

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

by Greg Barrow

The Protestant Antidote to Modern Disunity is covenant theology and faithful church government, which are essential for the health and purity of the church.

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Topics: "Protestant Reformation", "Church Unity"

Description

In this sermon transcript, Greg Barrow responds to Richard Bacon's criticisms of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton and the Covenanters. Barrow addresses Bacon's misrepresentations and false accusations, refuting them with biblical evidence and historical context. He emphasizes the ongoing battle for the supremacy of Jesus Christ and the corruption of the gospel teachings. Barrow's defense of the classical Protestant doctrines and practices serves as a testimony against error and a call for a Third Reformation.

Transcript

This is Tape 5 of the Protestant Antidote to Modern Schismatical Disunity, being Chapter 4 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. 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 780-450-3730 or by email at swrb@swrb.com. Please also 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 conclude our reading on this tape. Conclusion I have surveyed Mr. Bacon's defense departed and spent as much time upon it as I could afford. I realize that I have not addressed every issue, but I have attempted to deal with his major objections.

Mr. Bacon clearly desires to champion the cause of the independent denomination he calls the Reformation Presbyterian Church, and I maintain that in so doing, he greatly errs. Does he teach the

doctrine of the Reformation? No. He pours contempt upon its martyrs and libels those who remember and uphold their faithful contendings.

He misinterprets the writings of our Reformed forefathers to reflect deformed half-truths, and imports his malignant neo-Presbyterianism upon their tried and true orthodoxy. Disparaging himself, his ministry, and most importantly, the cause of Christ, he dogmatically teaches a confused mix of papistical, prolatical, and independent error, while scandalously hindering the cause of Reformation in our land. Behind him lies a wake of sincere children of God who have honestly and sometimes gullibly received the bread of life from his pulpit, only to find upon more careful inspection that the leaven of error had permeated the whole, and that what was once fit for consumption has been transformed into that which is harmful to the whole body.

A faithful minister of Christ is commissioned to edify, not destroy. He is sent to faithfully witness as a humble servant, not proudly misrepresent the humble servants. Mr. Bacon's doctrine and manners are not those of a minister of Reformation truth, but rather those of a minister of error and compromise.

As such, he is a minister of deformation, and those who would be careful to watch over their own souls would be well advised to steer clear of his unfaithful feeding. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people, Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them. Behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the Lord.

Is Mr. Bacon a Presbyterian? While the outside of his cup glistens with Presbyterian platitudes, the inside is full of the poison and contradiction of potpourri and independency. He attempts to pour out his fatal toxin to Presbyterianism by disparaging the covenants and fundamentally striking at the root of fellowship and Christian unity. Those bodies who have drunk of his cup have been subtly inebriated as the doctrine of schism courses through their members.

Sadly, some will ever remain in the stupor of error until such time as this mingled fruit of the vine will find its way to deliver a fatal blow to both the heart and mind of the body. What Mr. Bacon promotes is anything but Presbyterianism. What he promotes is nothing less than sectarian sin.

Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces. And give ear, all ye of far countries. Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.

Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to naught. Speak the word, and it shall not stand.

For God is with us. Isaiah 8, 9, 10 Does Mr. Bacon belong to a true church? Yes, in essence. Though he feeds his members with the leaven of error, and many are stumbled from the cup that he serves, the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett still retains the title of a true church as to being.

Everything taught in this body is not wrong, nor is every ordinance adulterated. Though church discipline is severely compromised and the communion table openly latitudinarian, fair judgment is not altogether wanting. While retaining the single mark of a true church as to being, that is, the profession of the truth, the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett lacks the marks of a faithful church of Jesus Christ and consequently should be avoided and withdrawn from until such time as they manifest repentance and restitution.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly and not after the tradition which he received of us. 2 Thessalonians 3, 6 What is our response to the lone minister of the so-called Reformation Presbyterian Church? He does

not faithfully teach Reformation doctrine, nor does he maintain Reformation practice. He is Presbyterian in word, but not in deed, and the church which he champions is Christian, though woefully unfaithful.

Mr. Bacon has neither honestly read nor properly represented the covenantal position regarding the nature, substance, and use of our covenants or terms of communion. In the midst of his emotional rhetoric, he has demeaned himself in the office of a minister of Jesus Christ. It should be abundantly clear to the reader at this point that Mr. Bacon's doctrine seriously deviates from the truth of God's word, from many acts of general assembly, as well as the abundantly clear testimonies of the faithful men of the past.

Such serious defections from the standards and practice of faithful Presbyterian churches of the past would place him before their judicial courts to give account of his perjury, schism, gross misrepresentation, and malignancy towards covenant and Presbyterianism. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

Many times throughout this response I have called for Mr. Bacon's repentance, and I will continue to plead with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that my petition will be granted in due time. Should Mr. Bacon fail to respond satisfactorily, I can assure the reader that any further attacks will be duly rebutted. George Gillespie has spoken so wisely and appropriately to the opponents of his day that I wish to apply his godly and judicious words to our current controversy with Mr. Bacon.

Quote, I shall leave every man to his judge, and shall judge nothing before the time. And I wish every man to consider sadly and seriously by what spirit and principles he is led, and whether he be seeking the things of Christ or his own things, whether he be pleasing Christ, whether sin be more shamed and holiness more advanced, this way or that way, which way is the most agreeable to the word of God, to the example of the best reformed churches, and so to the solemn league and covenant. This controversy is now hot.

Every faithful servant of Christ will be careful to deliver his own soul by his faithfulness and let the Lord do what seemeth him good. The cause is not ours but Christ's. It stands him upon his honor, his crown, his laws, his kingdom.

Our eyes are toward the Lord, and we will wait for a divine decision of the business. For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king. He will save us.

And that's from Gillespie's Aaron's Rod Blossoming, page 78. Finally, I close this response with the sobering words of John Calvin. These things which I set before you are not those which I have meditated with myself in my shady nook, but those which the invincible martyrs of God realized amid gibbets and flames and ravenous beasts.

Had not their courage been thus whetted, they would in an instant have profitously abjured the eternal truth which they intrepidly sealed with their blood. They did not set us an example of constancy in asserting the truth that we should now deserve it when handed down to us so signed and sealed. But they taught us the art by which, trusting in the divine protection, we stand invincible by all powers of death, hell, the world, and Satan.

Farewell. And that's from Calvin's tract On Shunning the Unlawful Rights of the Ungodly, taken from Calvin's Selected Works, volume 3, page 411. And this concludes the Protestant antidote to modern

schismatical disunity, being chapter 4 of Greg Barrow's book *The Covenanted Reformation Defended*.

However, Barrow noted in this chapter, appendix F, about a qualification on the rights to the seals of the covenant of grace, and so I'll now read that. Appendix F. Qualification. God did not intend to reprobate or secret hypocrites to have the internal right to the covenant seals.

Samuel Rutherford comments, Now the Orthodox and Reformed Church holdeth that the covenant and promises are preached to the whole visible church, but for the elect's sake, and that however externally the covenant of grace and promises be promulgated to everyone and all within the lists of the visible church, yet they belong in God's intention and gracious purpose only to the elect of God. And that's from the *Do-Righter Presbyteries*, page 248. Here we must understand two things.

One, the sacraments are an effectual means of grace to the elect only. We must understand that only the invisible church has an internal right to the covenant of grace. Any reprobate who receives baptism or partakes of the Lord's table will receive judgment and not grace for their acts of hypocrisy.

