

# **The Covenanted Reformation Defended Against Contemporary Schismatics:**

**A Response and Antidote Primarily to the Neopresbyterian Malignancy and Misrepresentations, and the Manufactured "Steelite" Controversy, Found in Richard Bacon's *A Defense Departed*; With a Refutation of Bacon's Independency, Popery, Arminianism, Anabaptism and Various Other Heresies (Including an Exhibition of His Opposition to Scripture and the Covenanted Reformation, in General; and His Opposition to John Calvin, John Knox, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland [Especially 1638-1649], Samuel Rutherford, George Gillespie, the Testimony of the Covenanter Martyrs, the Reformed Presbytery, the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton and a Host of Other Prominent Reformers from Past Generations, in Particular) - With Copious Notes on Mr. Bacon's Backsliding and His Blackening of the Blue Banner; as Well as Various Replies to Other Modern Malignants**

**by Greg Barrow**

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**by Greg Barrow**  
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**Reg Barrow**  
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**Foreword**  
**Larry Birger, Jr.**  
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# Publisher's Preface

Reg Barrow

We aim only at removing the rubbish, that the ancient landmarks may reappear, and on the principle of charity, which comprises the whole moral law (Rom. 13:8-10), we have not shunned to mention the names of leaders in public measures of defection, following the example of our Lord, prophets, apostles, and our witnessing ancestors (Reformed Presbytery, *Short Vindication of Our Covenanted Reformation*, 1879, SWRB, 1997, p. 48).

Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set (Prov. 22:28). That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and **God requireth that which is past** (Eccl. 3:15, emphases added) .

Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, **no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto** (Gal. 3:15, emphasis added).

Over the last decade or so, as President of Still Waters Revival Books, I have had the privilege (by the grace of God and with the help and prayers of many dear Christians) of publishing approximately 800 books. Over 400 of these have been released in the last two years. Most of these works have been between 100 and 400 years old - though a few have been older. All have been from the Covenanter/Presbyterian/Puritan/Reformed family of literature (though the terminology is anachronistic in regard to authors like Augustine). A good number of these books are considered classics by many. *But I cannot recall one title that I thought would be as useful to our generation as the title you are holding in your hands.* In fact, I did not think that we would see a book of this calibre written in our generation. Books like this - which contain pertinent evidence, testimony, exhortation, admonishment and encouragement so startling that they can bring about a paradigm shift in the thinking of whole denominations and even nations - come along only very rarely. And the truths expounded in this book have in the past brought whole nations to the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, in repentance and covenanted love.

## What makes this book so useful and unique?

I believe that there is one primary answer to the question of what makes *The Covenanted Reformation Defended* uniquely useful and it is this: it exposes the many differences between what took place during the two previous great Reformations (of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) - which were based upon and agreeable to the glorious *covenanted Reformations found in the Old Testament* - and what the bulk of the Presbyterian and Reformed churches (corporately), elders (individually), and church members (individually) mistakenly think took place. It conclusively and irrefutably demonstrates that those churches which today call themselves Presbyterian (and even many which claim a more general Reformed heritage) have grievously departed from the *Scriptural standards and principles* of these previous Spirit-led Reformations. This will become progressively (and painfully) clear as the reader witnesses evidence upon evidence of defection from biblically based Reformation attainments (Phil. 3:16) - and the burying and/or removing of the ancient Reformation landmarks. For two prime examples of what I am saying please see the research on the Westminster Assembly and admission to the Lord's Table (on pages 143-156) and the original intent of the Covenanters (including the Westminster Divines)

involved in the swearing of an "everlasting covenant" in the Solemn League and Covenant (on pages 44-48). Ultimately, when the testimony and evidence is weighed in light of Scriptural verities, it is entirely safe to say that the original Reformers would not only have sought *negative ecclesiastical sanctions* against our modern pseudo-Reformers, but in many cases *negative civil sanctions* as well.

Notice a small portion of the evidence Greg Barrow presents as to how the Covenanters fenced the Lord's Table in keeping with our fourth term of communion (from p. 88 in this book [all subsequent references to page numbers which stand alone refer to page numbers in *The Covenanted Reformation Defended*],

Act for Taking the Covenant at the first receiving of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

The General Assembly according to former recommendations, Doth ordain that all young students take the Covenant at their first entry into colleges; and that **hereafter all persons whatsoever take the Covenant at their first receiving of the Lords Supper:** Requiring hereby Provincial Assemblies, Presbyteries and Universities to be careful that this Act be observed, an account thereof taken in the visitation of Universities and particular Kirks, and in the trial of Presbyteries (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], p. 422, emphases added).

That all students of Philosophy at their first entry and at their lawrecreation, be holden to subscribe the League and Covenant and be urged thereto, and **all other persons as they come to age and discretion before their first receiving the Sacrament of the Lords Supper** (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 368, emphases added).

Or how the Genevan Presbytery of Calvin's day sought *negative civil sanctions* against non-covenanters who "did not wish to swear to the reformation" (from p. 237).

Register of the Council of 24

12 November 1537. It was reported that yesterday the people who had not yet made their oath to the reformation were asked to do so, street by street; whilst many came, many others did not do so. No one came from the German quarter. It was decided that they should be commanded to leave the city if they did not wish to swear to the reformation.

Or who were considered to be "opening the door to schism and sects" by the Covenanted General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (from p. 176),

Whosoever brings in any opinion or practice in this Kirk contrary to the Confession of Faith, Directory of Worship, or Presbyterian Government may be justly esteemed to be opening the door to schism and sects (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland* [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 396).

Or how those aspiring to the ministry were dealt with if they refused to swear the National

Covenant (from p. 87),

August 5, Session 10, 1640.

The Assembly ordains, that if any Expectant [minister - GB] shall refuse to subscribe the Covenant, he shall be declared incapable of Pedagogy, teaching in a school, reading at a Kirk, preaching within a presbytery, and shall not have liberty of residing within a Burgh, university or College: and **if they continue obstinate to be processed** (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], p. 94).

Even more alarming are the words from *The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland* directed against covenant breakers (p. 49),

August 6, 1649.

Although there were none in the one kingdom who did adhere to the Covenant, yet thereby were not the other kingdom nor any person in either of them absolved from the bond thereof, **since in it we have not only sworn by the Lord, but also covenanted with Him**. It is not the failing of one or more that can absolve the other from their duty or tie to Him: **Besides, the duties therein contained, being in themselves lawful, and the grounds of our tie thereunto moral, though the other do forget their duty, yet doth not their defection free us from that obligation which lies upon us by the Covenant in our places and stations.** And the Covenant being intended and entered into by these kingdoms, as one of the best means of steadfastness, for guarding against declining times: **It were strange to say that the backsliding of any should absolve others from the tie thereof** especially seeing our engagement therein is not only National, but also personal, everyone with uplifted hands swearing by himself, as it is evident by the tenor of the Covenant. From these and other important reasons, it may appear that all these kingdoms joining together to abolish that oath by law, yet could they not dispense therewith; Much less can any one of them, or any part in either of them do the same. **The dispensing with oaths have hitherto been abhorred as Antichristian, and never practised and avowed by any but by that man of sin;** therefore those who take the same upon them, as they join with him in his sin, so must they expect to partake of his plagues (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 474-475, emphases added).

Such evidence is multiplied throughout this work; contrasting the old (paleo) Reformed paths and Reformers with new (neo) Reformed innovations and innovators. Thus, I ask you to be patient, read carefully, compare the words of the Reformers with our **alone infallible standard** (the Scriptures) and then see if what is passed off as the Reformed faith today resembles that which was taught and practiced during previous Reformations.

### **Common neopresbyterian errors and the big picture**

I will not detain the reader with a long list of the many critical errors exposed and crucial questions answered in this book - Berean-like Christians will easily discern what is being said and how the modern church has defected from the blood-stained "footsteps of the flock" (Song 1:8). I will, however, ask the reader to keep the *big picture* in mind as he (or she) reads. The controversy with the Baconites of Rowlett, which helped to bring this indispensable information before the public, is very much *secondary* when considered in

the light of the greater defection of the church in general. Had we been called upon to answer just the slander, libel and gross misrepresentations of the Reformer's (and the Reformed faith), found in the work of Richard Bacon, it would hardly have been worth the time and effort that has gone into this book. But considering, in God's most holy and wise providence, that Bacon's *A Defense Departed* echoes so many classic anti-Reformation errors (an eclectic mix of confusion based on everything from Independent to Popish heresies, as the title of this book indicates), a much larger and extensive work has been prepared. Furthermore, the perceptive reader will quickly notice that though Bacon's objections are being answered in our modern context, many of these same objections (at times almost word for word) have been brought against previous generations of Covenanting Reformers by various heretics, schismatics and sectarians. Moreover, the doctrinal errors and unscriptural practices which Bacon defends (some which are clearly "inspired by the ghost of Arminius," as Gillespie would say, see page 42) have contaminated the body of the modern church (especially those denominations calling themselves Presbyterian or Reformed), like a deadly contagion or malignant cancer. It should therefore be exceedingly helpful to the contemporary reader to see these old errors and heresies (though wrapped in the finery and smooth speeches of our modern malignants) contrasted with the classic Presbyterian and Reformed positions. Clearly, as will be seen, the issues that divide Christians have changed little, if at all; and until these issues are settled, the church will lack the unity that Scripture commands (Phil. 1:27, 2:2; 1 Pet. 3:8, etc.) and the blessing that follows all *true* unity - because biblical unity, undergirded by faithful terms of communion (cf. pp. 108-116), must be based upon truth (Ps. 133:1-3).

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light. And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: **in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one** (Zech. 14:6-9, emphases added).

Additionally, with the big picture in mind, the following parable from the pen of Greg Barrow, entitled "the deep pit of covenant breaking," will help the reader to understand the spirit in which this book has been written,

Those who follow Mr. Bacon's teaching walk together hand in hand within the deep pit of covenant breaking. From this pit they look up at those who plead with them to climb out, and call us "the separatists." "Come down into this pit with us," they cry. "You schismatics, don't you see it's a sin to stay separate from us? Can't you see that for hundreds of years, most of the nations have joined us down here? How can we be wrong when all the churches and ministers are ignoring the promises made to our Master? Every scholar would have to be wrong for you to be right. Join us, or we will try to set everyone down here against you." From atop the pit we say, "Brethren, you have fallen into a deep pit and we desire to be with you, except we have seen light at the top and our King has shown us the way out. We are not boasting that we are better than you. We are only pleading with you to come and see what God has graciously given. Our forefathers marked the way for us before we were born and God's Word has given us the light to see their landmarks. Those with you have moved these landmarks in order to keep you in

the pit, but we can show you where they are and help you out. We cannot return to you but you must return to us (Jer.15:19). We cannot join you in the deep pit of covenant breaking, but rather you must come join us so that we might have unity in the light of the sun. This is the place where our forefathers dwelt. Come join us and keep the promises made to our Master. Tell the others and bring the whole nation with you so that we can dwell together in peace. The table is set, and we go now to His table of communion. Please climb out now and eat and drink with your brothers. They reply, "Are you seriously telling us that we must keep our fathers old promises? Our fathers are long dead and we have sailed to another land where few have even heard of these promises. Surely those actual promises don't apply to us any more. We admit that these promises are good examples and strong reminders of what our Master requires, but you want us to keep the traditions of men. You want us to climb out using the same path as our forefathers. Just because they did it that way doesn't mean we have to. We are wiser than you, and have not invented new rules to keep people from our table - down here we are more tolerant and therefore we enjoy great unity. You are nearly alone, and we are all against you. Return to us, enjoy our meal and we will forgive you for climbing out of the pit." Finally, we respond, "We must go now for our Master calls. We will continue to call out to you as we go, but today you must hear our voice - for if you reject it now, it will grow faint as we walk away. Soon you will become so angry with us that you will not even hear the words we say - your railing will drown out the sound of our voice in your ears, and what will become of you then? We have invented no new rule, but rather we are simply calling you to keep the Master's old rule. It is He who told our fathers to make their promises. It is He who tells us that they are still binding. And it is He who tells us to keep our promises. We will continually knock on our Master's door and plead with Him to show you your error, but we warn you that His patience will not last forever. Soon He will come and reckon your account. He will ask why you did not climb out of the pit? Why you did not listen to the truth? Why you are persecuting His children? In that day you will be ashamed before the piercing eyes of the Judge. We only desire our Master's approval and your fellowship in the light. Come brethren, stop fighting with us, and follow the footsteps of the flock. Climb out of the deep pit of covenant breaking." (pp. 48-49)

We rejoice in the truth and desire the repentance of our backsliding brethren, that we might walk together in the light and glorify God. We hold no ill will towards any man, even those who have so most sorely misrepresented and slandered us (see the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton's [PRCE] sessional correspondence [in Appendix C] and especially Greg Price's email correspondence with Richard Bacon, on pages 233-248 [letters 7-10], as a prime example of the *modest means* used to educate and reclaim Mr. Bacon and those following him). We will do our best to expose their errors because we think that is the most loving thing to do. We are open to correction and rebuke and have already done much repenting on the road to understanding the truths set forth in this book. We are willing to do much more, as God convinces us of the need for such. And ultimately, we pray and write that our wayward brethren, like us, might share in these glorious truths - *and that in all this the Lord Jesus Christ might get the glory!*

### **The tip of the iceberg for the neopresbyterian Titanic**

After reading *The Covenanted Reformation Defended Against Contemporary Schismatics*, the landmark lessons from Calvin's covenanting in Geneva, the international

scope of the Solemn League and Covenant, the Westminster Divines work on the Lord's Supper, the Protesters (including Rutherford's) separation from the schismatic Resolutioners (and the Protester's refusal to serve the Lord's Supper with the Resolutioners or recognize their pretended assemblies (cf. *A Brief Defence of Dissociation in The Present Circumstances* free at:

<http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualnls/BriefDef.htm>), and the United Societies testimony before and after the defective Revolution settlement, should be on the tip of every reader's tongue - as the blood and testimony of the Reformation martyrs cries out against our modern day declension. With this knowledge in mind (tracing the "footsteps of the flock"), it will then be clear that whether we are talking about the covenanted Reformation under Josiah (2 Chron. 34) or Nehemiah (see Neh. chapters 9 and 10), or that which took place in Geneva in the time of Calvin (cf. *Calvin Covenanting and Close Communion* free at: <http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualnls/CalvinCC.htm>), or the under the leadership of the Presbyterians at the Westminster Assembly (cf. *Paleopresbyterianism Versus Neopresbyterianism* free at: <http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualnls/Paleo.htm>), the church of our day has much to learn. As I have pointed out in *A Contemporary Covenanting Debate; Or, Covenanting Redivivus* (free at:

<http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualnls/CovDebRB.htm>), the covenanted Reformations under Asa, Hezekiah, Josiah, Ezra and Nehemiah all prominently featured the following biblical teaching and practices in which the Covenanters faithfully sought to:

1. Nationally eradicate idolatry and false religion (with iconoclastic zeal) (cf. 2 Chron. 34:3-7; 2 Chron. 31:1; 2 Chron. 15:8; 2 Chron. 15:16, etc.).
2. Nationally promote the true worship, discipline, and doctrine of the church of Christ (2 Chron. 29:11-30:6; 2 Chron. 30:12-27; Ezra 10:10vv.; Neh. 10:31-32, etc.).
3. Nationally establish the one true religion and church (cf. 2 Chron. 34:8-17; 2 Chron. 29:3-5; 2 Chron. 31:2-3; 2 Chron. 31:20-21; 2 Chron. 32:12, etc.).
4. Nationally confess their own sins and the sins of their fathers (2 Chron. 34:21; 2 Chron. 29:6-7; 2 Chron. 30:7-9; Ezra 9:6-10:2; Neh. 9:2-37, etc.).
5. Nationally publish the truth (2 Chron. 34:30; Ezra 10:7-8, etc.).
6. Nationally renew covenant with God (with specific regard to the present testimony) and set the state upon a fully covenanted biblical pattern, agreeing to nationally obey the law of God (2 Chron. 34:31; 2 Chron. 29:10; 2 Chron. 15:12-15; Ezra 10:3-4; Neh. 9:38-10:31, etc.).
7. Nationally cause (by civil power) the inhabitants of the nation to stand to the Covenant (2 Chron. 34:32-33; 2 Chron. 15:12-13; Ezra 10:5, etc.).

Is this the biblical pattern for true Reformation which is being taught in the neopresbyterian and neoreformed churches of our day? How many sermons have you heard on any one of these points? When was the last time you read a book on any one of these topics? How much time have you spent in prayer calling on God to bring about such Reformation? *And this is just the tip of the iceberg for the neopresbyterian Titanic.* Much more is to come in the pages you are about to read. This book will give the reader an

astonishingly clear picture of just how bad the corporate and individual backsliding has become in our modern setting, and Lord willing, lead many to repentance and back to their first love (Rev. 2:4-5). Take the example of the Protester/Resolutioner controversy (cited below from pages 91-93) as an example of the feast which you are about to partake of and notice the application (not cited below, but found later in this book) that is made to our day (pp. 93-95), along with its relevance to the present *broken state* of the church (pp. 95-99),

**The faithful contendings of the "Protesters" exemplifying their steadfast application of the biblical principles regarding withdrawal and separation from corrupt individuals and pretended assemblies.**

Another prime example of Reformation principles, in speaking plainly and acting consistently against unfaithful churches and ministers, was manifested by the faithful Protesters of the General Assembly of Scotland in 1651. At this time, an unfaithful majority faction of the General Assembly (called the Resolutioner party) openly broke their covenant vows and initiated a dispute that quickly divided them from the faithful minority (the Protesters). These compromisers under pressure from the King, approved the placement of men (called malignants for their ungodly character) in the army and places of public trust contrary to the covenants and previous Acts of General Assembly. Thus, by evident perjury, these Resolutioners made themselves co-conspirators and accessories to the crimes that followed the sad division of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Matthew Hutchison explains:

The former party [the resolutioners - GB] had among them men of high character and worth, some of whom afterwards regretted the position they had taken in this controversy. They were more tolerant in the application of their principles; among them the Second Charles found afterwards many of his willing tools, and they constituted the bulk of those who accepted the Indulgences and Toleration [later compromises - GB] (Matthew Hutchison, *The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland*, 1893, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 21).

The compromise of the Resolutioner party within the General Assembly of Scotland led to a division that remains unhealed, and a schism that effectively set aside the original constitution of the Church of Scotland. The seriousness of this schism can be observed in the following excerpts. Note the actions of faithful Protester ministers as they dealt with the unfaithful ministers of the Resolutioner faction. Mr. Samuel Rutherford [Protester - GB] would not serve the Lord's Supper with Pastor's Blair and Wood [Resolutioners - GB] though they had most other points of faith in common.

In the time of the difference between the Resolutioners and Protesters, at a Communion at St. Andrews, **he [Samuel Rutherford - GB] ran to a sad height and refused to serve a table with Messrs. Blair and Wood**, after all the entreaty they could make. At length Mr. Blair was forced to serve it himself (Robert Gilmour, *Samuel Rutherford, A Study, Biographical and somewhat Critical, in the History of the Scottish Covenant*, 1904, SWRB reprint, 1995, p. 201, emphases added).

Obviously, I do not concur with the assessment of Robert Gilmour, that Mr. Rutherford, "ran to a sad height," when he refused to serve the Lord's Supper with Robert Blair, or James Wood. Rather I believe that Mr. Rutherford was acting consistently with the doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith in refusing to serve the Lord's Supper with obstinately scandalous (perjured) ministers. Did Rutherford sin by refusing communion with perjured but otherwise godly men? No, instead he acted faithfully and consistently in refusing to serve the Lord's Supper with the scandalous. Was he saying these men were no longer Christians? No, he was attempting to correct and restore the brethren he dearly loved by testifying against their sin and not complying with their compromise. And if Rutherford (who sought to apply faithfully the biblical obligations declared in the *Solemn League and Covenant*) was unable to serve the Lord's Supper "with" those who have scandalously compromised their covenant obligations, much more would he refrain from serving the Lord's Supper "to" those known to be guilty of such sins.

Rutherford aptly states:

Because the Churches take not care, that Ministers be savoury and gracious; from Steermen all Apostasie and rottenness begin. O if the Lord would arise and purge his House in Scotland! As for Church-members, they ought to be holy; and though all baptized be *actu primo* members, yet such as remain habitually ignorant after admonition, are to be cast out, and though they be not cast out certainly, as paralytick or rottened members cannot discharge the functions of life: **So those that are scandalous, ignorant, malignant, unsound in faith, lose their rights of Suffrages in election of Officers, and are to be debarred from the Seals.** Nor can we defend our sinful practise in this: it were our wisdom to repent of our taking in the Malignant party, who shed the blood of the people of God, and obstructed the work of God, into places of Trust in the Church, State, and the Army, contrary to our Covenants, they continuing still Enemies (Samuel Rutherford, *A Survey of the Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline*, 1658, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 373, emphases added).

Not only would consistent Protesters not administer the Lord's Supper "with" or "to" the Resolutioners, but applying their doctrine uniformly they called the Resolutioner Assemblies "pretended" and would not compear before their courts. The *Records of the Church of Scotland*, reports the following events which depict their godly and constant principles.

At this session [of General Assembly - GB], Mr. Rutherford gave in a protestation against the lawfulness of the Assembly, containing the reasons thereof in the name of the Kirk, subscribed with 22 hands, and desired it might be read; **but it was delayed to be read, and all that subscribed the remonstrance, with some others, went away** (July 17, 1651, Session 6, *The Records of the Kirk of Scotland*, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 628, emphases added).

Did the Protesters sin when they walked out of the meeting of the Scottish General Assembly (1651)? Were they saying that the Resolutioner churches were not

Christian churches? No, they simply would not recognize the pretended authority of the Resolutioners compromised majority. "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment" (Ex. 23:2).

Many have never heard of this controversy and yet it demonstrates how faithful Reformers, some of the most gifted and spiritual men of their day, dealt with declension in the church. And entertain no doubts about it, the neocovenanters of our day (Bacon, Schwertley, *et al.*) cannot abide a careful study of the Protester/Resolutioner controversy - as it shines a bright light on their compromise and defection. The Protesters often gave up their livings, possessions, friends, families, and even their lives for the issues dealt with in this book. Are we so much better than they? Are we so much smarter? Have we reached such a spiritual plane that we will give up all these things for the sake of the least revealed truth. I really don't think so. We have much to learn from the faithful contendings of such men and this book will help teach us. Those who refuse to listen will likely find themselves drowning in the sea of heresy, error and toleration - that is even now filling the lower decks of what many have claimed is an unsinkable ship. Some will stay aboard until it is too late, which "concerning faith have made shipwreck" (1 Tim. 1:19). Others will heed the message of these pages and find themselves resting safely in God's little lifeboats, though tossed about by stormy seas, worshipping alone in their homes to avoid the present apostasy (as counseled by Calvin [p. 259], Knox [see Kevin Reed's forthcoming *John Knox the Forgotten Reformer*], Flavel [see our photocopy edition of *A Warning Against Backsliding, False Worship and False Teachers*, originally titled *Antiphararmacum Saluberrimum* in volume four of his *Works* and others).

