

# Debate: Protestant Antidote to Modern Disunity (3/5) Protestant Fundamentals of Separation and Unity

by Greg Barrow

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the principal heads of religion prior to being admitted to the Lord's table and the need for uniformity and consistency in church practice.*

**Duration:** 1:21:32

**Topics:** "Church Unity", "Reformed Theology"

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## Description

In this sermon, Greg Barrow defends the Covenanted Reformation against contemporary schismatics. He argues that just as individuals are expected to comply with the laws of the land, even if they don't fully understand them, so too should members of the church comply with its confession and testimony for truth. Barrow emphasizes that the church's understanding of truth may grow over time, but the truth itself does not change. He refutes the claim that the church requires too much from its members, stating that a competent understanding of the Westminster Shorter Catechism and a general understanding of the church's standards are necessary for communion and membership.

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## Transcript

This is tape three 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 Stillwaters Revival Books website, [www.swrb.com](http://www.swrb.com). It's 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 area code 780-450-3730, or by email at [swrb@swrb.com](mailto:swrb@swrb.com). Please note that 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, quoting from the lengthy quote from the House of the Journal of the House of Commons concerning the measure of understanding required to come to the Lord's Supper. Resolved, etc., that they have not a competent measure of understanding concerning the way and means to apply Christ and his benefits, who do not know that Christ and his benefits are applied only by faith, that faith is the gift of God, and that we have it not of ourselves, but it is wrought in us by the Word and Spirit of God.

Resolved, etc., that they have not a competent measure of understanding in the nature and necessity of faith, who do not know that faith is that grace whereby we believe and trust in Christ for remission of sins and life everlasting, according to the promises of the gospel, that whosoever believes not on the Son of God shall not see life, but shall perish eternally.

Resolved, etc., that they have not a competent measure of the knowledge of repentance, who do not know that they who truly repent of their sins do see them, sorrow from them, and turn from them to the Lord, and that except men repent they shall surely perish. Resolved, etc., that they have not a competent measure of knowledge concerning a godly life, who do not know that a godly life is a life conscionably ordered according to the Word of God in holiness and righteousness, without which no man shall see God. Resolved, etc., that they have not a competent measure of understanding in the nature and use of the sacrament, who know not that the sacraments are seals of the covenant of grace in the blood of Christ, that the sacraments of the New Testament are baptism in the Lord's Supper, that the outward elements in the Lord's Supper are bread and wine, and do signify the body and blood of Christ crucified, which the worthy receiver by faith doth partake of in this sacrament, which Christ hath likewise ordained for a remembrance of his death, that whosoever eats and drinks unworthily is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and therefore that everyone is to examine himself, lest he eat and drink judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Resolved, etc., that they have not a competent measure of understanding concerning the condition of man after this life, who do not know that the souls of the faithful after death do immediately live with Christ in blessedness, and that the souls of the wicked do immediately go into hell torments, that there shall be a resurrection of bodies, both of the just and the unjust, at the last day, at which time all shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether it be good or evil, and that the righteous shall go into life eternal, and the wicked into everlasting punishment. Resolved, etc., that those who have a competent measure of understanding concerning the matters contained in these eight articles shall not be kept back from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper for ignorance." And again, that's from the Journal of the House of Commons, Volume 4, pages 113 and 114. J. R. DeWitt explains that the outcome of these resolutions resulted in the parliamentary ordinance issued six months later.

Quote, At long last, the first parliamentary ordinance for scandal appeared on 20 October 1645, under the title, An Ordinance of the Lords and Commons Assembled in Parliament, Together with the Rules and Directions Concerning Suspension from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Cases of Ignorance and Scandal. Here was given a statement of what constituted sufficiently competent understanding of the Christian religion so as to admit one to the Lord's table, a statement which in fact amounted to a careful summary of the Reformed and Protestant faith. There was no difficulty about that, and indeed it had been ready since the preceding April.

But the ordinance also contained a list of scandalous sins, and a list of that sort cannot, in the very nature of the case, as both Parliament and Assembly perfectly well knew, be anything like complete. A great many things were proscribed. No blasphemers, incestuous persons, adulterers, drunkards, swearers, worshippers of images, crosses, or relics, portrayes of the Trinity or any person thereof, duelers, dancers, gamers, or breakers in any other way of the Lord's Day, brothel keepers, parents consenting to a child's marrying a papist, any such child, frequenters of witchcraft, insubordinate persons, and so forth, were not to be admitted to the Sacrament.

And that's from DeWitt's *Just a Venom*, page 188. This ordinance was recorded in the *Journal of the House of Lords*, volume 7, October 20, 1645, pages 649 and 650, and the relevant portions of this ordinance read as follows. The 20th day of October, an ordinance of the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament, together with the rules and directions concerning suspension from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in cases of ignorance and scandal.

Also the names of such ministers and such others that are appointed triers and judges of the ability of elders in the twelve classes within the province of London. Rules and directions concerning suspension from the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper in case of ignorance. All such persons who shall be admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ought to know that there is a God, that there is but one ever-living and true God, maker of heaven and earth, and governor of all things, that this only true God is the God whom we worship, that this God is but one, yet three distinct persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all equally God.

That God created man after his own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, that by one man sin entered 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 liable to eternal death, the wages of every sin. That there is but one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who is also over all, 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 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. That Christ and his benefits are applied only by faith, that faith is the gift of God, and that we have it not of ourselves, but it is wrought in us by the word and spirit of God. That faith is that grace whereby we believe and trust in Christ for remission of sins and life everlasting, according to the promise of the gospel, that whosoever believes not on the Son shall not see life, but shall perish eternally.

That they who truly repented their sins do see them, sorrow for them, and turn from them to the Lord, and that except men repent, they shall surely perish. That a godly life is conscionably ordered according to the word of God, in holiness and righteousness, without which no man shall see God. That the sacraments are seals of the covenant of grace in the blood of Christ, that the sacraments of the New Testament are baptism in the Lord's Supper, that the outward elements in the Lord's Supper are bread and wine, and do signify the body and blood of Christ crucified, which the worthy receiver by faith doth partake of in this sacrament, which Christ hath likewise ordained for a remembrance of his death.

That whosoever eats and drinks unworthily is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, and therefore that everyone is to examine himself, lest he eat and drink judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. That the souls of the faithful after death do immediately live with Christ in blessedness, and that the souls of the wicked do immediately go into hell torments. That there shall be a resurrection of the bodies, both of the just and unjust, at the last day, at which time all shall appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive according to what they have done in the body, whether it be good or evil, and that the righteous shall go into life eternal, and the wicked into everlasting punishment.

And it is further ordained by the Lords in Commons that those who have a competent measure of understanding concerning the matters contained in these articles shall not be kept back from the

sacrament of the Lord's Supper for ignorance, and that the examination and judgment of such persons as shall for their ignorance of the aforesaid points of religion not be admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is to be in the power of the eldership of every congregation. Rules and directions concerning suspension from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in cases of scandal. This is still continuing the quote.