While it is possible for the external sign of the covenant to be applied to the unregenerate, it is impossible for the internal seal to be applied apart from faith. Two, the frailty of elders will only allow for judgment based upon what is visible and consequently the external right to these covenant seals is based upon outward profession and practice. In admitting or demitting professors from the sacraments, elders are never to attempt to read the hearts and intentions of God's people.

Therefore, we must understand that, strictly speaking, not every member of the visible church has an internal right to signs and seals of the covenant of grace. These were intended for the elect alone and ordained to be administered to them through the visible church of Christ. The only sense in which I may say that the visible church has a right to the signs and seals of the covenant is by making this qualification.

Again, Rutherford explains, quote, The invisible church, and not the visible church as it is such, hath right to the sacraments, because these who have right to the covenant have right to the seals of the covenant, and this is Peter's argument to prove the baptizing of infants to be lawful, Acts 2, 38 and 39. But only the invisible church hath right to the covenant, for God saith only of and to the invisible church, and not to the visible church, in his gracious purpose, Jeremiah 32, 38, And I will be their God, and they shall be my people, Jeremiah 31, 33. I will put my law in their inward parts, and Jeremiah 31, 34.

They shall all know me, all within the covenant. I will forgive their iniquity. Now the visible church, as the visible church, is not within the covenant.

Therefore the visible church, as the visible church, and being no more but the visible church, hath not right to the seals of the covenant, but insofar as God is their God, and they his pardoned and sanctified people, as it is in Jeremiah 31, 33 through 34. And that's from the *Do-Right of Presbyteries*, page 249. Why was it necessary to make this distinction? Because we must understand that God intended to send his covenant blessings only to his elect.

When I say that all who profess faith possess a right to both baptism and the Lord's table, I mean that only the elect truly have that right. But since we as mere men cannot tell the elect from the reprobate, we must rely on a visible profession only. This observable profession forms the basis from which we as mere men may judge who may receive the sacraments and who may not.

I've already noted that this entire book is free from Stillwaters Revival Books on its website at www.swrv.com and in hardcover from Stillwaters as well. Now, since Barrow's work is an unequalled modern remedy for the disunity and impurity rampant in the Church today, I'll now be reading the foreword that he requested me to write. This foreword surveys the book and I believe it gives a concise and powerful presentation of why the Covenanted Reformation defended is so important for the well-being of Christ's bruised and battered bride, indeed, why it is truly the Protestant antidote to modern schismatical disunity.

And thereafter, I'll be reading another important appendix from this book, Appendix G, which has been released on a separate tape entitled *Eschewing Ecclesiastical Tyranny, The Duty of Christ's Sheep*, and it deals with the matter of the private judgment of discretion that is a privilege and a duty of all believers. I thank you for listening and may God bless you as you consider these precious old paths wherein is rest for our souls. Jeremiah 6.16 It has often been the case that the best writing and the most precise and orthodox theology have arisen from controversy.

Examples are numerous, Paul's epistles to the Galatians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Hebrews, and the young pastor Timothy, the epistles of Peter, John, Jude, and James, faithful Athanasius standing against the Arian majority, Luther's immortal refutation of Erasmus in the bondage of the will, Calvin's Institutes, John Knox's appellation to the nobility of Scotland, the productions of the Westminster Assembly, Samuel Rutherford, George Gillespie, Thomas Edwards, Daniel Cawdry, and the Presbyterian London ministers at the time of the Westminster Assembly concerning church government, John Brown of Wemphrey, Robert McWard, and others regarding the protester-resolutioner controversy and its fruits see especially an outstanding book entitled *The Protesters Vindicated*, Alexander Shield's classic *Hein Let Loose*, James Rennick's *Informatory Vindication*, Andrew Clarkson's *Plain Reasons for Presbyterians Dissenting from the Revolution Church in Scotland*, the *Reformed Presbyteries Act Declaration and Testimony for the Whole of Our Covenanted Reformation*, and indeed, the list could easily fill this forward. The reader is strongly encouraged to consult the ever-growing publication list of Stillwater's revival books for these and other outstanding works. Neither should we expect things to be different today.

Our beloved apostle has forewarned us, There must be also heresies among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. Thus, although we are not to be contentious, contention for the sake of truth cannot and must not be avoided. Paul says, We were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

1 Thessalonians 2.2 And in Jude we are exhorted that we should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. Jude 3. The book you now hold, penned by ruling elder and ministerial student Greg Barrow, is a modern example of such faithful contending and orthodox doctrinal precision. Since Barrow's work was born of controversy, it is necessary to give an historical overview of this conflict that the reader may read most profitably and intelligibly.

Richard Bacon published *A Defense Departed*, his alleged refutation of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton's, PRCE, a brief defense of dissociation in the present circumstances, in early August of last year, 1997, on the web page of the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett, Texas. However, we do not begin here in our historical survey. Neither do we proceed from the point of an earlier and similar slander from the pen of Brian Schwertle, minister in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, RPCNA.

Schwertle's open letter to Reformed pastors, elders, and all brethren in Christ was circulated via the Internet in April of last year, that would be 1997. The scandalous lies of these modern malignants who pervert the righteous ways of the covenanted Reformation are certainly germane. Indeed, Barrow's book is directed primarily at Richard Bacon.

Nevertheless, to understand truly the nature and importance of our current conflict, and therefore the paramount importance of Barrow's book, we must first turn our gaze backward three and a half centuries. Some 350 years ago, our faithful Reformed forefathers in Scotland took hold of the Covenant of Grace in their national covenant, by this means fulfilling their duty and privilege as Christ's witnessing church in the British Isles. Thus was born the second, or covenanted, Reformation of religion in those Isles, sustained and greatly furthered by the swearing of the solemn Ligon Covenant five years later.

The latter, covenanted uniformity of religion, undergirded the work of the famous Westminster Assembly, and bound the covenanting churches and nations to the adoption and implementation of that Assembly's work, that is, the Confession of Faith, the larger and shorter catechisms, directory for public worship, and form of church government. Sadly, of these churches and nations, Scotland was most faithful to pay her vows, and only for a brief time. In 1650, a deadly church-dividing blow was dealt by the majority of backsliding civil and ecclesiastical leaders in their support of the public resolutions, as they were called.

England and Ireland had already broken their sacred bond. The next four decades were times of bitter and often unrelenting trial for the faithful protesting remnant, which included such men as Samuel Rutherford, Archibald Johnston of Warreston, James Guthrie, Patrick Gillespie, John Brown of Wemfre, Robert McWard, William Guthrie, Donald Cargill, Richard Cameron, and James Rennick, who themselves, by God's grace, were unrelenting in their testimony against the covenant-breaking resolutioners and the defections in church and state. Though the merciless persecution by the civil and ecclesiastical tyrants ended with the Reformation denying revolution settlement of 1688, the blessed but short-lived covenanted Reformation has been, and continues to be, opposed by many, ignored by or unknown to others, and embraced and loved by only a faithful few who, like their fathers, and unlike the RPCNA today, truly wear the name Covenanter.