It is, beloved, high time now to awake, to look about us, to consider where we are, upon what ground we stand, whether the enemy or we have the advantage, how and in what posture we are to rencounter with deceivers that seek to cheat us out of all our souls, and of the Lord our Righteousness, and draw us off the paths of life... (John Brown of Wamphray, *Christ: The Way, the Truth and the Life*, 1677 [1839], SWRB, 1997, p. 23).

The Word of the Lord amplifies this encouragement to the covenanted remnant, though it is a stinging rebuke to the slumbering shepherds of our day,

Thus saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an

house of prayer for all people. The Lord GOD which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him. All ye beasts of the field, come to devour, yea, all ye beasts in the forest. His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter. Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and to morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant (Isa. 56:1-12).

Will you be found emptying buckets of water on the deck of the neopresbyterian Titanic or in the little lifeboats of faith "which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth" (Rev. 14:4)?

Therefore say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come (Ezek. 11:16).

### **The importance of the research and quotations amassed herein**

A secondary benefit of this work, which makes it uniquely useful to our generation, is that this book will give the diligent reader the historical context and doctrinal foundation from which to profitably *understand* and *apply* the myriad of Covenanter books and other *source documents of both Reformations* (which are once again available) to our contemporary situation. "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples" (Isa. 8:16). I know of no other book which does this so well - or even comes close. If you want a key to understanding some of the most perplexing aspects of Reformation thought you will do no better than to carefully study what is contained in *The Covenanted Reformation Defended*.

The Reformers knew their Bibles and had, to a great extent, systematically integrated the teaching of Scripture into a *cohesive system*. Those unfamiliar with the foundations of this system will confuse, misapply and outright oppose parts of the Reformed system of doctrine even when citing quotations from the very Reformers they think they are upholding. The writings of Richard Bacon refuted in this book furnishes us with a perfect example of what happens when one reads a sampling of some of the *best* Reformed books and does not understand what he is reading, confuses the context and teaching, and turns the Reformers on their heads to justify the weak, insipid, "Reformed" Christianity of our day. A prime example of this is found on pages 95-96 and is an indictment against the previously published unfaithfulness of Richard Bacon, and "his atrocious little work" (as Larry Birger denominates it) *The Visible Church and Outer Darkness*. In regard to the Covenanters doctrine of the visible church Greg Barrow writes,

**To properly understand the Reformers' doctrine of dissociation and separation we must distinguish between the "settled" and "broken" state of the church.**

To properly understand the Covenanter position regarding dissociation and separation from pretended authorities, **the reader must become familiar with another important distinction, viz., the settled vs. the broken state of the church.** The nation of Scotland (1638-1649) possessed both a truly constituted

General Assembly, and the civil establishment of the true Reformed religion, thereby enabling the church to enjoy the blessed privilege of being "settled" in the land. Our case in 1997 is vastly different. We have no National Presbyterian General Assembly, nor do we possess the civil establishment of the one true Reformed religion. Among the Reformers, such a disorganized state of affairs was referred to as the "broken state" of the church. **One of the most serious errors of Mr. Bacon (and those like him), and one of the main reasons he so frequently misunderstands the Reformers' doctrine of dissociation and separation is his failure to grasp this important distinction** Mr. Bacon is fond of quoting men like Samuel Rutherford, James Durham, and George Gillespie, who wrote extensively regarding true principles of separation. What he fails to take into account is that they were applying their principles to a time when the church was nationally established and bound by faithful reformed covenants. Those who fail to make this distinction are constantly taking the scriptural principles of separation pertaining to a national church (settled) and applying these principles to the church in her "broken" and "unsettled" state. The results are disastrous: books are written like Mr. Bacon's, *The Visible Church in the Outer Darkness* (a book filled with both Popish error and Independent confusion). In his public misrepresentation of Kevin Reed, Mr. Bacon practically ignored the necessary distinctions of the Reformers (being vs. well-being, settled vs. broken state), and consequently led his readers to believe something far different than the doctrine they actually taught. Through his false teaching, sincere children of God are led to believe that separation from a Christian church, even in a time of great apostasy (broken state), should be exceedingly rare. Citing men (like John MacPherson, James Wood, and Thomas Boston) who did not stand upon the biblical principles of covenanted Protesters (like Samuel Rutherford, George and Patrick Gillespie, James Guthrie, Robert McWard, John Brown of Wamphray, Richard Cameron, Donald Cargill and James Renwick), Mr. Bacon has confused his readers into confounding the faithful teaching of the Second Reformation with the dissimulation of those who were attempting to justify their backsliding and compromise. He must be called to account for his error (see Appendix G).

Because this truth (settled/broken state of the visible church) and many of the other important teachings making up the doctrinal system of the best Reformed churches are so often abused or buried (by ignorance), far too many Reformation treasure chests of truth lay unopened in our day; *not because they cannot be read, but because they are not understood*. This book, by God's grace, will change all that. It provides an easy-to-read and easy-to-understand commentary on some of the most important ideas of the two previous major Reformations - doctrines which we must return to if we are to see the third Reformation move forward. Moreover, in laying out the pathway to a third Reformation, and in exposing those schismatics who are deriding and obfuscating the landmarks of "covenanted unity and uniformity," the positive message of *real* national Reformation and *true* ecclesiastical reconstruction cannot be missed. Greg Barrow writes,

Now the reader may object and ask what is different about what the PRCE is doing? Have they not practically done the same thing? Have they not set up a church court distinct from all the rest? No, just the opposite. We have separated from all the existing schisms of the present day and returned to the original covenanted constitution of the Church of Scotland. We own their constitution and are bound by the Acts of their General Assembly (1638-1649) because they are

agreeable to God's Word, and because they are undeniably noble examples of the purest and highest attainment of the Church of Jesus Christ thus far. Contrary to Mr. Bacon's charge that we "do not believe [ourselves - GB] compelled to answer in any church court," we abide by and enforce the rulings of their church courts (as they are agreeable to God's Word), and we also understand this is part of the formal and moral obligation of the *Solemn League and Covenant*. We have not separated ourselves into Independency like Mr. Bacon (who, by his separatist practice owns no church court but his own), but instead have returned to the Presbyterian polity which we have sworn to uphold in the Covenants of our forefathers. Let the reader judge if we have not chosen the Scriptural way to promote unity of doctrine and uniformity in practice. We are simply following in the path of our forefathers (Song 1:8, Jer 6:16), and imitating their godly and biblical example while hoping for the same blessing of God upon our efforts that they enjoyed upon theirs. (p. 31) ... We cannot walk together with Mr. Bacon in his schismatic practice and agree to this endless multiplying of rival church courts. We believe that it is sin to associate or comply with such schismatic societies. We call upon all those who see the Scriptural principles being violated to separate from such schisms and work together with us toward one national covenanted unity and uniformity. This is the true doctrine of the Second Reformation and we praise God that it will again be victorious (p. 33).

Without a book like this, the publishing work of Still Waters Revival Books (and others) would be of only limited value, as many of the most useful and important truths (landmarks) of Reformation (granted to our fathers) would remain obscured or completely buried. And we should not forget that for many of these truths, which Bacon contemptuously calls "tempests in a teapot," the Presbyterian, Reformed and Covenanted martyrs of ages past suffered torture, "not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection" (Heb. 11:35). They are the same truths for which the martyrs "under the altar," who "were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held," cry unto God to "judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth" (Rev. 6:9-10). And the very truths which have in days gone by been used of God to turn whole nations to Christ - and which are prophesied to do so once again, not only for a few nations (as in previous Reformations), but for the whole world (Isa. 2:2-5, 11:9; Ezekiel 47:1-12).

In digging out the foundational Reformation landmarks, set deep in the soil of faithful Scriptural exegesis - using an arsenal of citations from previously buried Reformation *source documents* seldom seen in the modern era - this book is guiding us back to the narrow path which our faithful forefathers so clearly marked. Lord willing, the publication of this book (*because of the important [and lost] Scriptural truths it contains*) will give those seeking real Reformation the fierce (Matt. 11:12) and faithful zeal that we see the newly discovered book of the law gave to King Josiah and his fellow Covenanters,

And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiyah the priest found a book of the law of the LORD given by Moses. And Hilkiyah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiyah delivered the book to Shaphan. And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do it. And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered

it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen. Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king. And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah a servant of the king's, saying, Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book. And Hilkiah, and they that the king had appointed, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college:) and they spake to her to that effect. And she answered them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah: Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched. And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard; Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the LORD. Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again. Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people, great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD. And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book. And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers. And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the LORD their God. And all his days they departed not from following the LORD, the God of their fathers. (2 Chr. 34:14-33).

Until we *understand* what the Scripture teaches, its value is minimized - and the misuse of Scripture can even lead to damnation as it does among those who wrest (2 Pet. 3:16) the Holy Word so severely as to teach and practice "damnable heresies" (2 Pet. 2:1). Thus, the importance of the research and quotations amassed herein should not be underestimated, for it is a compilation of some of the most significant testimony, exposition and exegesis (extracted from a wide variety of classic Protestant works) which has appeared in some time. And this is why the Lord has given these faithful teachers to His church, "that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of

doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive (though they think themselves teachers - RB); But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ (Eph. 4:14-15). Thus, though this book will be found to be eminently useful even to the youngest, untaught Christians, those in the field of battle, who have learned to use it in conjunction with the sword of the Spirit will most appreciate its value - and know the power its teachings contain.

### **Comfort and encouragement to the scattered remnant**

A final benefit of this work which I will note here (though there are many more) is that it will be found to be of great practical encouragement and help to the remnant of Covenanters that remain in our day. What the author has written will be found to be of special comfort to the faithful remnant (laboring under many false charges and much misrepresentation) who remain outside of unfaithful churches - and often struggle with loneliness, isolation and extreme opposition (2 Tim. 3:12). The wilderness is not an easy place, but to those faithful souls enduring hardship and persecution for "the word of God, and for the testimony which they hold," this book will be like a hiding place "by the brook Cherith," providing the water of life during long years of drought (1 Kings 17:3); and as ravens bearing life-giving food from heaven (1 Kings 17:4). And though those disaffected to the truth label our contentions as points of little or no consequence, we can take heart that the faithful martyrs before us, who knew the secret of the Lord's Covenant (Ps. 25:14), thought and acted in accord with the positions we defend. Greg Barrow writes,

Mr. Bacon's opening attempt to reduce the importance of these questions, along with their far reaching implications, to the realm of, "a tempest in a teapot," is ridicule unworthy of even the most base opponent. The inherent self-contradiction of downplaying the issue while at the same time writing such lengthy public testimony against the PRCE is too notable to be ignored. Nevertheless, I respond by reminding the reader that our martyred forefathers were willing to shed their blood for this "tempest in a teapot." Our covenanted brothers and sisters were starved, raped, tortured, and murdered over this so-called, "tempest in a teapot." (p. 4).

Though the day will surely come when the truths promoted in *The Covenanted Reformation Defended* will light the whole earth, the present situation is like a dark night before the dawn. The old truths are slowly reappearing, yet the sun has not yet arisen; it is there in all its glory, just off the horizon, and (we think) about to burst forth, but yet darkness enshrouds the land. In reading this book the scattered remnant of faithful Covenanters should be greatly encouraged to continue to "stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught" (2 Thes. 2:15) - "testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand" (1 Pet. 5:12). For the light of the Scriptural truth contained in this book (setting forth a number of important points related to the old covenanted uniformity) makes it exceedingly clear that if our Reformed forebears were correct, the greater part of the modern Reformed community is woefully backslidden; and that only those refusing to partake of their corrupt ordinances (e.g. refusing to practice the sin of occasional hearing, cf. James Douglas' *Strictures on Occasional Hearing*) can expect the blessing of God. In fact, this book should remove any doubt that if our Reformed fathers were correct, we live in days similar to those of Elijah - when the prophet's words clearly indicate that he was not aware of the existence of one *faithful* visible church in all of Israel (1 Kings. 19:10, 14). Likewise, we find Samuel Rutherford lamenting the scarcity of *sound* Christians in England, even as late as 1644, in his Letter (CCCIX) to Lady Boyd

(cf. *Letters of Samuel Rutherford*, p. 619, 1891 edition). Thus, this book demonstrates how and why our position "in the wilderness" (Rev. 12:6,14) - outside the present defection - is entirely justified; and that no matter what opposition we face we can be assured that the Lord Jesus Christ is pleased with our stand for His Crown and Covenant.

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified (1 Pet. 4:12-14).

### **Testimony-bearing exemplified**

If we are to see the third Reformation blossom in our day the small band of "Gideon-like" covenanted soldiers must set their faces like flint against the neopresbyterian defection (and all other assaults upon Christ's Kingly throne) - by testifying against and refusing to join with the covenant breakers in their backsliding. Many walking the narrow path of separation from corrupt churches and nations, who have set up landmarks before us, have suffered much worse than we are likely to suffer. Therefore we should not be dissuaded by the lesser tests that often come our way. Moreover, as this book proves, we are the heirs to the best Reformers of both Reformations, those men and women that followed Christ most carefully (sometimes unto violent deaths), and we should never take our blood-bought freedom lightly - even as those opposing our work seek to disparage it. Concerning some of the primary biblical attainments defended in the pages of *The Covenanted Reformation Defended*, note the courage, conviction and exemplary steadfastness (in the truth) exhibited in the following portion of "(t)he last speech and testimony of Andrew Guilline, Weaver, who lived in the Shire of Fife, and suffered at the Gallowlee, Edinburgh, July [20] 1683,"

I am come here to lay down my life. I declare I die not as a murderer, or as an evil doer; although this covenant-breaking, perjured, murdering generation lay it to my charge as though I were a murderer, on account of the justice that was executed on that Judas [i.e. Archbishop Sharp] that sold the Kirk of Scotland for 50,000 merks a-year. And we being bound to extirpate Popery, Prelacy, and that to the utmost of our power, and we having no other that were appearing for God at that day, but such as took away his life; therefore, I was bound to join with them in defending the true religion. And all the land, every man, was bound, I say, to meet him by the way, when he came down from London, and have put him presently to the edge of the sword for that heinous indignity done to the holy Son of God. But it is (alas!) too apparent that men have never known God rightly, nor considered that He is a holy God. Oh! terrible backsliding, they will not believe that God will call them to an account for what they owed to God. **But assure yourselves; as He is in heaven, He will call every one to an account, how they have stood to that Covenant and work of Reformation. I need say no more; but I would have you consider, that in breaking the Covenant, we have trampled under foot the precious truths of Jesus Christ**(John Thompson, ed., *A Cloud of Witnesses for the Royal Prerogatives of Jesus Christ: Being the Last Speeches and Testimonies of Those Who Have Suffered for the Truth in Scotland Since the Year 1680*, Sprinkle Publications, reprinted, 1989, pp. 276-277, emphases added).

Thompson expands on this, calling us to *remember* the sufferings and testimony of this martyr for Christ,

The inhuman treatment this martyr met with ought not to be forgot, as a pregnant instance of the hellish rage and fury of these persecutors, and of the Lord's rich grace, who wonderfully countenanced and strengthened him to endure the tortures inflicted upon him with an undaunted braveness of spirit. For, besides the tortures he suffered in prison, they ordered both his hands to be cut off, while he was alive. And it was observed by on-lookers, that though by reason the executioner was drunk, he received nine strokes in cutting them off, yet he bore it with invincible patience. And after the right hand was cut off, he held out the stump in view of the multitude, saying -

"As my blessed Lord sealed my salvation with His blood, so I am honoured this day to seal His truth with my blood."

Afterwards, being strangled a little, his head was cut off, and it, with the hands, placed upon the Netherbow Port of Edinburgh; and his entrails being taken out his body was conveyed to Magus Muir, and there hung up in chains on a high pole. (John Thompson, ed., *A Cloud of Witnesses for the Royal Prerogatives of Jesus Christ: Being the Last Speeches and Testimonies of Those Who Have Suffered for the Truth in Scotland Since the Year 1680*, Sprinkle Publications, reprinted 1989, p. 277).

A number of such instances (and hundreds more could easily be adduced) are chronicled in the pages you are about to read. Each testify to the fact that the faith which we defend is the faith of the Covenanted martyrs - "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Another prime example that "the blood of the martyrs imposes obligations upon posterity from generation to generation" can be seen on pages 7-8 (and following). Here Greg Barrow cites two stirring quotations from McFeeter's *Sketches of the Covenanters*, both demonstrating the extent of the Covenanters' suffering for Christ and showing that heavy moral obligations "fall to the successors of those who gave their lives for the truth." Barrow further explains the significance of these passages when he writes,

The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church, and we cannot sit idly by while Mr. Bacon attempts to mislead his readers to believe that the PRCE is fighting for a cause different from that of the glorious martyrs described above (on pages 7-8 - RB). Mr. Bacon may want to believe that we are saying something different from those champions of the faith, but we shall soon see that our cause is identical to the martyrs of Scotland and the best reformers of the First and Second Reformations (p. 8).

This book clearly proves that we are fighting the continuing battle for Christ's Crown and Covenant, for which our honored forefathers fought and died. Moreover, it further evidences that an important part of the Reformation conflagration (destroying, as with fire [Deut. 7:4], the citadels of Antichrist) included *a biblical testimony against and public separation from covenant breakers*. This point is among the most important in this book and is dealt with throughout Misrepresentation #3. When rightly understood and applied it has major ramifications for our day - not only for the individual, but for the church and the

nations also. James Douglas, writing on "Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock" (Song 1:7), comments,

These footsteps, I apprehend, are just the attainments of the church in former times, in respect of greater conformity to scripture in doctrine and practice. These are left on record for our imitation; and the divine command with relation to them is, - "Whereunto we have already attained let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing, - that which ye have already hold fast till I come, - hold fast that which thou hast that no man take thy crown, - be followers of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises," etc. To assist in distinguishing between sin and duty, truth and error, and to distinguish the flock of Christ from those of his companions, it has been the practice of the church to retain and bring to view in her subordinate standards the attainments of former times... The Westminster Confession of Faith is partially acknowledged as the subordinate standard in all churches that bear the Presbyterian name, while, however, important parts of the same compilation are entirely omitted; *as the covenants*, considered as national transactions. This is done even by some who once regarded the rejection of the covenanted uniformity of Scotland, a sufficient ground for secession from the national Church. But these now reject the whole civil part of the reformation, and deny the moral obligation of former deeds on succeeding generations... *As these covenants constitute a fundamental article of the reformation, the rejection of them necessarily includes a rejection of it. In vain shall any pretend to follow the footsteps of the flock, while they reject the most distinguishing articles of their creed, and the most approved part of their conduct.* A profession of respect to their memory, and of adherence to their example, with the exception of these articles, is like a Unitarian professing faith in the Christian system. Is it asked, Why bring so frequently to view the leaders of the church in a former century? - Because they were most distinguished for their fidelity in the ways of God; most highly honoured as instruments for advancing the interests of his kingdom; and in all respects the most perfect patterns of imitation, that history has transmitted to us since the apostolic times. This perfection designs only a high degree of superiority to others in the time specified; not that they were already perfect... When the majority of the Nation departed from the *scriptural covenanted principles* of the Reformed Church of Scotland, our Fathers strictly adhered to the profession which they had made, and for which many of them had suffered persecution. They never separated from the Revolution Church, as they were never incorporated with her (as is our position contra the "Baconites" of Rowlett - RB), but they strictly held fast that which they had attained. They have been unjustly called separatists, but the judicious Christian may easily see, that *the Nation at large was guilty of the great separation, as they separated from the truth*, and the good old Reformation Constitution, which was the work of better times; and we must not follow a multitude to do evil. By our profession we belong to a different society, having a purer constitution and a better administration, for which a noble army of Martyrs suffered unto the death. The principal heads of their suffering were not of a personal nature, nor solely on account of the infringement of their civil rights and liberties; *but public breach of Covenant*; - changing the ordinances that were of Divine institution, by the introduction of diocesan prelacy; - robbing Christ of his crown rights and prerogatives royal, as the King and Head of Zion, by vesting the supreme magistrate with an ecclesiastical supremacy, or blasphemous headship, over the Church; - filling places of power and trust, with open enemies of Christ,

and his holy religion; - and tyrannizing over the lives, liberties, and properties of men, were the great reasons why our renowned Martyrs suffered, bled and died (*Strictures on Occasional Hearing; In An Inquiry Into Song 1:7*, 1820, SWRB reprint, 1995, pp. 6, 24-26, emphases added).

However, because so many are apt to confuse Reformation thinking on this vital point (regarding separation from the public ordinances of backsliding denominations), Douglas is also careful to point out,

By this is not meant to say, or even to insinuate, that here are no good men, or real Christians, except among ourselves. We never entertained such a selfish opinion. We have no doubt that there are many eminent and pious Christians among the ministers, and many precious saints among the private members of different denominations, who, believing the same doctrines of the glorious gospel, that we do, concerning Christ and him crucified, shall be saved in him with an everlasting salvation: but this does not warrant church-communion with such as do not observe Christ's ordinances as they are written. *It is the revealed will of God, and not saintship, which is the only rule of a visible profession* (*Strictures on Occasional Hearing; In An Inquiry Into Song 1:7*, 1820, SWRB reprint, 1995, pp. 8, emphases added).

Nevertheless, as documented and substantiated throughout this book, it is easy to see that barring open public repentance by most (if not all) *modern* Presbyterian denominations (i.e. the neopresbyterian denominations), no Christian can lawfully attend upon their public ordinances without denying the biblically based testimony and attainments of the Second Reformation. The testimony of the Second Reformation and the testimony of the neopresbyterians are mutually exclusive at too many crucial points - not the least of which includes the Scriptural doctrine and duty of covenanting. Even Judah was specifically commanded of the Lord not to communicate in the lawful ordinance of covenanting (i.e. *swearing* "The LORD liveth") with Israel while Israel remained in public rebellion against the Lord. "Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, *nor swear, The LORD liveth*" (Hosea 4:15, emphases added). Similarly, in this book, Bacon's errors (particularly his opposition to the Solemn League and Covenant) are seen to be symptomatic of the greater defection from covenanted attainments seen on a larger scale in our day. Consequently, many have falsely attacked us and the old covenanted ways who do not yet understand our Second Reformation stance regarding those who remain obstinately opposed to "the truth of God's Word, many Acts of General Assembly, as well as the abundantly clear testimonies of the faithful men of the past,"

Mr. Bacon has neither honestly read, nor properly represented the Covenanter 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 and 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 toward covenanted 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" (2 Thessalonians 3:14,15, AV) (pp. 197-198).