The several and respective elderships shall have power to suspend from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper all scandalous persons hereafter mentioned, appearing to be such upon just proof made thereof. In such manner as is by this present ordinance hereafter appointed, and not otherwise until it be otherwise declared by both houses of Parliament, how notoriously scandalous persons, other than such as are herein expressed, shall be kept from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. That is to say, all persons that shall blasphemously speak or write anything of God, His Holy Word, or sacraments, an incestuous person, an adulterer, a fornicator, a drunkard, a profane swearer, or a curser, one that hath taken away the life of any person maliciously, all worshipers of images, crosses, crucifix, or relics, all that shall make any images of the Trinity, or of any person thereof, all religious worshipers of saints, angels, or any mere creature, any person that shall profess himself not to be in charity with his neighbor, any person that shall challenge any other person by word, message, or writing to fight, or that shall accept such challenge and agree thereto, any person that shall knowingly carry on any such challenge by word, message, or writing, any person that shall, upon the Lord's Day, use any dancing, playing at dice, or cards, or any other game, masking, wake, shooting, bowling, playing at football, or stoolball, wrestling, or that shall make or resort unto any plays, interludes, fencing, bull-baiting, or bear-baiting, or that shall use hawking, hunting, or coursing, fishing, or fouling, or that shall publicly expose any wares to sale otherwise than as is provided by an ordinance of Parliament on the 6th of April, 1644, any person that shall travel upon the Lord's Day without reasonable cause, any person that keepeth a known stews or brothel house, or that shall solicit the chastity of any person for himself, or any other, any person, father, or mother, that shall consent to the marriage of their child to a papist, or any person that shall marry a papist, any person that shall repair for any advice unto any witch, wizard, or fortune-teller, any person that shall assault his parents, or any magistrate, minister, or elder in the execution of his office, any person that shall be legally attained of barratry, forgery, extortion, or bribery, and the several and respective elderships shall have power likewise to suspend from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper all ministers that shall be duly proved to be guilty of any of the crimes aforesaid from giving or receiving the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

And that again is from the Journal of the House of Lords, Volume 7, pages 649 and 650. Based upon this overwhelmingly clear evidence, any unbiased reader can readily determine that the Westminster Assembly substantially authored and agreed with this portion of the Ordinance of Parliament. Notice that the degree of knowledge required for admission to the Lord's Table far exceeded this simple profession of faith espoused by Mr. Bacon.

Also observe the multiplicity of items listed as terms of communion, that is, uninspired beliefs and practices deduced from Scripture for which willful or obstinate violation would result in admonition, suspension from the Lord's Table, and excommunication. Contrary to the judgment of the Westminster Divines, Mr. Bacon 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.

From Defense Departed. And again, Bacon says, finally, Paul teaches that females who have been baptized into Christ are also communicant members of the Church. And that's Bacon's book, What Mean Ye by This Service, Appendix A. How does Mr. Bacon account for the difference between his position and

that of the Westminster Divines? Three.

Furthermore, the following list, for a more complete list, see Alexander Mitchell's *Catechisms of the Second Reformation*, pages 73 to 91, of catechism titles from 1580 to 1648, serves an instructive purpose, allowing us to accurately determine the intent of the ministers of the First and Second Reformations who originated these doctrines. By the way, that book is available from Stillwater Survival Books. Notice the emphasis of the various authors upon the necessity of understanding the principal heads of religion prior to being admitted to the Lord's table.

From the titles cited below, it should be abundantly clear that these ministers required much more than a simple profession of faith for admission to communion. And an extended quote here, *A catechism and plain instruction for children which prepare themselves to communicate in the Holy Supper, yielding therein openly a reason of their faith according to the order of the French Church at London*, written in French by Monsieur Fontaine, minister of the same church there, and lately translated into English by T.W. London, 1579. It has at the end an, quote, advertisement we are accustomed to give the Saturday going before the supper at the prayers, to the end that every everyone may prepare himself as he ought to the worthy communicating and partaking thereof.

Another title, *The foundation of Christian religion gathered into six principles, and it is to be learned of ignorant people that they may be fit to hear sermons with profit and receive the Lord's supper with comfort*, Psalm 119.30, London, 1595, one of the earliest editions of Perkins' *Catechism*, whose name is signed at the end of the preface. *A short catechism being a brief instruction of the ignorant before the receiving of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper by Mr. Obadiah Sedgwick*, London. *A brief catechism so necessary and easy to be learned, even by the simple sort, that whosoever cannot or will not attain to the same is not to be accounted a good Christian, much less to be admitted to the supper of the Lord*, London, 1582.

*A preparation unto the way of life with a direction unto the right use of the Lord's Supper, gathered by William Hopkinson, preacher of the Word of God, imprinted at London, 1583. Certain short questions and answers very profitable and necessary for all young children and such as are desirous to be instructed in the principles of the Christian faith, imprinted at London, 1584. An abridgement of the former treatise for the help of such as are desirous to learn by heart the chief principles of Christian religion.*

Certain necessary instructions meet to be taught the younger sort before they come to be partakers of the Holy Communion. To this is appended certain articles very necessary to be known of all young scholars of Christ's school. The first is that the end of our creation is to glorify God.

*A short catechism for examination of communicants and so forth, like number six, modeled on Parliament's Ordinance, London, 1646. E. 1185-1. A new catechism, etc., written by William Good, minister at Denton in Norfolk, one of the added members of the Westminster Assembly, London, 1644.*

Like larger catechism, explains what communicants must do before receiving the Communion, what after he is received, and what at the time of receiving. *A short catechism necessary to be learned by all such as come to the Holy Communion, according to the late Ordinance of Parliament, humbly commended by the author for uniformity's sake to all the churches of England, by J. Meyer, D.D., London, 1646. A short and fruitful treatise of the prophet and necessity of catechizing, that is, of instructing the youth and ignorant persons in the principles and grounds of the Christian religion, by Robert Cawdry, one of the ministers and preachers of the Word of God in the county of Rutland, London, 1580.*

At the end of Cawdry's treatise is a copy of the Injunction of the High Commissioners, headed by Grindahl, Archbishop of Canterbury, and bearing the date of 1576, quote, that no youth be admitted to the Lord's Table, or to be married, or to be godfather or godmother for any child, except they can answer the little catechism with additions. A fruitful treatise of baptism and the Lord's Supper, of the use and effect of them, of the worthy and unworthy receivers of the same Supper, very necessary for all such as are to be admitted to the Lord's Table, Wogran, London. A short catechism, very necessary for the plain understanding of the principal points of Christian religion, meet to be practiced of all Christians before they be admitted to the Lord's Supper, Richard Cox, London, 1620.

A catechism in brief questions and answers, containing such things as are to be known or had by all such as would partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper with comfort, by John Jury, sometime minister of the word in Tewksbury, now pastor of St. Faith's, London, 1647. The principles of Christian religion briefly set down in questions and answers, very necessary and profitable for all persons before they be admitted to the Lord's Supper, by William Adersall, London, 1635. Motives to godly knowledge, with a brief instruction, very necessary to be learned and understood of everyone before he be admitted to partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, also a sweet comfort for a Christian being tempted, London, 1613.

A light from Christ, leading unto Christ by the star of his word, or a divine directory to self-examination, the better to prepare for a trial and approbation of knowledge and their graces, in such as by the minister and elders, are to be admitted into a reformed church communion to partake of soul-cherishing virtue from Christ at the Lord's table, profitable for persons and families in private or congregations in public, by Emmanuel Bourne, M.A., of Ashover, in the county of Derby, preacher of the gospel to the congregation of St. Sepulchre's Church, London. A short catechism wherein are briefly handled the fundamental principles of the Christian religion, needful to be known by all Christians before they be admitted to the Lord's table, William Gouge, 1635. And Dr. Gouge was one of the eminent English Puritans, Puritan Presbyterians in the Westminster Assembly.

