synods or councils since the Apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred. Therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as a help in both. Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 31, Section 4 To make this topic in theology and faithful

testimony bearing so plain that he may run that readeth it, and to render those who prefer to continue willingly ignorant inexcusable, we give an illustration adapted, we hope, to the capacity of even babes in Christ.

Q. Do you believe there is such a place as Scotland? A. I think I do, for it is laid down on the school atlas, and whoever made the atlas must have believed in its existence. Q. Do you find Scotland named in the Bible? A. No. Q. Do you believe that Richard Cameron, Donald Cargill, James Rennick, and many others associated with them lived in Scotland in the latter half of the seventeenth century? A. I do, for I have both heard and read about those ministers.

Q. But you do not read of them in the Bible, do you? A. No. Q. Well, have you read of the principles they held and how they applied their principles? A. Yes, I know the principles they propagated and also the way they applied them. Q. Now, were they malefactors as most of their countrymen charged, or were they indeed martyrs of Jesus Christ? A. I believe they were martyrs.

Q. So you believe in human testimony that there is such a place on the earth as Scotland, that Richard Cameron and so forth once lived in Scotland, that they taught certain doctrines and applied them, and for such teaching and practice they suffered a violent death, martyrdom, and yet you find nothing of this in the Bible. Human records alone supply these facts from which, comparing them with the Word of God, you argue and conclude with certainty that those people were witnesses for Christ. Now, if you reject the history of their principles, practice, and sufferings, how can you honestly or rationally claim identity with them? You thereby sever the only link of connection.

You may be pious, a Christian, but not a covenanted Presbyterian, and if your supreme end is your own salvation, you have mistaken the end of your being, Revelation 4.11, and come short of that type of patriotism which the example of the martyr supplies. Hence, 1. The British Covenants are manifestly historical documents. 2. The peculiarity of the National Covenant that it was framed, sworn, and often renewed in Scotland does not destroy its moral character or affect the permanency of its obligation, and the same is true of the Solemn Legion Covenant.

3. The very names of these covenants, yes, and the principles incorporated in them which have given Christian liberty and liberty of conscience to many millions, come to us through the medium of history alone. 4. All who have adhered to these covenants have been known for centuries by historic names and can be identified in no other way as Cameroonians, Cargolites, society people, mountain men, covenanters, and so forth, and by near and necessary consequence, if thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock and feed thy kids besides the shepherd's tents. Song of Solomon 1.8. 5. All who reject history from their conditions of fellowship and yet claim kindred with the Reformed Covenanted Church are deceiving and being deceived.

In this matter they are false witnesses, but we want that through ignorance that they do it. And that's from the Original Covenanter Volume 2, Number 12, pages 353-357. History alone supplies the facts, and argument ascertains the validity of these historical facts by applying doctrinal principles and taking both to the law of God to pass judgment upon them, that is, the them being Acts of General Assembly and Judicial Testimony.

By agreeing that these historical judgments are consistent and agreeable with God's Holy Word, we bear witness of the faithful contendings of our forefathers and exhibit the uniformity of doctrine and practice intended by the covenant of God. This agreement in doctrine and practice, both presently and historically,

forms our mutual bond of fellowship and communion and is the means by which we as brethren voluntarily and honestly resolve to walk together in peace and sit together in communion. Can two walk together except they be agreed? Amos 3.3 Pastor Steele continues, quote, Among consistent Reformed Presbyterians, unity in the faith and uniformity in its application have ever been the terms of their fellowship, and this unity and uniformity are mutually pledged not only as required by the word of God, but as the subordinate standards of both their faith and practice were received by the Church of Scotland.

Of course, the avowed faith, that is, the principles of our covenant fathers and their Christian practice, are known to us only by evidence of uninspired history, and while we view neither their system of faith nor their known practice as infallible, we nevertheless own their principle and engage to follow their footsteps, and both, if need be, with all the solemnity of the oath of God. All this is implied and carried out in covenant renovation. And again, that's from Apostasy in the RPC and A. Steele's Correspondences with James M. Wilson.