How can one "walk in the counsel of the ungodly" and "sit in the seat of the scornful" (Ps. 1:1), who "frame mischief by law" in their constitutions, openly opposing the covenant of the Lord (individually, ecclesiastically and civilly) as it was laid hold of on our behalf in the Solemn League and Covenant - and still lay claim to the faithful testimony attained during the Second Reformation? How can one sit at the Lord's table with the same type of malignants who would have come under the censure of the best Reformed churches during the Second Reformation - and still lay claim to the faithful biblically-based testimony attained during the Second Reformation? This was not the way of our faithful fathers, who would rather die than give up Scriptural truth! James Renwick's final earthly words (from p. 107), given on the scaffold just before he was martyred by the Royalist/Episcopal beast of his day, makes this abundantly clear; as he echoes what later became the bulk of our terms of communion (which are found in appendix E),

Dear Friends, I die a Presbyterian Protestant; I own the Word of God as the rule of faith and manners; I own the Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Sum of Saving Knowledge, Directory for Public and Family Worship, Covenants, National and Solemn League, Acts of General Assemblies, and all the faithful contendings that have been for the Covenanted Reformation. I leave my testimony approving the preaching in the field, and defending the same by arms. I adjoin my testimony against Popery, Prelacy, Erastianism, against all profanity, and everything contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness; particularly against all usurpation and encroachments made upon Christ's right, the Prince of the kings of this earth, who alone must bear the glory of ruling his own kingdom the Church; and in particular against the absolute power affected by his usurper, that belongs to no mortal, but is the incommunicable prerogative of Jehovah, and against his Toleration flowing from his absolute power (John Howie, *The Scots Worthies*, 1781, p. 547).

This book, like amiable Renwick (as he was called) above, defends the progressive nature of testimony-bearing and the testimony itself (Ps. 78). The commanded duties of pointedly testifying against defection from biblical attainments and refusing ecclesiastical communion with obstinately backsliding churches are true acts of love (Prov. 27:6). And though they are often met with severe denunciations and even martyrdom (note the reception the faithful testimony of the prophets and apostles received throughout Scripture), *The Covenanted Reformation Defended* will make this job of "sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts" and being "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh" for the "reason of the hope that is in us" (1 Pet. 3:15) much easier. For those who recognize the enormity of the problems among the neopresbyterian churches - and act in accord with Scripture (and the requirements of a present testimony), separating themselves from these polluted bodies - the Reformation understanding of the distinctions dealt with in *The Covenanted Reformation Defended* are indispensable. Whether it be the Reformed distinctions between the *being* and *well being* (see Misrepresentation 2, point D) or the *broken* and *settled* state of the visible church (noted above), covenanting and covenant obligation (see Misrepresentation 3) or the meaning and proper administration of the Lord's Supper (see Misrepresentation 4), this book is a paleopresbyterian weapon with which to be reckoned. Exceptionally telling (in light of corporate backsliding from

Reformation attainments) is the segment on the Westminster Assembly's official statements defending their view of close communion, particularly concerning *Larger Catechism* Q&A #173 on the meaning of "ignorance" and "scandal." The remarkable research found here (see pages 141-152) forms the most extensive commentary on this significant section of the *Larger Catechism* that I have ever seen. Moreover, if the Westminster Divines were correct in their understanding of Scripture on this point (and I believe they were) then it would seem that *almost* every Presbyterian minister who has vowed to uphold the Westminster standards (since about 1652) has perjured himself (whether ignorantly or otherwise); for the original intent of the Westminster Divines concerning close communion is well beyond question - and the historical record gives every indication that the truth found here has been laid aside and/or buried by neopresbyterians for centuries. So, again we find that this book is unearthing another Reformation landmark - this time defending the classic teaching and practice of the best Reformed churches on the Lord's Supper. And again the ramifications are massive. For those who vow to uphold the *Westminster Larger Catechism* (a part of the covenanted uniformity envisioned, and sworn to, in the Solemn League and Covenant) paedocommunion is out! All forms of open communion are out! Half-hearted, non-covenanted and non-confessional attempts at close communion are out! Even defective, overly strenuous or overly demanding "hyper-Covenanter" communion is out! The mature biblical mean, concerning admission to the Lord's Supper, set down by the Westminster Divines and the Scottish General Assembly (in her best days) - as confirmed in these pages - guards against both the extremes of latitudinarianism and legalism (i.e. Scripturally unauthorized rigor). The biblical beauty and balance of the work of both these Assemblies is a joy to behold and we hear the echo of this work in the words of the Reformed Presbytery,

(We - RB) reject and condemn that loose and latitudinarian tenet and opinion of opening the door of communion with the church in her judicative capacity, or sealing ordinances, unto the grossly ignorant, loose, careless, profane and scandalous: and to the antichristian deist, blasphemous heretic, or any who maintain doctrines principles and opinions contrary to and eversive of the cardinal and fundamental doctrines of Christianity, or such principles and practices as oppose, obscure or darken the church's beauty and purity, and spoil her of her power, and particularly that of the church of Scotland, in her attainments in reformation; this being evidently destructive and ruinous to truth and holiness, the only foundation and basis of external union and concord in the church, and consequently of all durable, harmonious and comfortable communion among the ministers and members of Christ's mystical body: See Eph 5:11; Isa. 8:20; Amos 3:3; 1 Cor. 9:10; Heb. 7:14; Rev. 22:14,15; 2 Cor. 5:17,18; and conform to the acts and practice of this church, in her best and purest times, in excluding from her communion, and refusing to unite with any chargeable as above (*Act, Declaration, and Testimony, for the Whole of Our Covenanted Reformation*, 1876, SWRB reprint, 1995, pp. 194-195).

Furthermore, what do you do in regard to whole denominations of ministers who are breaking solemn ordination vows to God (and many do not even know it) on this point? This and many other like questions are answered in the pages you are about to read. With the release of this book (along with the many other classic Covenanter, Presbyterian and Reformed works which we at SWRB [and others] have had the privilege to recently publish), the covenanted remnant now has an arsenal of nuclear tipped ICBM's from which

to defend the faith, bear witness against defection, and honor and glorify God. Neopresbyterians who refuse to repent, in the face of such overwhelming biblical and historical evidence of (and godly testimony against) their defection, would be well advised to construct sturdy bomb shelters. Those who read this book, and who seek the truth above all else, are about to confront you with some serious questions. On the other hand, the faithful remnant should be encouraged to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil 1:27); remembering, as Calvin has noted, "that some special assistance is promised to godly teachers and ministers of the word; so that the fiercer the attacks of Satan, and the stronger the hostility of the world, so much the more does the Lord defend and guard them by extraordinary protection" (*Calvin's Commentary* on Isaiah 50:7). This book would seem to be a useful part of the Lord's "extraordinary protection" for the contemporary Covenanter, and has been produced with many singular signs of God's providential care and intervention. The faithful Covenanter is encouraged to use it wisely for personal edification (as well as the edification of one's family and church), to comfort and/or confront others who are seeking the truth, and, above all, to pray that God will add *the testimony of His Spirit* to the truths it contains.

For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed (Isa. 50:7).  
Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:32).

#### **A little (recent) history relative to the publication of this book**

A little recent history and I will conclude. When it was first given (by the Lord Jesus Christ) to the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton (and Still Waters Revival Books) to take up the old covenanted cause, cries of Anabaptism and schism filled the air in opposition to our witness. After the release of Greg Price's *A Testimony Against the Unfounded Charges of Anabaptism* (free at: <http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualnls/anabapt.htm>) and my *Saul in the Cave of Adullam: A Testimony Against the Fashionable Sub-Calvinism of Doug Wilson* (Editor of *Credenda/Agenda Magazine*); and, *For Classical Protestantism and the Attainments of the Second Reformation* (free at: <http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualnls/Saul.htm>), both answering these erroneous indictments, almost nothing has been heard of such scurrilous charges any longer (at least not publicly).

Shortly after the release of these two works Larry Birger perceptively pointed out that something should be written to ward off the other false charge that always appears when the witness for the Covenanted Reformation gains a public hearing, viz., the charge of Romanism. Samuel Rutherford and his fellow Covenanters were falsely charged with Romanism "worse than Trent" by John Milton (who championed the cause of Cromwell, and later apostatized into Arianism, Arminianism and open sympathy for Quakerism, [Barker, *Puritan Profiles*, p. 306]). The later covenanted martyrs, like James Renwick (see his *Informatory Vindication*) - and even David Steele, though he was not martyred - have all been falsely accused of this charge. In fact, to those unfamiliar with classic Presbyterian thought (and Scripture) this charge seems all too convenient: and as is often the case, the refutation of the false charge of Romanism, carelessly hurled out against Covenanters, was not to be forthcoming until the enemies of Christ's covenanted cause broke forth in public with their calumnies and false accusations.

In every century, since the glorious international attainments won in the Solemn League

and Covenant, pretended presbyters and presbyteries attempt to push themselves into prominence on the coat-tails of the Covenanters. These neocovenanters and neopresbyterians (and their denominations) have, as noted throughout this book, a long and checkered history of backsliding from the original Covenanted testimony (see especially pages 91-93 dealing with the Protester/Resolutioner controversy and pages 209-214 on the Revolution settlement). The corporate Presbyterian backsliding (after the Solemn League and Covenant) started in the seventeenth century with the Engagers; who first attacked covenanted obligations on the basis of pragmatism, hoping to dull the Scripturally pointed testimony already attained for a broader ecclesiastical cooperation and mere political power. Sounds familiar, doesn't it? What started as a few pebbles of defection tumbling down the mountain of Covenanter truth soon turned into a landslide of treason against Christ, when the covenant-breaking Resolutioners split the Church of Scotland and opposed the faithful Protesting remnant (which included men like Samuel Rutherford, James Guthrie and Robert Trail). After a time of severe testing and many martyrdoms during which only a very small remnant remained faithful (lead by Brown of Wamphray, Robert M'Ward, Richard Cameron, Donald Cargill and James Renwick), the Revolution settlement of 1688 solidified official opposition to the covenanted Reformation (under the pretence of a return to Presbyterianism in Scotland). Since then it has been pretty much all downhill as far as corporate national testimony to the attainments of the covenanted Reformation is concerned. Our modern Presbyterian and Reformed denominations stand squarely on the defective principles (and some are even the direct descendants) of the Resolutioners and the later Revolution Settlement (which, among other abominations never rescinded the Act of Abjuration, which left the Covenants buried by law). *The Baconites of Rowlett are one prime example of a public revival of the very things that the Covenanters stood against.* Their pretended "presbytery" (which now consists of just one congregation) has adopted the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland's book of church order. In doing this the Baconites have solidified their public claim to a schism (Revolution Settlement) of a schism (Free Church of Scotland) of a schism (Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland). See pages 241-243 for further verification, in conjunction with pages 209-214 already noted. Their independent "denomination," is grounded in a long line of disaffection to the covenanted Reformation and affection to schism - and Bacon's *A Defense Departed* is the rotten fruit that continues to grow from a bad tree that is now centuries old (Matt. 7:17). Moreover, in adopting the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland's book of church order (in another letter which was conveniently left off their web page record, see Appendix A [pp. 199-202] for a copy of this letter) the Baconites require of their ministers the same type of historical testimony which they denounce as popish in others (see pages 118-120). I will not go into any more detail here, as you will find plenty to sustain my claims in this book. But please keep this short historical outline in mind as you read on. It will help you see why it is so obvious where Richard Bacon and much of the contemporary Presbyterian and Reformed community have defected from the biblical positions adopted by our Reformed forebears. It will also help you to recognize those who continue to maintain a faithful testimony in keeping with the Scriptural command,

Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following (Ps. 48:12-13).

Using a more specific example, the Reformed Presbytery provides a defense of the true Covenanter position in the context of the RPCNA's defective (neocovenanter) attempt at

covenant renewal; showing again that the problem with the neopresbyterianism of recent times (even among the best neo's) is that they maintain a different religion (at many points) than the *faithful* Reformers that have gone before them,

By the National Covenant our fathers laid Popery prostrate. By the Solemn League and Covenant they were successful in resisting prelatic encroachments and civil tyranny. By it they were enabled to achieve the Second Reformation... They were setting up landmarks by which the location and limits of the city of God will be known at the dawn of the millennial day... How can they be said to go forth by the footsteps of the flock, who have declined from the attainments, renounced the covenants and contradicted the testimony of "the cloud of witnesses"... All the Schisms (separations) that disfigure the body mystical of Christ... are the legitimate consequences of the abandonment of reformation attainments - the violation of covenant engagements. This is sound doctrine and historical truth combined. Again our author puts the important question, "Is it not unfaithfulness to reject the obligations of the covenants of former times?" Yes, we think so, when their objects are not yet reached; and moreover, that "Confession of sin, and especially the sins of covenant breaking should always accompany the renewal of our obligations." This is well said. Was it thought of at Pittsburgh, 1871? To good purpose he adds, "In the renewal of covenants there should be no abridgment of former obligations." (All these excellent sentiments seemed to have been totally forgotten or wholly disregarded when the time came for their practical use and appropriate application. Some said, "We have all we want;" and we strongly suspect too many wanted none of the former obligations - "in this free country.") And can this be denied? Once more we quote, - "The opposition is not so much to covenanting, as it is to the covenants of our fathers, and to the permanence of their obligations." Then the author says emphatically and somewhat prophetically, "The church never will renew her covenants aright until she embraces in her obligations all the attainments sworn in the covenants, National and Solemn League. This was done in the renovation at Auchensaugh, in Scotland" (*A Short Vindication of Our Covenanted Reformation*, 1879, SWRB reprint, 1996, pp. 38-39).

Though I do not have the space (or the time) to expand on this example, the reader will find that this book deals thoroughly with the question of covenants and covenant obligations. It proclaims the ancient truths of Scripture (and the Covenanted faith) in a way that can be easily understood by the modern reader, yet which does not compromise the Gospel verities for which our forebears (from the beginning of creation) gladly suffered and died. In this book, Greg Barrow, like a skilled surgeon, will be seen to be cutting out all the cancerous growth which Richard Bacon (and others malignants like him, both past and present) have spread throughout the body of Christ. Barrow buries Bacon's folly not only with Scripture, but with historical quotations from the best and most faithful Church Councils, Creeds, Confessions, Acts of National General Assemblies, Acts of Covenanted Christian Parliaments, etc. In doing so he makes it abundantly clear that the so-called "Reformation" of our day is but a pale imitation of what Scripture requires and what our forefathers attained and testified to. Nowhere in recent history (though *The Protesters Vindicated* and Clarkson's *Plain Reasons for Presbyterian Dissenting from the Revolution Church of Scotland* are excellent and comparable eighteenth century works and the *Reformed Presbytery's Act, Declaration and Testimony for the Whole of Our Covenanted Reformation* is an excellent and comparable nineteenth century work) will you find such conclusive evidence of backsliding and defection from

Reformation attainments as in *The Covenanted Reformation Defended Against Contemporary Schismatics*.

### **A Reformation watershed and "the real enemies of Reformation"**

To conclude I will note that Greg Barrow, with some assistance from five others (Greg Price, Lyndon Dohms, Larry Birger, Kevin Reed and myself), in researching and applying the biblical principles of our Reformation forefathers has produced a watershed work. This book should *polarize* the professing Reformed community into clearly demarcated groups of paleopresbyterians (Covenanters, Cameronians, Steelites or whatever you want to call them) and neopresbyterians (Presbyterian Church in America, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, etc.). In *general*, the neopresbyterians will no longer be able to hide under the cover of ignorance regarding their defection from historic Reformation standards and thought. In *particular*, these same neopresbyterians will no longer be able to claim that they uphold some of the most important doctrines and practices (concerning covenanting, the Lord's Supper, the nature of the visible church, etc.) judicially maintained by the Westminster Assembly and the Church of Scotland in her purest times. Whether due to ignorance or willful public rebellion against the standards of the covenanted Reformation (which many neopresbyterians claim to uphold, at least partially), they will be seen to be covenant breakers, profaners of the Lord's table, perjurers, occasional hearers and more. *A Defense of the Covenanted Reformation* will force the neopresbyterians to abandon the pretence of following in the footsteps of the Reformation flock (regarding the topics discussed in this book) or suffer the loss of all credibility. The proofs found herein, against the ongoing apostasy (i.e. defection or falling away) of the neopresbyterians, are so clear and overwhelming that if they continue to maintain adherence to the Westminster Standards they will be met (by all those who have read this work) with stares of amazement (that they have been given over to such blindness) - and likely a few hearty gaffaws! For "the Lord will have them in derision," who say "let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us" (Ps. 2:3, 4). Richard Bacon may be the contemporary theological "poster boy" for certain aspects of neopresbyterian defection, but make no mistake about it, this book is a serious indictment against most of the Presbyterian and Reformed community - since the time of the Engagers and the public Resolutions which followed, to our day. We should now see a pronounced increase in epistemologically self-conscious movement toward faithfulness, covenant keeping and the third Reformation (among paleopresbyterians) *contrasted with* further backsliding, malignancy and self-justification (by neopresbyterians) for trashing the standards and ancient landmarks set up by the faithful and contending witnesses throughout the ages.

In summary, after reading *The Covenanted Reformation Defended*, I must say that I cannot remember seeing such an utter devastation of the opponents arrayed against Reformation at any time since Gillespie wrote his *Dispute Against English Popish Ceremonies* (first published 1637, in defense of Reformation worship against the idolatry and innovations of the Prelates). This book is that good! In my estimation it is the most important book to be written in at least the last 310 years (since Alexander Shields wrote *A Hind Let Loose*, which was first published in 1687). If you want to know what the *greatest international Reformation thus far in history* was about (at a very fundamental level), you will not do any better than carefully studying this book. In mastering some of the more advanced positions of the second Reformation (found throughout this work), you will have the framework necessary to delve into the myriads of First and Second Reformation source documents presently being published. And when the Lord has granted

enough of His dear children (our brothers and sisters in Christ) the mastery of the magnificent truths set forth in this title (a veritable treasure chest of truth being unlocked for the first time in many, many years), we can all rejoice together that we will be witnessing a token of the turning away of God's fierce anger against the nations - and possibly the coming third and greatest Reformation yet (and maybe even the dawn of the millennial day). "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it" (Isa. 2:2).

It should also be encouraging to the lovers of truth to remember that the teachings set forth in this book are the same teachings that helped bring various nations to the doorstep of the Lord's house - some even entering in for a short time - during many past covenanted Reformations (from Old Testament times right on through to as late as the seventeenth century). Though this is included in my *Saul in the Cave of Adullam*, it bears repeating here, as it is a good summary of the victories won in the last great Reformation, what is necessary for a third Reformation, and where the teaching found in this book will lead,

James Kerr, on the Sabbath, June 20th, 1880, in a sermon preached in Greyfriar's Churchyard, in Edinburgh, titled "A Third Reformation Necessary: or, the Piety, Principles, and Patriotism of Scotland's Covenanted Martyrs; With Application to the Present Times," makes the same point concerning the monumental character of the international transactions that transpired during the Covenanters' combat with the forces of antichrist. While also giving us great insight into some of the most important battles of Second Reformation warfare, Kerr proclaims, regarding the combat of these faithful witnesses,

They stood for the Supreme Authority of the Holy Scriptures; for the Exclusive Headship of the Lord Jesus over the Church; for the Church's independent spiritual jurisdiction and power; for the Divine right of Presbytery; for the purity of worship in the Church and the Church's freedom from all unauthorized rites and ceremonies. They stood for every pin of the tabernacle, for every item of truth to which they had attained... 'Whose faith follow.' Let us embrace those doctrines affecting the Church's existence, privileges and prosperity, for which the martyrs suffered, and let us imitate their fidelity to the high attainments of a preceding period. The great Scriptural doctrines for which they were honoured to contend and which constituted the Church's glory, are still more or less lightly esteemed by even many professing Christians and ecclesiastical denominations... (A)rminianism is making rapid strides to popularity. Dishonour is done to the royal prerogative of Christ as Zion's King by those Churches that appeal to or base the claim of rights upon the Revolution Settlement - a Settlement that proceeded upon Erastian principles and left many of the attainments for which the martyrs suffered in the oblivion to which the Stuarts had consigned them... The doctrine of Christ's Exclusive Headship over His own Church, and of the freedom of the Church under her exclusive head, requires to be vindicated and testified for against all modern departures therefrom. There is need to maintain and propagate the doctrine of the Divine right of the Presbyterian form of Church government, for at the present time only two of the Churches - and these among the smallest - hold this doctrine in all its Scriptural completeness. There is a need to maintain the high scriptural doctrine concerning the modes of worship in the Church, that no rite or ceremony is to be introduced into the forms of worship for which an express prescription,

direct or indirect, cannot be produced from God's Own Word. The additions to the Church's worship of forms of human invention, and called for in order to the gratification of mere religious fashion, constitute one of the saddest signs of the present time. 'As though God has been defective,' as Charnock writes with reference to such innovators, 'in providing for His own honour in His institutions, and modelling His own service, but stood in need of our directions and the *caprichios* of our brains. In this they do not seem to climb above God, yet they set themselves on the throne of God, and would grasp one end of His sceptre in their own hands. They do not attempt to take the crown from God's head but discover a bold ambition to shuffle their hairy scalps under it, and wear a part of it upon their own.' *By the unflinching maintenance and profession of these doctrines, then, we are to prove ourselves the legitimate descendants of Scotland's Covenanted Martyrs.* This duty may draw down upon us reproach and shame, but, as the doctrines are Scriptural, the shame, like that of the martyrs, is transformed into glory. These doctrines are not now popular nor fashionable; still they are in advance of this age and prevailing ecclesiastical opinions, and they shall be popular and fashionable in the Church everywhere when 'God shall help her, and that at the breaking of the morning.' They shall have a resurrection with power, when Zion shall be set upon the mountains, and when the glory of her King shall array her, they shall be triumphant when the whole banner for the truth shall wave upon the battlements of the Millennial Church of Jesus (Cited in *Sermons Delivered in Times of Persecution in Scotland* [1880 ed., SWRB reprint 1996], pp. 32-35, emphases added).

This book and the teaching it contains is a challenge to all good Bereans to rise up, *testing all things by Scripture*, to see if the claims made herein can be sustained - for if they can, great changes are in order. It has been a marvelous and sometimes painful journey for us to have so many of the old books and teachings of the Reformers almost literally dropped into our hands. Now you, Lord willing, are about to embark on the same journey, with a convenient, predigested summary of the best of years of study from which to work. Read it carefully, do not draw rash conclusions, and check everything from the source documents themselves - whether they be confessions, covenants, etc., or *most importantly Scripture*. We pray that you will not end up in the camp of the malignants, but rather that you will be given the grace to do as the Scripture commands and to "go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock" (Song 1:8).