The Parliament's rules and directions concerning sacramental knowledge, contained in an ordinance of the Lords of Commons of the 20th of October 1645, drawn into questions and answers by Robert Austin, D.D. And again, all 19 of those references are cited from Alexander Mitchell's Catechisms of the Second Reformation, as reprinted by Stillwater Survival Books, pages 73 to 91. 4. Next, I refer the reader to the Westminster annotations and commentary on the whole Bible, where, commenting upon the self-examination required by God in 1 Corinthians 11, 18, and 28, they say, verse 18, that there be no divisions among you, or schisms. To celebrate the Lord's Supper aright, it is requisite that there not only be consent of doctrine, but also of discipline and affections, that it be not profaned.

And, verse 28, examine himself, both concerning his spiritual state in general, whether he be a true member of Christ's mystical body, for none but such may eat his body and drink his blood, and in special, whether he be a fit guest for so holy and heavenly a table, whether he truly repent him of his sins, have a lively faith in Christ, be in charity with his neighbors, and is endued with a competent measure of knowledge to discern this heavenly food from other meat. This examination of man's self is of necessity required in all that intend to receive communion, and therefore they ought not to be admitted to it, which cannot examine themselves as children, idiots, and madmen, none of which can examine themselves, and all such as either have no knowledge of Christ, or no competent measure thereof, though they profess the Christian religion. And as from the Westminster annotations and commentary on the whole Bible, by some of the Westminster divines and other Puritans, Gouge, Gatteker, and so forth, again note that even though one professes the Christian religion, these divines require, quote, a competent measure of knowledge,

and a consent of doctrine, discipline, and affections, prior to admitting one to the Lord's table.

Mere profession is not enough. It is also interesting to further observe that the comments of the Westminster annotations were identical to the notes of the Geneva Bible upon this point. Evidently, the Geneva commentators also do not agree with Mr. Bacon's position.

And since both of these works are so valuable, I should comment here that the Westminster annotations, as well as the King James Bible with the Geneva notes, are all available now from Stillwater's Revival Books. The annotations of John Diodati are also available, and those are excellent. Number five.

The first book of discipline was one of the primary documents of Reformation in Scotland. Approved by the General Assembly in 1560, this statement of church policy and discipline was designed to guide the Scottish Reformation of manners and practice to an ever-increasing uniformity. This early statement of Reformation principles exhibits the keen intellect and godly sincerity of its writers as they speak to the issue of ignorance at the Lord's table.

Quote, All ministers must be admonished to be more careful to instruct the ignorant than ready to satisfy their appetites, and more sharp in examination than indulgent in admitting to that great mystery such as are ignorant of the use and virtue of the same. And therefore we think that the administration of the table ought never to be without that examination passed before, especially of those whose knowledge is suspect. We think that none are apt to be admitted to that mystery who cannot formally say the Lord's Prayer, the articles of the belief, and declare the sum of the law.

And that's the first and second books of discipline, page 94, and those are also free on Stillwater's webpage. This gives us a specific list of what the Church of Scotland required at the early stages of Reformation. This godly exhortation to be more sharp in examination than indulgent speaks directly to the tendency of lax ministers who are more ready to satisfy the appetites of the people than instruct and protect the ignorant.

To formally say the Lord's Prayer, the articles of belief, and declare the sum of the law is far more than a simple profession of faith, and even at this earliest stage of Reformation we can see that these men were entirely at variance with the principles of Mr. Bacon. Not even the most general statements of the first book of discipline will allow for the same doctrine as Mr. Bacon promotes. 6. Further specific evidence of the practice and understanding of the men of the Second Reformation regarding admission to the Lord's Table comes from the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Session 10, the second to last day of May, 1592.

Quote, For as much as at the special desire of the Kirk, a form of examination before communion was penned and formed by their brother, Mr. John Craig, which is now imprinted and allowed by the voice of the Assembly, therefore it is thought needful that every pastor travail with his flock that they might buy the same book and read it in their families, whereby they may be better instructed, and that the same be read and learned in doctor's schools in place of the little catechism. And that's from Alexander Peterkin, the book of the Universal Kirk of Scotland. Peterkin was the editor.

Page 359. David Calderwood adds, Quote, This form of examination before the communion penned by Mr. Craig was allowed by this Assembly, and ministers willed to recommend it to their flocks and to families, and to be learned in lecture schools instead of catechism. And that's from Calderwood's The True History of the Church of Scotland, page 268.

The full text of this form of examination before communion can be found in Appendix D. It is also available for free on the Stillwaters Revival Books web page. A careful reading of this examination reveals what a far cry Mr. Bacon's doctrine is from that of John Knox, John Craig, Robert Bruce, who was moderator of the General Assembly of 1592, Andrew Melville, Robert Rollock, among many other early Scottish reformers. Notice also how much these men differ from acquiring a simple profession of faith, such as that of the Ethiopian eunuch, as the only term of communion.

As the reader examines the headings of the communion exam and considers the extensive knowledge required by these 96 questions in Appendix D, he will see that the doctrine of Mr. Bacon is a far cry not only from the doctrine of the Church of Scotland, but also from the truth of God's Word, which they faithfully upheld. The heads of the form of examination before communion, 96 questions. 1. Of our miserable bondage through Adam, 6 questions.

2. Of our redemption by Christ, 9 questions. 3. Of our participation with Christ, 11 questions. 4. Of the Word, 7 questions.

5. Of our liberty to serve God, 12 questions. 6. Of the sacraments, 11 questions. 7. Of baptism, 10 questions.

8. Of the supper, 9 questions. 9. Of discipline, 5 questions. 10.

Of the magistrate, 1 question. 11. Of the table and special, 9 questions.

12. The end of our redemption, 2 questions. Mr. Bacon arrogantly says he requires the simple profession of faith of the Ethiopian eunuch and of Peter, while the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, 1592, requires a form of examination that has 96 questions upon the major heads of doctrine.

This is hard evidence that cannot be ignored or explained away. Unless Mr. Bacon wishes to equate a simple profession of faith with this 96-question examination before communion, he must admit that he and our Scottish reformers believe different things regarding terms of communion. The practice of our modern churches in allowing almost anyone who makes a simple profession of faith to come to the Lord's table is a grievous sin against him who instituted this means of grace.

Our modern malignants who, like Mr. Bacon, upon pretense of superior wisdom and toleration, teach that true communion can exist apart from the truth itself, forget that the wisdom that comes from above is first pure and then peaceable. We must protect ourselves from those who, for the sake of peace and unity, assault us by their willingness to reduce the just requirements of God's Word to the lowest common denominator. John Calvin comments, quote, teachers who discharge their duties honestly and sincerely are like builders who, if they see a breach in a wall, instantly and carefully repair it.

For God indeed offers us peace and invites us to reconciliation by his own prophets, but on this condition that they make war with their own lusts. This then is one way of being at peace with God by becoming enemies to ourselves and fighting earnestly against the depraved and vicious desires of the flesh. But how do false prophets preach peace? Why, so that miserable and abandoned men may sleep in the midst of their sins? We must diligently attend, then, to this difference, that we may safely embrace the peace which is offered us by the true prophets and be on guard against the snares of those who fallaciously flatter us with peace, because under promise of reconciliation they foment hostilities between God and ourselves.

