

Debate: Protestant Antidote to Modern Disunity (2/5) Protestant Fundamentals of Separation and Unity

by Greg Barrow

The sermon critiques Mr. Bacon's views on terms of communion, highlighting inconsistencies and contradictions that lead to a Romish distinction between clergy and laity.

Duration: 1:24:02

Scripture: Psalm 96:1, Matthew 6:33, Acts 8:37-39, Romans 14:1, 1 Timothy 3:8-13

Topics: "Church Unity", "Reformed Theology"

Description

In this sermon transcript, the speaker addresses the issue of requiring historical testimony as a term of communion for ministers, elders, deacons, and probationers in the Reformation Presbyterian Church. The speaker points out the hypocrisy of Mr. Bacon, who demands historical testimony from his officers while excluding his congregation from the same standard. The speaker also highlights the inconsistency in Mr. Bacon's argument, as he criticizes faithful covenanters for practicing the same principle. The speaker defends the practice of requiring understanding and agreement with the doctrines before admitting someone to the Lord's table, emphasizing the importance of comparing teachings to the word of God.

Transcript

This is tape two of the Protestant Antidote to Modern Schismatical Disunity, being chapter four of Greg Barrow's book, *The Covenanted Reformation Defended Against Contemporary Schismatics*, narrated by Larry Berger. Please note that this entire book is free on Stillwater Survival Books' website, www.swrv.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 swrv@swrv.com. These tapes are not copyrighted, and we therefore encourage you to copy and distribute them to any and all you believe would be benefited.

We continue our reading. A triple standard in the Reformation Presbyterian Church? In *Defense Departed*, Mr. Bacon states, quote, Let it simply be recorded that the Act, Declaration, and Testimony is itself a book over two hundred pages and expatiates in stelite terms the Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland from the year 1638 to the year 1649 inclusive. That book contains an additional five hundred-plus pages of historical rulings, acts, and testimonies.

Of course, that material contains references to still other material, and so forth. If that amount of reading seems to our readers like a tremendous overhead to require of Christians before admitting them to the Lord's Table, then our readers agree with us. Contrary to what he asserts in *Defense Departed*, in his forgotten letter, fully cited in Appendix A of the *Covenanted Reformation Defended*, Mr. Bacon says that he requires the following of his officers as terms of ministerial communion, quote, We the undersigned Ministers and Elders of the Free Church of Scotland, considering that the Constitution of the said Church, as settled in 1843, is contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith, as approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1647, the First and Second Books of Discipline, the Larger and Shorter Catechisms, the Claim, Declaration, and Protest of 1842, the Protest of 1843, the Act of Separation and Deed of Demission executed in the last mentioned year, the formula appointed to be subscribed by probationers before receiving license, and by all office-bearers at the time of their admission, together with the questions appointed to be put to the same parties at ordination and admission, and the Acts of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland prior to 1843, and that's from the Deed of Separation, cited from a manual of practice in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, based on the practice of the Church of Scotland in her several courts, fourth edition as revised in 1886, pages 116 to 117.

Is it not abundantly evident that Mr. Bacon requires even more explicit historical testimony of his Ministers, Elders, Deacons, and Probationers than the so-called Stelites? Are these not terms of ministerial communion? Are his Elders and Deacons not members of his congregation? How does he explain requiring historical testimony as a term of communion for his officers, while excluding his congregation from the same standard, while at the same time vilifying faithful Covenanters for practicing the same principle? What hypocrisy! Dear reader, this again is a gross oversight on his part. He has again condemned himself and undone most of his own argument in *Defense Departed*, with this one glaring inconsistency. Sadly, it gets worse.

Contradicting himself again, Mr. Bacon sets forth yet another standard of communion, this time apparently for non-officers, when he says, quote, "...this point in the six terms of communion seems like a reasonable place to put something about a personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ. After all, in Acts 8.37, that was the only term of communion that Philip the Evangelist seemed concerned to enforce." Again from *Defense Departed*. Which is it, Mr. Bacon? On the one hand, you call for a simple profession of faith as the only term of communion for your members, and on the other, you require your officers to swear ordination vows that include hundreds of pages of historical testimony.

Let the reader note that Mr. Bacon is clearly speaking out of both sides of his mouth. Again I ask, are his elders and deacons not members of his church? Do they have some special status and requirement for admittance to the Lord's Table that his members do not share? Clearly, Mr. Bacon requires historical testimony for his ministerial terms of communion, but simple profession for the rest of his members and visitors. Are the substance of the RPC's ordination vows not the same as his terms of communion? What would happen to an officer of the FPCR if they obstinately and willfully opposed the Acts of General Assembly, FPCR session, or any of the historical deeds cited above? What would happen if they obstinately broke any one of their ordination vows? Would they not be judged scandalous and barred from communion until such time as they repented? Therefore, the substance of the RPC's ordination vows are clearly terms of communion, although Mr. Bacon doesn't seem to realize it yet.

Next, if a minister, elder, or deacon could not come to the communion table in the FPCR because of obstinately speaking against one of the above-mentioned articles, why would it be all right for a member of

the Church to do so? Does Mr. Bacon advocate one standard of faith for his elders and a different standard of faith for his members? Are there two or three different moral standards in the Reformation Presbyterian Church? It appears so. The members of the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett are not even required to swear to endeavor to uphold their own Church standards before coming to communion. This triple standard, such as is commonly practiced in the Christian churches of our nation, makes a popish distinction between the clergy and the laity.

The same terms of communion ought to apply to officers and members alike. May members of the FPCR come to the communion table if they obstinately teach premillennialism to others? How about if they teach others that singing exclusively psalms in public worship is wrong and singing hymns with instrumental accompaniment in public worship is right? Apparently, these people can come to Mr. Bacon's communion table, since according to Mr. Bacon, a simple profession of faith, like the Ethiopian eunuch, is the only term of agreement necessary. How does Mr. Bacon reconcile that with the fact that he believes that teaching such doctrines are scandalous? Will he allow those who are openly scandalous doctrinally to his communion table? Yes, it appears so, since he desires to be so generous, more generous than has to allow a simple profession of faith to be his only term of communion.

Furthermore, not only is there a Romish distinction made between the clergy and the laity, but in reality, visitors who come to Rowlett are judged with one standard while the congregation is judged with another. The members of the congregation of FPCR would be censured for obstinately and publicly promoting such doctrine as dispensationalism, Arminianism, independency, etc., while a visitor from a Baptist, Arminian, or independent church would be welcomed at the communion table based upon their simple profession of faith. Why shouldn't Arminian ministers and visitors be allowed to come to the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett if a simple profession of faith is all that is required? And if they are not welcomed to the communion table of the FPCR, then we must ask, why not? Surely most Arminians will say as much as the Ethiopian eunuch.

As you can see, false doctrine breeds confusion and tyranny in the discipline of the church. True liberty of conscience is destroyed by popish practice lurking under the cloak of tolerance and pretended unity. Ministers have communion on one standard, members on another, and finally visitors on yet another.

Each descending standard becomes more latitudinarian and more damaging to the preservation of sound doctrine and uniform practice. Does Mr. Bacon really require the simple profession of faith of the Ethiopian eunuch, Acts 8, 35-37? Does Mr. Bacon only have one simple term of communion? His terms of communion are never explicitly stated, though I will attempt to infer what he requires from his defense departed. His practice so contradicts his principle that it is hard to tell what he believes.