Francis Turretin adds, quote, As we have said before, this is the natural right of all well-regulated societies, that they can separate from their own flock unfit and injurious men and the impurities, disgraces, and cancers of their assembly. For the same power by which they have the right of gathering themselves together gives to them the authority to make laws and constitutions for the preservation of the body and for the expulsions of those who will not obey those laws and who, by their rebellion, could taint or corrupt the whole body. And it is a necessity of such kind that without it no society can long exist.

Now, if this is granted to other societies, far more ought it to belong to the Church, which is both holier and better regulated. Nor can they with whom we now argue deny this who acknowledge the magistrate not being a believer or neglecting his duty in restraining and punishing the wicked, that each assembly by associated discipline and mutual covenant can assume for itself a certain power of the magistrate, reduce the disorderly to order, drive the impious and unbelievers from itself, and cause them to keep by themselves, and provide for other things conducing to its own conservation. Now, it makes little difference whether this is called a right of nature or authority flowing from Christ, since the right of nature is derived from no other source than God Himself.

Nay, since the Church is a sacred and religious society instituted by Christ, no one can deny that she is received from Christ Himself whatever power she has, as all other things. For the same one who wished to establish her in the world furnished her also with all things which are necessary for her conservation. That's from Turretin's Institutes of Olympic Theology Volume 3, page 296.

Pastor Steele explains the broad purpose and progressive nature of terms of communion. Quote, As the primary object of terms of communion in the Church is to exhibit the law and covenant of God and then agreement of persons in their apprehension of these, together with their joint and declared resolution to walk accordingly, it would appear that they are a rational expedient to reach the proposed end. Those who oppose creeds and so forth are apt to forget that the acknowledgement of the Holy Scriptures does not itself secure union of sentiment and concert in action.

Besides, the witnesses of Christ in preserving the integrity of their testimony and their own moral identity are necessitated to know and expose the errors and ungodliness which prevail under the name of religion. Hence they are obliged so to direct their testimony as to meet the ever-shifting forms and phases of error and immorality. And as their testimony thus progresses towards its consummation, there is a correspondent bearing given to her terms of communion.

In case of defection she must ascertain from history the footsteps of the flock whereto she attained in time past that she may obey the divine direction, walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing. And that's from Steele's *The Two Witnesses*, Appendix Note C. Let us therefore as many as be perfect be thus minded, and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

Philippians 3, 15 and 16. The Reformed Presbytery comments, quote, This Presbytery believes firmly that the testimony of Christ's Witnesses is necessarily progressive, and that it will assuredly advance in the face of all opposition until it be finished. There is no such anomalous document recognized among the faithful Witnesses as a standing testimony.

All such measures of compromise they must repudiate. And that's from *The Minutes of the Reformed Presbytery, North Union, September 30, 1875*, which are found in *The Reformation Advocate*, page 233. To summarize, what are terms of communion? 1. Terms of communion pertain to the external communion of the visible church and not to the internal communion of the invisible church.

2. Terms of communion are intended to exhibit the law and covenant of God so that members of Christ's visible body can determine whether or not they walk together in unity and uniformity. They are an aid to promoting, preserving, and maintaining the peace and purity of the church and are based solely upon the infallible Word of God. 3. Terms of communion are composed of abstract doctrinal statements such as creeds and confessions, forms and directories.

Though agreeable to God's Word, these standards are all deduced from the Word of God and thus understood to be historical and fallible. 4. Terms of communion also include intrinsically and perpetually binding covenants. Faith without works is dead, as is abstract doctrine without covenant and obligation.

Covenants are deduced from God's Word and thus are subordinate and fallible. 5. Terms of communion include facts of history judged by the Word of God according to the argument of faithful witnesses and judicatories. Historical acts of general assemblies, governments, and notable individuals are identified and judged according to the principles of God's Word.

Faithful contendings are separated from unfaithful contendings and martyrs are remembered and honored for their faithful works created in Christ Jesus from the foundation of the world. These acts of general assembly, judging history according to Scripture, are all fallible and subordinate to the Word of God. 6. All of these terms are progressive and may be restated by qualified assemblies to meet the ever-shifting forms and phases of error and immorality.