There have been many in the last three centuries who have gloriously praised the work of the Westminster Assembly, yet there has been at best only an incomplete adherence to the Assembly's doctrine and practice. Many factors have contributed to this, of which the foremost must certainly be our wretched failure to receive the love of the truth. Consequently, our righteous God has given the people and nations professing His name over to a profound blindness in keeping with His fearful threatenings in Scripture, 2 Thessalonians 2, 10-12, Romans 1, 28, and so forth.

This judicial blindness has led to an increased preaching, publishing, and practicing of numerous errors condemned by our forefathers as popish on the one hand and schismatic and independent on the other in so-called Protestant, Reformed, and Presbyterian churches. Richard Bacon exemplifies this dreadful dynamic in our day. As we see then, our quarrel goes back over three hundred years, and really, back to the dawn of the human race.

Our contending is for nothing less than the Crown Rights the comprehensive Crown Rights of the Blessed Promised Seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, which are denied, trampled, and usurped on all sides. The Serpent and His Seed throughout the millennia have unceasingly sought and fought to strip the Lamb of God of His due honor and glory in church and state. The Lamb and His followers have continually met them in battle,

being made strong through His Spirit and Word, and through His might casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

2 Corinthians 10.5 By such faithful contendings, God has graciously granted two major reformations in days past. We stand desperately in need of a third. There is great cause for rejoicing in Zion, however, for an increasing number of God's people are beginning to be awakened and to return to the blessed biblical attainments of the covenanted reformation.

We are hopeful that the prayers of the faithful covenanters of old are being answered, that the rediscovery of their precious principles and practices are nothing less than a prologue to the third reformation and the worldwide overthrow of Antichrist. Lamentably, the defection and backsliding we've inherited place us at a great disadvantage. We know we must return to the old paths, Jeremiah 6.16, and we earnestly desire to walk in the footsteps of the flock, Song of Solomon 1.8. Yet a substantial gap separates us in our current condition from our forefathers.

Christ's beloved church today is ignorant of many fundamentals of Protestantism, unable to derive the benefit we ought from faithful teachers of old. To make matters worse, men like Richard Bacon and Brian Schwertle are further confusing Christ's already confused and scattered sheep with their shoddy scholarship and lying publications. A bridge traversing this chasm of ignorance and confusion and an antidote to the popish and independent heresies of blind guides is desperately needed that we may sit at the feet of our faithful Reformed forebears and fully partake of the Scripture truths which will make us free and effective in our service to the Lord, to each other, and to our countries.

In light of this need and believing that the old Covenanter truths are indeed a testimony against modern backsliders and hopefully the prologue to a glorious Third Reformation, I earnestly commend to you the following volume. Barrow has faithfully and skillfully produced the clearest and best Covenanter primer that has yet appeared in the recent resurgence of the full-orbed teachings of the Protestant Reformation. In the Covenanted Reformation defended against contemporary schismatics, Barrow accomplishes at least three important tasks.

As the full title indicates, Richard Bacon has manufactured a controversy involving faithful Covenanters whom he disparagingly designates Stelites. The first objective, then, is to vanquish without hope of resurrection the slanderous caricature Bacon has made of the Covenanter position and the PRCE and other modern Covenanters. In the second installment of Bacon Bits, the preliminary response to Bacon's essay, I anticipated that Barrow's refutation of Bacon would be nothing less than an annihilation.

My expectations were completely justified. If Bacon has any integrity and humility, he will, with profound shame, beg the PRCE, the Church at large, and, most importantly, the living God to forgive him for ever emitting his literary refuse. Second, in keeping with the Ninth Commandment, Barrow vindicates the good names of modern and historical brethren.

Bacon has, in Defense Departed and elsewhere, blackened the names and doctrines of quite a number of godly men and even General Assemblies. See, for example, No. 3 Bacon Bits by Greg Price.

One especially relevant modern instance, see Appendix G, is that of Kevin Reed, founder of Presbyterian Heritage Publications. Reed was the recipient of Bacon's popish clubbing in his atrocious little work The Visible Church in the Outer Darkness, a reply against those claiming to be true Presbyterians separating in

extraordinary times. Finally, and most importantly, Barrow provides the bridge back to the teachings of our Reformed forefathers, his work serving as a skillful and much-needed covenantor primer.

His explanations of key and ill-understood in our day doctrines of the Reformation are the clearest I have ever read. His numerous citations of non-covenantor writers demonstrate that these doctrines are not at all peculiar to covenantors, and indeed, that they are foundational to Protestantism. That these doctrines are not understood by the pastors and people of our day is a heart-breaking commentary on how far we Protestants have fallen from the Protestant Reformation.

My people hath been lost sheep, their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains, they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

Jesus answered and said unto Nicodemus, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Jeremiah 50, verse 6, Hosea 4, 6, Matthew 15, 14, and John 3, 10. That Beryl's book has now appeared is an overjoying sign of God's favor and mercy toward his church. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.

And he gave 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 fullness of Christ, that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine. Romans 5.20 Ephesians 4.11-14 The format of this book has been necessitated by the essay it refutes. Bacon has uttered numerous falsehoods and smears in his scurrilous attack, and in the body of his work Beryl has responded to four primary misrepresentations.

In each case he obliterates these falsehoods, and with remarkable restraint, given the outrageousness of Bacon's accusations and assertions, lovingly and firmly calls Bacon to repentance. In the appendices, in-house to the book additional historical materials presented and discussed, and, as noted, Kevin Reed's Protestant Contendings for Private Judgment concerning church leaders and their teaching and governing are vindicated. After briefly and graciously stating the disposition of the PRCE toward Bacon and their desire for his reclamation, Defense Departed's two opening sentences are first dealt with.

These state, I believe it is fairly certain, even as we prepare to place these words in history before the view of the world, that many will regard this dispute to be little else than a tempest in a teapot. In large measure I find I must agree. Thus the man frequently contributing to the newsletter presumptuously named after the Covenanter emblem, the blue banner, at once falsifies it and despises the faithful labors and shed blood of our Covenanted ancestors.

Among others, Barrow incisively quotes J.C. McPheeters in reply. The blood of the martyrs imposes obligations upon posterity from generation to generation. The martyrs deeply felt their responsibility for the Church, her purity, doctrines, discipline, membership, for her loyalty to Christ, her separation from the world and her administration in the Holy Spirit.

Their zeal for the house of God brought them to the front. Their passionate love for Jesus Christ placed them on the firing line. There they met every attack made upon Christ in His house.

There they stood for the royal rights of Jesus and the honor of His kingdom. There they fell under the murderous fire giving place to their successors. These soldiers of Jesus knew how to die, but not how to retreat.

They did their work well, yet necessarily left it unfinished. The victory was assured, though not in sight. The death-stricken hands reached the blood-stained banner out to another to be carried forward.

This war still rages. The supremacy of Jesus Christ is yet disputed. His royal rights are yet usurped by men and by mortals.

His bride, the church, still halts amid many opinions. The ordinances of grace are unblushingly corrupted. The teachings of the gospel are adroitly doctored.

The attacking forces are active, determined, and numerous as in the days of the martyrs. The tactics differ, but the fight goes on. Heavy, heavy are the moral obligations that fall to the successors of those who gave their lives for the truth.

To recede would be cowardice, desertion from the ranks, perjury within the covenant, treason against Jesus Christ. Is this too strong? Listen! If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. Surely, the times call for Christian soldiers, yea, heroes, possibly martyrs.