Nevertheless, it will become clear as we proceed that Mr. Bacon's thinking is so far off that, even if we give him every benefit of the doubt, he will still be left holding to papist principles. An Examination of Mr. Bacon's Principles in Regards to his Terms of Communion Mr. Bacon's system of toleration can be deduced from the words of his own mouth when he says, 1. In quoting the 1560 Confession in defense of the PRCE's status as a true Church of Christ, we do not mean that we agree with the terms of communion of the PRCE or that everyone the section of the PRCE has barred from the communion table has been justly so barred. We believe their view of closed communion to be an error, but we do not believe it is an error that prevents them from rightly being called a true Church of Christ.

2. Note also what a far cry steals position regarding the necessity of uninspired history as part of the terms of communion is from the simple profession of faith of the Ethiopian eunuch and of Peter. 3. This point in the six terms of communion seems like a reasonable place to put something about a personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ. After all, in Acts 8.37, that was the only term of communion that Philip the Evangelist seemed concerned to enforce.

4. Finally, Paul teaches that females who have been baptized into Christ are also communicant members of the Church. 5. Like Paul, I fear that these human additions to the requirements of the Lord's table are corrupting minds from the simplicity that is in Christ. From these quotes, we can deduce that Mr. Bacon holds the following position regarding terms of communion.

First, negatively. A. He does not agree with the six terms of communion of the VRCE and believes our view of close communion to be an error. Two, positively.

A. A personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ was all that Philip required as a term of communion, and he, the eunuch, answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Acts 8.37. B. Though Mr. Bacon does not explicitly say which profession of Peter he was referring to, I think it is reasonable to infer that he meant Peter's simple profession of faith as found in Matthew 16.16. And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. C. All who are baptized are to be admitted to communion, except, of course, infants and children who have not made a profession of faith. This is significant in that, except as it applies to covenant children, Mr. Bacon is equating the qualifications necessary for both baptism and the Lord's Supper.

As the reader shall see in the following examination, this is a serious error. D. Human additions to the requirements of the Lord's Table are corrupting minds from the simplicity of Christ. First, I would note that the Ethiopian eunuch did not receive communion, but was simply baptized in Acts 8.36-38. The reader is asked to consult the passage to see if this has anything to do with admission to the Lord's Supper.

The only reason Mr. Bacon would cite this in regard to terms of communion would be because he equates the qualifications for baptism and communion. And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water, and the eunuch said, See, here is water. What doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest.

And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized them, Acts 8.36-38. Naftali Press has done an excellent job of republishing the classic book entitled *Just Divinum Regimenus Ecclesiasticae*, that is, *The Divine Rite of Church Government*, by the London ministers, and therein we are furnished with an applicable commentary to undo Mr. Bacon's ill-conceived notions regarding the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch. One would hope that in the future Mr. Bacon's publisher would instruct him more clearly in what his republished books contain.

Besides, by the ordinance of baptism we are all admitted into one body, the general visible church, 1 Corinthians 12.12, and some were baptized into the general body that thereby were not admitted into any particular church as the eunuch in Acts 8. How do terms of communion apply to someone who has yet to be admitted to a particular church? How would the eunuch partake of communion outside of a particular church? Furthermore, Peter's profession, Matthew 16.16, is entirely unrelated to a communion service. Neither of these instances provide Mr. Bacon with any proof of his position. Second, I would point out that, by his own words, Mr. Bacon appears to require nothing more than a simple profession of faith to admit

someone to the Lord's table.

A simple profession of which particular statements of faith he doesn't say. I assume that this profession would have to include at least some of the so-called simple fundamentals of the faith. One would hope that he would at least inquire as to whether someone is Trinitarian, believes the Bible is God's word, or whether the prospective communicant believes in the bodily return of our Lord and Savior.

Whatever his minimal standard is, we can by his own words, as cited above, reasonably infer that Mr. Bacon is promoting an extreme form of latitudinarian communion, and conversely that he unabashedly denounces the idea of a close communion. John Anderson comments on this latitudinarian scheme, quote, In the first place, it is a sectarian communion. Its existence supposes that there are sects and parties in the Catholic, that is, universal church, and that the variety of men's opinions, habits, and feelings is sufficient to justify the continuance of them.

Scriptural sacramental communion, that is, close communion, admits of no sects, requiring all partakers of it to be one bread, one body, perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. In the second place, it is an unfaithful and dishonest scheme. It is unfaithful to the Lord Jesus, for under the pretext of expressing love to him at his table, it regards the denial of some of his truths or institutions, however openly or obstinately persisted in, as a trivial matter, deserving no church censure.

When the advocates for this scheme represent the truths and institutions of Christ that are publicly opposed by corrupt churches as sectarian and local peculiarities, they are chargeable with great unfaithfulness to the Lord Christ, to these churches, and to the whole Catholic Church. They are chargeable with attempting to heal the wound of God's people slightly, saying, Peace, peace, while there is no peace. Thirdly, it is a backsliding scheme.

There is nothing more incumbent on a particular church than steadfastness in maintaining all the articles of divine truth stated in her confession and testimony. But as soon as the practice obtains in any particular church of having sacramental communion with the open and obstinate opposers of any of these articles, that church thereby falls from her steadfastness and is chargeable in some measure with apostasy. Hence, we teach that all churches which do not base their communion upon faithful and explicit terms of agreement are to be avoided and withdrawn from.

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. Romans 16, 17. Sadly, Mr. Bacon says, we believe their view of closed communion to be an error.

Therefore I, without any reservation, maintain that Mr. Bacon is a minister who ought to be avoided and withdrawn from. His scheme is unfaithful and leads the children of God into backsliding and sectarian sin. It is an inherently schismatic view, and we will not and cannot countenance such ministers who are dividing and wounding the church of Jesus Christ.

Third, we in the PRCE teach that the ground of the church's profession is based upon God's word alone, though we recognize that the acts and modes of preserving and maintaining the true religion in the visible church, as to well-being, are necessarily human. Mr. Bacon, in his arrogance and ignorance, labels us as popes and pharisees for adhering to human constitutions that are agreeable to the word of God. By means of our terms of communion, we are simply explaining and applying our alone infallible rule of faith, while neither adding nor detracting from its authority.

Why does Mr. Bacon deride us for that which is unavoidable, especially when he clearly does the same thing? Thomas McCree powerfully explains, but while the matter, as well as the ground, of the church's profession is, properly speaking, divine, the acts and modes of professing and maintaining it are necessarily human. When false and corrupt views of Christianity become general, it is necessary that confessions of the truth in opposition to them be embodied in formal and written documents, which may be known and read by all men. It is not enough that Christians confess their faith individually, to comply with divine commands, to answer to their character as church members, and the better to gain the ends in view.

It is requisite that they make a joint and common confession. When the truths contained in the word of God have been explicitly stated and declared, in opposition to existing errors, by the proper authority in a church, an approbation of such statements and declarations may be required as a test of soundness in the faith and Christian fidelity, without any unwarrantable imposition on conscience or the most distant reflection on the perfection of Scripture. The same arguments which justify the use of creeds and confessions will also justify particular declarations or testimonies directed against errors and corruptions prevailing in churches which still retain scriptural formularies.