Consequently, a standing testimony is not sufficient due to the fact that it does not testify against the current sins and errors of the times. Now, having laid this foundation, let's examine Mr. Bacon's principles according to the words of his own mouth. An examination of Mr. Bacon's Popish principles.

Mr. Bacon's misrepresentations stem from something far more than overwrought emotion, shoddy scholarship, and open lies. False doctrine begets bad manners. It is he who has adopted the Popish position of infallibility, and I will now proceed to prove it out of his own mouth.

To do this, we must first distinguish between the bond of communion in the invisible church, that is, saving faith, and the bond of communion in the visible church, that is, doctrine, argument, and history. These are not the same thing, and like Rome, Mr. Bacon ignorantly confounds the two. I will begin by demonstrating

how 140 years ago Mr. James M. Wilson, herein called the Covenanter, employed the same sinful tactics as Mr. Bacon.

Pastor Steele says, quote, The Covenanter made free to charge to us the damnable heresy of infallibility avowed by the Romish church. Take the charge in some of his select phraseology, a great error, this writer's great error, a strange delusion, human history on a par with Bible truth, the worst form of the Popish doctrine, the radical and most dangerous error, fearful error, putting human compositions on a par with the Bible. These are but some of the charitable and complimentary terms and phrases by which the Covenanter, so called, cast dust in the eyes of the credulous and eluded the point in argument which he could not meet.

And it is to be deplored that a spirit of deep sleep has closed the eyes of many professing witnesses for a covenanted testimony. It is certain that if Scripture light and sound reasoning do not prevail to awaken sinners in Zion, judgments must follow. Then, woe to blind seers and to those who say to the seers, see not.

That's from The Two Witnesses, page 39. To these outlandish charges, Pastor Steele replies, quote, We are constrained, however, to roll off the odium attached to a claim of infallibility and show the reader to whom this fearful error belongs, praying that he who originated it may be brought to renounce the error and repent of former rashness. We should reflect that a real disciple may for a time resist the truth, fundamental truth, in the plan of redemption, while his heart is biased by a clouded intellect, Matthew 16, 21 through 23.

Such reflection would contribute to the right direction of our charity. But to our present purpose, one, distinguish between the ground of saving faith and terms of communion in the visible church. These are not identical.

Rome's error results from confounding these. Her reasoning, if it may be called reasoning, is this. The church receives none to communion but believers, all beyond her pale or unbelievers, heretics.

There is no salvation but in her communion. Therefore, saving faith or the grounds of saving faith should alone constitute the bond of fellowship in the church. In the time of the First Reformation, both in Europe and England, enthusiasts would receive none but true believers.

Luther himself was troubled, perplexed for about three years in dealing with this question after he had obtained clear views of the grounds of saving faith. The covenanter is entangled in the same difficulty. That's from the two witnesses, pages 39 and 40.

But it will be asked, does not saving faith rest on divine testimony? Of course it does. But while saving faith is the single term of communion for the invisible church, where does the Scripture teach that saving faith is a term, and especially the only term of communion in the visible church of Christ? Pastor Steele continues, 2. Distinguish between the visible church and the church invisible. Saving faith, or the ground of saving faith, is the bond of communion in the invisible church.

Not so in the visible church, otherwise hypocrites could not be there. The doctrines arguments, and history of the visible church are all her own deductions from Scripture. None of these has the attribute of infallibility because the church is not infallible.

An effect cannot be greater than its cause. The stream rise higher than its source. Again, from the two witnesses, page 40.

Mr. Bacon says, 2. The difference between the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton and the RPC is not over creedal subscription. We subscribe fully and without reservation to the Westminster Confession of Faith and a larger and shorter catechisms. In fact, our officers are required to declare that we, quote, do sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith approved by formal general assemblies of this church to be the truths of God, and I do own the same as the Confession of my faith, close quote.

This formula, in full, is to be subscribed by probationers before receiving license, and by all ministers, elders, and deacons at the time of their admission. There should be no question at all about the strictness with which we hold the Confession. Any who have known either First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett or the RPC should have no question in that regard.

Defense departed. Here, Mr. Bacon declares insistently how strictly he requires the officers of his church to swear to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the larger and shorter catechisms. By this, he undeniably asserts that he is willing to swear to the truth of fallible doctrine.