That's from Calvin's commentary, volume 12, pages 20 and 21. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy, James 3, 17. A commission of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland met in October of 1651 to write an article entitled, Causes of the Lord's Wrath Against Scotland, the primary author being James Guthrie.

Therein they explain the causes why the Lord was contending with the land, and they offer advice on how to properly deal with Scotland's significant guilt. In the following section they point out that a major cause of God's wrath upon the land stemmed from an unfaithful latitudinarian admission to the Lord's table. Quote, As to the other, how the rule of the word and constitutions of this Kirk are kept in this particular, it needs not much be spoken, the transgression being so palpable and common that they who run may read.

These particular faults may be taken notice of in order to this point. One, to say nothing that, in some places, few or none at all are excluded for ignorance, but that persons being once come to such an age are admitted, and being once admitted, are never again excluded. There is, in many congregations, little or no care to examine or take any notice of the knowledge of all persons indifferently, something being done in reference to servants and those of the poorer sort, but masters of families and those of the richer sort, for the most part neglected, taking it for granted, as it were, that they have knowledge, when indeed many of them are grossly ignorant, and ought because of their ignorance to be debarred.

Two, that the bare repeating of the Lord's prayer, the belief, that is the Apostles' Creed, or Ten Commandments, or answering a question or two of the Catechism by rote time, as we say, when nothing of the meaning is understood, is by many taken for knowledge sufficient, and that's from the Causes of the Lord's Wrath Against Scotland, taken from the works of Gillespie, where it was published, volume 2, page 16. Notice the similarity in language between the passages cited in the Causes of the Lord's Wrath and the First Book of Discipline. In 1560, the Church of Scotland says, quote, we think that none are apt to be admitted to that mystery who cannot formally say the Lord's Prayer, the Articles of Belief, and declare the sum of the law.

In 1651, this commission to the General Assembly further defines what was meant by this statement, affirming that the bare repeating of the Lord's Prayer, the belief, or Ten Commandments, or answering a question or two of the Catechism by rote time, when nothing of the meaning is understood, is not considered adequate, and is rather deemed a lamentable cause of God's wrath in Scotland. Again, we see that the knowledge requirements of the Church of Scotland are far more than what Mr. Bacon, or the majority of backslidden churches in the world today, plead. By means of these proofs, I have completed that which I had intended to establish.

By an examination of historical evidence, the original intent of the framers of the Westminster Standards, as it pertains to the meaning of the word ignorance, has been clearly revealed. From the documents of the First and Second Reformation, we may reasonably conclude the following. One, the attitude of all faithful elders ought to be more careful to instruct the ignorant than ready to satisfy their appetites, and more sharp in examination than indulgent, from the First Book of Discipline.

Two, 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. That's from Henderson's Government and Order of the Church of Scotland, page 39. Three, the bare repeating of the Lord's Prayer, the Articles of Belief, or Ten Commandments, or answering

a question or two of the Catechism by rote time, when nothing of the meaning is understood, is not considered adequate.

The Causes of the Lord's Wrath, page 16. Four, for as much as at the special desire of the Kirk, a ninety-six question form of examination before communion was penned and formed by their brother, Mr. John Craig, which is now imprinted and allowed by the voice of the Assembly, as from the Book of the Universal Kirk of Scotland, page 359. Five, the Westminster Assembly undoubtedly defined what they meant by the term ignorant when they answered the question of Parliament as to what constituted a competent measure of knowledge necessary to worthily attend the Lord's Table.

Their answer displays their mutual agreement upon the need for elders to carefully examine the basic knowledge of prospective communicants prior to admitting them to communion. Six, an examination of the titles of the short Catechisms of the First and Second Reformation unquestionably indicates that their author's intended purpose was to use them as a means of instruction and a test of competent knowledge for the members of the Church prior to admitting them to the Lord's Supper. Seven, according to the writers of the Westminster Annotations, which are Mr. Lay, Dr. Gouge, Merrick, Cassabon, Francis Taylor, Dr. Reynolds, Mr. Smallwood, Mr. Gattaker, Mr. Pembleton, Dr. D. Featley, and so forth, even though one professes the Christian religion, it is requisite that a competent measure of knowledge and a consent of doctrine, discipline, and affections be ascertained by the eldership prior to admitting one to the Lord's Table.

Mere profession is not enough. Mr. Bacon teaches something distinctly different from the Westminster Larger Catechism. Mr. Bacon 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. Defense departed. Those who profess to uphold the Westminster standards while promoting a lax definition of the word ignorance are either ignorant themselves or blatantly dishonest about their commitment to their own profession.

Men who have taken vows to rule in the house of the Lord while failing to honor their commitment with integrity should be withdrawn from until such time as they manifest their repentance. Mr. Bacon is such a man. Mr. Bacon's Latitudinarian scheme falls directly under the definition of heresy penned by numerous Orthodox divines.

Quote, I find the most learned Orthodox divines hold that there are substantial articles of faith that are not so great articles as the author's fundamentals, and yet the maintaining and teaching errors contrary to any of these substantial articles is heresy and brings damnation, as the learned Mr. Rutherford, in his Examine Arminian Misme, page 12, says, though an article of faith be but superfundamental, that is, by evident necessary consequence deduced from the fundamental as a doctrine from a text, an error that is maintained and taught contrary to this consequential article of faith is damnable, that is, brings damnation, because whoever denieth the evident necessary consequent by the same reason he denies the antecedent, which is a fundamental article beyond all controversy. And I would note here, since it was so helpful when someone explained this to me, this is not just a fundamental article of faith that are taught in the scriptures, but this is a fundamental rule of logic called modus tolens, which says, if P then Q, not Q therefore not P. And again, I found that to be very helpful as I've considered various arguments and thought I would share that here. And Turajan holds the same in his Institutes of Elenctic Theology, part 1,

page 56, in arguing against papists.

Mr. Gillespie, in his Miscellany Questions, chapter 9, pages 111 and 112, saith, heresy is not so far to be taken at large as to be extended to every error which may be confuted by scripture, although happily such an error be too tenaciously maintained, nor yet is it to be so far restricted as that no error shall be accounted heretical, but that which is destructive to some fundamental article of the Christian faith. If by fundamental article you understand a truth, without the knowledge and faith whereof, tis impossible to get salvation. But if you understand by fundamental truths all the chief substantial truths, I mean not, saith he, the ABC of a catechism.

This most likely is a reference to the ABC, or a catechism for young children appointed by the act of the Church and Council of Scotland to be learned in all families and lecture schools in the said kingdom, 1644, which we first of all put to new beginners, but I mean all such truths as are commonly put in the Confessions of Faith and in the more full and large catechisms of the Reformed Churches, or all such truths as all and every one who live in a true Christian Reformed Church are commanded and required to learn and know as they expect in the ordinary dispensation of God to be saved. In this sense I may yield, saith he, that heresy is always contrary to some fundamental truth, and in the 112th page he cites Wallias, Tome 1, page 57, Calvin, Institutes Book 4, Chapter 2, Section 5, and Peter Communion, Lac Commun, Class 2, Chapter 4, Section 60, who all hold the same. And Augustine and Cyprian did thus understand heresy as Calvin in his Institutes Book 4, Chapter 2 observes.