Those who allow the former cannot consistently condemn the latter. It is not sufficient to entitle persons to the character of faithful witnesses of Christ, that they profess a general adherence to the Bible or a sound confession of faith, provided they refuse or decline to direct and apply these seasonably against present evils. It might as well be said that the soldier has acquitted himself well in battle because he had excellent armor lying in a magazine or a sword hanging by his side, although he never brought forth the armor nor drew the sword from its scabbard.

The means alluded to are the unsheathing of the sword and the wielding of the armor of the church. So far from setting aside the authority of Scripture, they are necessary for keeping a sense of it alive on the spirits of men and for declaring the joint views and animating the combined endeavors of those who adhere to it. By explaining and applying a rule, we do not add to it nor do we detract from its authority.

Mr. Bacon charges us with requiring implicit faith when he says, The PRCE 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, where in chapter 20 section 2 it states, the requiring of an implicit faith and an absolute and blind obedience is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also. And that's from Defense Departed.

In reality, it is Mr. Bacon's latitudinarian communion that is founded in ignorance, delusion and blind obedience. Consequently, it is his pretended unity that attacks true liberty of conscience. Mr. Bacon's solution is one in which Christians are to attend the Lord's Supper based upon simple profession or fundamentals only.

The distinction between what is fundamental and non-fundamental is not made in the word of God and thus remains vague and arbitrary in the minds of church officers. This emphasis upon the necessary truths of scripture, while helpful to didactic theology, is not useful, indeed it is dangerous in this connection. When applied to the communion table, the tendency of this emphasis is to lead others to consider that some truths of scripture are of little or no importance.

Consequently, these little truths are considered too minute to be contended for, and they are relegated to realms of indifference and minutia. Those who promote this unscriptural emphasis constantly whine about

conscientious Christians being overly concerned with so-called minutia, such as singing psalms, Sabbath-keeping and instrumental music in public worship. Under the cloak of charity, forbearance and peace, the so-called neutral principle of upholding the fundamentals only becomes a law by which the tolerance of all others is judged.

The law of communion by fundamentals only, not being founded upon nor determinable by scripture, becomes a law to be believed upon the authority of the church only, and thus a certain degree of blind obedience is required to observe it. This is the scheme proposed by Mr. Bacon, and as we have observed repeatedly, his own accusations are continually recoiling upon his own head. According to his principles and to his law of communion by fundamentals only, he should be holding communion with the Church of Rome.

He makes the supposed state of an individual profession the rule by which one is received or rejected, and denies that the communion table is fenced by the doctrinal and practical testimony of the church corporate. When a Roman Catholic comes to his communion table and professes personal faith like the Ethiopian eunuch, Mr. Bacon should, if he were to be consistent with his doctrine, receive this Roman Catholic professor. If he allows a Roman Catholic to partake individually, I cannot see what would stop him from proceeding to the logical conclusion of actually partaking with the Church of Rome herself.

This law of simple profession is simply a dangerous error which shifts the ground of external church communion from a corporate agreement in faith and practice to a law requiring the toleration of sectarian individual doctrine and practice. The concealment of truth for the sake of peace is certainly as dangerous as an outright propagation of lies. Latitudinarian schemes of communion, though often coupled with the best intentions, are direct assaults upon the Christian liberty of God's people and the purity of the visible church.

The Danger of Latitudinarian Schemes of Union and Fellowship Thomas McCree further explains, and this is a lengthy quote, Mournful as the divisions of the church are, and anxious as all its genuine friends must be to see them cured, it is their duty to examine carefully the plans which may be proposed for attaining this desirable end. We must not do evil that good may come, and there are sacrifices too costly to be made for the procuring of peace with fellow Christians. Is it necessary to remind you that unity and peace are not always good, nor assure an infallible mark of a true and pure church? We know that there is a church which has long boasted of her Catholic unity, notwithstanding all the corruptions which pollute her communion, and that within her pale the whole world, called Christian, once enjoyed a profound repose, and it could be said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language, Genesis 11, 6. It was a union and peace founded in ignorance, delusion, implicit faith, and a base subjection to human authority, and supported by the arts of compulsion and terror.

But there are other methods by which Christians may be deceived, and the interests of religion deeply injured, under the pretext, or with the view of uniting its friends. Among these I know none more imposing, nor from which greater danger is to be apprehended in the present time, than that which proceeds on the scheme of principles usually styled latitudinarian. It has obtained this name because it proclaims an undue latitude in matters of religion, which persons may take to themselves or give to others.

Its abettors make light of the differences which subsist among religious parties, and propose to unite them on the common principles on which they are already agreed, in the way of burying the rest in silence, or of stipulating mutual forbearance and charity with respect to everything about which they may differ in

opinion or in practice. Some plead for this on the ground that the several professions of religion differ very little from one another, and are all conducive to the happiness of mankind and the honor of God, who is pleased with the various diversified modes in which men profess their regard to Him, provided only they are sincere in their professions. A principle of deformity which, however congenial to the system of polytheism, is utterly aversive of a religion founded on the unity of the divine nature and will, and on a revelation which teaches us what we are to believe concerning God and what duty He requires of us.

But the ground on which this plan is ordinarily made to rest is a distinction made among the articles of religion. Some of these are called essential or fundamental or necessary or principal, others circumstantial or non-fundamental or unnecessary or less important. The former, it is pleaded, are embraced by all true Christians, the latter form the subjects of difference among them and ought not to enter into the terms of ecclesiastical fellowship.

On this principle, some of them would conciliate and unite all the Christian denominations, not accepting Papists, Arians, and Socinians, while others restrict their plan to those called evangelical, who differ mainly in their views and practice as to the worship, order, and discipline of the Church. The distinction on which this scheme rests is itself liable to objections which appear insuperable. It is not warranted by the word of God, and the most acute of its defenders have never been able to state it in a manner that is satisfactory or which renders it subservient to any practical use.

The Scripture indeed speaks of certain truths which may be called the foundation, because they are first laid and others depend on them. First principles are elementary truths which are to be taught before others, but their priority or posteriority in point of order, in conception or instruction, does not determine the relative importance of doctrines or their necessity in order to salvation, far less does it determine the propriety of their being made to enter into the religious profession of Christians and Christian churches. There are doctrines, too, which intrinsically and on different accounts may be said to have a peculiar and superior degree of importance, and this, so far as known, may properly be urged as a motive for our giving the more earnest heed to them.

It is not, however, their comparative importance or utility, but their truth and the authority of Him who has revealed them, which is the formal and proper reason of our receiving, professing, and maintaining them. And this applies equally to all the contents of a divine revelation. The relations of truths, especially those of supernatural kind, are manifold and incomprehensible to us.

It is not our part to pronounce a judgment on them, and if we could see them as God does, in all their extent and at once, we would behold the lesser joined to the greater, the most remote connected with the primary, by necessary and indissoluble links, and altogether conspiring to form one beautiful and harmonious and indivisible whole. Whatever God has revealed we are bound to receive and hold fast whatever He has enjoined we are bound to obey, and the liberty which we dare not arrogate to ourselves we cannot give to others. It is not, indeed, necessary that the confession or testimony of the church, meaning by this that which is explicitly made by her, as distinguished from her declared adherence to the whole word of God, should contain all truths.

But then any of them may come to be included in it when opposed and endangered, and it is no sufficient reason for excluding any of them that they are less important than others, or that they have been doubted and denied by good and learned men. Whatever forbearance may be exercised to persons, the word of the Lord, in all its extent, must have free course and be glorified. And any act of men, call it forbearance or

what you will, which serves as a screen and protection to error or sin, and prevents it from being opposed and removed by any proper means, is contrary to the divine law and consequently is destitute of all intrinsic force and validity.