Finally, in light of all the opposition that has arisen to the old covenanted way, I conclude with a portion of a letter written by the National Covenanted General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (August 2, 1648) in answer to a letter from the divines meeting in England at the Westminster Assembly,

We cannot but acknowledge to the Honour and glory of the Lord, Wonderfull in counsell and excellent in working, that hee hath strongly united the spirits of all the godly in this Kingdom, and of his Servants in the Ministry, first in the severall Presbyteries and Synods, and now in this Nationall Assembly, in an unanimous and constant adhering to our first Principles and the Solemn League and Covenant, And particularly in giving a testimony against the present unlawfull Engagement in War: Yet it semeth good to the LORD who hath his Fire in Zion and Furnace in Jerusalem, for the purging of the vessels of his house to suffer many adversaries to arise with violence to obstruct and stop this great and effectual door, which the

Lord hath opened unto us. But we know that he openeth, and no man shutteth, and shutteth, and no man openeth: yea, **he will cause them who say they are for the Covenant and are not, but are Enemies thereto, and do associate with Malignants or Sectaries, to acknowledge that God hath loved us, and that his truth is in us and with us.** And now dearly beloved, seeing the Lord hath kept you together so many years, when the battel of the Warriour hath been with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood, the Lord also sitting as a refiner to purifie the Sons of Levi, and blessing you with unity and soundnesse in the Faith, we are confident you will not cease to give publick testimony for Christ, both against Sectaries and all Seducers, who prophecie lies in the name of the LORD, and against Malignants and Incendiaries (the Prelaticall and Popish Faction) who now again bestir themselves to hold up the rotten and tottering throne of Antichrist, **and are (whatever they pretend) the reall enemies of Reformation** (original spelling retained, *The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland, Form the Year 1638 to the Year 1649 Inclusive*, 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 411-412; or Alexander Peterkin, ed., *Records of the Kirk of Scotland, Containing Acts and Proceedings or the General Assemblies, From the Year 1638 Downwards, As Authenticated by the Clerks of Assembly; With Notes and Historical Illustrations*, 1838, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 508, emphases added).

May you be given the grace as you read this book to recognize the true Covenanted Reformers of our day from those "who say they are for the Covenant and are not, but are Enemies thereto, and do associate with Malignants or Sectaries," - who are, as our General Assembly proclaims, "(whatever they pretend) the reall enemies of Reformation."

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord GOD. Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye (Ezek. 18:30-32).

# Foreword

## Larry Birger

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 Cawdrey, and the Presbyterian London Ministers (at the time of the Westminster Assembly) concerning church government; John Brown of Wamphray, Robert M'Ward, and others regarding the Protester/Resolutioner controversy and its fruits (see especially an outstanding book entitled, *The Protesters Vindicated*); Alexander Shields, classic *Hind Let Loose*; James Renwick's *Informatory Vindication*; Andrew Clarkson's *Plain Reasons for Presbyterians Dissenting From the Revolution Church in Scotland*; the Reformed Presbytery's *Act, Declaration, and Testimony for the Whole of Our Covenanted Reformation* and indeed, the list could easily fill this foreword (the reader is strongly encouraged to consult the ever-growing publication list of Still Waters 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" (1 Cor. 11:19). Thus, although we are not to be contentious, contention for the sake of the 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 Thess. 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 Defence of Dissociation in the Present Circumstances" (FREE at <http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualnls/BriefDef.htm>) - 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 Schwertley, minister in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA). Schwertley's "Open Letter to Reformed Pastors, Elders, and all Brethren in Christ," was circulated via the Internet in April of last year. 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 League and 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 (*the Confession of Faith, 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." 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 Warriston, James Guthrie, Patrick Gillespie, John Brown of Wamphray, Robert M. Ward, William Guthrie, Donald Cargill, Richard Cameron, and James Renwick), 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 the Scriptures (2 Thess. 2:10-12; Rom. 1:28; etc.). 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 Cor. 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 (Jer. 6:16), and we earnestly *desire* to walk in the footsteps of the flock (Song 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 Schwertley 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, "Steelites." 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; FREE at <http://www.swrb.com/newslett/actualnls/BaconBit.htm>), 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, #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 and 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 "Covenanter Primer." His explanations of key (and ill-understood, in our day) doctrines of the Reformation are the clearest I've ever read. His numerous citations of non-Covenanter writers demonstrate that these doctrines are not at all peculiar to Covenanters, and indeed, that they are foundational to Protestantism. **That these doctrines are not understood by the pastors and people of our day is a heartbreaking 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 restingplace.... 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?" (Jer. 50:6; Hos. 4:6; Matt. 15:14; John 3:10). That Barrow'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 fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine..." (Rom. 5:20; Eph. 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 Barrow 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" disputes are dealt with, additional historical materials presented and discussed, and (as noted) Kevin Reed's Protestant contentings 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 and 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 Covenanters 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. McFeeters 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 and 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 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? (*Sketches of the Covenanters*, pp.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 smoke screen 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 (esse) of a church and its well-being (bene esse). 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, viz, the profession of the true religion [cf. Westminster Confession of Faith, 25:2, and Larger Catechism, Q. 62 - LB]. 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.* (emphasis added).

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 Renwick, Thomas M, Crie, 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 "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" ("Defense Departed"). 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 (esse [i.e. "being" - LB]). A more informed opponent would understand that the question truly revolves around whether or not it's 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 (emphases added).

Finally, Barrow tackles what has become perhaps the most oft-repeated falsehood about 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, "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 Steelites invest a similar meaning in the term 'historical testimony' that the Romanist does with his 'inspired tradition of the fathers,' ("Defense Departed"). 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 expose of Bacon's and modern "Reformed" churches, 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 ("Practically adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour 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 (i.e. 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 deny 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 Session of Bacon's church maintaining that vows constituting a presbytery were ever taken). 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 Puritan Reformed 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 no t

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 "Covenanter 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 League and 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 antichristian 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 the peace and tranquillity of Christian kingdoms and commonwealths ("The Solemn League and Covenant," introduction and conclusion).*

*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 thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.... One shall say, I am the LORD's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel.... And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee (Jer. 6:16; 50:4-5; Is. 44:5; Zech. 2:11).*

Larry Birger, Jr.  
Fishers, Indiana  
January 9, 1998

## **Dedication and Acknowledgements**

Many hours of hard work and sacrifice are required to produce and publish a response of this kind. I would like to thank the many people who graciously gave of their time and effort in assisting me in its production. First and foremost I dedicate this book to my darling wife, Fran and to my precious children Amy, Angela, Charity, Joshua and Stephanie. Their patience and encouragement, as well as their willingness to help me in whatever way possible, is a testimony of their love for God and their dedication to the cause of Christ. Furthermore, I would also like to thank the following brothers and sisters in Christ: Pastor Greg Price and his wife Lonna, Lyndon and Ginny Dohms, Dennis and Patricia Price, Reg and Shelly Barrow, Larry and Jennifer Birger, and Kevin and Lea Reed. I thank God for each of you and consider it a privilege to stand with you in the defense of the Truth. Thank you for your suggestions, proofreading, editing, and especially for your encouragement and prayers. May God bless each one of you for your kindness and sacrifice.

They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him (Psalms 126:5-6, AV).

Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart (Nehemiah 6:8, Authorized Version [AV]).

## **Introductory remarks**

We are saddened but not surprised at the publication of the article entitled, *A Defense Departed* by Richard Bacon. We are desirous to secure attention to Mr. Bacon's thoughts on our differences and will fully and freely refer to all he has written whenever this discussion renders it necessary. I must, at the outset, express my regret that Mr. Bacon's disparaging comments and attempts at ridicule, not less than his scandalous accusations of error, are so often and dogmatically repeated in his writings. Since his comments are directed against what we are assured is the truth of God, we have no alternative but to dispute them in a manner equally decided.

My constant hope was that the differences between the doctrine and practice taught by Mr. Bacon and ourselves might have been lessened by a kindly conducted and thorough discussion, comparing facts and clearly demonstrating principles. That hope, however, was severely diminished on the appearance of Mr. Bacon's late work. Were the subject essentially of less importance than it is, this writer would much prefer to pursue it no farther and simply allow the able and faithful writers of the Covenanted Reformation to speak for themselves. One only need consult the books written by our covenanted forefathers (available through Still Waters Revival Books [SWRB]) to see readily and plainly that the many assertions and representations made by Mr. Bacon in his *Defense Departed* are misleading and unreliable.

George Gillespie, Scottish Commissioner to the Westminster Assembly, judiciously emphasises this writer's sentiments when he says:

I have often and heartily wished that I might not be distracted by, nor engaged into, polemic writings, of which the world is too full already, and from which many more learned and idoneous [i.e. suitable - GB] have abstained; and I did, accordingly, resolve that in this controversial age, I should be slow to write, swift to read and learn (George Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, 1646, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications 1985, p. xv).

Nevertheless, to succumb to Mr. Bacon's assumptions and accusations, so utterly unfounded and yet so serious, would be a violation of the ninth commandment, where we are forbidden to keep silent in a just cause or to hold our peace when iniquity calls for either a reproof from ourselves, or complaint to others (cf. *Larger Catechism* # 145). To allow Mr. Bacon's misrepresentations to go unanswered would lead the Church of Jesus Christ to believe that he has spoken truly and faithfully. To allow his unseasonable appearing and pleading for an evil cause to stumble the faithful would allow the inference that we are indifferent to the interests of both the truth and the Church of Jesus Christ. I submit that Mr. Bacon has spoken falsely and unfaithfully regarding what we believe to be God's undoubted truth. I contend that Mr. Bacon has falsely and unfaithfully represented our views, and consequently the views of the best men of the First and Second Reformations. I ask our readers to carefully consider what is written in this response and to critically evaluate whether our conclusions and representations are true. If it be, as I affirm, that it is the truth of God which Mr. Bacon is striving to suppress, then I pray that God will allow him and all readers to pay close attention to what is said in these pages. Unless he speedily repents, his iniquity, offence and every wanton assault will recoil upon his own head, leaving him in a worse position than when he started. He who would dare speak in the name of the Lord Jesus while endeavouring, through abuse, to suppress evidence and misrepresent His cause, will be called to answer to a far more potent adversary than I.

For the Lord GOD will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed (Isaiah 50:7, AV).

**The Puritan Reformed Church considers Mr. Bacon an erring and disorderly brother in the Lord.**

Let not the reader think by my accusations and warnings, that I consider Mr. Bacon anything other than an erring and disorderly brother. When a brother takes it upon himself to write an article publicly misrepresenting the truth of God and the belief of the covenanted remnant, we are duty bound to withstand him to the face and warn him to repent. I desire to admonish Mr. Bacon in the same spirit that Paul admonished Peter: not as an enemy but as a disorderly brother; not desiring continued dissociation, but commanded to continue dissociated as long as the offence is obstinately and wilfully maintained.

But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews (Galatians 2:14, AV)?

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us (2 Thessalonians 3:6, AV).

When our Lord Jesus rebuked the Apostle Peter, he did so in love and to the end that Peter might be restored in the truth.

But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me, Satan: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men (Mark 8:33, AV).

**The Puritan Reformed Church desires Mr. Bacon's correction.**

In Mark 8:33 our Lord Jesus exemplifies His faithful love for the Apostle Peter as he demonstrates the use of plain speech in the correction and restoration of a true son. My entire response to Mr. Bacon is to be interpreted in this light. I will endeavour to use language appropriate to the charges advanced and sins committed, while at the same time, humbly entreating the Lord to keep us from exacting personal vengeance. I mourn not only for the sins of this land, but also for our own shortcomings which are too often revealed in the heat of debate. I call upon our Great Shepherd to moderate my tongue, to the end that I may through careful and thoughtful expression effect edification and reconciliation as I testify throughout this discourse. I am not responding to vindicate our church so much as I am responding to the misrepresentation of Mr. Bacon upon the cause of God and Truth itself. In the words of the godly martyr James Renwick I say, "Let us be lions in God's cause and lambs in our own" (W. H. Carlsaw, *The Life and Letters of James Renwick*, 1893, SWRB bound photocopy reprint, 1997, p. 35).

**The format of this response.**

My format will be simple and direct. Mr. Bacon's general misrepresentations will be followed by a rebuttal and a call to repentance. Many of Mr. Bacon's statements are of such a preposterous nature that I judge them to be a sinful distortion of the facts and no less than an emotional attempt to bias the sincere reader by the use of irrelevant debating tactics. While some may be persuaded by such sophistry, I am hopeful of better things regarding our present readers.

He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him (Proverbs 18:17, AV).

**Mr. Bacon has misstated the issues.**

The logical fallacy of irrelevant thesis is an argument in which **an attempt is made to prove a conclusion that is not the one at issue**. This fallacy assumes the form of an argument that, while seeming to refute another's argument, actually advances a conclusion different from the one at issue in the other's argument... The fallacy of irrelevant thesis derives its persuasive power from the fact that it often does prove a conclusion or thesis (though not the one at issue) (S. Morris Engel, *With Good Reason*, p. 97, emphases added).

Whether Mr. Bacon simply does not understand the issues or whether he understands the issues all too clearly and chooses not to deal with them, I cannot say. My concern is that he has fundamentally failed to address the most relevant questions and consequently has directed his energies to the wrong issues.

Others have fallen into the same snare. As a result, our true position has been so grossly misrepresented that we are concerned that sincere seekers of truth may actually judge us based upon the misrepresentations set forth by Mr. Bacon, Mr. Schwertley, or Chris Coldwell, and not upon the plain and repeated published facts. Rather than allowing these men and others to continue in the direction of opposing things we do not maintain, which is obviously unproductive and destructive to sound faith and good manners, I was commissioned by the Session of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton (PRCE) to defend our doctrine in these controverted areas. We hope that the forthcoming pages will be helpful in promoting a more careful and accurate study of the issues at hand, and we pray that our God and Father will by these efforts reduce the amount of sinful rhetoric cultivated from either side of the question. While it may not be reasonable to expect agreement upon all controverted points, I do believe it is necessary to use any and **all lawful** means to endeavor to effect a more favourable outcome. This is certainly in accord with the following sentiments penned by John Calvin.

I wish it could be brought about, that men of learning and dignity from the principal churches might have a meeting; and, after a careful discussion of the several points of faith, might hand down to posterity the doctrine of the scripture, settled by their common judgment. But amongst the greatest evils of our age, this also is to be reckoned, that our churches are so distracted one from another, that human society [fellowship - GB] scarcely flourishes amongst us; much less that holy communion of the members of Christ, which all profess in words, and few sincerely cultivate in fact. Thus it happens, that the body of the church, by the dissipation of its members, lies torn and mangled. As to myself, were I like to be of any service, I should not hesitate to cross the seas for that purpose. . . . Now, when the object is to obtain such an agreement of learned men upon strict scriptural principles, as may accomplish a union of churches in other respects widely asunder, I do not think it lawful for me to decline any labours or troubles (John Anderson, *Alexander and Rufus*, 1862, Still Waters Revival Books reprint, 1997, p. 151).

For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease (Job 14:7, AV).

## **Misrepresentation #1: Mr. Bacon represents our dispute as a "tempest in a teapot."**

Mr. Bacon's opening attempt to reduce the importance of these questions, along with their far reaching implications, to the realm of, "a tempest in a teapot," is ridicule unworthy of even the most base opponent. The inherent self-contradiction of downplaying the issue while at the same time writing such lengthy public testimony against the PRCE is too notable to be ignored. Nevertheless, I respond by reminding the reader that our martyred forefathers were willing to shed their blood for this "tempest in a teapot." Our covenanted brothers and sisters were starved, raped, tortured, and murdered over this so-called, "tempest in a teapot."

### **Mr. Bacon appeals to the majority.**

Mr. Bacon states,

The understanding of virtually every other scholar, both Scottish and American, would have to be wrong in order for Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton to be correct (*Defense Departed*).

Though Mr. Bacon may be somewhat comforted that, "many will regard" this dispute to be little else than a "tempest in a teapot," or that "every other scholar would have to be wrong," I am persuaded by the sad history of mankind that the masses are rarely correct. Such appeals invite people's thoughtless acceptance to ideas that are simply irrelevant to the question. Shall we, as Mr. Bacon prompts, believe that these things are relatively insignificant simply because "many people" or "every scholar" considers them relatively insignificant? Such rhetoric pretends to fall in with the crowd in hope of appealing to an already strong prejudice, and thus we must be reminded such appeals do not constitute reasonable evidence. The godly martyrs of Scotland in the, "Killing Times," were well aware of the issues that Mr. Bacon is downplaying, and they bore the brunt of the same logical fallacies employed against them.

David Hackston, honored martyr of Christ died, July 30, 1680, amid great torture and suffering. As he describes the trials he faced before the Privy Council he speaks of the tactics used by his persecutors.

It was cast up to me both at the council and here, that here were not two hundred in the nation to own our cause. I answered, at both times, that the cause of Christ had been often owned by fewer (David Hackston, *A Cloud of Witnesses*, Sprinkle Publications, reprinted 1989, p. 50).

Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom (Luke 12:32, AV).

O shame on you, Mr. Bacon, for your opening comments! Shame upon anyone who does not regard the testimony of our covenanted martyrs as noble, honourable and glorifying to God. Shame upon anyone who affirms these questions to be of little significance upon the Church of Jesus Christ. If the violence of bloodthirsty persecutors will not change the minds of the martyrs, then appealing to the majority and downplaying the issues over

which these faithful servants suffered and died will do nothing to move us out of the bloodstained path of the footsteps of the flock. Rather, such intemperate sentiments will serve only to expose those who set them forth to the charge of being ignorant of history and disrespectful to the memory of the martyrs who died for the Covenanted cause.

**Mr. Bacon condemns the Covenanter martyrs as being too rigid, and implies that the Covenanters strayed from the doctrines of Second Reformation Presbyterianism.**

Mr. Bacon states:

...the remainder of this introduction to the Steelite controversy will form a Defense of historic, second reformation Presbyterianism against the rigidity of the strict covenanter position (*Defense Departed*).

In his *Defense Departed* Mr. Bacon wishes to pit the doctrine of the Second Reformation against the doctrine of the Covenanters. In so doing he exposes his true sentiments by accusing the Covenanters, and especially their martyrs, of holding too rigidly to their principles. Mr. Bacon's own words indicate that the remainder of his introduction is a formal condemnation of the principles for which these martyrs died. While Mr. Bacon would attempt to lead us to believe that only David Steele and a small handful of others have historically held the position he opposes, I contend that this is far from the case. Matthew Hutchison explains,

Some imagine that the United Societies [the faithful Covenanters - GB] embraced only an insignificant number of individuals. Enemies did their best to create the impression at the time [cf. Hackston quote above - GB]; and some historians have proceeded on the assumption of its truth. **The facts of the case point to a different conclusion**, though it is impossible to give exact numbers. This we know, on the authority of Gordon of Earlston, that in 1683 there were eighty societies representing an aggregate of 7000 members exclusive of women. That the numbers did not diminish during the next five years, notwithstanding the fierce persecution, seems evident from the fact, that at the Revolution they mustered 9000 strong on Douglas Moor: a regiment was raised among them in a few days, and another could easily have been obtained had it been wanted. **As the Societies were confined to southern Scotland, it is manifest that they must have embraced no inconsiderable portion of the population** (Matthew Hutchison, *The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland*, 1893, Still Waters Revival Books reprint, 1997, p. 63, emphases added).

Those well acquainted with history and familiar with the issues surrounding the Covenanted Reformation must not allow Mr. Bacon to paint such an unreliable portrait of our covenanted forefathers. Will Mr. Bacon continue to pretend to fly his Blue Banner after downplaying the issues that led to their suffering? Why pretend any longer? The true Blue Banner flies in the face of Mr. Bacon as he disputes against the rigidity of those who died for Christ's Crown and Covenant. His pretence in upholding its colors has now been exposed by the words of his own mouth. While Mr. Bacon's pretended Blue Banner has been forever blackened, we are comforted in knowing that his pretence will never affect our grateful remembrance of the authentic blood-stained banner of the Covenanted faithful.

Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah (Psalms 60:4, AV).

**This is a pouring of contempt upon our brethren.**

The real issues at stake are of the highest concern to any Christian desirous of bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Mr. Bacon's labelling of this dispute, "a tempest in a teapot," is to us a pouring of contempt upon our brethren, and we cannot let it pass without publicly displaying our indignation at such an attack. J. C. McFeeters paints a vivid picture of this so-called "tempest in a teapot" as he describes the horrifying statistics of the twenty-eight year persecution suffered by the Covenanted remnant.

The Fathers have not been forgotten; yea they are still highly esteemed for their heroic struggle, by which every son and daughter has a birthright to the richest inheritance of Christian liberty on earth. The persecution lasted twenty eight years, with few "blinks" to take the chill of horror out of the air. During this time, 18,000 persons, it is said, suffered death, or utmost hardships, for their faith in Jesus Christ. Of this number, 7,000 went into voluntary banishment; 2500 were shipped to distant lands; 800 were outlawed; 680 were killed in battle, or died of their wounds; 500 were murdered in cold blood; 362 were, by form of law executed. We have no account of the number that perished in shipwrecks, or succumbed to the horrors of transportation; nor of hundreds that were shot at sight by the soldiers who ravaged the country for years; nor of the thousands who wasted away through cold, hunger, and exposure in the mountains and moors. Gloomy caves, dripping moss hags, and unmarked graves, were asylums of mercy to multitudes, who are without any earthly record; but their names are written in heaven. Truly Scotland has been consecrated to the Lord. The blood of the martyrs has watered her heather, crimsoned her streams, stained her streets, and bedewed her fields. Scotland is the Lord's. **The blood means much** (J. C. McFeeters, *Sketches of the Covenanters*, 1913, SWRB bound photocopy reprint, 1996, pp. 395-396, emphases added).

The blood of the martyrs imposes obligations upon posterity from generation to generation. The martyrs deeply felt their responsibility for the Church, her purity, her 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 and His House; there they stood for the royal rights of Jesus and the honour 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 and necessarily left it unfinished. The victory was assured, though not in sight. The death stricken hands reached the bloodstained 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 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? (J. C. McFeeters, *Sketches of the Covenanters*, 1913, SWRB bound photocopy, 1996, pp. 402-403, emphases added).

Does the reader agree with Mr. Bacon? Is this really the "tempest in a teapot," to which he alludes? The blood of the martyrs is still the seed of the church, and we cannot sit idly by while Mr. Bacon attempts to mislead his readers to believe that the PRCE is fighting for a cause different from that of the glorious martyrs described above. Mr. Bacon may want to believe that we are saying something different from those champions of the faith, but we shall soon see that our cause is identical to the martyrs of Scotland and the best reformers of the First and Second Reformations.

If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself: but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it (Proverbs 9:12, AV).

Those who would label us with such names as "Cameronians" or "Steelites" would do well to remember their faithful contendings, and to honour the blood of the martyrs of Jesus Christ. Dear reader, ask yourself as you read the following account, whether you really want to testify against Richard Cameron as Mr. Bacon has.

...he [Richard Cameron - GB] went over to Holland in the year of 1678, not knowing what work the Lord had for him there; where he conversed with Mr. M'Ward [Robert McWard - GB] and others of the banished Worthies. In his private conversation and exercise in families, but especially by his public sermon in the Scots Kirk at Rotterdam, he was most refreshing unto many souls. He dwelt mostly upon conversion work, from that text, Matt. 11:28: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;" which was most satisfying and agreeable to Mr. M'Ward and Mr. Brown [John Brown of Wamphray - GB], and others who had been informed by the Indulged, and those of their persuasion, that he could preach nothing but babble against the Indulgence, cess paying, etc. Here he touched upon none of these things, except in prayer when lamenting over the deplorable case of Scotland by means of defection and tyranny. About this time Mr. M'Ward said to him, "Richard the public standard has now fallen in Scotland; and, if I know anything of the mind of the Lord, ye are called to undergo your trials [ordination exam - GB] before us, to go home, and lift the fallen standard, and display it publicly before the whole world. But before you put your hand to it, ye shall go to as many field ministers as ye can find, and give them your hearty invitation to go with you; and if they will not go, go alone, and the Lord will go with you."