Do covenanters feel their obligation to the Lord? That's from Sketches of the Covenanters, pages 401-403. The second misrepresentation of which Barrow skillfully disposes is Bacon's allegation that the PRCE claims they are the only duly constituted church on the face of the earth. Bacon exhorts, The error into which you have fallen is serious, and until you come out of the little group which claims that they alone of all the inhabitants of the earth have a true constitutional church, you will continue attached to the dead body of human tradition.

This emotive smokescreen is dispelled quickly and readily, first by noting that Bacon has therein made such an unqualified charge as to be useful only in misleading the ignorant or unwary reader. Barrow thus asks, What does he mean by true constitutional court or true constitutional church? Does he mean constitutionally true as to the being of the church or constitutionally true as to the well-being of the church? Shouldn't he define what he means before publicly making such a serious accusation? Instead, he begins and ends his defense-departed without ever qualifying these terms. He leaves it to the imagination and emotion of the reader to wonder whether the PRCE thinks they are the only Christian church on earth.

Barrow leaves nothing to the imagination of the reader, though, as he proceeds to lay forth in unmistakably clear terms the classic reformed distinction between the being and the well-being of the visible church. This chapter alone is worth one hundred times the price of the book. He explains, There is an important distinction to be made between the being of a church and its well-being Dear reader, please, always keep this distinction in mind or you will fail to understand both the scriptures and the reformers and the men of the PRCE on this vital matter.

What is necessary to the being of a true church is something considerably different from what is necessary to its well-being. Since the term true church can be applied to both its being and well-being, it is absolutely imperative to qualify which true church one is referring to, especially when making public charges. Speaking of a true church as being essentially true tells us that a church is Christian as opposed to pagan, while speaking of a true church relative to its well-being tells us whether a particular Christian church is

being faithful to God's word.

While the former distinguishes between the church and the world, the latter distinguishes between the faithful and the unfaithful churches among those bodies which profess Christianity. In light of this distinction, he clearly displays the disposition of Covenanters. I have shown by this first distinction that one mark alone is sufficient to constitute an essentially true visible church that is the profession of the true religion see the Westminster Confession of Faith 25 section 2 and Larger Catechism question 62.

This single mark is used to designate a Christian church from a pagan church. The PRCE unequivocally states that the one remaining church calling itself the Presbytery of the Reformation Presbyterian Church is a truly constituted visible church as to essence or being as are particular Roman Catholic, Arminian, or Baptist churches. This applies equally to any other particular church who essentially retains the profession of the truth.

In his skillful and easy-to-follow discussion, he treats the reader to a delightful feast of citations from Samuel Rutherford, the Scottish Confession of Faith, the Westminster Confession of Faith, Francis Turretin, John Calvin, the Presbyterian London ministers at the time of the Westminster Assembly, John Anderson, James Bannerman, James Rennick, Thomas McCree, and the Reformed Presbytery, all clearly supporting the classical Protestant position of the PRCE and all revealing the embarrassingly impoverished and confused state of Bacon's scholarship on this fundamental point of Protestantism. The third misrepresentation Barrow takes up is Bacon's malicious and misleading charge that, quote, essentially the difference between the Reformation Presbyterian Church and Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton is that the Reformation Presbyterian Church maintains that a church can be truly and biblically constituted without swearing the solemn league and covenant, and the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton claims that a church is not a properly, truly, biblically constituted church if it has not formally adopted the solemn league and covenant. A lengthy discussion of the true covenanter position on the covenants follows, expounding many important scriptural and historical features of public social covenanting in general, and of the national covenant and solemn league and covenant in particular.

Again, a wealth of historical citations are presented showing that these distinctions were widely recognized amongst the best Reformed teachers and were not covenanter peculiarities. In the process, it is seen how Bacon's misapprehension of the crucial being-well-being distinction regarding the visible church leads him to make such a scandalous accusation, and how, as usual, Bacon stands at odds with the plain, fundamental Reformational teaching on numerous key points. Here, Barrow picks up where he left off in the previous chapter, discussing how covenants like the solemn league and covenant were intended not to define the visible church as to her being, but to promote, preserve, and protect her as to her well-being.

He states, This leads us to consider the next topic which stands in need of clarification. Mr. Bacon, either by ignorance or design, has directed all the attention to the wrong question. He wishes to make the PRCE say that it is necessary to take the covenants in order to BE a Christian church.

A more informed opponent would understand that the question truly revolves around whether or not it is necessary to the well-being of a Christian church to keep the promises representatively made by their forefathers. Taking the covenants are not an absolute necessity to the essential constitution of the church, and we have never, in any of our writing or preaching, said they were. Instead, we have maintained that, in a covenanted land where lawful promises have already been made, they are necessary to keep for the

well-being of our constitution and for the integrity of our witness for Christ.

Lawful promises must necessarily be kept, and covenants once made are necessary to own, adopt, and renew, lest we open ourselves to the charge of taking the Lord's name in vain. Finally, Barrow tackles what has become perhaps the most oft-repeated falsehood against the PRCE and covenanters in general, that we tyrannically impose the traditions of men upon the consciences of Christ's sheep by requiring unscriptural terms of communion. In an amazing display of moral baseness too foul and too obvious to be dismissed as simply scholastic incompetence, Bacon constructs the grossest caricature of our terms of communion.

He says, quote, 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. But one must remember that the Stelites invest a similar meaning in the term historical testimony that the Romanist does with his inspired tradition of the Fathers. Although Barrow's previous refutations of Bacon's errors and libels were impressive and devastating, they may seem like a warm-up when compared to this chapter.

True Protestant principles shine resplendently herein, especially when compared with Bacon's tawdry substitutes. Indeed, so thoroughly, so embarrassingly, so irrefutably are Bacon's lies exposed in the light of the truth, that if one did not keep in mind the wickedness and vehemence of his attacks on the scriptural doctrines of the Reformation, he would be tempted to pity Bacon. A simple enumeration of some of the topics covered in this chapter will suffice as an overview.

These include the nature of terms of communion, an exposé of Bacon's and modern Reformed Church's Popish notions and triple standards for communion, the danger of modern latitudinarian schemes of church union, a description of how one becomes a member of the PRCE, how subscribing, confessions, catechisms, directories for worship and church government, covenants and uninspired historical testimony are all required by Scripture as terms of communion, and more. Particularly instructive and devastating for those modern churches like the OPC, PCA, and RPCNA claiming to uphold the Westminster Confession of Faith is the discussion of the teaching of the Westminster standards and various Reformed divines concerning church membership and communion privileges. Especially careful attention should be given to this section.

Immediately before his brief but powerful conclusion, Barrow wipes out perhaps Bacon's most ridiculous claim that by our sixth term of communion, which is practically adorning the doctrine of God our Savior by walking in all His commandments and ordinances blamelessly, we have hereby become guilty of teaching works righteousness. Whatever crumbs of credibility Bacon had after all that preceded, they are here forever swept away. The appendices of this work largely cover matters related to the dissociation of the PRCE from the pretended Reformation Presbyterian Church presbytery.