There are truths also which are more immediately connected with salvation, but who will pretend to fix those propositions which are absolutely necessary to be known in order to salvation by all persons of all capacities and in all situations, or say how low a God of grace and salvation may descend in dealing with particular individuals? Or, if we could determine this extreme point, who would say that it ought to fix the rule of our dealing with others or the extent of a church's profession of faith? Is nothing else to be kept in view in settling articles of faith and fellowship but what may be necessary to the salvation of sinners? Do we not owe a paramount regard to the glory of God in the highest, to the edifying of the body of Christ, to the advancing of the general interests of religion, and to the preserving, in purity, of those external means by which, in the economy of providence and grace, the salvation of men, both initial and progressive, may be promoted to an incalculable extent from age to age? In fine, there is reason for complaining that the criteria or marks given for determining these fundamental or necessary articles are uncertain or contradictory. It is alleged that they are clearly taught in Scripture. This is true of others also.

That they are few and simple. This is contradicted by their own attempts to state them. That they are such as the Scripture has declared to be necessary.

Why, then, have we not yet been furnished with a catalogue of them? That they are such as embraced by all true Christians. Have they a secret tact by which they are able to discover such characters? If not, can they avoid running into a vicious circle in reasoning by first determining who are true Christians by their embracing certain doctrines, and then determining that these doctrines are fundamental because they are embraced by persons of that description? Many who have contributed to give currency to this scheme have been actuated, I have no doubt, by motives which are in themselves highly commendable. They wish to fix the attention of men on matters confessedly of great importance, and were anxious to put an end to the dissensions of Christians by discovering a mean point in which the views of all might harmoniously meet.

But surely those who cherish a supreme regard for divine authority will be afraid of contemning or of teaching others to think lightly of anything which bears its sacred impress. They will be disposed carefully to reconsider an opinion or an interpretation of any part of Scripture which seems to imply in it that God has given men a power to dispense with some of His own laws, and they will be cautious of originating or countenancing plans of communion that may involve a principle of such a complexion. These plans are more or less dangerous according to the extent to which they are carried, and the errors or abuses which may prevail among the parties which they embrace.

But however limited they may be, they set an example which may be carried to any extent. So far as it is agreed and stipulated that any truth or duty shall be sacrificed or neglected, and that any error or sin shall be treated as indifferent or trivial, the essence of Latitudinarianism is adopted, room is made for further advancements, and the way is prepared for ascending through successive generations to the very highest degree in the scale. Another plan of communion, apparently opposite to the former, but proceeding on the same general principle, has been zealously recommended, and in some instances reduced to practice in the present day.

According to it, the several religious parties are allowed to remain separate, and to preserve their distinct constitution and peculiarities, while a species of partial or occasional communion is established among them. This plan is liable to all the objections which lie against the former, with the addition of another that is peculiar to itself. It is inconsistent and self-contradictory.

It strikes against the radical principles of the unity of the church, and confirms schism by law, while it provides that the parties shall remain separate, at the same time that it proceeds on the supposition that there is no scriptural or conscientious ground of difference between them. And Barrow notes that this is Mr. Bacon's plan of communion. By defending such occasional conformity, English dissenters at a former period contradicted the reasons of their dissent from the establishment, and exposed themselves to their opponents.

For where communion is lawful, it will not be easy to vindicate separation from the charge of schism. The world has for some time beheld annually the spectacle of Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, Methodists, and Seceders, sitting down together at the Lord's table, and then going away and maintaining communion through the remainder of the year on their own separate and contradictory professions. Nay, it has of late become the practice to keep, in the same church, an open communion table for Christians of different denominations on one part of the day, and a closed one for those of a particular sect on the other part of the day, while the same ministers officiate, and many individuals communicate on both these occasions.

And all this is cried up as a proof of liberality, and a mind that has freed itself from the trammels of party. It is difficult to say which of these plans is most objectionable. By the former, that church which is most faithful, and has made the greatest progress in reformation, must always be the loser, without having the satisfaction to think that she has conveyed any benefit to her new associates.

It behoves her profession and managements to yield, and to be reduced to the standard of those societies which are defective and less reformed. And thus, by a process opposite to that mentioned by the Apostle, those who have built on the foundation gold, silver, and precious stones, are the persons who shall suffer loss. By the latter scheme, all the good effects which might be expected from warrantable and necessary separations are lost, without the compensation of a rational and effective conjunction.

Purity of communion is endangered, persons are encouraged to continue in connection with the most corrupt churches, and the faithful testimony against errors and abuses, with all consistent attempts to have them removed or prevented, is held up to odium and reproach, as dictated by bigotry, and as tending to revive the old dissensions, and to defeat the delightful prospect of those halcyon days of peace which are anticipated under the reign of mutual forbearance and charity. And that was from Thomas McCree's *Unity of the Church*, which is Presbyterian Heritage Publications reprint, pages 106 to 118, and it's also free under the free books section of Stillwater's Revival Books webpage, www.swrb.com. As you can see, it is not necessary to quote a Covenanter to expose Mr. Bacon's latitudinarian tendencies. Those who boast of liberal forbearance are typically most liberal in spewing out severe accusations upon those who plead for true liberty of conscience.

It is an undoubted maxim of our tolerant age that there are none so violently intolerant as the so professedly tolerant man who contends with those who are steadfast in the true religion. Their harshest criticism and sharpest intolerance is reserved for those who have the courage to tell them they are wrong. It is one thing to recognize the relative importance of fundamental and non-fundamental truth, and quite

another to say that the former are the only truths which the Church of Christ is bound to confess and require as a profession at our communion table.

Mr. Bacon must recognize that truth is no enemy to peace, and that human constitutions, when agreeable to God's word, are no enemy to liberty of conscience. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies, Psalm 25.10. 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 an implicit faith and an absolute and blind obedience is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also.

That's the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 20, Section 2. The Apostles' Creed as a Term of Communion? For the sake of further discussion, let us conjecture that all Mr. Bacon requires for a term of communion is a simple profession and understanding of the Apostles' Creed. Isn't that an historical document which is both fallible and uninspired? It sets forth the fundamental doctrines of the Church of Christ in beautiful order and brevity, but is it inspired? Would Mr. Bacon actually use a fallible historical document as a term of communion? If he can use the Apostles' Creed, then all his objections against our terms of communion fall to the ground, and all his accusations recoil upon his own head. This historical creed teaches things agreeable to God's word, though in every case they are uninspired deductions from Scripture.

This one fact, the fact that the Apostles' Creed is not inspired, completely overthrows Mr. Bacon's slanderous arguments. Where can he run? Does he plead for a deduction from Scripture even more simple than the Apostles' Creed? Whatever he chooses can be said to be uninspired and fallible, short of repeating the Scriptures word for word. What should we ask if Mr. Bacon used the Apostles' Creed or something like it as his sole subordinate standard for admission to the communion table? Is it humanly composed? Yes, man accurately deduced it from Scripture.

Does it qualify as a human addition in composition? Yes, it was written by man. In its present form, it is of no later date than the fourth century. Is it historical and uninspired? Yes.