And learned Ravenel in his Bibliotheca Sacra, Part 1, page 702, saith, An heretic is one who, having been instructed in the principles of faith, not only erreth in some article or head of true faith, but also pertinaciously insists in his error, breaks the peace of the Church, and produceth scandals against the doctrine we have learned, and is to be avoided, Romans 16, 17. Thus he, By all which it is plain, both by Scripture and the judgment of orthodox divines, that men who teach and pertinaciously maintain an error, contrary to any substantial article of true faith, are heretics to be avoided, and shunned as wolves among Christ's sheep. And that's from Protestors Vindicated, page 105.

I have now proved that Mr. Bacon's doctrine regarding admission to the Lord's Table is a subversion of a fundamental truth. His teaching differs so significantly from the Westminster Larger Catechism, as well as numerous other faithful standards, that we must judge his departure from the truth as a serious and notable heresy which has the effect of undermining and destroying the very confessional standards he professes to own. Accordingly, he should be withdrawn from and avoided until such time as he manifests both repentance and restitution.

Earlier, I stated that each person who makes a simple, credible profession of faith, and is free of gross scandal, is a member of the Universal Visible Church. Samuel Rutherford comments, If the profession be not grossly and knowingly hypocritical, and their coming in be not for buy-ins, and to betray the cause, but morally ingenuous and negatively sincere, the Church is to receive such, and is not forbidden to admit them as members. That's from Survey of the Survey of that Sum of Church Discipline, page 14.

Visible Church members possess a visible right to the signs and the seals of the covenant of grace, that is, baptism and the Lord's Supper. I also stated that the simple possession of the right doesn't automatically qualify one to exercise it lawfully. Those who possess the right to the covenant seal of baptism may immediately, by virtue of their simple profession and freedom from scandal, exercise their right and have that seal administered.

As we have already observed, those who possess the right to the Lord's table must pass further examination regarding both knowledge and practice before being admitted. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, that henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. But speaking the truth in love may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

Ephesians 4, 11 through 15. Positive and negative agreement in the membership and communion of the Church. 1. Positive agreement.

As formerly noted and unquestionably manifested, the short catechisms authored during the period of the first and second Reformations served as an extensive form of examination which surveyed a prospective communicant's knowledge of the major heads of religion. Though these catechetical examinations were practically applied to greater and lesser degrees, depending upon the faithfulness of individual elders, they nevertheless exemplify the emphasis placed upon the requisite positive agreement in doctrine and practice necessary for admission to communion. If we as elders would hold fast the form of sound words, adhere to the godly examples set by faithful Reformers of the past, and uphold our sworn duties, many would lawfully enjoy this means of grace while keeping themselves free from the condemnation associated with eating and drinking unworthily.

On the other hand, if we as elders desert our calling and put on the garment of slothfulness, we will lead our beloved flocks into a sin where many are weak and sickly among us and many sleep. 1 Corinthians 11.30. To positively determine that someone is too ignorant to come to the Lord's table is an act of love that displays a godly watchfulness for souls. To fail to do so will bring the sword of God down upon both unfaithful leaders and their congregations.

But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned, if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. Ezekiel 33.6. George Gillespie explains, Now that the admission of scandalous and notorious sinners to the sacrament in a reformed and constituted church is a profanation or pollution of that ordinance may be thus proved. First, Parius, upon question 82 in the Heidelberg Catechism, where it is affirmed that by the admission of scandalous sinners to the sacrament the covenant of God is profaned, giveth this reason for it.

Because as they, having no faith nor repentance, if they take the seals of the covenant, do thereby profane the covenant, so they who consent to known wicked and scandalous persons taking of the seals, or to their coming to the sacrament, do by such consenting make themselves guilty of profaning the covenant of God. For the doer and the consentor fall under the same breach of law. As from Aaron's Rod, Blossoming, page 254.

Gillespie adds, He, Mr. Prynne, tells us that the minister only gives the sacrament and the unworthy receiving is the receiver's own personal act and sin. Gillespie answers, First, he begs again and again what is in question. Two, there is an unworthy giving as well as an unworthy receiving.

The unworthy giving is a sinful act of the minister, which makes him also accessory to the sin of unworthy receiving, and so to partake of other men's sins. As from Aaron's Rod, Blossoming, page 229. For if the

saying of God's speed to a false teacher makes us partakers of his evil deed, second John 10, how much more doth the admitting of such or the like scandalous sinners to the Lord's table make, I say not all who communicate then and there, but all who consent to their admission to be partakers of their evil deeds.

Again, Aaron's Rod, Blossoming, page 53. Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep, and an idle soul shall suffer hunger. Proverbs 19, 15.

Undeniably, these are serious considerations which no faithful elder of God will want to take lightly. What then should be chosen by faithful elders? How much positive agreement is enough? John Calvin eloquently sets forth the importance of formal positive agreement as he writes about the relationship between catechisms and communion in his dedication to the Catechism of the Church of Geneva written to the faithful ministers of Christ throughout East Friesland. Writings of a different class will show what were our views on all subjects in religion, but the agreement which our churches had in doctrine cannot be seen with clearer evidence than from catechisms, for therein will appear not only what one man or other once taught, but with what rudiments learned and unlearned alike amongst us were constantly imbued from childhood, all the faithful holding them as their formal symbol of Christian communion.

This was indeed my principal reason for publishing this catechism. Furthermore, if we have vowed to uphold the Westminster Standards, then faithfulness and honesty dictate that we must interpret them as they were originally intended. Alexander Mitchell has accurately explained that the advice of the Westminster Assembly regarding a competent measure of knowledge was embodied in the Ordinance of Parliament, October 20, 1645, and was soon after made the basis of various catechisms intended to prepare the catechumens for communion.

Knowing that our faithful forefathers prepared catechumens for communion through the use of various catechisms agreeable to the word of God, and based upon the godly advice and practice of the Westminster Assembly, we may reasonably determine that their best short catechism would be our wisest choice for use in preparing and examining catechumens in our present circumstances. Alexander Mitchell comments, The shorter catechism contains, as I have already explained, more of the materials of the catechism passed by the Assembly in 1646, but not in a shape which brings them nearer to the form of Palmer's original work. On the contrary, it is a thoroughly Calvinistic and Puritan catechism, the ripest fruit of the Assembly's thought and experience, maturing and finally fixing the definitions of theological terms to which Puritanism for half a century had been leading up and gradually coming closer and closer in its legion of catechisms.

The guiding principle of the Westminster Assembly and its committee in its composition of the shorter catechism was that announced by Dr. Seaman in one of the earliest debates about it, that is, that the greatest care should be taken to frame the answer not according to the model of the knowledge the child hath, but according to that the child ought to have. Guided by the collective wisdom of the Westminster Assembly and seeing that their desire was to prepare a catechism according to the model of knowledge a child ought to have, considering the fact that the previous legions of short catechisms had been penned for the purpose of instruction and examination so that the weak and ignorant would be made ready to worthily partake of the Lord's Table, observing that this subordinate standard is agreeable to the word of God and consistent with the vows we have sworn to uphold, we may reasonably conclude that the shorter catechism is our wisest choice for use in preparing, examining and admitting others to partake of the Lord's Supper, accordingly the session of the PRCE determined to positively require people to have a competent knowledge of the shorter catechism before coming to the Lord's Table. By this means we

require communicants to have enough knowledge upon the principal heads of religion to adequately prepare for communion and discern the Lord's body.