Whereas Bacon alleges vociferously that vows were broken in dissociating, Barrow proves first that no vows were ever taken, and second, that if they had been taken, a vow to something sinful, that is, unlawful associations with covenant-breaking denominations, is no lawfully binding vow but must be repented of. This is further corroborated by letters from former Reformation Presbyterian Church ministers, Bruce Robinson and Jerry Crick, who both denied that any vows constituting a presbytery were sworn. Both men also considered their involvement in this group to be sinful independency, penning words of heartfelt sorrow over such Christ-dishonoring activity as they too separated from their unlawful association, leaving

only the section of Bacon's church maintaining that vows constituting a presbytery were A third appendix discusses the alleged rejection of modest means of reconciliation by the PRCE, showing that this charge instead rests squarely upon Bacon.

The fourth appendix, the form of examination for communion approved by the Scottish General Assembly of 1592, sheds further detailed light upon Barrow's discussion of truly Protestant requirements for coming to the Lord's table. The fifth appendix provides the reader with a complete list of the terms of communion of the Church of Edmonton. The sixth appendix makes an important qualification of the discussion of the visible church, explaining that although hypocrites do partake of the sacraments, this is only an external participation, and not an effectual means of grace to them.

Finally, as noted, in the seventh appendix, Bacon's popish heresy, which denies to individual believers the right of private scriptural judgment of the doctrines, officers, ordinances, government, and discipline of the church, is succinctly destroyed. The net result of Greg Barrow's obliteration of Richard Bacon's strident slander is the clear exposition of the classical Protestant doctrines and practices of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton and modern and historical Covenanters. Dear reader, you hold in your hands a treasure of inestimable value.

In the love of Christ, I earnestly plead with you to read it, read it carefully, read it diligently, read it prayerfully, read it repeatedly, and buy copies for your friends and enemies and urge them to read it. For the doctrines and practices it expounds and defends are nothing less than a testimony against malignant error, a lifting up of the true and faithful blue banner, and hopefully, by the grace of God, a humble contribution to the coming Third Reformation and the worldwide overthrow of Antichrist. Nowhere else will you find such a covenant or primer to guide you skillfully and safely back to the old paths wherein is rest for your souls and for the entire Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Many today are proclaiming peace, peace, when there is no peace. Barrow proclaims to you the true peace, the scriptural balm of healing for the festering, debilitating wounds of Christ's beloved Church. We have now, at last, for the preservation of ourselves and our religion from utter ruin and destruction, according to the commendable practice of these kingdoms in former times and the example of God's people in other nations, after mature deliberation resolved and determined to enter into a mutual and solemn legion covenant.

And this covenant we make in the presence of Almighty God, the Searcher of all Hearts, most humbly beseeching the Lord to strengthen us by His Holy Spirit for this end, and to bless our desires and proceedings with such success as may be deliverance and safety to His people, and encouragement to other Christian churches groaning under or in danger of the yoke of anti-Christian tyranny, to join in the same or like association and covenant to the glory of God, the enlargement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and to the peace and tranquility of Christian kingdoms and commonwealths. Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. In those days and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping.

They shall go and seek the Lord their God, they shall ask the way to Zion with their faces turned to the Lord, and they shall go and seek the Lord their God, and they shall ask the Lord their God, the Lord their God, and they shall ask the Lord their God, and they shall ask the Lord their God, and they shall ask and they shall ask the Lord their God, and they shall ask the Lord their God, and they shall ask the Lord their

God, and they shall ask the Lord their God, and they shall ask the Lord their God, and they shall ask the Lord their God, and they shall ask the Lord their God, and they shall ask the Lord their God, and they shall ask the Lord their God, and they shall ask the Lord their God, and they shall ask the Lord their God, the Lord their God, and they shall ask the Lord their God, deride John Calvin for giving the following godly advice to his flock. As for the Babylers who ridicule us, wondering if one cannot get to paradise except by way of Geneva, I answer, would to God they had the courage to gather in the name of Jesus Christ wherever they are and to set up some sort of church, either in their houses or in those of their neighbors, to do in their place what we do here in our temples. And whoever has no means of being in the Christian church where God is worshiped purely, let him at least groan night and day, Thine altars, Lord, it is only Thine altars that I desire, my God, my King.

That's John Calvin from his book *Come Out from Among Them, the Anti-Nicodemite Writings of John Calvin*, which is forthcoming from Protestant Heritage Press, pages 192 and 193. And again, quoting Calvin, someone will therefore ask me what counsel I would like to give to a believer who thus dwells in some Egypt or Babylon where he may not worship God purely, but is forced by the common practice to accommodate himself to bad things. The first advice would be to leave, that is, to relocate, if he could.

If someone has no way to depart, I would counsel him to consider whether it would be possible for him to abstain from all idolatry in order to preserve himself pure and spotless toward God in both body and soul. Then let him worship God in private, praying him to restore his poor church to its right estate. And that's from the same book, pages 93 and 94.

Would Mr. Bacon say to those who dwell in some Egypt or Babylon, would to God they had the courage to gather together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ wherever they are and set up some sort of church either in their houses or in those of their neighbors to do in their place what we do here in our temples? Or then let him worship God in private, praying him to restore his poor church to its right estate, not as long as he obstinately maintains his present errors. Those who have set up house churches in places where God is not worshiped purely are libeled by Mr. Bacon and said to be a member of no church at all. Directly contradicting John Calvin, Mr. Bacon says, Churching at home is a contradiction.

The primary meaning of the word church is assembly. That's from the *Visible Church in the Outer Darkness*, page 49. Both Jim Dodson and Kevin Reed have felt the sting of Mr. Bacon's caustic pen.

His abusive use of false principle and rhetoric are not confined to the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton. Sadly, Mr. Bacon reserves his most vicious denunciations for those who are most faithful to the biblical truths embodied in the godly standards of the First and Second Reformations, while leaving those who espouse his erroneous principles free to go about their business. Those who profess the true religion together with their children are members of the Visible Church of Christ, whether they formally join a local congregation or not.

It is their profession of faith that essentially makes them members, and not their association with an institution calling itself a church. I certainly am not advocating that people start a house church if there is a faithful church with which to unite in the area. Rather, I am saying that when there is not a faithful church in the area, they must not settle for an unfaithful one.

That is to do evil that good may come. It is better to let our counsel come from Reformed divines who have scripturally guided the Church of Christ in times when godly ministers were few and far between. We have

already seen how John Calvin's teaching directly opposes that of Mr. Bacon, and now we must listen to the faithful counsel of the ministers of the Church of Scotland.

We are not ignorant that the rarity of godly and learned men shall seem to some a just reason why that so straight and sharp examination should not be taken universally, for so it shall appear that the most part of the Kirks shall have no minister at all. But let these men understand that the lack of able men shall not excuse us before God if, by our consent, unable men be placed over the flock of Christ Jesus. As also that, amongst the Gentiles godly learned men were also rare as they are now amongst us, when the Apostle gave the same rule to try and examine ministers which we now follow.

And last, let them understand that it is alike to have no minister at all, and to have an idol in the place of a true or faithful minister, yea, and in some cases it is worse. For those that are utterly at destitute of ministers will be diligent to search for them, but those that have a vain shadow do commonly, without further care, content themselves with the same, and so they remain continually deceived, thinking that they have a minister, when in very deed they have none. Worse yet, we find Mr. Bacon elevating the authority of corrupt judicatories above the right of an individual believer to maintain a clear conscience.

While he acknowledges that a congregation may lawfully depart from a corrupt denomination, he denies the right of an individual or head of household to make such a determination. This is grossly heretical and violates the doctrinal principle of the Lordship of Christ alone over the believer's conscience. In Mr. Bacon's ignoble attack upon Mr. Kevin Reed, he says, quote, There have been times in the history of God's church when corruptions were such that it became impossible to stay without sinning.