Thus, even the Apostles' Creed could not qualify as a subordinate standard for examination to come to the Lord's Supper. In fact, to be absolutely consistent with Mr. Bacon's notions, no profession of faith in the fallible, uninspired words of men could be used to examine one who comes to the Lord's Supper. Is the Apostles' Creed the standard Mr. Bacon uses for his terms of communion? It is difficult to tell, given his present state of confusion and inherent self-contradiction.

His officers have one standard, his members another, and sadly his visitors have yet another. For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the Lord. Therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flock shall be scattered, Jeremiah 10.21. Again, for Mr. Bacon to use the Apostles' Creed, or any other humanly deduced creed, and then to reject our terms of communion because they are fallible, is to imply that his deduction in his creed is infallible.

No matter which way he turns, he finds himself in the popish camp and supping with the whore of Babylon. Whether he has failed to distinguish between the visible and the invisible church, or whether he lifts his own scriptural deductions to a level of infallibility, he sits on the beast. Either way, his argument is proved entirely erroneous.

Mr. Bacon's error lies in the fact that he cannot seem to understand that uninspired deductions are binding when they agree with the Word of God. If history is judged correctly, and is agreeable to the truth of God's Word, then it is reasonable and fair to require it as a bond of agreement and a term of communion. The same goes for any uninspired and true deduction from Scripture.

Truth is a binding term of communion in whatever form it comes. Does joining the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton, PRCE, require implicit faith? Mr. Bacon writes, 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.

They, the Stelites, assure us that we must simply agree to it, that is, all their subordinate standards, and they will explain to us later what it says. This is no difference in principle from the Papist who explains to the Protestant, just come home to Mother Church and accept her historic footprints based upon history and argument as conditions of fellowship. We will explain all that this entails as we think you have a need to know.

Here the PRCE is slanderously portrayed as requiring implicit faith by requiring people to agree to doctrine they don't yet understand. Is this true? First accept the doctrine, then understand it later. Simply agree to it, and we will explain it later.

That is what Mr. Bacon represents as our view. We have neither required nor asked such an unlawful thing from any prospective member of our church. Membership in the PRCE is based upon a simple, voluntary, sincere profession of faith, and this is not to be confused with an examination based upon our terms of communion.

Simple profession of faith precedes examination for communion, and Mr. Bacon entirely confounds the long-standing order of the Reformed churches when he attempts to connect the two. New converts are brought into the schoolhouse of Christ, the visible church, to receive feeding and instruction from good shepherds who make them ready to partake worthily of the Lord's table. These babes join the church and are baptized in their simplicity, but must have their ignorance removed so that they might be given the understanding to communicate properly and worthily, remember and discern the body and blood of the Lord.

This is done to protect them from their own ignorance and to protect the congregation from tolerating error and false doctrine around the Lord's table. How does one become a member of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton, PRCE? Samuel Rutherford describes the three primary prerequisites of becoming a member of the PRCE. Though the church have not a positive certainty of the judgment of charity that they are regenerated, so they be known, that is, so long as they be known, one, to be baptized, two, that they be free of gross scandal, three, and profess that they be willing hearers of the doctrine of the gospel.

Such a profession as giveth evidences to the positive certainty of the judgment of charity of sound conversion is not required to make and constitute a true visible church. In addition to these three prerequisites, we require that prospective members agree not to speak publicly or act scandalously contrary to the publicly professed standards of the church, and we ask if they are willing to abide by all lawful rulings of the session of the PRCE. This is all that is required to become a member of the PRCE, a simple profession of faith combined with a life free of gross scandal and an agreement to endeavor not to be publicly scandalous in the future.

We have had people become members of the church within one or two weeks of their professed conversion. These babes are baptized, if necessary, brought under the oversight of the session and nurtured by the sound preaching of the word of God. We have never asked anyone to agree to something they do not yet understand, nor would we ever counsel someone to accept a doctrine before explaining it to them and giving them a chance to compare our teaching to the word of God.

By representing us in this light, Mr. Bacon has shown how unacquainted he is with our profession and practice. As seems to be his practice, it appears that he would rather not be confused by the facts, so he simply invents his own version of the story. It is much easier to dupe the general public with contrived stories than actually deal with the reality of the situation, and Mr. Bacon has evidently chosen this short-sighted approach.

His scandalous lies and distortions would have worked well had we chosen not to answer. Notwithstanding Mr. Bacon's own lack of integrity, I would like to ask the reader another question. In the PRCE membership process described above, which typically takes 30 minutes or less, where did we ask someone to agree to something or to affirm something that they didn't believe? We ask for a simple profession of faith and an agreement to endeavor not to speak or act contrary to the truths of God's word as found in our subordinate standards.

Where do we require implicit faith? On the contrary, we counsel all of our members not to believe anything until they have confirmed it by the alone infallible rule of faith and practice, that is, God's word. Francis Turgeon comments, On account of the abuse of a thing, its use is not to be given up. Nor, if the pontifical tyranny should be avoided, should we on that account pass over to the other extreme of the confusion and anarchy of the Anabaptists.

Rather, we must hold the mean of lawful ecclesiastical and ministerial power between these two extremes. And that's from the Institutes of Elenctic Theology, Volume 3, page 281. When we indicate that prospective members must not speak or act contrary to the infallible word of God and the fallible and subordinate standards of our church, we are simply requiring them to walk obediently up to their present degree of light.

If someone should ignorantly, through inexperience or misunderstanding, say or do something contrary to our standards, they would be patiently taught the nature of their error from God's holy word. The membership requirements of the PRCE are exceedingly simple and can be attested to by any present member of our congregation. Our membership requirements are no different than that required of the Ethiopian eunuch, that is, simple profession of faith, baptism, and freedom from gross scandal.

Mr. Bacon, again, through his failure to do his homework, has misrepresented both our belief and practice. One phone call would have kept Mr. Bacon from his folly. It seems he would rather assert his own imagination than investigate our practice.

Next, each person who makes a simple profession of faith has a right to the signs and seals of the covenant of grace, that is, baptism and Lord's Supper. Because someone has a right to the signs and seals of the covenant doesn't mean that they are automatically qualified to enjoy those privileges. God requires all professing Christians to meet certain qualifications before they may lawfully partake of his ordinances.

To illustrate, in Canada, assuming that a legitimate government was ruling, each child who is born within Canadian boundaries has a right to vote. Though they possess the right to vote, they cannot exercise that right until they meet the qualifications of Canadian law. When they turn eighteen years old, they may then exercise their right.

Thus, a distinction is made between possessing a right and exercising a right. While little qualification is needed to possess a right, more is required for its lawful exercise. In the visible Church of Christ, membership involves different privileges for which one must be duly qualified.

To hear the word regularly preached does not automatically qualify a person for baptism, nor does being baptized automatically qualify a person to attend the Lord's table. Each privilege of the Church has its own distinctive prerequisites. Samuel Rutherford explains, Some be members of the visible Church properly and strictly, such as are admitted to all the seals of the covenant and holy things of God.

Others are less properly, or in an inferior degree, members of the visible Church, such as are baptized and are ordinary hearers of the word, but not admitted to the Lord's Supper. Of old, the catechumens were such. As there are degrees of citizens, some having all the privileges of the city, and some only right to some privileges, but not to all three.

Some have right to all, and are most properly, in the visible Church. That's from Rutherford's *Right of Presbyteries*, page 268. What Rutherford just finished saying gives us an important summary of the privileges of Church membership.