In addition to a competent understanding of the principal heads of the shorter catechism, we require a general understanding of the nature, substance and use of our terms of communion. This will be more fully described in the following sections on negative agreement, where I will demonstrate that these additional requirements were commonly acknowledged and practiced by the faithful ministers of the First and Second Reformation. By these means, communicants are required to be aware of their covenant obligations and the terms by which the Church is ruled.

Is this requiring more than the word of God requires? Is this asking more than the faithful standards of the First and Second Reformation? No, we believe that what the Reformers required children to understand before attending the Lord's Table may necessarily be required of new converts and every member of the visible Church. We have no desire to see anyone fail this examination, neither do we desire to have anyone pass who is not yet ready. We desire only to be faithful to the word of God in executing our duties and honoring the trust which God has committed to the officers of the Church.

And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean. Therefore thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again, and thou shalt stand before me. And if thou take forth the precious from the vial, thou shalt be as my mouth.

Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them. The huge majority of the Reformed churches across North America ignore the requirements of the Confession and Catechisms, that is the Westminster Standards, they profess to uphold. When was the last time you heard of a session refusing anyone access to the Lord's Table for lack of sufficient knowledge? Dear reader, carefully consider the testimony of George Gillespie as he describes his own ministry and that of the faithful ministry of the Church of Scotland at the time of the Second Reformation.

Quote, I dare say diverse thousands have been kept off from the sacrament in Scotland, as unworthy to be admitted. Where I myself have exercised my ministry, there have been some hundreds kept off, partly for ignorance and partly for scandal. The order of the Church of Scotland and the Acts of General Assemblies are for keeping off all scandalous persons, which every godly and faithful minister doth conscientiously and effectually endeavor.

And if, here or there, it be too much neglected by some Archippus, who takes not heed to fulfill the ministry which he hath received of the Lord, let him and his eldership bear the blame and answer for it. When was the last time you heard of someone being barred from the communion table for promoting a scandalous doctrine or living in a scandalous sin? Have you ever had communion with professing believers who openly deny articles of faith contained within faithful Reformed confessions or catechisms of the Church? Have you ever wondered why visitors are permitted to come to the Lord's Supper with little or no examination of their profession in word or deed of the truth? Those elders who allow this are in reality saying, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. They say, We are one in the Lord, when in reality they are many in the Lord.

Ignorance abounds, and those who contradict one another in the Church foyer over matters of confessional orthodoxy come thirty minutes later to jointly profess their agreement in Christ at the Lord's table. Reformed, Catholics, Baptists, Charismatics, and so forth, each making a simple profession of faith, join together at the Lord's table, professing before God and the world that they all speak the same thing,

and are perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. When in reality they are testifying before both God and man to a lie, that is not honest.

How can they glorify God at the Lord's table when they are simultaneously involved in a high-handed violation of the ninth commandment? Bearing a true witness for Christ does not involve agreeing to disagree on points of confessional orthodoxy. The Larger Catechism states that the ninth commandment requires the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor, as well as our own, appearing and standing for the truth, and from the heart, sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice. How can those who agree to disagree in matters of confessional orthodoxy glorify God when they profane His ordinance and offend Him to His face at His own table? When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it, for He hath no pleasure in fools.

Pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin, neither say thou before the angel that it was an error.

Wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?--Ecclesiastes 5, 4-6. Has the PRCE gone too far? Are our knowledge requirements too high and unreasonable for professing Christians? No, on the contrary, these requirements are precisely what we have covenanted to uphold. When we in the PRCE subscribe our confession of faith in catechisms as being subordinate rules of faith agreeable to the word of God, we vow to bar the ignorant and scandalous from the Lord's table.

Those who fail to uphold their ordination vows are perjured, time-serving watchmen. Those like Mr. Bacon, who teach that a simple profession of faith is all that is required to come to the Lord's table, fill the people of God with vain imaginations, and seduce them into a false sense of security amidst a great deal of danger. Because even because they have seduced my people, saying, Peace, and there was no peace, and one built up a wall, and lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar, say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall.

There shall be an overflowing shower, and ye, O great hailstone, shall fall, and a stormy wind shall rend it.--Ezekiel 13, 10-11. John Calvin judiciously comments upon this passage, Here the Spirit signifies that the false prophets should be subject to the greatest ridicule when they shall be convicted by the event, and their lies shall be proved by clear proof. Hence also we may gather the utility of the doctrine which Paul teaches, that we must stand bravely when God gives the reins to impostors to disturb or disperse the church.

Please read carefully as J. A. Wiley describes how John Calvin was willing to practice what he preached, setting a godly example for all elders and ministers to follow. The customary hour of public worship was now come, the Lord's Day, September 3, 1553. The great bell Clemens had told its summons, the throng of worshipers on their way to the cathedral had rolled past, and now the streets, which had resounded with their tread, were empty and silent.

Over city, plain, and lake there brooded a deep stillness. It was around the pulpit of St. Peter's, and the man with pale face, commanding eye, and kingly brow who occupied it, that the heart of Geneva palpitated. The church was filled with an uneasy crowd.

On the benches of the consistory sat, unmoved, the pastors and elders, resolved to bear the greatest violence rather than not do their duty. A confused noise was heard within the temple. The congregation opened with difficulty, and a numerous band of men of all ranks, their hands upon their sword-hilts, forced their way into the presence of the holy table.

The elite of the Libertines had decided to communicate. Berthier did not appear as yet. He reserved himself till the last moment.

Calvin, calm as ever, rose to begin the service. He could not but see the Libertines in the vast congregation before him, but he seemed as if he saw them not. He preached on the state of mind with which the Lord's Supper ought to be received.

At the close, raising his voice, he said, As for me, so long as God shall leave me here, since he hath given me fortitude, and I have received it from him, I will employ it, whatever betide, and I will guide myself by my master's rule, which is to me clear and well known, as we are now to receive the holy supper of the Lord Jesus Christ, if anyone who has been debarred by the consistory shall approach this table, though it should cost my life, I will show myself such as I ought to be. When the liturgies were concluded, Calvin came down from the pulpit and took his stand before the table. Lifting up the white napkin, he displayed the symbols of Christ's body and blood, the food destined for believing souls.

Having blessed the bread and the wine, he was about to distribute them to the congregation. At that moment there was a movement among the Libertines as if they would seize the bread and the cup. The Reformer, covering the sacred symbols with his hands, exclaimed in a voice that rang through the edifice, These hands you may crush, and these arms you may lop off, my life you may take, my blood is yours, you may shed it, but you shall never force me to give holy things to the profane and dishonor the table of my God.

These words broke like a thunder-peal over the Libertines. As if an invisible power had flung back the ungodly host, they slunk away, abashed, the congregation opening a passage for their retreat. A deep calm succeeded, and the sacred ordinance, says Biza, was celebrated with profound silence and under a solemn awe in all present, as if the deity himself had been visible among them.