Accordingly he was ordained by Mr. M'Ward, Mr. Brown, and Roleman, a famous Dutch divine. When their hands were lifted up from his [Richard Cameron's - GB] head, Mr. M'Ward continued this still and cried out, "Behold all ye beholders, here is the head of a faithful minister and servant of Jesus Christ, **who shall lose the same for his master's interest**, and it shall be set up before sun and moon, in the

view of the world." (John Howie, *The Scots Worthies*, 1781, SWRB reprint, p. 423, emphases added).

On July 22, 1680, faithful Richard Cameron was martyred in Airmoss. His head and hands cut off and taken to Edinburgh, just as Robert M'Ward had spoken. Before his murderers committed the barbarous act of publicly displaying his head and hands upon the Netherbow Port, they first had one further act of antichristian cruelty to enact.

His father being in prison for the same cause, they carried them [Cameron's head and hands - GB] to him, to add grief unto his former sorrow, and inquired at him if he knew them. Taking his son's head and hands which were very fair - being a man of fair complexion like himself - he kissed them, and said, "I know - I know them; they are my son's - my own dear son's. It is the Lord - good is the will of the Lord, who cannot wrong me nor mine, but hath made goodness and mercy to follow us all our days." After which, by order of the Council, **his head was fixed upon the Netherbow Port, and his hands beside it with the fingers upward.** (John Howie, *The Scots Worthies*, 1781, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 428-429, emphases added).

Instead of downplaying this dispute and appealing to the majority, Mr. Bacon should admit that he is not simply fighting against the principles of David Steele alone. A careful student of church history will easily see through Mr. Bacon's attempts to isolate Pastor Steele from his godly predecessors. Those predisposed to check out the facts will readily see the folly of Mr. Bacon's representations. One simply needs to take the time to read what Covenanters like David Steele believed and practised in order to observe that they were simply upholding the historic testimony of the faithful men who preceded them. If Mr. Bacon would have met face to face with us when we asked him to (see Appendix C), perhaps we could have helped him understand these issues with more clarity.

Observing that Mr. Bacon favours an appeal to the multitude, we will indulge him by appealing to a greater multitude; one, I might add, that is scriptural and not arbitrary. First we appeal our case between Mr. Bacon and ourselves to the first free and lawful General Assembly of Canada and we ask them to judge this matter between us. Upon judging our case, we ask that they take our concerns to the first free and lawful General Assembly of the United States and have our concerns brought to the table. Until this is accomplished (or Mr. Bacon repents) we resort to our only other recourse - seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, we appeal unto, "mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant" (Hebrews 12: 22-24, AV).

Let Dick Bacon, David Seekamp, Brian Schwertly, and Chris Coldwell speak plainly. Was Richard Cameron a faithful minister or a heretical schismatic? Donald Cargill? James Renwick? Were their disputes a "tempest in a teapot" as well? Were they martyred for holding too strictly to their principles? The words of Mr. Bacon condemn these faithful martyrs as schismatic and in so doing he scorns those who agree with these true churches and faithful ministers. **He accuses us of immoderate speech!** O dear brother, I speak this to your shame! You accuse us of condemning faithful ministers and true churches? Let the whole world consider who you are condemning when you downplay the importance of the

issues for which these martyrs suffered and died. This dispute is much more than a "tempest in a teapot" and our prayer is that you will repent of your shameful minimizing of these issues.

I close this section with a quote from James Renwick, faithful martyr of our Lord Jesus.

Now upon this very comprehensive ground, **we withdraw not only from gross heretics**, and sectarians, and malignant prelatists.... **But in this broken and declining state, even from many Presbyterian Ministers who have overturned a great part of our testimony...** which has been signally sealed by the blood of many Martyrs who laying down their lives for this Testimony have been singularly countenanced of the Lord: yet we say, by many of our ministers this in a great measure has been deserted and perverted, by their condemning the Martyrs that died for it, as well as us who have desired to witness for it... (James Renwick, *An Informatory Vindication*, 1687, SWRB bound photocopy reprint, 1997, pp. 75-76, emphases added).

Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O LORD (Psalms 83:16, AV).

## **Misrepresentation #2: The Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton (PRCE) denounces true churches and maintains that they are the only duly constituted Church upon the face of the earth.**

In his *Defense Departed* Mr. Bacon asserts,

The Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton session do not believe themselves compelled to answer in any church court, for they have, in their exaggerated opinion, the only truly constituted church court to be found upon the face of the earth today (see letter of Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton Clerk of Session and Brian Schwertley's warning) (*Defense Departed*).

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 (*Defense Departed*).

### **Mr. Bacon's charges are scandalously unqualified.**

When one reads such unqualified statements as, "they have, in their exaggerated opinion, the only truly constituted church court to be found upon the face of the earth today," or, "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," often there is a very natural inclination to an intensely negative response. This language represents us as thinking very highly of ourselves and very poorly of others, and is designed to lead the injudicious reader to substitute passion for reasoned judgment. This accomplished, it is then very unlikely that the reader will notice that the statements of Mr. Bacon are entirely unqualified. 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. These unqualified statements are a telling example of what Mr. Bacon has asked the public to digest. By not defining the terms in his accusations he has asked his readers to swallow his unannounced assumptions with a certain degree of implicit faith. Because of Mr. Bacon's serious disregard for these relevant qualifications and because some may have been beguiled into believing this false report concerning us, I believe it would be most prudent to first inform the reader of our disposition toward those brethren who disagree with us. Following that, I will proceed with a direct response to these erroneous charges.

### **Our disposition toward those who disagree with us.**

On the 7th of May , 1741, the Mount Herrick Declaration was published after receiving sanction from the correspondences and General Meeting of the United Societies. The spirit of our covenanted brethren echoes our own sentiments and disposition toward those of our brethren who differ from us.

We declare our esteem of and love for all the godly in these lands, who have the root of the matter in them, and love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, who are studying godliness and have sad hearts for the tokens of God's sad displeasure, and the sins and abominations procuring the same, **notwithstanding of their not being of the same sentiments and mind with us as to some parts of our testimony and practice** (Matthew Hutchison, *The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland*, 1893, Still Waters Revival Books reprint, 1997, p. 175, emphases added).

We have neither stated nor do we believe that those who profess the true religion and their children (the visible church universal) are only those who agree with us on every point of doctrine or practice. We do, however, fully concur with our Confession of Faith which states,

Saints by profession, are bound to maintain an holy fellowship and communion in the worship of God, and in performing such other spiritual services as tend to their mutual edification; as also in relieving each other in outward things, according to their several abilities and necessities. Which communion, as God offereth opportunity, is to be extended unto all those who, in every place, call upon the name of the Lord Jesus (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 26:2).

In the universal visible church there are many true sons and daughters of God who have never even considered some of the questions we are now disputing. We fully concur with Pastor David Steele when he says,

Yes, unto them which believe Christ is precious; and **I never question that he is so to multitudes who never heard of the British Covenants**; but I grieve when these are lightly called the "old covenants" by those under the obligation of them... (David Steele, *Reminiscences*, 1883, Still Waters Revival Books reprint, 1997, p. 262, emphases added).

We, in the PRCE, love all the brethren who will not obstinately and wilfully speak or act contrary to the truth of God's word, with an approving love that is desirous of intimate Christian communion. We also love those who call themselves brethren, who wilfully and obstinately speak or act contrary to the truly professed religion, with a love of benevolence that is desirous of their correction and restoration to the truth. We love all men, as they are created in God's image, with a love of benevolence, desiring their regeneration and conversion in Christ by the grace of God.

We have no desire to condemn the innocent or acquit the guilty and so, according to God's holy will, we must make every attempt to speak the truth in love. While we endeavour to steer clear of indiscriminate censure of those guilty of defection, we at all times must pray for the resolve and perseverance to speak clearly against the sins of the day. Recognising that all beloved believers have one and the same God and Father, we must also, at the same time, never become slack in distinguishing between truth and heresy in doctrine, and faithfulness and defection in practice. If, for the sake of peace, we are indifferent to heresy, or if, out of a false sense of love, we fail to correct the scandalous, we directly dishonour our Saviour and suffer our neighbour to remain either ignorantly or obstinately in sin. It is simply because we love both our Saviour and our brethren that we have adopted the position of our faithful forefathers as it is agreeable to the alone infallible

standard of God's Word.

Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD (Leviticus 19:17,18, AV).

All saints that are united to Jesus Christ their head, by his Spirit and by faith, have fellowship with him in his graces, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as to conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 26:1).

This is the temper of earnest Christians who appreciate the gift of God in others. When our brethren speak truly, act faithfully, and make righteous rulings, we rejoice in the truth. When a credible Christian profession is joined with faithful contending, we thank God for his mercy upon His children. Undeniably, Mr. Bacon's heated and unwarranted attacks have quenched the expression of love once shared by his congregation and ours and it is my hope that a way can be found to overcome this obstacle. We pray that God would bring to the remembrance of all contending parties, that which we once enjoyed in each other, and that even through these disagreements God would grant us the grace to hold out hope for reconciliation.

Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life (Proverbs 13:12, AV).

Though the PRCE is presently isolated from many independent congregations and denominations (though not from the universal visible church), we long for the communion and fellowship that only true likeminded Christian unity can produce. We long for the day of reconciliation and agreement; a day when our present divisions will be healed and our protests will become unnecessary. Our prayer and our contending is for a Covenanted Protestant unity of National Presbyterian Churches who would work together to rule the universal visible Church of Christ in truth, and we believe that this cause is most consistent with the biblical love of our triune God toward mankind.

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORDS house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it (Isaiah 2:2, AV).

I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth (Isaiah 62:6-7, AV).

Please do not be fooled by Mr. Bacon's misrepresentations. Our love for the brethren is both sincere and genuine. Please judge us according to our own words and not according to the words and motives falsely imputed to us by Mr. Bacon and others.

Having cleared our disposition toward others I will now proceed directly to the issue at

hand. Does the PRCE denounce true churches and maintain that it is the only duly constituted church upon the face of the earth?

### **Introductory remarks.**

Unless one is so naive as to think that every man who calls himself a minister is truly a minister of Christ, or that every group of people that call themselves a church is actually a true church, then one is left to discern which ministers and churches are true and which are false. Repeatedly, our Lord warned the church to beware of wolves in sheep's clothing and schismatic heretics who would come into the church of God to deceive the simple and to cause division. To testify openly against error is a moral and perpetual obligation binding upon all faithful churches and ministers. In so doing they are fulfilling their primary function as disciples of Christ by witnessing for the truth and contending against error. As one approaches this delicate topic it becomes clear even at the most early stages of investigation that sweeping generalizations must give way to careful and precise distinctions.

### **The true state of the question.**

Seeing that the PRCE has been charged with denouncing true churches and claiming to be the world's only truly constituted church, an obvious question arises - what does Mr. Bacon mean by **true churches or truly constituted churches**? What distinctions, if any, is he making when he uses these terms? Does he mean that we are denouncing true churches as to their essence or **being**, or does he mean we are denouncing true churches as to their **well-being**? Is he saying that we profess to be the only Christian church in the world, or is he charging us with something else?

Mr. Bacon's only serious attempt at qualification appears when he quotes the eighteenth chapter of the 1560 *Scottish Confession of Faith* and one sentence from Samuel Rutherford's, *The Due Right of Presbyteries*. He concludes from these two quotations that, "Rutherford did not leave us to guess if he understood the true church as the 1560 Scots Confession understood it or if he agreed with the Steelites." Hereby he implies that the PRCE's understanding of the true church differs significantly from that of Rutherford and the 1560 *Scottish Confession of Faith*. To clear up Mr. Bacon's ambiguity and error, I intend to prove, from the above mentioned quotation, that Samuel Rutherford was talking about a true church as to its **being**, while the 1560 *Scottish Confession of Faith* was talking about a true church as to its **well-being**. Next, I intend to prove that each of these sources, taken in their proper context, agree precisely with the doctrine of the PRCE. Please note carefully: Mr. Bacon's primary assumption and error is exhibited when he asserts that the church of Christ **essentially** considered is to be defined by three marks, viz., the true preaching of the Word, the right administration of the sacraments and ecclesiastical discipline uprightly administered. I contend that the true visible Church of Christ **essentially** considered is to be defined by one single mark, viz., the profession of the true religion. Much, therefore, depends upon who is correct in answering the following question: what marks are essential to the **being** of the visible church? When Mr. Bacon's error in answering this question is exposed, his one foundation stone (concerning the visible church) is removed, and his whole house of misrepresentations comes tumbling down.

## **The doctrinal position of the PRCE regarding the being and well-being of the Church as it relates to the term true church.**

One mark alone is sufficient to constitute an essentially true visible church - the profession of the true religion. We use this mark to distinguish between a Christian church and a non-Christian church.

There is an important distinction to be made between the being (*esse*) of a church and its well-being (*bene esse*). 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.

James Bannerman explains:

We recognize this distinction every day in regard to a Christian man; and it is no less to be recognized in its application to Christian society. There is many a doctrine and truth of revelation, in regard to which a man may err without ceasing on that account to be a Christian man; and there may be many a duty recognized in Scripture as binding upon all, in which he may be totally deficient without forfeiting his Christianity. In other words, there is much in doctrine and duty, in faith and practice, necessary to the perfection of a believer, which is not necessary to the existence of a believer as such; and so it is with a Christian Church. What is essential to its **existence** as a Church is something very different from what is essential to its **perfection** as a church.... This distinction is of considerable value, and not difficult, under the teaching of Scripture, to be applied. We read in Scripture that the Christian Church is, "the pillar and ground of the truth," and that, "for this cause the Son of God himself came, that he might bear witness to the truth." In other words, we learn that the very object for which the Church of Christ was established on the earth was to declare and uphold the truth.... **Judging then by this first test, we are warranted in saying, that to hold and to preach the true faith or doctrine of Christ is the only sure and infallible note or mark of the Christian Church, because this is the one thing for the sake of which a Church of Christ has been instituted on earth. A true faith makes a true church and a corrupt faith a corrupt church: and should it at any time apostatize from the true faith altogether, it would by the very act, cease to be a Church of Christ in any sense at all. The Church was established for the sake of the truth and not the truth for the sake of the church....** For this thing then the Church of Christ was instituted; and this thing, or the declaration of the truth, must therefore be, in its nature and importance, paramount to the church itself. Again we read in Scripture that Christ, " 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." In other words we learn that ordinances and office bearers have been established for the object of promoting the **well-being** and edification of the Church. These things then [the ordinances and the ministry - GB], unlike the former [the truth - GB], were instituted for the sake of the Church and not the Church for the sake of them; and these things [the ordinances and the ministry - GB] therefore, must be, in their nature and importance, subordinate to the Church (James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, Vol. 1, 1869, SWRB reprint, 1991, pp. 56-59, emphases added).

**The Westminster Confession of Faith (25:2) defines an essentially true church as having one mark, viz., the profession of the true religion.**

The idea that there is one mark that alone distinguishes the **being** of a church from its **well-being** is clearly and plainly taught in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, where it states,

The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel (not confined to one nation as before under the law), **consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion**, together with their children; and is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ; the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 25:2, emphases added).

Likewise the Larger Catechism, Question 62:

Q. What is the visible church?

Answer: The visible church is a society made up of all such as in all ages and places of the world do profess the true religion, and of their children.

Notice that the only mark mentioned as necessary for the existence or "being" of a true visible church is, "the profession of the true religion." According to the Westminster Divines this is the single mark that distinguishes Christian churches from Pagan churches. By using this mark we can determine whether a body of people meeting together for worship are to be considered "Christian" in any sense. The Reformers, by applying this single mark to the Roman Catholic Church, called her a true church (as to essence or being), and correctly distinguished her from the Turks or Pagans.

For example, commenting on Jeremiah 15:16, John Calvin writes:

The name of God is indeed called indiscriminately on all, who are deemed his people. As it was formerly given to the whole seed of Abraham, so it is at this day conferred on all who are consecrated to his name by holy baptism, and who boast themselves to be Christians and the sons of the Church; and this belongs even to the Papists (*Calvin's Commentaries*, 1539 Latin, Baker Book House English reprint [1850] 1993, Vol. 9, p. 285).

Another excellent reformed scholar, Francis Turretin, defines the essentially true church (*esse*) as having one mark, viz., the profession of Christianity and gospel truth.

The Church of Rome can be regarded under a twofold view (*schesei*); either as it is Christian, with regard to the profession of Christianity and of Gospel truth which it retains; or Papal, with regard to subjection to the pope, and corruptions and capital errors (in faith as well as morals) which she has mingled with and built upon those truths besides and contrary to the Word of God. We can speak of it in different ways. In the former respect, we do not deny that there is some truth in it; but in the latter (under which it is regarded here) we deny it can be called Christian and Apostolic, but Antichristian and Apostate (Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1696 Latin, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing English translation, 1997, Vol. 3, p. 121).

Here the Church of Rome (which retains the single mark: a profession of gospel truth) is designated a true church when compared to Pagans. Turretin, like Calvin, is saying that in the Roman Catholic Church there remains a possibility of salvation which is not true in a Pagan group, and in this sense he is willing to call them a Christian church, a true church essential, or a truly constituted church. On the other hand Turretin makes it clear that when he considers the Catholic Church as **Papal** he designates her a false church and Antichristian. **Notice here, that by distinguishing between the being and well-being of the Church of Rome Turretin calls them a true church (as to being) and a false church (as to well-being) at the same time.** It is significant to recognize this point, which to some seems like a contradiction throughout the writings of the Reformers. A true church can, at the same time, be considered true in one sense while false in another. In this case Turretin is saying that though the Romish church is essentially Christian (*esse*) it has strayed so far from its Christian foundation that it must be called false (*bene esse*).

Samuel Rutherford defines the essentially true church as having only one mark, viz., the profession of the truth and doctrine of godliness.

A visible profession of the Truth and Doctrine of godliness, is that which essentially constitutes a visible church, and every member of the visible church." (Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries*, 1644, SWRB reprint, 1995, p. 251).

To properly examine what Samuel Rutherford meant by this statement we must do more than Mr. Bacon when he simply cites one quote and then boldly asserts that Rutherford agrees with him. Mr. Bacon has asked us to believe that Rutherford is in total agreement with the eighteenth chapter of the *Scottish Confession of Faith* while the so-called Steelites are in disagreement with both Rutherford and the *Confession*. I believe and will establish that Samuel Rutherford was in agreement with the 1560 *Scottish Confession of Faith*, but for very different reasons than Mr. Bacon sets forth. Furthermore, I will demonstrate that he has grossly erred regarding his doctrine of the Church **primarily because he does not understand the Reformers' distinction between the being and the well-being of the church.** Consequently, this particular error will be shown to be the foundation of the destructive misrepresentations set forth in his *Defense Departed*. Let's begin with what Rutherford and others do **NOT** mean when they teach that "A visible profession of Truth and Doctrine of Godliness is that which essentially constitutes a visible church."

1. Rutherford shows that actual saving faith is **not** necessary to the **essence** or **being** of a

true visible church.

That which is unseen is the form and essence of an invisible church, and that which is visible must be the essential form of a visible church (Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries*, 1644, SWRB bound photocopy reprint, 1995, p. 242). And whereas our Divines say, that the church is invisible, because faith which is the specific and constitutive form of the Church is invisible, and known only to God the searcher of hearts (Samuel Rutherford, *Survey of the Survey of that Summe of Church Discipline*, 1658, SWRB bound photocopy reprint, 1997, p. 418)

2. Ministers, Elders and Deacons are **not** necessary to the **essence** or **being** of a true visible church.

In 1646 an anonymous work entitled *Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici* or *The Divine Right of Church Government* was published. Its authorship is generally attributed to either Westminster Divines themselves (likely the London Covenanted Presbyterians), or those who closely sympathised with them. It is ironic that this book refutes its own publisher (Naphtali Press) on this vital point, the very crux of the controversy!

There are degrees of necessity; **some things are absolutely necessary to the being of a church**, as matter and form, viz., visible saints, and a due profession of faith, and obedience to Christ, according to the gospel. **Thus it is possible a church may be, and yet want both deacons, elders, and pastors too, yea, and word and sacraments for a time: some things are only respectively necessary to the well-being of a church**; thus officers are necessary, yet some more than others, without which the church is lame, defective, and miserably imperfect (*The Divine Right of Church Government, Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici*, ed. by Thos. Henderson, 1844 edition, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 121; see also Naphtali Press edition, p. 123, emphases added).

3. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are **not** necessary to the **essence** or **being** of a true visible church.

Abraham called with his house to leave idolatry, obeyed the calling, building an altar to the Lord (Gen 12:1-18) professes and teaches as a Prophet the doctrine of the covenant, and God appearing revealed the Gospel unto him (Gen 12:1-3, Gen 15:4-7) and so he and his house are a visible church, when, not while many years after and until he was ninety and nine, the seal of circumcision was ordained and given to him and his house, Gen 17:1-3. (Samuel Rutherford, *Survey of the Survey of that Summe of Church Discipline*, 1658, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 17).  
**...and the church is a true visible church in the wilderness... which yet wanted [lacked - GB] circumcision and the passover forty years in the wilderness** (Josh. 5:5-7), this proves that there is a true visible church, where Christ is, and yet wanteth the ordinary seals, Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Samuel Rutherford, *Survey of the Survey of that Summe of Church Discipline*, 1658, p. 17, emphases added).

4. Church discipline is **not** necessary to the **essence** or **being** of a true visible church.  
**But a church may retain the essence and being of a visible church, and yet**

**have no discipline in actual use, or little**, and though want [lack - GB] of discipline do leaven a church, yet it does not (as Robinson says) evert the nature thereof, and turn it into Babylon and a den of dragons (Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries*, 1644, SWRB bound photocopy reprint, 1995, p. 288, emphases added).

To summarize, Rutherford and others do not make actual saving faith, ministry, sacraments or church discipline necessary to the existence of a true church essentially considered. Why? Because saving faith is the essence of the invisible church and does not pertain to the definition of the true visible church, and because ministry, sacraments and discipline, while necessary and profitable for the **well-being** of the church are not necessary to its **existence** or **being**. Seeing that Rutherford removes all of these things from his definition of an essentially true church, what is left to include? One mark, and one mark alone is necessary to the definition of a true church (*esse*), viz., profession of the truth.

A visible profession of the Truth and Doctrine of godliness, is that which **essentially** constitutes a visible church, and every member of the visible church (*The Due Right of Presbyteries*, 1644, SWRB reprint, 1995, p. 251, emphasis added).

Truth of Doctrine concurs to give **being** to the Church and to the constitution of it (Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries*, 1644, SWRB reprint, 1995, p. 285, emphasis added).