He explains that all members do not have equal access to the signs and seals of the covenant. Some have a right to all privileges, while others have a right to exercise all privileges. I am saying the same thing as Rutherford, but in slightly different terms.

Though we may possess the right to all the privileges of the visible Church, by virtue of our profession of faith, visible interest in the covenant of grace, and freedom from visible scandal, we are only entitled to exercise those rights after we have met the visible qualifications set down in the word of God. George Gillespie makes the same distinction, remote right versus proximate, that is, nearest right. There is *jus ad rem* and *jus in re*.

There is a remote right, or right in *actu primo*, that is, such a right, relation, or habitude, as entitleth a person to such a privilege or benefit to be enjoyed and possessed by him when he shall be capable and fit to enjoy it. Such is the right of a minor to his inheritance. Such was the right of lepers of old to their tents, houses, and goods when themselves were put out of the camp, and might not, during their leprosy, actually enjoy their own habitations.

There is again a proximate right, or a right in *actu secundo*, which rendereth a person actually and presently capable of that thing which he is entitled to. What are the qualifications for baptism? Qualification number one, profession of faith. When a person becomes a member of the church, he does so by simple profession of faith.

The visible church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel, not confined to one nation as before under the law, consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion together with their children, and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. Those born within the church have, by their birth, interest in the

covenant, and therefore ought to be baptized. Visible profession of faith gives a visible interest in the covenant of grace.

Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized. Qualification number two, freedom from obstinate scandal, doctrinal or practical. Larger Catechism, that is, the Westminster Larger Catechism, question number 166 asks, unto whom is baptism to be administered? Answer, baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, till they profess their faith in Christ and obedience unto him.

But infants descending from parents, either both or but one of them, professing faith in Christ, that is, the parents, and obedience to him, are in that respect within the covenant and to be baptized. Those who possess a visible right to the covenant seal of baptism may immediately, by virtue of their or their parents' visible, credible profession and visible freedom from scandal, doctrinal and practical, exercise that right and have the sign of the covenant administered. See Appendix F for an important qualification to this statement.

Any known to be wolves, apostates, and heretics do not qualify for this ordinance, while those who in their simplicity profess obedience to Christ may proceed. In Aaron's Rod Blossoming, George Gillespie summarizes his opponent's, that is, Mr. Prynne, argument as follows, quote, Such as in all ages, yea, by the very apostles themselves, have been deemed fit to receive and could not be denied the sacrament of baptism, ought to be, being baptized and unexcommunicated and willing to communicate, admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But in all churches from Christ's time to the present, all external professors of Christ, even carnal persons, quote, upon only a bare external profession of faith and repentance, were deemed fit to receive and were never denied the sacrament of baptism.

Yea, saith he, we read in the very apostles' times that a mere slight confession of sin and profession of the Christian faith was sufficient to enable sinners to be baptized. Therefore, all external professors of Christ ought to be admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And that's from Aaron's Rod Blossoming, page 226.

Note that Mr. Prynne's argument is also Mr. Bacon's argument when he says, quote, Finally, Paul teaches that females who have been baptized into Christ are also communicant members of the church. And that's from What Mean Ye by This Service, appendix A. Both Prynne and Bacon contend that all who are baptized adults are entitled and qualified, by virtue of their membership in the visible church, to attend the Lord's Supper. George Gillespie responds to Mr. Prynne and consequently to Mr. Bacon as well, quote, I retort the argument thus.

Such as have been deemed by the apostles and by all well-constituted churches unworthy to be admitted to baptism, ought also to be deemed unworthy, though baptized, to be admitted to the Lord's table. But all known wicked and profane livers, how able and willing soever to make confession of the true Christian faith, have been by the apostles and all well-constituted churches deemed unworthy to be admitted to baptism. Therefore, all known wicked and so forth, that is, and profane livers, though baptized, ought to be deemed unworthy to come to the Lord's table.

And that's from Aaron's Rod Blossoming, page 226. We see that Gillespie does not appreciate the argument of Mr. Prynne or Mr. Bacon. If simple profession of faith does not, in and of itself, qualify a person for baptism, then it certainly does not qualify a person for the Lord's Supper.

Known heretics, wolves, and apostates are to be kept from both ordinances, and elders are responsible not to profane the covenant of God by promoting or participating in a promiscuous admission to either of its signs and seals. Baptism differs from the Lord's Supper due to the fact that a participant receives baptism passively while at the table the participant eats, drinks, and examines himself actively. In the forthcoming section, we shall see that this difference necessitates an enlargement of the qualifications necessary for worthy participation at the Lord's Table.

What are the qualifications for admission to the Lord's Table? Like baptism, we possess the right to the Lord's Supper by virtue of a visible, credible profession of faith, giving us a visible interest in the covenant of grace, and visible freedom from scandal, both doctrinal and practical. As in baptism, so also in the Lord's Supper, any known to be wolves, apostates, or heretics do not qualify for this ordinance. The difference in qualification between the two ordinances is due to the amount of knowledge required to accomplish the necessary duties associated with worthily partaking of the bread and wine.

The key difference between these two ordinances is one of positive knowledge. To exercise our right to attend the Lord's Table, we must meet the necessary qualifications as they are set down in the Scripture and summarized in our confession of faith and catechisms. In addition to requiring all the qualifications of baptism, the additional qualifications necessary to attend the Lord's Table can be broken into positive and negative categories.

Regarding positive qualifications, qualification one, age and ability to examine themselves, we are explicitly taught in the Westminster Larger Catechism how God's two sacraments differ. Question 177. Wherein do the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper differ? Answer.

The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper differ in that baptism is to be administered but once, with water, to be a sign and seal of our regeneration and ingrafting into Christ, and that even to infants, whereas the Lord's Supper is to be administered often, in the elements of bread and wine, to represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul, and to confirm our continuance and growth in Him, and that only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves. Age. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

1 Corinthians 11.28.31 Those who are not old enough to examine and judge themselves obviously cannot meet the knowledge requirements necessary to worthily partake. If, as our larger catechism states, only such as are of years and ability to examine themselves may partake of the Lord's Supper, then more than simple profession is required. Very young children may make a simple, visible, and credible profession of faith, while remaining unable sufficiently to examine themselves, or to discern the Lord's body to any significant degree.

God may reveal Himself to a child well before He can articulate an accurate understanding of the true religion. Until He is able to visibly demonstrate His understanding of the truth, no mere man ought to presume what lies in his thoughts and intentions. This argument alone should eliminate the foolish practice of the paedocommunion camp.

Those who contend for a simple profession if they were consistent, God forbid, should be serving the bread and wine to any child who has made a simple profession of faith. Sadly, there are many unfaithful church officers foolish enough to abuse their children by admitting them to this ordinance based upon a consistent application of this deceptive principle. Faithful officers who take their confession seriously would, of course, more carefully attend to their duty.

George Gillespie mentions the three necessary categories--profession, knowledge, and practice--to be examined by the elders of the church, and that they who are the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God ought to admit none to this sacrament except such as are qualified and fit so far as can be judged by their profession, knowledge, and practice observed and examined by the eldership, according to the rules of the word, no human court being infallible, to have part and portion in the communion of saints, and to receive the seals of the covenant of grace. Gillespie adds, The eldership judgeth of words and works, professions and practices. By their fruits he shall know them.