And that's from Wiley's History of Protestantism, volume 2, page 327. Are your elders committed to saying, These hands you may crush, and these arms you may lop off, my life you may take, my blood is yours, you may shed it, but you shall never force me to give holy things to the profane and dishonor the table of my God? Is that the norm in the PCA, OPC, RPCNA, and First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett? We as elders and members must pray that we are not found among those who promiscuously offer the Lord's Supper to the ignorant and scandalous. Thomas McCree comments, A vague and erratic charity which soars above fixed principles of belief, looks down with neglect on external ordinances, and spurns the restraint of ordinary rules, whether it seeks to include all Christians within its Catholic embrace, or confines itself to those of a favorite class, is a very feeble and precarious bond of union.

True Christian charity is the daughter of truth, and fixes her objects for the truth's sake which dwells in them. 2. NEGATIVE AGREEMENT While it is impossible to understand all that is included in either God's word or the Church's subordinate standards, it is necessary to both communion and Church membership that an agreement be obtained in which the prospective member consents to being ruled by the Church's standards. Thomas McCree explains that such agreement is necessary to the stability and preservation of any society.

The exercise of authority in government is necessary as a bond of union and a basis of stability in all societies. By means of it, the largest communities, and even many nations, may be made to coalesce and become one under the same political government. And can any good reason be assigned for supposing that the Church of Christ should be destitute of this bond, or that it should not be necessary to her union as a visible society? If every family has its economy and discipline, if every kingdom has its form of government and laws, shall we suppose that the most perfect of all societies, the house of the living God, 1 Timothy 3.15, and the kingdom of heaven, should be left by her divine head without that which so evidently tends to the maintenance of her faith, the purity and regulation of her administrations, and the order, subordination, unity, and peace which ought to reign among all her members? Whatever is necessary to her government, and the preserving of her order and purity, either is expressly enjoined in Scripture, or may be deduced by native inference from the general rules and the particular examples which are recorded in it.

Opposition to Church standards is the greatest source of strife and division in the Church, and as McCree just pointed out, standards are necessary for the preservation and orderly government of God's people. Without securing agreement to abstain, that is, negative agreement, from obstinately and willfully opposing the standards of the Church, how can we expect peace or preserve order? Should we invite those to membership or communion who overtly declare the opposite of our principles? Should we say to them, Since you are relatively ignorant about what our Church teaches, you may speak against our articles of faith at will, you may teach our children whatever you please. Since our standards contain too much for you to understand, you may ignore them, oppose us at any point, or teach contrary to their meaning, and we will be happy to have communion with you? This, of course, is absurd, and I would not even mention it, were it not for the fact that most of our nation's churches commune together on similar principles.

Let's keep to the fundamentals, is the slogan of the day, and let's agree to disagree on everything else, appears to have become the only commandment these churches are seriously willing to enforce. Anybody who speaks up against these modern day clichés are habitually judged as schismatic and divisive. Never committing to what the fundamentals are, this system of toleration degenerates into an indefinite system of arbitrary tyranny.

Instead of the whole council of God, we are left with the half council of men. Under the pretense of genuine concern for their fellow brethren, these schismatics slither their way into sessions and set out to fundamentally neutralize the standards of faith that have faithfully served the Church of Christ for hundreds of years. Thus they subvert the unity of the Church and sin against the body of Christ.

Stand fast, therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children, that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children, that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments, and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God. Mr. Bacon says, 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, and that's from Defense Departed.

While total familiarity with these documents is not required, general familiarity with their substance, nature, and use is. Those who are unfamiliar with God's word or our Church's standards, which agree with God's word, may be likened to those who are unfamiliar with the laws and practices of the nation. Whether the people of the land are familiar with all the civil law or not, they are ruled according to its statutes, and are required to obey its precepts.

Those like Mr. Bacon, who would attempt to misrepresent us by implying that we require people to read and understand hundreds of pages of documents, are simply being irresponsible. This foolish argument could be used even if an acknowledgment of the word of God to be the alone infallible rule of faith and practice were our only term of communion. I can almost hear Mr. Bacon saying, how dare you require an acknowledgment of the Old and New Testament to be the word of God and the alone infallible rule of faith and practice? You are requiring people to read and understand hundreds of pages to be able to come to the Lord's table.

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. This sentiment practically refutes itself, but for the sake of those swayed by such sophomoric babble, I will continue with an explanation. Let us assume that we live in a land with a legitimate civil government, and that we are ruled by common law and precedent, which is true of most Western nations, which are, in effect, civil terms of communion.

These civil terms of communion fill whole libraries. These terms externally bind us to obedience whether each of us has read every book in the whole law library or not. Those accused of civil crimes are brought before a judge who is intimately familiar with the civil terms of communion in the land.

After listening to the historical testimony of two or three witnesses who previously were covenanted to tell the whole truth, the judge proceeds to examine other historical testimony, precedent, comparing it with the fundamental laws of the land, confession of faith. If found guilty, these criminals are excluded from communion with others, separated from society, and put into prison until such time as restitution and hopefully repentance occur. Are we required to know every law in the land to be able to commune with our fellow man in civil society? No, of course not.

Those, however, who are called to rule over us are expected to rule according to the laws of the land and are expected to judge equitably based upon those standards. These terms of civil communion are not laid aside simply because they are too much for each man to know. Each individual in society must be acquainted with enough law to coexist peacefully with others.

They are expected to negatively comply with the laws of the land that they have not yet read nor yet fully understand. If at any time they study the law and are convinced of its error, they are obliged to bring about reform by orderly change. Similarly, in the church we find that over the course of history our confession and testimony for truth has grown larger.

The truth does not change, but the church's understanding of the truth enlarges, and hence the creed of the fourth century will not meet the wants of the nineteenth century any more than the coat worn by a boy

of six years will fit a grown man, as from J. M. Foster's *Distinctive Principles of the Covenanters*, page 4. The Acts of General Assembly and judicial testimonies of the church do not fill whole libraries, but they are over a thousand pages long. Is it required that everybody who comes to the communion table read and understand everything in all of those documents? Of course not. Is that any excuse to set aside all the just rulings of past assemblies? Is that any reason to throw away their lawful historical judgments and faithful practical testimony? No.

Our elders are constantly studying these documents in order to apply them consistently throughout our congregations. We do not believe we have to throw out hundreds of years of faithful testimony simply because it is a lot to understand. Our communicants are required to have a general knowledge of what is contained in these documents, and they must understand why these documents, in all their faithful judgments, still bind them.

Like civil court judges, our elders are expected to judge consistently with former judicial acts, declarations, and testimonies, provided they are agreeable to God's word. Mr. Bacon is again up to his old tricks of misrepresentation. He wishes to make it appear that we require everybody to have the same level of understanding as our judges.

That is both unrealistic and absurd. We require each communicant to understand enough doctrine, a competent understanding of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, to meet the communion qualifications set down in Scripture, and have a general understanding of each of our church standards so that we may peacefully study and pursue agreement in the truth. Prospective members are informed before joining that they will be ruled according to all that has been explicitly published, and they are encouraged to grow an understanding of all this faithful testimony.

This has proved to be both edifying and attainable for all who have presently come for examination. While we encourage our members to grow in a better understanding of all these things, we have never counseled anyone to implicitly accept something with which they disagree. Although new members in the PRCE have varying degrees of knowledge of our terms of communion, they are encouraged to compare our subordinate standards at every point with our supreme standard, the word of God.