Any sort of profession, whether by an avowing of that Gospel to one another, or suffering for it, even when the shepherds are smitten and the flock is scattered is a very practical and speaking mark that such a company is a true church (Samuel Rutherford, *Survey of the Survey of that Summe of Church Discipline*, 1658, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 16).

And yet if these may be, to wit, hearing and professed receiving, here is an essential mark by which persons before they receive seals are made members and visible disciples, and societies visible and Churches essentially differenced, 1. From all the false churches visible upon earth, who have not the sound of the word preached and professedly heard and visibly received and 2. from all civil societies 3. from all Pagan and heathen societies on earth. Ergo they were a distinct Christian society, differenced essentially, and if they should all die before they had been baptized or had received the seals they have been true visible church members; and if killed for the truth they had died visible professing martyrs, and the called Church of Christ (Samuel Rutherford, *Survey of the Survey of that Summe of Church Discipline*, 1658, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 17).

It is to be carefully observed, that like James Bannerman, the Westminster divines, and Francis Turretin, Samuel Rutherford also taught the distinction between the **being** and **well-being** of a true church. By one single mark he distinguishes the true church from false churches (who have no profession of truth), from all civil societies and from all Pagan societies on earth. We can now confidently affirm that Rutherford's definition of the essentially true church is exceedingly broad. By his definition there are many true churches upon the earth. Samuel Rutherford was simply saying that one mark was necessary to

distinguish an essentially true church from a Pagan church, which is precisely what the PRCE is saying. Strictly speaking, all that Scripture requires to constitute (*esse*) a visible church is the mark of the truth, viz., possession of the true doctrine of Christ and enough of the fundamentals of the true Christian religion to warrant a possibility of salvation. This is the minimal standard necessary for a church to qualify as a true church as opposed to a Pagan church.

To illustrate this in practical terms let us consider how Rutherford applies his definition to the Roman Catholic Church.

Speaking of the reason why the Reformers still consider the baptism of Rome to be valid (and therefore not to be repeated in a Protestant Church) Rutherford states:

Because their [those in Rome who received an invalid baptism by a midwife or a private person - GB] profession of that covenant whereof baptism is a seal, separates them sufficiently from infidels though they want [lack - GB] the seal external (Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries*, 1644, SWRB reprint, 1995, p. 239).

Notice that Rutherford says that even those in Rome who receive an invalid baptism by a midwife or a private person do profess the true covenant in such a way as to separate them from Infidels and Pagans. This is precisely the purpose of distinguishing between the **being** and **well-being** of the church. If we say that we receive the baptism of Rome then we must "essentially" receive the ministry of Rome which administers the baptisms. This is exactly what Rutherford concludes when he says,

These have a ministry **essentially** entire who have power under Christ to preach the Gospel and Administer the Sacraments, Matthew 28:19. The Romish priests have this, and are called to this by the church (Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries*, 1644, SWRB reprint, 1995, p. 240, emphasis added).

John Robinson, Rutherford's Independent opponent from New England, objects, How can England forsake the church of Rome and forsake the ministry within the church, as in the subject, especially, seeing you teach that a true ministry makes a true church (Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries*, 1644, SWRB reprint, 1995, p. 240).

Rutherford responds,

England may well separate from Rome everting the fundamental parts of faith and not separate from Rome's baptism or ministry, in so far as they **essentially** be the ordinances of Christ (Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries*, 1644, SWRB reprint, 1995, p. 240, emphasis added).

Rutherford is applying his doctrine exactly the same way as Turretin, Calvin, and the divines of the Westminster Assembly. He teaches that one may lawfully separate from a church that is **essentially** true (as to being) when it is deformed as to its **well-being**. The Reformers do not profess separation from **the true remnant** of Rome which professes the true Gospel, but, from the **Papal part** of Rome that destroys the fundamentals of the truth. Though the ministerial Church of Rome still retained an **essentially** true ministry and valid baptism, the Papal tyranny inseparably attached to it was like a malignant tumor

and these Reformers understood that this true church (*esse*) was something to denounce and avoid lest they die amidst her corruption. Is this not exactly what John Calvin is teaching when he says,

However when we categorically deny to the papists the **title** of the church, we do not for this reason impugn the existence of churches among them. Rather **we are only contending about the true and lawful constitution of the church, required in the communion not only of the sacraments (which are signs of profession) but also especially of doctrine** (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 4.2.12, Translated by Ford Lewis Battles, emphases added).

Mr. Bacon whines and complains that the PRCE has, "used their forum to denounce true churches and ministers of Christ" (*Defense Departed*). As I have demonstrated, both the church of Rome and its ministry are considered true, as to essence, by Calvin, Turretin and Rutherford, yet they counsel separation from both, warning others to avoid their poison. Does Mr. Bacon also say that Calvin, Turretin, and Rutherford were using their forum to denounce true churches and ministers when they taught separation from Rome? If not, then how is he justified in making such an accusation about the PRCE for saying that the Presbyterian Church in America or Orthodox Presbyterian Church or Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, though true churches as to essence, are to be avoided and denounced? My point is that the validity of Mr. Bacon's charge entirely depends upon the meaning he attaches to the phrase **true church. Without making the distinction between the being and the well-being of the church his charges are meaningless and entirely ambiguous.** As it stands, these meaningless charges are a source of mischief and stumbling for Christ's little ones, who until now were likely unaware of these critical distinctions. If Mr. Bacon was aware of these distinctions, I conclude that he was negligent and culpable for not using them. If he was ignorant of these distinctions then he must repent for slandering us in his ignorance. He is trapped between a rock and a hard place with nowhere to turn. Is Mr. Bacon ready to admit that his charges are entirely unqualified and misleading? There is no excuse for his making public charges of this nature, leading others astray, without carefully qualifying what he means.

**The Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton (PRCE) unequivocally states that there are many truly constituted churches (essentially considered) in the world.**

I have shown by this first distinction that one mark alone is sufficient to constitute an **essentially** true visible church, viz., **the profession of the true religion.** 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. Mr. Bacon's unqualified libel that the PRCE thinks it is the only truly constituted church in the world has led many to believe that we are denominating all other Christian churches except ourselves as non-Christian. This is absolutely false and we can hardly fathom how Mr. Bacon would dare utter such unqualified folly. Now that we have exposed Mr. Bacon's slander we shall see if he responds with repentance or with simply more false rhetoric. Let him demonstrate from anything we have written or spoken that we have condemned every

body of Christians but ourselves as non-Christian, or let him be ashamed. To date he has simply acted mischievously and irresponsibly by publicly making unqualified accusations invented by an offended imagination.

We judge Schismatic and Pragmatic dividers of the church, and wideners of the breaches thereof, already broken and divided, and those who sow discord among brethren and promote their contentions by individious reproaches or other ways, are to be withdrawn from (James Renwick, *An Informatory Vindication*, 1687, p. 85).

Next, I would like to continue to prove that Mr. Bacon is entirely wrong in his assertion that Samuel Rutherford (who stated in his classic work entitled, *The Due Right of Presbyteries*, p. 251, that, "A visible profession of the Truth and Doctrine of godliness, is that which essentially constitutes a visible church, and every member of the visible church." (Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries*, page 251) was talking about the same thing as the eighteenth chapter 1560 *Scottish Confession of Faith*.

**Those things commonly called the notes or marks of the church, viz., the true preaching of the Word, the right administration of the sacraments and ecclesiastical discipline uprightly administered, pertain to the well-being of the church or, the perfecting of the saints. By these notes we distinguish between a truly constituted visible church (being), and a true church faithfully adhering to its lawful constitution (well-being).**

We must distinguish between the things for which the church was instituted and the things that have been instituted for the church.

James Bannerman explains:

In the second place, what are those things which, unlike the truth, have been instituted for the sake of the Church, and not the church for the sake of them? Such, unquestionably, are those ordinances, office bearers, and discipline which have been established within the Christian society. These being instituted for the advantage and edification of the Church, are, from their very nature, subordinate and secondary to the truth, for the holding and publication of which both they and the Church itself exist. They may be necessary, and are necessary, for the **perfection** of the Church, but they are not necessary for its **existence** (James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, 1869 Vol. 1, SWRB reprint, 1991, p. 59, emphases added).

But join to the possession of the true faith the administration of the outward ordinances, as necessary to constitute a Christian Church - and you assign to outward ordinances a rank and value which are not justly theirs, and make them primary, and not, as they truly are of secondary importance (James Bannerman, *The Church of Christ*, 1869, SWRB reprint, 1991, Vol. 1, p. 61).

**The Westminster Confession of Faith (25:3) distinguishes that which is essential from that which is given for the well-being of the church.**

The Westminster *Confession of Faith* (25:3) states,

Unto this catholic and visible Church, Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world; and doth by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto (double emphasis added).

That the ministry, oracles, and ordinances are not necessary to the **being** of the church is clearly spelled out for us when the Confession says that these things were given unto the church for the perfecting of the saints. That which is given unto the church for its perfection cannot be said to constitute its existence. Ministry, oracles and ordinances are not things that essentially distinguish Christians from Pagans, but rather these are the marks that essentially distinguish one Christian assembly from another. Rather than distinguishing Christian churches from non-christian churches, this distinction allows us to differentiate between faithful true churches (*esse*) and unfaithful true churches (*esse*). The Church of Scotland (1638-1649) serves as an example of the former and is to be distinguished from the Church of Rome or the Reformed and Presbyterian daughters of the Revolution Church, who serve as examples of the latter. Though he has given these distinctions some lip service in the past (see *The Visible Church in the Outer Darkness*, p. 5) it is evident that Mr. Bacon does not understand how to apply these necessary distinctions. This is proved by the fact that the marks of the church in the 1560 *Scottish Confession of Faith* and the words of Samuel Rutherford as cited in *Defence Departed* are misrepresented and misunderstood by Mr. Bacon.

The 1560 *Scottish Confession of Faith* speaks of the **well-being** of the church when it says,

The notes, therefore, of the true kirk of God we believe, confess, and avow to be: first, the true preaching of the Word of God, into the which God has revealed himself to us, as the writings of the prophets and apostles do declare; secondly, the right administration of the sacraments of Christ Jesus, which must be annexed unto the word and promise of God, to seal and confirm the same in our hearts; last, ecclesiastical discipline uprightly ministered, as God's word prescribes, whereby vice is repressed, and virtue nourished. Wheresoever then these former notes are seen, and of any time continue (be the number [**of persons** - GB] never so few, about two or three) there, without all doubt, is the true kirk of Christ: who, according to his promise is in the midst of them: **not that universal [kirk - GB]** (of which we have before spoken) but particular [kirks - GB]; such as were in Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, and other places in which the ministry was planted by Paul, and were of himself named the kirks of God (*The Scottish Confession of Faith*, 1560, chapter 18, Presbyterian Heritage Publications, p. 29, emphases added).

Notice here that the 1560 *Scottish Confession of Faith* uses a more general definition of the true church and one that could only be applicable when defining the true church as to its **well-being** and not to its **being**. This is evident by the fact that the Scots of 1560 included the ministry, ordinances and discipline in their definition of the true church. As we have already seen, these are things given for the perfecting of the church and not for the existence of the church. The eighteenth chapter of the *Scottish Confession* was speaking of the same thing as *Westminster Confession of Faith* (25:3) where it says, "Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints." It was not at all describing the essence of the true church

described in *Westminster Confession of Faith* (25:2), but rather was contrasting a faithful church which ought to be joined to an unfaithful church which must be avoided. The Scots of 1560 were making a correct distinction between a true church (being) and a faithful church (well-being), legitimately and pastorally warning God's people to separate from the corruption within the visible church. If the reader will take the time to read the eighteenth chapter of the 1560 Scottish Confession with these distinctions in mind, he will easily see that the three marks of the church never pertain to the church's **essence** and always pertain to the **well-being** of the true church of Christ. If the three marks do pertain to the essence of the church, as Mr. Bacon would seem to believe, then why did the Spirit of God call the wandering Jews (who were without the sacrament of circumcision for forty years) a "church in the wilderness?"

This is he, that was in the church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us (Acts 7:38, AV).

We are assured from Scripture that circumcision was not administered to this "church in the wilderness" by the following account in the book of Joshua.

And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt. Now all the people that came out were circumcised: **but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised.** For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: unto whom the LORD sware that he would not shew them the land, which the LORD sware unto their fathers that he would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey. **And their children, whom he raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way** (Joshua 5:4-7, AV, emphases added).

Therefore we may safely conclude that, according to Scripture, circumcision is not essential to the definition of a true church (*esse*). This unequivocally proves that the 1560 *Scottish Confession of Faith* could not have been referring to the essence of the church when it defined the church as having three marks. Baptism (the second mark) like circumcision is given for the perfecting of the saints and is not essential to the definition of a true church (*esse*). Unless Mr. Bacon wishes to assert that the Church of Scotland (1560) was wrong about what it wrote in the eighteenth chapter of its *Confession*, he must admit that they were talking about the **well-being** of the church and not its **being**. Next, consider again Mr. Bacon's comments when he says:

Rutherford did not leave us to guess if he understood the true church as the 1560 Scots Confession understood it or if he agreed with the Steelites" (*Defense Departed*).

How could Mr. Bacon assert that Samuel Rutherford and the 1560 *Scottish Confession* were saying the same thing when, as I have demonstrated, they were not even talking about the same subject?

The eighteenth chapter of the 1560 *Scottish Confession* used a definition distinguishing a faithful church from an unfaithful church, to practically warn and instruct the people of God to avoid communion with the church of Antichrist. They knew that strictly speaking, the ministry, ordinances, and discipline were not necessary to the **being** of a church. On the other hand, as I have already demonstrated, Samuel Rutherford (in the passage cited by Mr. Bacon in his *Defense Departed*) was speaking only about the **being** of the church. Mr. Bacon apparently does not recognize the distinction between the **well-being** of the church spoken of in the 1560 *Scottish Confession*, and the **being** of the church spoken of by Samuel Rutherford in his *Due Right of Presbyteries*. This lack of understanding is magnified when he further asserts that the so-called Steelites disagree with both Rutherford and the 1560 *Scottish Confession*.

**The PRCE agrees with both Samuel Rutherford and the 1560 Scottish Confession, while Mr. Bacon misrepresents all parties involved.**

The PRCE agrees with Rutherford that one mark alone is sufficient to constitute a true visible church (as to being), viz., a visible profession of the truth. The PRCE also agrees with the 1560 *Scottish Confession* when they say that the three notes that pertain to the **well-being** of the church are the true preaching of the Word, the right administration of the sacraments and ecclesiastical discipline uprightly administered. In this case, Mr. Bacon's unqualified libel has misstated the doctrine of Rutherford, the 1560 *Scottish Confession* and the PRCE. In his attempt to expose the alleged error of the PRCE, Mr. Bacon has again exposed himself to shame. Mr. Bacon is correct in this much at least, Rutherford did leave no doubt whether or not he agrees with the doctrine of the Puritan Reformed Church. He agrees with us perfectly (that is we agree perfectly in the truth). Thus far I have demonstrated that the Puritan Reformed Church calls many churches on earth truly constituted churches (as to being) - contrary to Mr. Bacon's slanderous misrepresentation that we think we are the only Christian church on earth. I have also shown that Mr. Bacon does not appear to understand the distinction between the **being** and **well-being** of the church. If he claims that he understands this distinction, his crime is aggravated, for then we must ask why he didn't mention it in his accusations? Why did he purposely mislead others to believe that the PRCE thought they were the world's only Christian church, if he knew that we considered many other churches to be essentially true? If he admits his ignorance of these important distinctions he needs to publicly repent for making such serious public misrepresentations of our beliefs. Either way he needs to repent.

**We must distinguish between the true church (being) and the true church (well-being) to fulfil our moral duty to God.**

John Anderson writes,

I have already mentioned the important distinction between a true church [being - GB] and a pure church [well-being - GB]. A church may retain the principal doctrines and ordinances of the Christian religion in her profession, in such a measure, that she may be called a true church; and yet she may as an ecclesiastical body, have such errors in doctrine; such human inventions as integral parts of her worship; such unscriptural officers and usages in her government; or may be chargeable from such defection from reformation, formerly attained, that we

cannot be faithful to the cause of Christ, which, in these respects, is opposed; nor to the catholic [universal - GB] church, for whose true interest we are bound to use our best endeavours; nor to the souls of men, which are deeply injured by such evils; without withdrawing from her communion. A particular church, in this case, though she ceases to be a pure church, may still be called a true church of Christ, on account of the measure, in which she retains the profession of his truths and ordinances. (John Anderson, *Alexander and Rufus*, 1862, SWRB, 1997, p. 77).

John Calvin uses the same reasoning when speaking of the Roman Catholic Church of his day. He distinguished between a true church (*esse*) and the faithful church (*bene esse*) which one ought to join or in which one should remain. He demonstrates that it is a **fundamental principle of Protestantism** to separate from a true church (*esse*) to go to a true church (as to well-being) when staying in a true but corrupt church prevents us from fulfilling our duty to God or conversely causes us to sin.

However when we categorically deny to the papists the **title** of the church [as to its well-being - GB], we do not for this reason impugn the **existence** of churches among them [as to their being - GB]. Rather we are only contending about the true and lawful constitution of the church, required in the communion not only of the sacraments (which are signs of profession) but also especially of doctrine (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 4.2.12, Translated by Ford Lewis Battles).

In the same way if anyone recognizes the present congregations - contaminated with idolatry, superstition, and ungodly doctrine - as churches (in full communion of which a Christian man must stand - even to the point of agreeing in doctrine), he will gravely err. For if they are churches the power of the keys is in their hands; but the keys have an indissoluble bond with the Word, which has been destroyed among them. Again if they are churches, Christ's promise prevails among them; "Whatever you bind," etc [Matt. 16:19; 18:18; John 23:20]. But on the contrary, they disown from their communion all that genuinely profess themselves servants of Christ. Accordingly either Christ's promise is vain, or they are not, at least in this regard, churches. Finally instead of the ministry of the Word, they have schools of ungodliness and a sink of all kinds of errors. Consequently, by this reckoning either they are not churches or no mark will remain to distinguish the lawful congregation of believers from the assemblies of Turks (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 4.2.10, Translated by Ford Lewis Battles).

Speaking of the Romish Antichrist he says,

Daniel [Dan.9:27] and Paul [2 Thess. 2:4] foretold that Antichrist would sit in the Temple of God. With us it is the Roman Pontiff we make the leader and standard bearer of that wicked and abominable kingdom. The fact that his seat is placed in the Temple of God signifies that his reign was not such as to wipe out either the name of Christ or of the Church. From this it therefore is evident that we by no means deny that churches under his tyranny remain churches... (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 4.2.12, Translated by Ford Lewis Battles).

Finally, Calvin states,

To sum up, I call them churches [*esse* - GB] to the extent that the Lord wonderfully preserves in them a remnant of his people, however woefully

dispersed and scattered - and to the extent that some marks of the church remain - especially those marks whose effectiveness neither the devils wiles nor human depravity can destroy. But on the other hand, because in them those marks have been erased to which we should pay particular regard in this discourse, I say that every one of their congregations and their whole body lack the lawful form of the church [bene esse - GB] (*Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book 4.2.12, Translated by Ford Lewis Battles).

Note that Calvin is calling particular churches within the Roman Catholic Church true (as to essence) while at the same time calling them false because they lack a true and lawful constitution. He states that the true and lawful constitution of the church is required in the communion of the sacraments as well as the doctrine. The fact that he mentions their true and lawful communion in relation to the sacraments is significant to our present dispute with Mr. Bacon. Here Calvin is using this phrase, "true and lawfully constituted" in exactly the same sense as the PRCE did when we dissociated from the RPC. Like John Calvin, Rutherford, and Turretin, we were not contending that the individual churches of the pretended presbytery of the Reformation Presbyterian Church did not exist as Christian churches relative to Pagans; rather, we were contending about the true and lawful constitution of the church which the Reformation Presbyterian Church required in her terms of communion. In the twenty-three times we used the phrase "truly constituted church" in our letter of dissociation we **never once** used it in such a way as to denote the **essence** or **being** of the church. We were not arguing about whether the bodies in the Reformation Presbyterian Church were Christian or Pagan, only whether these bodies lacked a true and lawful constitution as they applied their doctrine to the ministry, ordinances and discipline. We were simply saying that their terms of communion were inconsistent with our duties and obligations before God and that we could not in good conscience comply with them. Consequently, we believed that our differences with the Reformation Presbyterian Church were so fundamental that we could not continue to be ecclesiastically associated with them.

Again I cite John Anderson:

If there be no lawful refusing of sacramental communion, with a particular church, then there can be no lawful separation from it, till it be unchurched. But the latter is absurd; and therefore the former. I think it manifestly absurd to say that we are not [to - GB] separate from a particular church, however degenerate and corrupt in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, till it is no church of Christ at all: for this would be to suppose that, though Christ has provided the censures of the church as a means of preserving her from the danger arising from the offences of one or a few members, he has provided no means of her preservation from the far greater danger of utter ruin by the prevailing influence of a corrupt majority. When such a majority is found incorrigibly obstinate in their opposition to any steps towards a thorough reformation, it is evident, that there is no remedy but secession. By such a majority, one great end of church communion, which is, that the truths and institutions of the Lord Jesus may be preserved pure and entire, is avowedly and obstinately opposed; and therefore, in this case, the Lord Jesus, is saying to his people, as in 2 Corinth. 6:17, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate." **Many limit such calls to our departure from the communion of Pagans and Papists. But they are applicable to our secession from any prevailing party, even though they should bear the name of Christians, of Protestants and Presbyterians, who, in their united capacity, or as a**

**professing body, are going on in obstinate opposition to any of the truths and institutions of Jesus Christ; so that none can continue in their church communion, without being involved in the guilt of that opposition.** From such combinations Christ is calling his people to separate. It is not meant, however, that degenerate Protestants and Presbyterians are upon a level with Heathens and Papists; for there may be a just cause of separation from the former, though not so great as from the latter (John Anderson, *Alexander and Rufus*, 1862, Still Waters Revival Books reprint, 1997, p. 78, emphases added).

We have now clearly established that Mr. Bacon has publicly shamed himself by making sinfully unqualified charges. One more thing needs to be discussed before we go on to the next misrepresentation.

**What is Mr. Bacon really saying about all other churches when he attempts to form a new Presbytery instead of joining an already existing one?**

The member churches and ministers of the Reformation Presbyterian Church came from various denominations but primarily they separated from the Presbyterian Church in America. Mr. Bacon played a large part in getting these ministers and elders together to talk about uniting into a presbytery. At the first meeting Mr. Bacon asked a very good question for which no one in the room had an adequate answer. What reason did this group of men have to form yet another presbyterian denomination distinct from all the rest? That question forms the basis for one of our greatest objections to the Reformation Presbyterian Church's pretended presbytery. What did the Reformation Presbyterian Church really say about the other denominations and congregations in the world when they formed yet another distinct and rival denomination?