But in such instances we must not flee Babel only to build Jericho, compare Joshua 6.26 and 1 Kings 16.34. A Christian may request dismissal from a less reformed church to a more reformed church, but he lacks authority as a private member to declare the church to be in extraordinary times and thus run without being sent. Those who remove themselves from true churches under such a pretext prophesy without God speaking to them. From this we observe that Mr. Bacon believes that a group of men, as long as they have ministers to lead them, may lawfully determine to leave a denomination, while a private believer, quote, lacks the authority to make the same choice.

What Presbyterian would teach that Mr. Reed lacked the authority to use his judgment of discretion to maintain a clear conscience in subjection to the word of God? George Gillespie comments, quote, The subordinate judgment, which I call private, is the judgment of discretion whereby every Christian, for the certain information of his own mind and the satisfaction of his own conscience, may and ought to try and examine as well the decrees of councils as the doctrine of particular pastors, and insofar to receive and believe the same as he understands them to agree with the Scriptures. And, again, a quote from Gillespie, The prelates did not allow men to examine, by the judgment of Christians and private discretion, their decrees and canons, so as to search the Scriptures and look at the warrants. But would needs have men think it enough to know the things to be commanded by them that are in places of power? Presbyterianial government doth not lord it over men's consciences, but admitteth, yea, commendeth the searching of the Scriptures, whether these things that it holds forth be not so, and doth not press men's consciences with sic volo sic jubeo, that is, as I will, so I order, but desireth that they may do in faith what they do.

And that's from Aaron's Rod Blossoming, pages 83 and 84. Either nobody has read Mr. Bacon's book, or nobody has bothered to correct something so obviously popish. His doctrine is not only contrary to Protestantism, but contrary to the light of nature and common sense.

Moreover, Mr. Bacon has more to contend with than Mr. Reid and ourselves, as is evidenced by the following comments from Francis Turretin. Rather, we hold only that private believers gifted with the Holy Spirit are bound to examine, according to the word of God, whatever is proposed for their belief or practice by the rulers of the church, as much as by individuals separately, as by many congregated in a synod. Also they are to believe that by the guidance of the Spirit, by pious prayers and diligent study of the Scriptures, they can better find out the meaning of Scripture in things necessary to salvation, than whole synods receding from the word of God, and then a society which claims for itself, but falsely, the name of the true church.

Therefore the examination which they are bound to make is not made for the purpose of correcting the meaning of the true church, and of finding out a better, as if they were wiser, but to investigate and follow it. Nor is the right of examination founded in this, that we ought to believe ourselves wiser and more sagacious than entire synods and the whole true church, but rather in this, that since the privilege of infallibility has been granted by God to no church or pastor, nor are we certain whether they who compose ecclesiastical assemblies are members of the true church and faithful servants of God, who are partakers of the Holy Spirit and follow His guidance, nay, it can happen, and it has too often happened, that such assemblies have erred in their decisions. Hence no other means is left for the believer to know the legitimate authority of these assemblies and the decisions made by them with the certainty of faith, than a comparison and examination of them with the word of God, which He not only permits as possible and lawful, but commands as just and necessary.

That cannot, therefore, be considered rashness or pride, which belongs to the execution of an indispensable office imposed upon all believers. Nor under the pretext of avoiding pride ought believers to blind themselves and to divest themselves of their right, in order that their consciences by a blind obedience may be reduced to bondage. And that's from Francis Turretin's Institutes of Elenctic Theology, page 84.

Notice the language of Turretin. We are to believe that individual believers, quote, can better find out the meaning of Scripture in things necessary to salvation than whole synods receding from the word of God, and then a society which claims for itself but falsely the name of the true church. Hence no other means is left for the believer to know the legitimate authority of these assemblies and the decisions made by them with the certainty of faith than a comparison and examination of them with the word of God, close quote.

It must not be considered, quote, rashness or pride which belongs to the execution of an indispensable office. Undeniably, Turretin is arguing that Protestants must appeal to a conscience that is submitted to the Scripture and enlightened by the Holy Spirit. The last and highest court of the church is ultimately based upon the Spirit of God speaking through the word of God and not the opinions of corrupt assemblies.

Truth is ultimate and that should never be forgotten. Again Turretin comments, quote, the obedience which he, that is Christ, wishes to be rendered to teachers must always be understood with the condition in as far as the teachers do not prescribe to us another thing than what Christ gave to us in his commands, which they do not do, who arrogate to themselves the right of making new laws. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

For although no one denies that we ought to hold in great esteem the pastors and faithful ministers of God who watch for our souls, and that we ought to obey them according to the direction of Paul, still it is certain that that obedience and dependency is not absolute and unlimited, which belongs to God and Christ alone, but circumscribed within certain limits, that is, as far as it promotes the glory of God and our safety, and as far as it can consist with the fidelity and obedience due to Christ. From Hebrews 13.17, nothing else can be gathered than that obedience is due to teachers as long as they hear Christ themselves and speak the words of God, otherwise if they lead us away from Christ they ought to be anathema to us. The supreme judge by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.

Writing against the Protestant doctrine of private judgment, Mr. Bacon states, The plea that separatists make, whether on the basis of the priesthood of the believer or the sheep hearing the voice of the shepherd, is ultimately an appeal to private conscience as the last and highest court of the church. Francis Turretin counters Mr. Bacon's popish notions, But in affairs of conscience which have reference to faith, piety, and the worship of God, no one can usurp dominion over the conscience, nor are we bound to obey anyone, because otherwise we would be bound to error and impiety, and thus we would incur eternal punishment, and our consciences would be stained with vices without criminality, because we would be bound to obey superiors absolutely. George Gillespie also responds, How be it even in such cases when the consent of the church cannot be had to the execution of this discipline, that is, excommunication, faithful pastors and professors, that is, professing Christians, must every one for his own part take heed that he have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but even reprove them? Yea, they ought, in sensu negativo, that is, in a negative sense, excommunicate those who should be, but are not excommunicated positively, which negative excommunication is not an ecclesiastical censure, but either a bare punishment or a caution and animadversion, that is, warning.

And so says the Archbishop of Spoleto, not only one brother may refuse to communicate with another, but a people also may refuse to communicate with their pastor, which he confirms by certain examples. But the public censure of positive excommunication should not be inflicted without the church's consent for the reasons foresaid. And again that's from A Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies, page 382.

If Mr. Bacon will not allow private individuals to search the scriptures and ultimately appeal to their own judgment of discretion, to whom does he turn to as a final court of appeal? Mr. Bacon says, quote, But it is neither the duty nor the right of private Christians to make determinations of who is ignorant or scandalous. Christ has left this authority in his church, in the hands of church officers. That's the Visible Church in the Outer Darkness, page 11.

Alas, is this not the teaching of Rome? Individuals do not have the duty nor the right to use the judgment of discretion? What did Turgeon just say? What did Gillespie just say? While it is true that Christ has left a judicial authority in his church, which is to be used by faithful and qualified officers, for edification, not destruction, 2 Corinthians 10.8, that does not alter the fact that the people of God must use their private judgment of discretion to scripturally determine whether or not those officers are faithful or qualified. While private individuals have no ordinary power to authoritatively judge or determine matters of faith on behalf of the church, they are duty-bound to examine whether the determinations and decisions of church courts are agreeable with Scripture. Even the apostles themselves came under such scrutiny.