If questions or doubts arise along the way, the elders are always available to instruct patiently such earnest sheep. Not only do we encourage all prospective members to thoroughly examine our church standards by God's word, but additionally we caution them against blindly accepting the opinion of the pastors or elders of this or any church. In regard to this, the substance of what we tell our prospective members is recorded in the book entitled *Protestors, No Subverters*, and is well summarized in the following statements.

Whatsoever reverence or dignity is by the Spirit of God in the Scriptures given, whether to the priests, or prophets, or apostles, or their successors, all of it is given, not properly to men themselves, but to the ministry wherewith they are clothed, or, to speak more expeditely, the ministry whereof is committed unto them, Exodus 3.4 and 14.31, Deuteronomy 20.17, 9 and 10, Malachi 2.4 and 6, Ezekiel 3.17, Jeremiah 23.28 and 1.6, Matthew 28.19, Acts 15.10. Secondly, that as their authority is founded upon, and wholly derived from the word of God, so in the administration and exercise thereof they are in all things to walk according to this rule, Isaiah 8.19 and 20, Malachi 2.6 and 7, Matthew 28.19. Thirdly, that church power is not a lordly and magistratical power, but a lowly and ministerial power, and not an absolute, autocratic, but a limited and hyperetic power, and that church decrees and sentences are all of the regulae regulate, rules

that are subordinated and do not bind but in the Lord, and so far as they are conformed to that first inflexible and unerring rule prescribed by himself, Luke 22.25, 26 and 27, 1 Peter 5.2 and 3, 2 Timothy 3.15-17, 1 Thessalonians 5.12, Ephesians 6.1, 96. Fourthly, that all church judicatures, whether congregational elderships or presbyteries or synods, provincial, national or ecumenical, being constituted of men that are weak, frail and ignorant in part, are in their determinations fallible and subject to error, Isaiah 40.6-8, Romans 3.4, 1 Corinthians 13.9 and 12. Fifthly, that insofar as any of these do actually err and decline, they do insofar act without power and authority from Jesus Christ, they may do nothing by his commission against the truth but for the truth, 2 Corinthians 13.8, the power that he hath given is to edification and not to destruction.

Sixthly, that sad experience almost in every generation doth teach us that church guides and church judicatures do oftentimes decline from the straight ways of the Lord and decree unrighteous decrees and write grievous things which they have prescribed, Isaiah 9.15-16, Jeremiah 8.8-9, Malachi 2.8-9, Jeremiah 2.8, Isaiah 9.15-16, and that while as they are boasting of the authority given to them of God and of their skill in the law and professing to walk according thereto, they are perverting the precious truths of God and persecuting those who adhere unto, Jeremiah 18.18, Isaiah 66.5, Job 7.48-49. Seventhly, in page 97, the same Lord who hath commanded us not to despise prophesying, 1 Thessalonians 5.19, has also commanded us to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good, verse 20, and not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits, whether they be of God, because many false prophets are gone forth into the world, 1 John 4.1, and that whatever is not of faith is sin, Romans 14.15, and that we ought not to be the servants of men, 1 Corinthians 7.23, that is, to do things especially in the matters of God, for which we have no other warrant but the mere pleasure and will of men, which the apostle calls living to the lusts of men, and not to the will of God, 1 Peter 4.2. And it is therefore both the duty and privilege of every church member to examine by the judgment of discretion everything that the church judicatory enjoineeth, whether it be agreeable or repugnant to the rule of the word. And if, after a diligent and impartial search, it be found repugnant, they are not to bring their conscience in bondage thereto. Protestant divines, de judiciale controversarium, have showed us that this does not make a private man or an inferior judge of the sentences of his superiors, but only of his own actions, page 98 and 99, and that's Protestors no subverted, cited from Protestors vindicated, pages 93 to 95.

When we come to the communion table, we do so in one mind and one faith. We come because we are convinced by the word of God that it is the right thing to do. That does not mean that everybody knows as much as our elders, but rather that we agree positively on the doctrine of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, and we agree in our general understanding of the substance, nature, and purpose of our terms of communion.

When we sit down together to profess jointly our faith to God at the Lord's table, we do so knowing that those who sit with us have been examined and approved by elders, weak and fallible as they may be, who are endeavoring by God's grace to be faithful in preparing the sheep to commune with their shepherd. Mr. Bacon says, quote, Based upon the history of the Reformed Presbytery, David Steele concluded that it is necessary to the true and proper constitution of a church that it swear the 1638 National Covenant of Scotland, the 1643 Solemn Leaguering Covenant, and the 1712 Arkansas Renovation. Further, acceptance of the judicial testimony emitted by the Reformed Presbytery in North Britain with supplements is required in order to come to the Lord's Supper.

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. 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.

To require members not to speak or act contrary to the subordinate standards of our church is not at all to require implicit faith, although elders in a church cannot require members to own as true what they believe to be false, nevertheless, faithful elders must require of members an outward conformity to the subordinate standards if there is to be any peace or order at all within a church. This is as much of a necessity in the church Mr. Bacon pastors as is true of the PRCE. It is inescapable in all the churches having subordinate standards.

To allow members promiscuously to attack and demean the subordinate standards of a church would obviously lead to those standards serving no purpose and having no meaning in that church. This being true, are all the members of the church that Mr. Bacon pastors required to exercise implicit faith because they are expected, whether explicitly or implicitly, not to speak or act contrary to the subordinate standards of the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett? To require an outward conformity is not to require implicit faith. Implicit faith requires members to believe articles of faith on the sole authority of a mere human being, whether he be pope or priest, minister or elder, or even one's mere conscience.

All articles of faith must be owned to be true upon the supreme authority of God speaking by His Spirit in His Word. Did the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland require implicit faith when they penned the following term of communion? Quote, The Assembly constitutes and ordains that from henceforth no sort of person of whatsoever quality or degree be permitted to speak or write against the said confession, this Assembly, or any act of this Assembly, and that under the pain of incurring the censures of this Kirk. That's from the Acts of Assemblies of the Church of Scotland, 1638 to 1649, page 51.

Doesn't the phrase, under the pain of incurring the censures of this Kirk, make this a term of membership and ecclesiastical communion? Would a new convert with relatively little understanding of the confession or acts of General Assembly be required to abide by this ruling? Yes, necessarily, since the Assembly stated that, from henceforth, no sort of person of whatsoever quality or degree be permitted to speak or write against the said confession. Obviously, that includes everybody. Contradicting this faithful act of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Mr. Bacon says, Quote, Let it simply be recorded that the Act, Declaration, and Testimony is itself a book over 200 pages and expatiates in steelite 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 500 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.

That's from Defense Departed. Of course, if the reader agrees with Mr. Bacon, they must immediately see that they cannot agree with the Scottish General Assembly. Is it not evident that Mr. Bacon's principles are entirely contrary to that of the Second Reformation? Did not the Scottish General Assembly require, under the pain of censure, that no sort of person of whatsoever quality or degree be permitted to speak or write against the said confession, this Assembly, or any Act of this Assembly? Does it not closely follow that the General Assembly required all their members to externally comply with these documents if they wanted to remain free from censure? Thus it is foolish to complain that being ruled by a large body of knowledge is to

require implicit faith.

Mr. Bacon's complaint that the PRCE requires too much is again exposed for what it is. Nonsense. This concludes tape three 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 that this 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). Note again that these tapes are not copyrighted, and we therefore encourage you to copy and distribute them to any and all you believe would be benefited.

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