**Given his view of the nature of the church, Mr. Bacon practically asserts the pretended Presbytery of the Reformation Presbyterian Church to be the only truly constituted (as to well-being) church court in the world.**

Does the Reformation Presbyterian Church presbytery regard the church courts of the Presbyterian Church in America, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, or any other denomination as having jurisdiction over them? Is the RPC officially in union with any church court in the world? **If they are then why didn't they acknowledge** such a union at their inception? Does the Reformation Presbyterian Church claim to follow all the contradictory acts of the present day General Assemblies? From where did the churches of the Reformation Presbyterian Church come? Did not the Reformation Presbyterian Church gather her churches from other true churches? How is this consistent with Mr. Bacon's book entitled, *The Visible Church and the Outer Darkness*?

The fundamental principle of government in each distinct Presbyterian denomination in the United States and Canada is really no different than that of the independent congregations Mr. Bacon calls "separatist". By forming a distinct and independent denomination Mr. Bacon and the Reformation Presbyterian Church are testifying that they could not find one group in all the world with whom they could in good conscience unite. This confused ecclesiology is no different in theory than the doctrine of the Independents - only it is

being practiced in forming denominations rather than congregations (thus we designate it Independent denominationalism). The Reformation Presbyterian Church and the other distinct and independent Presbyterian denominations have put Presbyterian window dressing upon an essentially Independent concept of the church government. "You have your church court, and I'll have mine," is the motto of the churches in North America and around the World.

John Anderson writes:

**The catholic church comprehends all that profess the true religion.** There is a lawful and necessary division of it into sections in respect of local situation. **But when a number of people, bearing the Christian name, combine together as a distinct society, for the purpose of maintaining and propagating doctrines and practices, which, instead of belonging to the true religion, are contrary to it; they ought not, considered as such a combination, to be called a lawful section of the catholic church. It is not denied, that they belong to the catholic church; but it is denied, that there ought to be any such section or division in it.** Thus, there ought to be no section of the catholic church, having for the peculiar end of its distinct subsistence, the support of episcopal hierarchy, unknown in the Scripture, of the propagation of antipaedobaptism, or of anti-scriptural doctrine, in opposition to that of God's election, redemption, effectual calling and the conservation of his people, as delivered in the scripture; or for the support of ways and means of divine worship not found in scripture. If the catholic visible church were brought to a suitable discharge of her duty, she would abolish all such sections. But no society ought to be called such an unlawful section, while it can be shown that it subsists as a separate society for no other end, than for the maintaining of something in the doctrine, worship or government of the church which belongs to the Christian religion as delivered in the Word of God, or for exhibiting a testimony against prevailing errors and corruptions which the scripture requires the catholic church to condemn. Such a profession of any party of Christians is no sectarian profession; and a union with them is not a sectarian, but properly a Christian union; and, being cordial and sincere, is a union in Christ; and communion upon the ground of this union is truly Christian communion. On the other hand, however much of our holy religion any body of Christians hold in common with others, and however many of them we may charitably judge to be saints, **yet while their distinguishing profession is contrary to the Word of God, communion with them, as a body so distinguished, is sectarian communion; as it implies a union with them in that which ought to be rejected by the whole catholic church** (John Anderson, *Alexander and Rufus*, 1862, pp. 10, 11, emphases added).

Where does the Bible teach that each nation is supposed to have numerous independent and rival church courts all claiming to be Presbyterian? The Word of God teaches the exact opposite. The Westminster Standards teach the exact opposite. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1638-1649) certainly did not believe in the ***Independent denominationalism*** of Mr. Bacon and the Reformation Presbyterian Church. Instead the Westminster divines taught and practiced (in agreement with Scripture) that each nation was to have one National church covenanted together in unity of doctrine and uniformity of practice. They not only taught and practiced it but God blessed them with victory in three nations, albeit for a very short time. This idea of covenanted unity and uniformity is the only possible way for the independent Presbyterians

of recent years to extract themselves from a palpable dilemma. While they preach Presbyterianism from the pulpits they practice Independency in their church courts. Mr. Bacon's false and scandalous charge that the PRCE thinks it is the only duly constituted church court in the whole world **rings hollow in our ears** when coming from his mouth. Who does he think he's fooling when he will not join with any other group on earth and then solves his dilemma by pretending to form yet another rival Independent-Presbyterian church court in the United States? Who does he think he's fooling when he boldly and unqualifiedly proclaims that the PRCE thinks they are the only truly constituted church court? If his sin were not so serious, it would border upon the humorous and absurd; especially considering that he cannot see how he is condemning his own actions. Let him soberly consider that he has charged us with precisely the same thing he is doing, and in the process caused much mischief and division. May Mr. Bacon sincerely repent of his hypocrisy and double standard. The Reformation Presbyterian Church (in its pretended court) is presently nothing more than another independent schism in the body of Christ.

We are expressly commanded to note such Schismatics and mark such causes of divisions and offences which they effectuate both by their practice and by their words, crying up their own party, and informing against the more pure and faithful remnant (James Renwick, *An Informatory Vindication*, 1687, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 85).

For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye (Matthew 7:2-5, AV).

Now the reader may object and ask what is different about what the PRCE is doing? Have they not practically done the same thing? Have they not set up a church court distinct from all the rest? No, just the opposite. We have separated from all the existing schisms of the present day and returned to the original covenanted constitution of the Church of Scotland. We own their constitution and are bound by the Acts of their General Assembly (1638-1649) because they are agreeable to God's Word, and because they are undeniably noble examples of the purest and highest attainment of the Church of Jesus Christ thus far. Contrary to Mr. Bacon's charge that we "do not believe [ourselves - GB] compelled to answer in any church court," we abide by and enforce the rulings of their church courts (as they are agreeable to God's Word), and we also understand this is part of the formal and moral obligation of the *Solemn League and Covenant*. We have not separated ourselves into Independency like Mr. Bacon (who, by his separatist practice owns no church court but his own), but instead have returned to the Presbyterian polity which we have sworn to uphold in the Covenants of our forefathers. Let the reader judge if we have not chosen the Scriptural way to promote unity of doctrine and uniformity in practice. We are simply following in the path of our forefathers (Song 1:8, Jer 6:16), and imitating their godly and biblical example while hoping for the same blessing of God upon our efforts that they enjoyed upon theirs.

**The worldwide vision of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton (PRCE).**

The PRCE is committed to promoting Covenanted National Presbyterian Churches which will rule the Church of Christ in covenanted unity and uniformity. Perhaps some may scoff and think that the PRCE is just dreaming about a pie in the sky ideal, but if we stop and consider what the millennial church will be like, we will recognize that covenanted unity in doctrine and uniformity in practice are its essential components. The Church of Christ must not give up what we know to be true doctrine simply because what we hope for seems so far away.

Thomas M'Crie comments,

Are there any who, when they hear of the future of uniting all Christians in profession, affection, and practice, are disposed to receive the intimation with a smile of incredulity, to treat the prospect as visionary, and to exclaim, "How can these things be? Will God create a new race on the earth? Will he give new structure to the minds of men? Will they not continue to think and act about religion as they have done from the beginning until now?"

Hear the Word of the Lord, you scornful men: Is it a small matter for you to weary men, will you weary my God also? Has he not said, "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me?" (Jer. 32:29). And will he not do it? Let God be true, and every man a liar (cf. Rom. 3:4). When the time comes, the time which he has set for accomplishing his promise, he shall arise, and every difficulty and every obstruction shall give way before him and vanish at his approach.

Do you ask a sign? Do you ask it in the heaven above? It is he that "binds the sweet influences of Pleiades, and looses the "frozen" bands of Orion, and guides Arcturus with his sons" (cf. Job 38:31). Do you ask it in the earth beneath? "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fattling together; and a little child shall lead them ... for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. 11:6, 9).

The Infinite One has, in his faithful Word, pledged all his perfections for the accomplishment of this work. What resistance can be opposed to infinite power, put in motion by infinite love, and guided by infinite wisdom? He can raise up instruments properly qualified and disposed for promoting his design, guide their counsels, animate them to constancy and perseverance, and, finally crown all their exertions with the wished-for success. He has the hearts of all men in his hand, and can turn them like the waters in an aqueduct. He can rebuke the spirit of error and delusion, "cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land" (Zech. 13:2), and remove and abolish all things that offend in his kingdom. He can subdue the most stubborn and inveterate prejudices, allay the fiercest heats and animosities, convert jealousies into confidence and hatred into love, and having "made the wrath of man to praise him" by accomplishing his purposes, can "restrain the remainder thereof" (cf. Ps. 76:10).

Who is among you that fears the Lord, and obeys the voice of his servant, who walks in darkness and has no light as to the removal or abatement of the melancholy divisions of the Church? Let him plant his faith firmly on the promises of Jehovah, and stay himself on his perfections. Say with the Prophet Jeremiah, in a

similar case, "Ah, Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power ... and there is nothing too hard for thee ... The Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of Hosts, is his name, Great in counsel, and mighty in work" (Jer. 32:17-19).

**Place yourself in spirit in the midst of the emblematical valley into which Ezekiel was carried, and say, "God who raises the dead can easily do this"** (Ezek. 37:1-14; cf. 2 Cor. 1:9). Rivers, deep and broad, seas, noisy and tempestuous, "on which no galley with oars can go, neither gallant ship ride" (cf. Isa. 33:21), have disparted the territories which the God of heaven has given to his Son, and prevented the intercourse of his subjects. But he "shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people ... like as it was to Israel in the day that he came out of the land of Egypt" (Isa. 11:15-16).

Brazen "mountains of separation" may stand in the way of the desirable event. But the resistance which they oppose to it shall be overcome, **not according to the confused plan of modern projectors, by throwing a scaffolding over them, by which those who have reared altars on their tops may hold occasional intercourse and partial communion**; but in a way becoming the New Testament Zerubbabel, the Disperser of Confusion.

When he rends the heavens and comes down to do things which we looked not for, "the mountains shall flow down at his presence" (cf. Isa. 64:1). Those separations which have been of most ancient date, and which threatened to last forever, shall yield to his power: "The everlasting mountains shall be scattered, the perpetual hills shall bow," before him whose "ways are everlasting" (cf. Hab. 3:6). If there shall be one that has reared its head above all the rest, and makes a more formidable resistance, it also shall crumble down and disappear: "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain" (Zech. 4:7). Then shall the mountain on which the house of God is built be established on the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow to it. And he will rebuke and repress the envious risings of its proudest rival. "A hill of God is the hill of Bashan, a high hill of Bashan. But why lift ye up yourselves, ye high hills? This (Zion) is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever" (cf. Ps. 68:15-16). May God fulfil these promises in due time; and unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. (Thomas M'Crie, *Unity of the Church*, 1821, reprinted in 1989 by Presbyterian Heritage Publications, pp. 130-134, emphases added).

We cannot walk together with Mr. Bacon in his schismatic practice and agree to this endless multiplying of rival church courts. We believe that it is sin to associate or comply with such schismatic societies. We call upon all those who see the Scriptural principles being violated to separate from such schisms and work together with us toward one national covenanted unity and uniformity. This is the true doctrine of the Second Reformation and we praise God that it will again be victorious.

These modern pigmies are too far dwarfed in intellectual stature to measure the altitude, of our glorious Covenanted Reformation - a Reformation which,

imbedded in the law and the covenant of God, has already brought civil and ecclesiastical freedom to many millions; and **which is doubtless destined to be laid in the foundation of reconstructed society in the millennial period of the world** (The Reformed Presbytery, *A Short Vindication of Our Covenanted Reformation*, 1879, SWRB bound photocopy, p. 4, emphases added).

### **Misrepresentation #3: The Puritan Reformed Church maintains that a church cannot be truly and biblically constituted without formally swearing and adopting the Solemn League and Covenant.**

First, Mr. Bacon asserts that the PRCE maintains that taking *Solemn League and Covenant* is necessary to exist as a truly constituted church.

Essentially the difference between the Reformation Presbyterian Church and PRCE 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 PRCE claims that a church is not a properly, truly, biblically constituted church if it has not formally adopted the *Solemn League and Covenant* (*Defense Departed*).

The issue is strictly whether the *Solemn League and Covenant* is a necessary document in order for a church to be a properly, truly, biblically constituted church (*Defense Departed*).

Second, Mr. Bacon argues that the *Solemn League and Covenant* is used by the "Steelites" in principally the same way as Rome uses its doctrine of Tradition.

Neither is this a minor distinction. The Reformed and Presbyterian churches maintain that the church is built on the apostles and prophets, Christ himself being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). The Romanist church maintains that the church is built upon Scripture plus the traditions of the church. Without the tradition there is no true constitution. While the content of the traditions differ between the Roman Catholic Church and the Steelites, the principle is the same: without the "right" tradition, no constitutional church can exist. This distinction is essential to the very definition of Protestantism. Epistemologically speaking, *sola scriptura* is prior even to *sola fide* or *solo Christo* (*Defense Departed*).

Third, Mr. Bacon denies that the *Solemn League and Covenant* binds him to historical or accidental aspects of the document, but admits it does bind him to moral duties only so far as they directly apply to God's law.

So, then, we account the *Solemn League and Covenant* an edifying historical document which contains in it several moral duties. But we deny that the existence of moral duties within a document binds subsequent generations of the church to the historical and accidental aspects of the document. As Calvin said, these things should be "accommodated to the varying circumstances of each age and nation." It should further be noted that whatever in a document is a moral duty is a moral duty so far and only so far as it is a direct application of God's moral law (*Defense Departed*).

I will deal with the two false accusations first, and then proceed to discuss Mr. Bacon's erring comments regarding the binding nature of the *Solemn League and Covenant*.

**Does the Puritan Reformed Church maintain that swearing and adopting the**

## **Solemn League and Covenant is necessary to the definition of a truly constituted church (essence)?**

In the previous section I demonstrated that the PRCE maintains that, strictly speaking, the only mark necessary to the **being** or **essence** of a true visible Church is a visible profession of the truth and doctrine of godliness. For this reason, the PRCE has always believed the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett to be a true church (as to its being). The reason I have devoted so much time to these ecclesiological distinctions is that the huge majority of Mr. Bacon's unqualified libel is based upon his misunderstanding of this one concept. His charge that we maintain that it is necessary to swear the *Solemn League and Covenant* to be a truly constituted church, while failing to qualify what he means by the word **church** is a perfect example of his inability to apply this necessary distinction.

## **The Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton (PRCE) unequivocally states that it is NOT necessary to swear the Solemn League and Covenant to be a truly constituted church (as to essence).**

First, Mr. Bacon's inability to distinguish the **being** from the **well-being** of the church has again led him to make a seriously flawed and unqualified accusation about the PRCE. In this respect, I judge Mr. Bacon's conduct to be a violation of the ninth commandment. His sin is aggravated by the fact that he has publicly sinned while holding the office of a minister of Christ. His testimony against us has led his followers to fight against that which is agreeable to God's word and intended for their edification. Those who believe what he is saying should carefully consider to whom they turn for counsel, lest his bad manners and churlish libel become for them an example to follow.

## **The true state of the question.**

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 (*esse*). A more informed opponent would understand that the question truly revolves around whether or not it's 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.

When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee (Deuteronomy 23:21, AV).

Therefore, dear reader, I ask you not to let Mr. Bacon's vague notions cloud the question. The question is about the **well-being** of the church and not its **being**; about whether a

church is being faithful to Covenant promises already made and not about whether a church is Christian or Pagan. Practically we must determine whether we ought to approve of, and associate with, churches who are unfaithfully violating binding covenant obligations, and whether or not we are duty bound to conscionably withdraw from them as covenant breakers. The importance of this question must not be underestimated. Those who approve of, and associate with, obstinate covenant breakers are accomplice to their crimes while those who testify against them remain free of their sinful influence and just punishment.

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain (Deuteronomy 5:11, AV).

**The Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton (PRCE) maintains that, in a land already bound by the Covenants, it is necessary to own and renew the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant to be a truly constituted church as to well-being, viz., a faithful church.**

The PRCE has never said that the Covenants are necessary to the **existence** of a church, but rather that the Covenants are necessary to the **well-being** of a church (assuming, of course, that the church in question has descended from the original covenanting churches of England, Ireland, and Scotland). Our forefathers made covenant promises on our behalf and we cannot preserve or maintain a faithful testimony while ignoring their formal and material obligations. For a nation, church or individual to ignore the obligations formally laid upon them by their ancestors would be to open themselves to the legitimate charges of covenant breaking and perjury, both of which are fundamentally destructive to the **well-being** of the Church of Christ and to the perfecting of the saints. This would be to willingly and purposely subvert the intended purpose of the ordinance of covenanting as stated in the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (25:3),

Unto this catholic and visible Church, Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world; and doth by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto.

Since the appearance of Brian Schwertley's slanderous, "Open Letter" (April, 1997), and especially since Mr. Bacon's *Defense Departed* appeared on the FPCR web site (August, 1997), young and inexperienced (and some who should have known better) believers have come to the sad conclusion that that PRCE does not think that anybody is a Christian church unless they take the Covenants. We have received calls and letters from some brethren indicating that Mr. Bacon's scandalous misrepresentations have sinfully affected some dear people, and we cannot adequately express how grieved we are by this turn of events. The misrepresentations expressed in Mr. Bacon's *Defense Departed* are among the most ignorant and dishonest I have encountered from a man of his supposed calibre of scholarship. How he can have a clear conscience regarding what he has written is beyond my comprehension! I do pray that God will grant him repentance in this matter. Again, for the sake of those who believed Mr. Bacon's report, I repeat that the PRCE unequivocally states that it is **NOT NOT NOT necessary to swear the Covenants to be a truly constituted church (as to essence)**. If those who oppose us cannot believe our explicit statements then I fear our arguments will have little effect upon such a calloused prejudice.

## **Mr. Bacon ignorantly compares us to keepers of Roman Catholic tradition.**

Immediately after Mr. Bacon utters his unqualified charges he compares us with the Roman Catholic Church, which teaches that all who do not accept her traditions are to be considered non-Christian churches. While he represents the position of the Roman Catholic Church correctly he proceeds to violently twist our meaning into something far different from what we have ever taught.

The Catholic Church in her most recent official Catechism says:

**The sole Church of Christ** is that which our Saviour, after his resurrection, entrusted to Peter's pastoral care, commissioning him and the other apostles to extend and rule it.... **The Church constituted and organised as a society in the present world, subsists in the Catholic Church**, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by bishops in communion with him (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, p. 234, Lumen gentium 8, par. 2, emphases added).

The Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism states:

For it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone, which is the universal help toward salvation, that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained. It was **also to the Apostolic college alone, of which Peter is the head, that we believe that our Lord entrusted all the blessings of the New Covenant**, in order to establish on earth the one Body of Christ into which all those should be fully incorporated who belong in any way to the People of God (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, p. 234, Unitatis redintegratio 3, par. 5, emphases added).

Again, I remind the reader of Mr. Bacon's charge:

Neither is this a minor distinction. The Reformed and Presbyterian churches maintain that the church is built on the apostles and prophets, Christ himself being the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). The Romanist church maintains that the church is built upon Scripture plus the traditions of the church. Without the tradition there is no true constitution. While the content of the traditions differ between the Roman Catholic Church and the Steelites, the principle is the same: without the "right" tradition, no constitutional church can exist. This distinction is essential to the very definition of Protestantism. Epistemologically speaking, *sola scriptura* is prior even to *sola fide* or *solo Christo* (*Defense Departed*).

It is true that the Church of Rome puts Tradition and Scripture on the same level of authority as the following citation demonstrates.

Sacred Scripture is the speech of God as it is put down in writing under the breath of of the Holy Spirit. And Holy tradition transmits in its entirety the Word of God which has been entrusted to the Apostles so that, enlightened by the Spirit of truth, they may faithfully preserve, expound, and spread it abroad by preaching. As a result the Church to whom the transmission and interpretation of Revelation is entrusted, **does not derive her certainty about all revealed truths from the holy Scriptures alone. Both Scripture and Tradition must be accepted and honoured with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence**(*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, p. 31, Dei Verbum 9, emphases added).

## **Does the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton (PRCE) equate the Covenants with Scripture, as Mr. Bacon misrepresents?**

The PRCE's first term of communion requires, "An acknowledgement of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, and **the alone infallible** rule of faith and practice." Our fourth term of communion states:

That public, social covenanting is an ordinance of God, obligatory on churches and nations under the New Testament; that the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League* are an exemplification of this divine institution; and that these Deeds are of continued obligation upon the moral person; and in consistency with this, that the Renovation of these Covenants at Auchensaugh, Scotland, 1712 **was agreeable to the Word of God.**

Notice that our Covenants are said to be **agreeable to God's Word** and **not equal to God's Word**. The Word of God is our "**alone infallible rule of faith and practice**," while the Covenants are said to be subordinately "**agreeable to God's word**." The Papists say that Scripture and Tradition are to be equally revered while we say that all our standards are subordinated to the Word of God. How can Mr. Bacon fail to notice the difference? *That which is humanly composed though agreeable to God's Word is subordinate to God's Word and not equal to it.* Consequently, it is impossible and dishonest to misrepresent the position of the PRCE as making the Covenants equal with Scripture in the same sense as Rome equates Scripture and Papal Tradition. I do not understand how Mr. Bacon can miss something so patently obvious. Since I do not believe that Mr. Bacon is feeble-minded, I conclude that he intended something more sinister by making this comparison.

### **Mr. Bacon unwittingly becomes an Arminian spokesman.**

To demonstrate how far off the mark Mr. Bacon actually is, I now must refer to an email discussion held between Pastor Price and Mr. Bacon on December 18, 1996. In this correspondence Mr. Bacon objects to Pastor Price's position by writing, "You have made the *Solemn League and Covenant* the rule of faith and practice. By referring to the non-necessity of taking a particular covenant as a sin, you have made it the (or at least "a") rule of faith and practice." It is here that Mr. Bacon displays his significant ignorance on this subject. Samuel Rutherford heard this exact objection from the Arminians of his day and I ask the reader to observe how closely Mr. Bacon's objection matches that of the Arminians.

**Mr. Bacon states, "You have made the *Solemn League and Covenant* the rule of faith and practice... or at least "a" rule of faith and practice."**

Samuel Rutherford replies:

Arminians [argue - GB] - A confession [Covenant - GB] is not a rule of faith it hath not the lowest place in the Church.

**The Covenant written and sealed in Nehemiah's time was a secondary rule of**

**faith** [in the same sense as the PRCE's fourth term of communion - GB], **and a rule in so far as it agreed with the Law of Moses**, for they enter in a curse and an oath to walk in God's law, not to give their sons and daughters in marriage to the heathen, not to buy victuals from the heathen on the Sabbath, to charge themselves to give money to maintain the service of God.(Nehemiah 9:38, 10:1-3, 29-32). **Which written Covenant was not Scripture; and Acts 15, the decrees of the Synod was not formally Scripture, yet to be observed as a secondary rule** (Samuel Rutherford, *A Free Disputation Against Pretended Liberty of Conscience*, 1649, SWRB bound photocopy reprint, 1996, p. 25).