Unless somebody desires to assert that an infant can be judged by his profession, knowledge, and practice prior to being able to speak or understand human knowledge, we can be assured that Mr. Gillespie and the writers of our church standards were not proponents of paedocommunion. Additionally, unless the reader wishes to equate Mr. Bacon's direction to judge by simple profession of the Ethiopian eunuch with Gillespie's direction to judge by profession, knowledge, and practice, we can rest assured that Mr. Bacon is not teaching the same thing as Mr. Gillespie. Ability.

Ability can be broken into two categories. One, ability to properly prepare for the Lord's Supper. Ruling officers of the church have a sworn duty to uphold their confession of faith and catechisms by judging whether a prospective communicant can properly prepare themselves to partake worthily.

If a person does not have the tools to prepare for the job, how will they ever get the task completed? If a new convert cannot properly understand how to make the proper preparations, how can we as elders allow them to partake? Love does not allow others to recklessly harm themselves. Should we allow our babes to use the stove prior to proper instruction and examination? How much more will our babes in Christ be burnt by improper preparation at the Lord's table? In regard to such preparation necessary to come to the Lord's Supper, the Westminster Larger Catechism states in Question 171, how are they that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to prepare themselves before they come unto it? Answer, they that receive the sacraments of the Lord's Supper are, before they come, to prepare themselves thereunto by examining themselves of their being in Christ, of their sins and wants, of the truth and measure of their knowledge, faith, repentance, love to God and the brethren, charity to all men, forgiving those that have done them wrong, of their desires after Christ and of their new obedience, and by renewing the exercise of these graces by a serious meditation and fervent prayer. These requirements lay no small task upon any believer, never mind a new convert or young adult.

The rulers of the Church have been ordained to decide whether a prospective communicant is ready to worthily partake, or whether more preparation is required. This duty, so seriously neglected in our present day, is not optional, and God will surely inquire of the lazy elders who shirk their responsibilities. Those elders reading this, who have become ensnared in sessions that overtly shirk their sworn and ordained responsibilities, should fall to their knees in fear and repentance for so poorly ruling the little ones of the Lord.

It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. 2. Ability to discern the Lord's body. The larger Catechism further elaborates concerning those who come to the Lord's Supper.

Question 174. What is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the time of the administration of it? Answer. It is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, that during the time of the administration of it, with all holy reverence and attention, they wait upon God in that ordinance, diligently observe the sacramental elements and actions, heedfully discern the Lord's body, and affectionately meditate on his death and sufferings, and thereby stir up themselves to a vigorous exercise of their graces, in judging themselves and sorrowing for sin, in earnest hungering and thirsting after Christ, feeding on him by faith, receiving of his fullness, trusting in his merits, rejoicing in his love, giving thanks for his grace, in renewing of their covenant with God, and love to all the saints.

Question 175. What is the duty of Christians after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper? Answer. The duty of Christians after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is seriously to consider how they have behaved themselves therein, and with what success, if they find quickening and comfort, to bless God for it, and beg the continuance of it, watch against relapses, fulfill their vows, and encourage themselves to a frequent attendance on that ordinance.

But if they find no present benefit, more exactly to review their preparation to and carriage at the sacrament, in both which, if they can approve themselves to God and their own consciences, they are to wait for the fruit of it in due time. But if they see they have failed in either, they are to be humbled, and to attend upon it afterwards with more care and diligence. We see immediately, upon reading the above-cited catechism, that, according to the divines who wrote it, an accurate discerning of the Lord's body is a task quite beyond the ability of a novice, though well within the reach of a diligent seeker of truth.

According to larger catechism No. 174 and 175, simple profession of faith is definitely not enough. Here Mr. Bacon's assertions regarding the simple profession of the Ethiopian eunuch violate his professed commitment to uphold the Westminster Standards.

Prospective communicants who examine themselves worthily must possess at least some knowledge of God's law and the ability to make application of it to their daily lives. If they would hunger and thirst after Christ, they must not hunger for a Christ of their own devising. Thus they must be instructed in the doctrine of his person and work.

If they would feed on Christ by faith, they must understand what faith is. Those who trust in Christ's merit must understand the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Those who rejoice in God's love must have an orthodox concept of the Trinity.

Those who are to renew their covenant with God, giving thanks for his grace, must understand something of the covenants of redemption, works, and grace. One must come to the schoolhouse of Christ to be nurtured upon the sincere milk of the word before they can reasonably expect to be ready to attend his table. If an elder is to take the instruction of the Westminster Larger Catechism seriously, he must realize that these requirements are not simply suggestions.

Those who have sworn an oath to uphold these standards as being agreeable to God's word will be called to account for the violation of their promise unless they repent and begin faithfully to examine their flock, judging whether or not their beloved sheep are ready to partake worthily. Failure to examine diligently the

profession, knowledge, and practice of all prospective communicants displays neither love nor watchfulness for their souls. To leave it to the people to decide for themselves is an abdication of duty, a direct violation of ordination vows, and a profaning of the covenant of God.

God will not hold him guiltless who is found to be slothful in this regard. This point in the six terms of communion seems like a reasonable place to put something about a personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ. After all, in Acts 8.37, that was the only term of communion that Philip the Evangelist seemed concerned to enforce.

Again, I would note that the Ethiopian eunuch did not receive communion but was simply baptized in Acts 8.36-38. Does Mr. Bacon's doctrine accord with the Larger Catechism he so strenuously insists he upholds? Should everybody who professes faith in Jesus Christ and is baptized be automatically admitted to the Lord's table? Was Philip the Evangelist concerned with enforcing a personal profession of faith as the only term of communion? As we have seen, the answer to all three of these questions is a resounding no. Furthermore, Mr. Bacon's confusion continues when he states, Paul teaches that females who have been baptized into Christ are also communicant members of the church. This sentiment is both absurd and irresponsible.

A woman could theoretically be baptized within hours after conversion and yet be in a state of ignorance comparable to a very young covenant child. To allow her to come to the Lord's table in this relatively high degree of ignorance is contrary to Scripture, the confession of faith, and the light of nature. Significant knowledge and preparation are required to partake worthily of the Lord's table, and baptism is but one element of the preparatory qualification.

If the Ethiopian eunuch possessed the ability to judge himself and properly discern the Lord's body, he would then be examined, after joining a particular church, by the elders administering the Lord's supper. Following a successful examination, he would be allowed to partake. The Scripture is silent about whether the eunuch was ready or whether he ever partook of the Lord's table.

Mr. Bacon's comments upon the communion principles of Philip the Evangelist are based upon no discernible evidence, and as such I judge them to be nonsense. Regarding negative qualifications, freedom from natural or sinful ignorance in doctrine, and freedom from scandal in doctrine or practice, Larger Catechism 173 asks, May any who profess the faith and desire to come to the Lord's supper be kept from it? Answer, Suches are found to be ignorant or scandalous, notwithstanding their profession of faith and desire to come to the Lord's supper may and ought to be kept from that sacrament by the power which Christ hath left in his church, until they receive instruction and manifest their reformation. Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 30, Section 8 states, Wherefore all ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's table, and cannot, without great sin against Christ, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto.