Next, he says, quote, but one must remember that the Stelites invest a similar meaning in the term historical testimony that the Romanist does with his inspired tradition of the fathers. That's from Defense Departed. Here, Mr. Bacon further argues, however, that we must never swear to historical testimony because we would place it in the same category of infallibility as the Papists do with their tradition.

Mr. Bacon's position is this. We may swear to the confessions and catechisms truth of doctrine, but we may not swear to historical testimony. Why? David Steele fittingly provides the devastating response.

Quote, but if we cannot swear to the truth of history, what is the reason? We assume that the only reason having the shadow of plausibility is this. We cannot be sure that the history is infallibly true. Well, then, if we can swear to the truth of doctrine, the reason must be because we are sure of its infallibility.

We shall not call this the worst form of Popish error, preferring that the reader pronounce upon it according to his own judgment. That's from the Covenanter, pages 73 and 74, the Correspondences with Wilson. Hence, the Popish error of Mr. Bacon and all who follow in his footsteps is exposed.

He, like James M. Wilson, admits that he will swear to uphold fallible, humanly composed confessions, but he won't swear to uphold fallible, humanly composed historical testimony. While he maintains that swearing to uphold historical testimony is Popish, we wonder why he won't say the same for fallible, humanly composed confessions. Are confessions and historical testimony not equally fallible? Are they not both humanly composed? Are they not the doctrinal form of historical testimony? The only rational explanation for Mr. Bacon's position is this, that he really believes that his confession of faith and its humanly deduced doctrine are infallible.

Thus, it is he who implicitly promotes the infallibility of human compositions. It is he who invests a similar meaning to his confession of faith that the Romanist does with his inspired tradition of the Fathers. He has condemned himself out of the words of his own mouth.

Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, Thou art taken with the words of thy mouth, Proverbs 6, 2. Pastor Steele had the same contention with James M. Wilson 140 years ago, and the argument concluded

with the same result. Quote, Now we have tested the Covenanter's orthodoxy here on this very point, Popish infallibility. We have supposed that the reason why he can swear to the truth of doctrine is because he is sure of its infallibility.

That was a quote from Covenanter, Volume 12, pages 73 to 74. Now, let the reader mark the reply. Quote, Certainly infallible because Bible truth, close quote.

But how shall it be ascertained that the deductions are Bible truth, infallible? Do we receive this infallibility by tradition from our fathers of Scotland or Westminster? No, indignantly we say no. In the very body of the doctrinal standards which they framed, they tell us, Quote, All synods and councils since the apostles' times may err, and many have erred, therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, etc. Surely the assembly at Westminster were not so impious or stupid as to claim an infallibility which they so explicitly denied to all uninspired predecessors.

The Covenanter, Quote, Wonders we do not see that if we show we have a history with our testimony it must be infallible, close quote. Besides separating here between history and testimony, we wonder at his persistence in asserting, by plain implication, the infallibility of a human testimony. We deny before the world the infallibility of our own testimony, the Covenanter's testimony, every other uninspired testimony, and moreover humbly suggest to the Covenanter the danger of encroaching upon the divine prerogatives and charging such impiety upon his neighbors.

It is amazing amidst perpetual displays of supercilious contempt, dogmatic assertion and so forth, that such palpable evidence occurs in almost every paragraph that the Covenanter has yet much to learn of the nature, substance, and arrangement of the terms of communion and the testimony of the Reformed Covenanted Church. And that's from the Two Witnesses, page 40. Evidently, Mr. Bacon also has much to learn about the nature, substance, and arrangement of the terms of communion as well as the proper use of his tongue.

Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge. Proverbs 19:27 This concludes Tape 1 of the Protestant Antidote to Modern Schismatical Disunity, being Chapter 4 of Greg Barrow's book The Covenanted Reformation Defended Against Contemporary Schismatics. Please note that this entire book is free on Stillwaters Revival Books website [www.swrb.com](http://www.swrb.com) It is also available in hardcover from Stillwaters along with a treasure trove of the finest Protestant, Reformed, and Puritan literature available anywhere in the world today.

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