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea, who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so, Acts 17.10.11. For Mr. Bacon to assert that, quote, it is neither the duty nor the right of private Christians to make determinations of who is ignorant or scandalous, is to leave that duty to the ministry alone. If the private Christian does not have the right to make such a determination, what is to be done when the greater part of the ministry is corrupt or when their determinations do not agree with the word of God? Are private Christians to ignore the truth because, according to Mr. Bacon, they don't have the right to judge who is ignorant or scandalous? Mr. Bacon's teaching leads directly to the conclusion that the authority of the ministry is above the authority of the truth.

Such a view is a popish heresy and a denial that God alone is the Lord of the conscience. Mr. Bacon says, quote, Independence invariably elevate the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer to a sort of papacy of the believer. That's the Visible Church in the Outer Darkness, page 15.

As seems to be his usual practice, Mr. Bacon accuses people of papacy and independency right before he presents his most serious errors. As we have seen, Turretin proves that examination of churches and synods by private individuals is an indispensable right afforded to Christians by God. This right is designed to protect a believer from blindly and implicitly following the dictates of a corrupt majority.

Mr. Bacon, in denying this fundamental right to Mr. Reed, is directly promoting the doctrine of implicit faith, which ironically he alleges against the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton. Noble martyr of God James Rennick explains, quote, If this, the right of private judgment, belongs not to the people, they have nothing but blind implicit faith, and what better are they than papists, who must believe as the church believes? Yea, hath not every Christian a judgment of discretion, even in reference to actions of others, seeing there to do nothing doubting but to be fully persuaded in their own minds? Romans 14.23. But some, I know, say that withdrawing from a scandalous person is a censuring of a scandalous person, and to withdraw from a scandalous minister is to depose him and make him no minister. But this I deny, for simple withdrawing is not the inflicting of a censure, but only the believers testifying their sense that a censure should be inflicted, to wit, by such as are competent, and this is warranted by Scripture, Romans 16.17, Ephesians 11.2, 2 Thessalonians 3.14, and many such like places.

Also Rutherford saith in his peaceable plea, chapter 4, page 25, quote, That the law of nature will warrant a popular and private subtraction and separation from the ministry of a known wolf and seducer, close quote, and alloweth what Parker saith from Seravia, it is lawful to use that blameless and just defense if the bad church guide cannot be deposed. Any private person may take that care for the safety of their souls that they may do for the safety of their bodies. For a son may defend himself by flying from his distracted father coming to kill him, and none will call this an act judicial of authority, but only an act natural.

Now I say private separation from scandalous persons is not depriving of them, if they be pastors, nor excommunicating of them if they be professors, that is, professing Christians. For the latter is an act of authority belonging to those whom Christ hath given the keys, but the former is an act natural belonging to every believer. Likewise if withdrawing from a scandalous person be a censuring of scandalous persons, then the professors who withdraw from the curates do censure the curates, which I hope no sound Presbyterian will say.

Howbeit I distinguish betwixt a person scandalous really and a person scandalous judicially, and between a church in a settled state and a church in a broken state. So I say, when a church is in a settled state, a person really scandalous cannot be withdrawn from until at least he be judicially by two or three witnesses convicted before the church. Rutherford's Peaceable Plea, Chapter 9, page 171, seeing that the brethren offended have church judicatories to appeal unto for taking order with offenders.

But when the church is in a broken state, and every man as the children of Israel when they wanted governors, doing that which is right in his own eyes, there may and should be withdrawing from a person scandalous really, though he be not scandalous judicially, because then ecclesiastic judicatories for censuring of him cannot be had. Otherwise all must go into a mixed confusion together, the faithful must become partakers of other men's sins, private and popular means of reclaiming offending brethren shall be stopped, and the testimonies of the faithful shall fall to the ground. That's from the Life and Letters of James Rennick, The Last Scottish Martyr, page 139.

Mr. Bacon's smokescreen is designed to protect covenant breakers whose chief qualification for ministry is perjury, and he has the audacity to accuse us of requiring implicit faith? Unbelievable! According to Mr. Bacon, we as individual believers must not take our Bibles and prayerfully determine where we can worship with a clear conscience. Instead, we are told to accept the fact that churches, such as the Presbyterian Church in America, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America and the Reformation Presbyterian Church, where error in doctrine, worship, discipline and government is established by ecclesiastical law, cannot be privately judged as unfit to join. We are told to keep our families in these institutions for years while we fight for reform with church courts who have already made up their mind and historically ruled contrary to Scripture.

During these years our children become used to false doctrine and practice. As we wait for reform, they learn by example how to bury the truth for the sake of unity. The hands of compromisers are strengthened, and while we wait for some subcommittee to admonish us on a technicality, we pour all our resources into their treasury.

Compromised pastors are exalted and faithful ministers are pushed aside. When have such churches ever shown signs of reform? They have slid backwards for so long that they think they are going forward. Truly God has judged our land with blindness when the sentiments of the visible church in the outer darkness are accepted as truth.

When such folly is well received by the general Christian population, it becomes a sad commentary upon the fact that the darkness is no longer only outside of the visible church. Undeniably it has pervaded the interior as well. As Jim Dodson cleverly noted, the refutation of Mr. Bacon's book entitled The Visible Church in the Outer Darkness would be aptly entitled The Visible Church and the Inner Darkness.

Why are the pulpits of our nation full of men who teach such hazardous error? It is because people who have fallen for this kind of popish implicit faith are continually attending their services and giving them money. Does not your attendance upon and following of such a ministry help to midwife and bring forth all those evils with which their ministry travails and is in pain to be delivered of? Could they do you any hurt if they were generally declined and avoided? Their strength lieth in you, as the great commander once said to his soldiers that he flew upon their wings. Those were the words of John Flavel in his Warning Against Backsliding False Worship and False Teachers.

Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge Proverbs 19.27. If these ministers of compromise can convince you to stay within the apostasy and fight for reform long after the issue has been decided, if you can be convinced that individuals don't have the right to judge false doctrine and superstitious practice, if they can train you to believe that separation from corrupt churches is wrong even in the broken state of the church, then you will never leave their church and you will become like them. You will supply their error with the fuel it needs to burn up your posterity. Dear reader, do not be deceived.

Their false teaching will become the substance of the thoughts which fill your children's minds and the sound of your grandchildren's voices. He who teaches that individuals may not judge whether the church is in extraordinarily backslidden times is a man who is to be avoided and withdrawn from. Do not be fooled by Mr. Bacon or his quotes from George Gillespie and James Durham.

He has taken their teaching entirely out of context, that is, the context being the settled state of a faithful church, and erroneously applied them to our contemporary context, which is the broken state of a corrupt church. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

Further, Mr. Bacon ignorantly says, Even a minister of Christ, as the one who ministers the sacraments, is not free, based on his own singular judgment, to exclude any person from the Lord's supper. George Gillespie, a contemporary of Ball, an English minister, agreed with him on this point in his assertion, and that's from *The Visible Church in the Outer Darkness*, page 21. Again, Mr. Bacon is impersonating someone who has actually read what George Gillespie wrote.