According to our church standards, those who are too ignorant to properly judge themselves or discern the Lord's body, as well as those who obstinately violate God's law, are to be kept from the communion table. Therefore those like Mr. Bacon, who teach that a simple profession of faith is all that is required to come to communion, do not believe the same doctrine as the men who wrote our standards. George Gillespie states, 1. Are persons grossly ignorant able to examine themselves? 2. Are drunken persons able to examine themselves? 3. Are men of corrupt minds and erroneous, yea, profane principles, who call evil

good and pervert Scripture to the defending of some gross sins, are these able to examine themselves? 4. Are those who are known that they had never any work of the law upon their conscience to convince or humble them, for by the law is the knowledge of sin, able to examine themselves? If the answers be affirmative, then surely this self-examination is not rightly apprehended what it is.

If the answers be negative, then those who, in their addresses to the Lord's table, are found ignorant or presumptuous and unconvinced, and do manifestly appear such, though they be not excommunicated and being professed Christians and desiring the sacrament, yet ought not to be admitted. Additionally, Gillespie more clearly makes the distinction between natural and sinful disability. But where there is no disability in the natural faculties, may not a sinful disability, which a man hath drawn upon himself as ignorance, drunkenness, corrupt and atheistical opinions, presumptuous excusing or defending of sin, make him unable to examine himself? Shall men that are unable to examine themselves be admitted to the sacrament because not disabled by any natural disability? Sure, this was far from Paul's thoughts when he delivered that rule concerning examining ourselves before the sacrament.

Whoever they be who are unable to examine themselves, whether naturally or sinfully, much more they who manifestly appear unwilling to examine themselves, if they be admitted and allowed to come to the Lord's supper, it is a high and heinous profanation of that ordinance. Earlier, when Mr. Bacon directly implied that the Ethiopian eunuch's scandal-free profession of faith, which qualified him for baptism, was also enough to qualify him for communion, he ignored the scriptural and catechetical requirements that bar those who are too ignorant from partaking worthily of the Lord's table. If a simple profession of faith and freedom from scandal are all that's required, then what could our standards possibly mean by the word ignorant? What do the scripture, confession and catechisms mean when they instruct elders to keep the ignorant person from sinning against the body and blood of Christ? Has the PRCE required more than the word of God, or is Mr. Bacon unfaithfully requiring far less? What did the reformers mean by such as are found to be ignorant in larger catechism? That is Westminster larger catechism question 173.

If we as elders intend to take our confession of faith and catechism seriously, and who would dare say that we should not take our vows seriously, we must come to an historical and contextual understanding about what the writers of our standards originally meant by the word ignorant. To ascertain the true meaning and original intent of these writers, we must examine the history of their doctrine and practice. Only then can we shed much-needed light upon the original meaning of this concept.

1. Alexander Henderson, Scottish Commissioner to the Westminster Assembly, writes, All baptized persons, when they come to age and discretion, are not admitted to the Lord's table, but such only as either upon examination are found to have a competent measure of knowledge in the principles of religion, do profess that they are believers, and do live unblameably, or coming from another congregation, bring with them sufficient testimony that they are such, or are otherwise well known and approved. We glean from this that the Scottish Church of the Second Reformation required what Henderson called a competent measure of knowledge in the principles of religion, and that even those who have come to age and discretion are not to be automatically allowed to come to the Lord's table. Unless Mr. Bacon wishes to call a simple profession a competent measure of knowledge in the principles of religion, he must admit that he and Henderson believed different things regarding terms of communion.

2. In the winter of 1644 and 45, the Westminster Assembly was occupied with the issues relating to the directory for church government. The matter of the jurisdiction of church courts and the extent of their respective powers developed into a debate which resulted in the direct discussion of our present question.

What did the Westminster Assembly deem to be competent knowledge, or to put it another way, how did they define the terms ignorant and scandalous in relation to the prospective communicant's admission to the Lord's table? William Beveridge explains, Just before the directory, that is, the directory for church government, was completed, the Assembly resolved to petition Parliament.

The result of this first petition was that the House of Commons required a detailed enumeration of everything included under the terms ignorant and scandalous. The Assembly, in reply, declared that no one should be admitted to communion without a competent understanding of the doctrines of the Trinity, of the Deity, of the state of man by his creation and by his fall, of redemption by Jesus Christ and the means to apply Christ in all his benefits, of the necessity of faith, repentance, and a godly life, of the nature and use of the sacraments, and of the condition of man after this life. Upon this, the House of Commons wished to know what was meant by a competent understanding.

The Assembly at once replied, On March 27, 1645, the House of Commons made their request to the Westminster Assembly as follows, Resolved, etc., that it be referred to the Assembly of Divines to set down, in particular, what they conceived to be such a competent measure of understanding concerning the state of man by creation and by his fall, the redemption by Jesus Christ, the way and means to apply Christ and his benefits, the nature and necessity of faith, repentance and a godly life, the nature and use of the sacraments, and the condition of man after this life, without which none shall be admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Alexander Mitchell adds an interesting historical account of what followed the House of Commons' request. This they, that is, the Westminster Divines, did without delay, and brought up on the 1st of April, 1645, that terse statement which on the 17th of April, 1645, was substantially passed by the Houses and embodied in their subsequent ordinance, which was October 20, 1645, and is cited below, and soon after made the basis of various catechisms intended to prepare the catechumens for communion.

What follows is substantially the advice given by the Westminster Assembly in answer to the question of what knowledge is necessary to constitute a competent understanding for prospective communicants to be admitted to the Lord's Table. This is the clearest extant commentary of what the Assembly of Divines meant by the term ignorant as it is used by the Westminster Standards. And this is a long quote.

April 17, 1645. Prayers. According to the former order, the Grand Committee of the whole House proceeded to the further consideration of the business concerning such as are not to be admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Mr. Whittaker called to the Chair. Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair. Ordered that the report concerning the Prince-Elector be made on Tuesday next.

Mr. Whittaker reports from the Grand Committee the votes passed the Committee concerning such ignorant and scandalous persons as are not to be admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Resolved, etc., that an incestuous person appearing to be such, upon just proof, shall not be admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Resolved, etc., that an adulterer appearing to be such, upon just proof, shall not be admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

That a fornicator appearing to be such, upon just proof, shall not be admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. That a drunkard appearing to be such, upon just proof, shall not be admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. That a profane swearer or curser appearing to be such, upon just proof, shall not be admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

That one hath taken away the life of any person maliciously, appearing to be such, upon just proof, shall not be admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Resolved, etc., that whosoever shall blasphemously speak or write anything of God, His holy word, or sacraments, shall, upon just proof thereof, not be admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Resolved, etc., that they have not a competent measure of understanding concerning the state of man by creation and by his fall, who do not know that God created man after his own image in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, that by one man sin came into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned, that thereby they are all dead in trespasses and sins, and are by nature the children of wrath, and so are liable to eternal death the wages of every sin.

Resolved, etc., that they have not a competent measure of understanding concerning the redemption by Jesus Christ, who do not know that there is but one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who is also, overall, God blessed forever, neither is there salvation in any other, that He was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary, that He died upon the cross to save His people from their sins, that He rose again from the third day from the dead, ascended into heaven, sits at the right hand of God, and makes continual intercession for us, of whose fullness we receive all grace necessary to salvation. This concludes tape two of the Protestant Antidote to Modern Schismatical Disunity, being chapter four of Greg Barrow's book, The Covenanted Reformation Defended Against Contemporary Schismatics. Please note, again, that this entire work is free on Stillwater Revival Books' website, www.swrv.com. It is also available in hardcover from Stillwater's, along with a treasure trove of the finest Protestant, Reformed, and Puritan literature available anywhere in the world today.

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