George Gillespie believes so strongly in the individual's right to private judgment that he maintained the exact opposite of what Mr. Bacon has represented. In a case where a minister is certain that a man allowed to come to the Lord's table is obstinately scandalous, he must defy the order of an eldership, classus, or synod based upon his private judgment of discretion, and not serve that man. And if it should fall out that a scandalous, unworthy person should find so much favor in the higher assemblies also, as that they shall judge him fit to be admitted to the sacrament, yet if the minister know him certainly to be a scandalous, abominable person, and to be clear in his conscience that the matter of scandal is sufficiently proved, he must not do an unlawful act in obedience to men, but walk by that apostolical rule, 1 Timothy 5.22, be not partakers of other men's sins, keep thyself pure.

In doing whereof he doth not make his conscience the rule of inflicting any censure, and particularly of suspending from the sacrament, which must be done by many. But yet his conscience, so far as it is informed and illuminate by the word of God, is a rule to him of his own personal acting or not acting, notwithstanding of which the offender stands *rectus in curia*, and is not excluded by the sentence of any ecclesiastical court. I confess a minister ought to be very clear in his conscience, and be persuaded, not upon suspicions, surmises, or such like slight motives, but upon very certain grounds, that the sentence of an eldership, classus, or synod is contrary to the word of God, before he refuses to do the thing.

If, as Gillespie says, an individual minister may defy an eldership, classus, or synod when he is certain that their ruling is contrary to the word of God, then Mr. Bacon is clearly at odds with Gillespie's principles. Mr. Bacon maintains that such doctrine is the basis for a separatist policy that elevates the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer to a sort of papacy of the believer. Does Mr. Bacon also call Mr. Gillespie a

separatist? It appears so.

The next time Mr. Bacon wishes to pretend that he believes the same thing as George Gillespie, perhaps he will remember to read his books first. Next, grossly abusing the argument of Kevin Reed, and this is from Reed's book *Presbyterian Government in Extraordinary Times, and True Presbyterian Principle*, Mr. Bacon writes that using the right of private judgment to determine who is ignorant and scandalous is, in effect, to usurp the office of the eldership. But it is neither the duty nor the right of private Christians to make determinations of who is ignorant or scandalous.

Christ has left this authority in his church, in the hands of the church officers. *The Visible Church in the Outer Darkness*, page 11. John Brown, of Wemfre, directly contradicts Mr. Bacon.

Quote, It is true private Christians may not set themselves up into the chair and judge of the endowments and qualifications of ministers, and what nulleth their office and what not. Yet every private Christian hath the use of the judgment of discretion, and that way may judge whether such an one appears qualified according to the rule of the word or not. And that's from Brown of Wemfre's *Apologetical Relation of the Particular Sufferings of the Faithful Ministers and Professors of the Church of Scotland*, page 146.

Robert McWard adds, Quote, What way can the practice of private persons towards others, in abstaining from some acts of church communion, hic and nunc, with them, because of scruple founded upon true Presbyterian principles, be said to be, on the matter, a drawing forth of one of the highest censures? For what hath a Christian's private censuring, by judgment of discretion, the practice of another, and carrying, according to that other, to do with taking the government off of its hinges? That's from McWard's *Earnest Contendings for the Faith*, page 121. *The Sad Irony of Mr. Bacon's Position* Mr. Bacon says, Quote, It must be admitted, however, that there will be times when either sufficient evidence cannot be brought to convince a church court, or even times when the church court is itself corrupt. It is in times and circumstances such as those that a conscientious Christian is the most likely to become impatient and run to separation as the only alternative.

It is also at such times that he is most susceptible to the arguments of separatists. Yet it is at precisely such times that the conscientious Christian must be most diligent in the use of the God-ordained means of grace. It has often been the case that those Christians who are most insistent that discipline is a mark of a true church have been the least willing to make the effort of using it.

The Visible Church in the Outer Darkness, page 26. And again, The difference lies in this. Separatists maintain that when there is any corruption in a church, that they may separate - yea, are duty-bound to separate - from that church, and to make up a church of their own by gathering out as many as they can.

The Visible Church in the Outer Darkness, page 54. Mr. Bacon's entire book was designed to prove that because the Presbyterian Church in America, PCA, was a true church - he was still a minister in the PCA when he wrote it - it was unlawful for Mr. Reed to separate or stay separate from her. For those who are not aware of this particular controversy, I should mention that Mr. Bacon subsequently separated from the PCA, and then claimed to form a presbytery made up mainly of separated PCA ministers.

Is this what he means by gathering out as many as they can? Didn't he just say that was a mark of separatists? Is he not judging others by the same principles he has conspicuously violated? George Gillespie comments, 1. Separation from churches is properly a renouncing of membership as unlawful. 2. The causes and motives of separation suppose either an unlawful constitution of churches or an unlawful

government of churches, or both, so far that they who separate hold it unlawful to continue their membership in churches so constituted and governed, or so much as to communicate with such churches, though they know no scandalous person admitted to the sacrament. Surely Mr. Bacon does not continue to maintain that it is lawful to remain in a denomination that he himself testified against by separation.

If it was sin for his congregation to remain united with the PCA, how can he maintain that it is lawful for any other congregation to remain in the PCA? He now necessarily must admit that Kevin Reed correctly, individually, judged that the PCA was not a faithful denomination. The theological position presented in his book, *The Visible Church in the Outer Darkness*, and his subsequent practice are so obviously self-contradictory that I marvel he has not publicly retracted this book and repented to Mr. Reed for his own short-sightedness and sinful misrepresentation. Not only is this book full of self-justifying heresy, but, as I said, the writer has refuted himself by his own actions.

How can Mr. Bacon defend his separation practice and defend his book, *The Visible Church in the Outer Darkness*, at the same time? Truly this defies logic. His congregation should demand an answer to this unanswerable dilemma. When Mr. Bacon fails to adequately defend the indefensible, he should be required to repent or resign.

Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I, yea, thine own lips testify against thee. Job 15.6 They therefore who give their will for a law, and their authority for a reason, and answer all the arguments of their opponents by bearing down with the force of public constitution and the judgment of superiors, to which theirs must be conformed, do rule the Lord's flock with force and with cruelty, Ezekiel 34.4, as lords over God's heritage, 1 Peter 5.3. Always since men give us no leave to try their decrees and constitutions, that we may hold fast to no more than is good, God be thanked that we have a warrant to do it without their leave from his own word, 1 Thessalonians 5.21. Non numeranda suffragis sed apparenda, opinions must not be counted up, but considered, says Augustine in Psalm 39. Our divines hold that all things which are proposed by the ministers of the church, yes, by ecumenical councils, should be proved and examined, and that when the guides of the church do institute any ceremonies as necessary for edification, yet the church has the free power of judgment to give assent to or reject them.

The schoolman also give liberty to a private man of proving the statutes of the church, and neglecting the same, if he see a cause for doing so, if a reason becomes evident, a man can on his own rightfully pass by the observance of a statute. If any be not able to examine and try all such things, every one ought to be able by the command of God, therefore they remove their own blame, says Parius. If we rightly feel we are deprived of the faculty of questioning, it must be indicated by that same spirit who speaks through his prophets, says Calvin.

We will not then call any man rabbi, nor gerari in verba magistri, to echo the sentiments of a teacher, nor yet to be Pythagorean disciples to the church herself, but we will believe her and obey her insofar only as she is the pillar and ground of the truth, George Gillespie, *A Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies*, pages 29 and 30.

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