According to Rutherford, Nehemiah's Covenant was necessary to be taken, as was the directive of the Assembly of Elders and Apostles in Acts 15. The necessity of obeying these **human constitutions** was based on the fact that they were **agreeable to Scripture**. Though both were subordinate to God's Word, I observe that Rutherford rightly concludes that they form a secondary rule of faith and thus they become **necessarily obliging** upon all for whom they were intended.

Consider the necessity of the covenant laid upon the tribes of of Israel in the fifteenth year of Asa, where "whosoever should not seek the Lord God Of Israel should be put to death."

And when Asa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD, that was before the porch of the LORD. And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God was with him. So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. And they offered unto the LORD the same time, of the spoil which they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. **And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul; That whosoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.** And they swore unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets. And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and sought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the LORD gave them rest round about (2 Chronicles 15: 8-15, AV, emphases added).

Would Mr. Bacon also upbraid Asa saying, "You have made the Covenant of Israel a rule of faith and practice. By referring to the non-necessity of taking a particular covenant as a sin, you have made it the (or at least "a") rule of faith and practice." This exemplifies the absurdity of **Mr. Bacon's Arminian objection**. Furthermore, doesn't Mr. Bacon consider the *Westminster Confession of Faith* to be a fallible, subordinate, secondary rule of faith which is agreeable to God's word? Are not the ministers and elders of the Reformation Presbyterian Church bound to uphold it in so far as it agrees with the Word of God? Would they allow someone who obstinately and wilfully teaches against it to come to the Lord's Table? Why then does he object to the Covenants being used as subordinate standard in the same way?

On December 18, 1996, Mr. Bacon writes (email) to Pastor Price regarding the necessity of covenants:

Necessity implies some rule other than Scripture which binds the conscience. If you wish to take the *Solemn League and Covenant* (which I assume you have done), no bother to me. However, the term "necessity" implies precisely the position that y'all have now taken - which I believe to be directly contrary to the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*.

No, Mr. Bacon, necessity doesn't imply some rule other than Scripture which binds the conscience. **Fallible human constitutions such as Confessions, Covenants and faithful acts of church courts all bind the conscience, if and when they agree with the Word of God.** A good and necessary deduction from Scripture binds just as much as Scripture itself.

The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence **may be deduced from Scripture**: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1:6).

The necessity of covenant keeping is based upon a good and necessary deduction taken from the third commandment. We must necessarily own and renew the Covenants because we are commanded to keep the vows made on our behalf by our faithful covenanted forefathers.

They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers (Jeremiah 11:10, AV).

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 shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay (Ecclesiastes 5:4,5, AV).

Necessity in the case of covenant keeping originates from Scripture alone and for this reason we say that it is necessary to renew and keep the Covenants. These Covenants were lawfully sworn, and we are therefore now obligated to pay what we owe. Is Mr. Bacon saying that good and necessary consequences deduced (inerrantly but fallibly) from Scripture do not necessarily bind? What kind of Protestant doctrine is this? Does Mr. Bacon truly believe that good and necessary deductions which bind are contrary to *sola Scriptura*? Even the doctrine of *sola Scriptura* is an historical deduction. Does that bind? Of course it does, and I am amazed that Mr. Bacon would attempt to argue in such a childish fashion.

If a man vow a vow unto the LORD, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth (Numbers 30:2, AV).

Samuel Rutherford refutes Mr. Bacon's Arminian notions as follows:

1. Only the Word of God is the principal and formal ground of our faith. Eph. 2:20-22;  
2 Tim. 3:16; Lk. 24:25.
2. A confession of faith containing all fundamental points is so far forth the Word of God as it agrees with the Word of God and **obligeth as a rule secondary, which we believe with subjection to God, speaking in His own word, and to this platform we may lawfully swear** (Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries*, 1644, p. 132, SWRB bound photocopy, emphases added).

Why then does Mr. Bacon object that we make the Covenants, "at least 'a' rule of faith and practice"? The reason Mr. Bacon is arguing like an Arminian is that he does not properly distinguish between the alone infallible rule of faith, and secondary rules of faith and practice. **He does not seem to recognize that fallible standards bind our conscience as secondary rules of faith when they are agreeable to God's Word.** It is not the subordinate standard that ultimately binds the conscience but rather the supreme standard of holy Scripture speaking in the subordinate standard that binds the conscience.

Pastor David Steele comments:

In short, while, on the ground and in the language of our reforming ancestors, we hold that our Covenants are a *norma recta* - a **right rule**, with which other symbols of our profession should harmonize; we also hold that the Scriptures are *norma recti*, **the rule of right**, TO REGULATE ALL (*The Reformation Advocate*, 1874, Still Waters Revival Books reprint, 1997, Vol. 1:1, pp. 6, 7, emphases added).

Pastor Steele's faithful explanation places him in good company. Compare his explanation of our subordinate Covenants with that of the noted Scottish Commissioner to the Westminster Assembly, George Gillespie.

It is in vain for them to palliate or shelter their covenant-breaking with appealing from the covenant to the Scripture, for *subordianta non pugnans*. The covenant is *norma recta*, - a right rule, though the Scripture alone be *norma recti*, - the rule of right. If they hold the covenant to be unlawful, or to have anything in it contrary to the word of God, let them speak out. But to profess the breach of the covenant to be a grievous and great fault, and worthy of a severe censure, and yet to decline the charge and proofs thereof, is a most horrible scandal; yea, be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and give ear, O earth! how small regard is had to the oath of God by men professing the name of God (George Gillespie, *The Works of George Gillespie, Male Audis*, 1646, reprinted in 1991 [SWRB] from the 1846 edition, Vol. 1, Chapter 3, p. 13).

Furthermore, Gillespie notes that those who argue like Mr. Bacon place themselves in very bad company.

[This is - GB] **a tenet looked upon by the reformed churches as proper to those that are inspired with the ghost of Arminius** for the remonstrants, both at and after the Synod of Dort, did cry down the obligation of all national covenants and oaths, &c., in matters of religion, under the color of **taking the**

**Scripture only for a rule.** Well, we see the charge declined as nothing (George Gillespie, *The Works of George Gillespie, Male Audis*, 1646, reprinted in 1991 [SWRB] from the 1846 edition, Vol. 1, Chapter 3, p.13, emphases added).

There is no reasonable explanation for Mr. Bacon's objection other than the fact that he has not adequately understood these fundamental truths. I'm sure the Arminian churches worldwide would approvingly endorse his objection, and in this regard he has unwittingly become their spokesman. I encourage the reader to obtain a copy of Samuel Rutherford's *Free Disputation Against Pretended Liberty of Conscience* and carefully examine whether or not Mr. Bacon has entirely imitated the Arminians in this regard. Let the reader observe how little Mr. Bacon truly understands about the necessity of covenanting and how ready he is to rail at those who, by the grace of God, have been given this knowledge. Mr. Bacon's reasoning, if applied consistently, would result in railing against both Rutherford and Nehemiah as well. The PRCE does not equate the Covenants with Scripture any more than Nehemiah or Rutherford. **The Covenants bind because they were lawfully sworn and agreeable to God's Word. Accordingly, these Covenants are fallible, subordinate, secondary rules of faith, and inasmuch as they are agreeable to God's Word they cannot be broken without sin.**

Again, I repeat that our first term of communion requires, "An acknowledgement of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, and the alone infallible rule of faith and practice." Does Mr. Bacon ever once acknowledge this in his *Defense Departed*? Does he ever acknowledge that we state that the Covenants are agreeable to God's Word? What shall we say about a man who appears to be given over to the sin of so grossly misrepresenting the beliefs of others? How can Mr. Bacon honestly expect others to believe him in the pulpit when he's behaving this way? We explicitly state that the Word of God is our alone infallible rule of faith and practice, and yet Mr. Bacon expects to convince others that we have equated the Covenants with the Word of God. Dear reader, what does "alone infallible rule of practice" mean to you? Mr. Bacon's objection is so absurd that I can hardly believe it has become necessary to answer it. What more could we say to convince Mr. Bacon that the Word of God is our alone infallible rule of faith and practice except to repeat our first term of communion? It is both sad and sinful that he cannot personally accept our plain words and expression of faith, but for him to aggravate his sin by brazenly deceiving others about what we believe is a high form of mischief. He should be ashamed of himself. His attitude should be one of profound embarrassment for so completely misstating our beliefs, and we await a humble apology and true repentance for his scandalously perpetrating this public spectacle. It is one thing to disagree and debate over different theological positions but we cannot fathom how Mr. Bacon could come to this conclusion based upon anything we have written. Again, I remind the reader that if Mr. Bacon claims to have meant to say that the PRCE believes it is necessary to take Covenants only in regard to the **well-being** of the church, his crime is further aggravated. For if he understood what we really meant, then why did he fail to qualify his public charges, and thereby lead young and inexperienced Christians to the wrong conclusions?

### **Mr. Bacon admits his confusion in his Defense Departed.**

Mr. Bacon admits his confusion in the following excerpt from his *Defense Departed* when he says:

This demonstrates two things about their dissociation: first, it proves that Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton, **regardless of confused and confusing statements to the contrary**, considers "the covenants" to be a necessary *sine qua non* of a church's constitution if that church is to be considered a true church (*Defense Departed*).

I can understand why he thinks our dissociation was confused, since it's apparent he did not understand what we were saying. The point I wish to make here is that the word "confusing" used in this context can only refer to Mr. Bacon's own confusion. If he didn't understand what we meant then why didn't he ask us before going to such an extreme? Why would he draw conclusions "regardless" of confused and confusing statements? Shouldn't he have regarded his confusion as a signal to ask more questions before penning public charges against us? Even under the most charitable construction his actions are sinful and in need of repentance.

### **A description of the Covenants, their binding nature, purpose, and relevance to the modern day church.**

Having dealt with Mr. Bacon's first two accusations I will now proceed to discuss Mr. Bacon's erring comments regarding the binding nature of the *Solemn League and Covenant*. To do this I intend to follow the following format. **First**, I will establish that both the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant* were originally intended to be sworn as an **everlasting covenant**. **Second**, I will establish the purpose for which the Covenants were sworn, viz., to glorify God, and to preserve and maintain the true church (as to well-being). **Third**, I will demonstrate who the original parties were in the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant*. **Fourth**, I will prove that Canada and the United States were among the parties bound by the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant*. **Fifth**, I will pinpoint exactly where Mr. Bacon has erred as I discuss the intrinsic obligation of the Covenants. **Sixth**, we will answer the question - Do the circumstantial details of the *Solemn League and Covenant* bind us? **Seventh**, I will discuss the negative application of the Covenants, and briefly examine the concepts of withdrawal, censure and separation.

#### **a. The original intent of the Covenanters was to swear an everlasting Covenant never to be forgotten.**

When interpreting any historical document we must strive to ascertain the original intent of the authors of that document. In many cases this is difficult and time consuming, though in this case it is easy and obvious. Those who originally swore the Covenants left us no doubt as to what their intentions were.

1. The *National Covenant* was intended and sworn as an everlasting Covenant. On September 22, 1638, six months after the *National Covenant* was renewed in Scotland we read the following protest against the proclamation of King Charles I, which called for the Covenanters to forget their subscription of 1638 and to renew the *National Covenant* as it was subscribed in 1580.

That by this new subscription [which Charles I was proposing - GB] our late Covenant [of 1638 - GB], and Confession may be quite absorbed and buried in

oblivion, **that where it was intended and sworn to be an everlasting Covenant never to be forgotten**, it shall never more be remembered, the one shall be cryed up, and the other drowned in the noise thereof (*Records of the Church of Scotland*, p. 86, "The Protestation of the Noblemen, Barons, Gentlemen, Burrowes, Ministers, and Commons" [after reading the proclamation dated September 9, 1638], emphases added).

2. *The Solemn League and Covenant* was intended and sworn as an everlasting Covenant. John Brown (of Haddington), in his book entitled, *The Absurdity and Perfidy of All Authoritative Toleration*, (1803), points out that the Westminster Assembly considered the *Solemn League and Covenant* an "everlasting covenant."

That the body of the English nation also swore the *Solemn League and Covenant*, is manifest. The Westminster Assembly and English Parliament, affirm, "The honourable house of Parliament, the Assembly of Divines, the renowned city of London, and multitudes of other persons of all ranks and quality in this nation, and the whole body of Scotland, have all sworn it, rejoicing at the oath so graciously seconded from heaven. God will, doubtless, stand by all those, **who with singleness of heart shall now enter into an everlasting covenant with the Lord**" (*The Absurdity and Perfidy of All Authoritative Toleration of Gross Heresy, Blasphemy, Idolatry, Popery, etc.*, 1803, Still Waters Revival Books reprint, 1997, p. 161, emphases added).

Finally, we read the words of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1643) where they address, "their beloved brethren, Ministers in the Church of England," in preparation for the swearing of the Covenant.

Go on in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, against all opposition, without fear of whatsoever dangers, to purge the house of the Lord, to repair the breaches thereof, to set up all his ordinances in their full beauty and perfection, to the uttermost of your power, according to the pattern of the Word of God and zeal of the best Reformed Kirks. And let these two kingdoms be knit together as one man in maintaining and promoting the truth of the Gospel. **Let us enter in a perpetual Covenant for ourselves and our posterity** to endeavour that all things may be done in the House of God according to his own will, and let the Lord do with us as seems good in his eyes (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, Still Waters Revival Books reprint, 1997, p. 205, emphases added).

This establishes beyond any shadow of doubt that those who originally swore the Covenants swore them with the intent of entering into an **everlasting covenant** with God. It is also easily observable that these Covenanters were members of a truly constituted Christian church (*bene esse*) before taking these Covenants. Why then would Mr. Bacon say, "it proves that Puritan Reformed Church... considers "the covenants" to be a necessary *sine qua non* of a church's constitution if that church is to be considered a true church," if it is so patently obvious that the Covenanters constituted a true church before swearing the Covenants? I can only think that he is trying to give others the impression that the PRCE is doing or requiring something different than the General Assembly of Scotland, **when in reality our position toward the Covenants is precisely the same as theirs.**

### **In what sense are these Covenants deemed everlasting and perpetual?**

On December 18, 1996, Mr. Bacon writes to Pastor Price,

Are you seriously suggesting that not aligning ourselves with a 17th century document is sinful (that seems to be what I've read thus far in both your overture and your posts)?

Archibald Mason explains,

That the obligation of religious vows and oaths extends to posterity is evident also, from the names which the Scriptures bestow upon the church's covenants with God.

They are called an everlasting covenant,

The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant (Isaiah 24:5, AV),

and a perpetual covenant,

They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten (Jeremiah 50:5, AV).

**These covenants are called an everlasting covenant, and a perpetual covenant, because their obligation is durable and permanent, and extends to future generations.** If the obligation of these covenants perished at the decease of the actual covenanters, they would be temporary, fleeting and transient in their nature indeed, and could have no title to these honourable appellations bestowed upon them by the Spirit of God. (Archibald Mason, "Observations on the Public Covenants Between God and the Church," 1821, cited from *The Fall of Babylon the Great By the Agency of Christ and Through the Instrumentality of His Witnesses*, Still Waters Revival Books reprint, 1997, p. 45, emphases added).

Like our covenanted ancestors, we believe that these Covenants were originally sworn as "everlasting covenants" and that their binding obligation extends throughout the duration of the moral person.

#### **A definition of the term "moral person".**

In his *Defense Departed*, Mr. Bacon inadequately describes a moral person as follows,

The term "moral person" may present just a bit of confusion to those not familiar with seventeenth century ecclesiology. By "moral person" the Steelite document refers to all those who are part of a covenantal "unit." Thus a family, a church, and a nation are all moral persons because God treats with them as they are covenanted units. I suppose a school or a business could be a moral person if the right conditions were met, though I have not seen any Steelite literature extending the term in that way (*Defense Departed*).

While Mr. Bacon gives a vague and general idea of this important concept, his description is so woefully inadequate that I believe it would be profitable to acquaint the reader with a more competent explanation. In so doing, we can better understand in what sense these covenants are called "everlasting."

Pastor David Scott explains:

1. Ecclesiastical and national societies are moral persons. By a moral person I mean that each of these kinds of society has an understanding and a will of its own, by which it perceives, deliberates, determines and acts. An individual person, is one that has the power of understanding and willing; the name moral person is therefore applied to a society, having an understanding and a will common to the whole body, by which, though made up of a vast number of individuals, it possesses the power of knowing, deliberating, determining, and acting. A moral person may enter into contracts and covenant obligations; and these are as valid when entered into, as the covenant obligations of individual persons. Being moral persons, churches and nations are capable of entering into covenant with God; and that it is their duty to do so, I have demonstrated in the preceding section. **Such obligation, when constituted agreeably to the will of God, are necessarily perpetual; for it is not the individuals merely of which the society consists, but the society itself, as a moral person, that covenants. In the case of personal covenanting, no one will question that the covenant obligation extends throughout the whole life of the individual; the same principle prevails in relation to social covenanting: the obligation extends throughout the duration of the moral person.**

2. The church is a permanently existing body. It has undergone, indeed, several changes in its external administration, but it is the same now that it was when first constituted. The church in the wilderness of Sinai is identical with the church in the days of Adam and Eve, and continues still the same moral person in the nineteenth century. The removal by death of individual members, does not destroy the identity of the moral person, which remains unaffected by the removal of a thousand generations. Covenant obligation entered into by the church, in any given period, continues of perpetual obligation throughout all succeeding generations, and that too, on the recognized principle that the church continues the same moral person.

3. National society does not possess an undying constitution like that of the church, it may be dissolved; and history presents a vast number of instances of the entire dissolution of nations. But the obligation created by national covenanting, extends throughout the duration of the society, because it is a moral person; and if the perpetuity of the obligation may be limited, it is limited only by the moral person ceasing to exist (David Scott, *Distinctive Principles of the Reformed Presbyterian Church*, 1841, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 61-63, emphases added).

Add to this the teaching of Thomas Houston where he further explains the nature of federal obligations:

The principle of continued or transmissible federal obligation is not liable to the objections that have been urged against it, and is no novelty. We do not make our ancestors a sort of federal head as Adam was to the human family, when we allege that our posterity are bound by their engagements. This is altogether a misrepresentation of the argument on the subject. **The descending obligation of the public covenants rests upon the essential character of organised society. It is the same party in different stages of its existence that is bound to moral obedience;** and the obligation rests in all its plenitude upon the community as the same moral agent, until the whole matter of the engagement be fulfilled (Thomas Houston, *A Memorial of Covenanting*, 1857, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 35,

emphases added).

From the source above, we learn that Covenants were "everlasting" in the sense that they bind those societies who take them for the duration of their existence, or until the intended ends of the Covenants are accomplished and maintained. In other words, the covenant obligation is as perpetual as the society that takes them. To this day, the societies who took the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant* continue to exist (as moral persons), and consequently, continue to be bound by all the terms and obligations of these promises. That these covenants were sworn on our behalf in the seventeenth century is as irrelevant as if they had been sworn in the twentieth century. Mr. Bacon shows his ignorance of the relevant issues when he asks, "Are you seriously suggesting that not aligning ourselves with a 17th century document is sinful?" He needs to explain exactly why he is no longer a part of the moral person of the Church of Jesus Christ descending from the Covenanted Church of Scotland (or the posterity of the Nation of Britain), before he can convince us that these covenants no longer bind us. That I am sure he could never do.

### **The deep pit of covenant breaking.**

Those who follow Mr. Bacon's teaching walk together hand in hand within the deep pit of covenant breaking. From this pit they look up at those who plead with them to climb out, and call us "the separatists." "Come down into this pit with us," they cry. "You schismatics, don't you see it's a sin to stay separate from us? Can't you see that for hundreds of years, most of the nations have joined us down here? How can we be wrong when all the churches and ministers are ignoring the promises made to our Master? Every scholar would have to be wrong for you to be right. Join us, or we will try to set everyone down here against you." From atop the pit we say, "Brethren, you have fallen into a deep pit and we desire to be with you, except we have seen light at the top and our King has shown us the way out. We are not boasting that we are better than you. We are only pleading with you to come and see what God has graciously given. Our forefathers marked the way for us before we were born and God's Word has given us the light to see their landmarks. Those with you have moved these landmarks in order to keep you in the pit, but we can show you where they are and help you out. We cannot return to you but you must return to us (Jer.15:19). We cannot join you in the deep pit of covenant breaking, but rather you must come join us so that we might have unity in the light of the sun. This is the place where our forefathers dwelt. Come join us and keep the promises made to our Master. Tell the others and bring the whole nation with you so that we can dwell together in peace. The table is set, and we go now to His table of communion. Please climb out now and eat and drink with your brothers. They reply, "Are you seriously telling us that we must keep our fathers old promises? Our fathers are long dead and we have sailed to another land where few have even heard of these promises. Surely those actual promises don't apply to us any more. We admit that these promises are good examples and strong reminders of what our Master requires, but you want us to keep the traditions of men. You want us to climb out using the same path as our forefathers. Just because they did it that way doesn't mean we have to. We are wiser than you, and have not invented new rules to keep people from our table - down here we are more tolerant and therefore we enjoy great unity. You are nearly alone, and we are all against you. Return to us, enjoy our meal and we will forgive you for climbing out of the pit." Finally, we respond, "We must go now for our Master calls. We will continue to call out to you as we go, but today you must hear our voice - for if you reject it now, it will grow faint as we walk away. Soon you will become so angry with us that you will not even hear the

words we say - your railing will drown out the sound of our voice in your ears, and what will become of you then? We have invented no new rule, but rather we are simply calling you to keep the Master's old rule. It is He who told our fathers to make their promises. It is He who tells us that they are still binding. And it is He who tells us to keep our promises. We will continually knock on our Master's door and plead with Him to show you your error, but we warn you that His patience will not last forever. Soon He will come and reckon your account. He will ask why you did not climb out of the pit? Why you did not listen to the truth? Why you are persecuting His children? In that day you will be ashamed before the piercing eyes of the Judge. We only desire our Master's approval and your fellowship in the light. Come brethren, stop fighting with us, and follow the footsteps of the flock. Climb out of the deep pit of covenant breaking."

**The General Assembly of Scotland did not mince words with those who tried to dispense with their "everlasting covenant" obligations - they call it "Antichristian" and "never practised by any but that man of sin."**

August 6, 1649.

Although there were none in the one kingdom who did adhere to the Covenant, yet thereby were not the other kingdom nor any person in either of them absolved from the bond thereof, **since in it we have not only sworn by the Lord, but also covenanted with Him.** It is not the failing of one or more that can absolve the other from their duty or tie to Him: **Besides, the duties therein contained, being in themselves lawful, and the grounds of our tie thereunto moral, though the other do forget their duty, yet doth not their defection free us from that obligation which lies upon us by the Covenant in our places and stations.** And the Covenant being intended and entered into by these kingdoms, as one of the best means of steadfastness, for guarding against declining times: **It were strange to say that the backsliding of any should absolve others from the tie thereof** especially seeing our engagement therein is not only National, but also personal, everyone with uplifted hands swearing by himself, as it is evident by the tenor of the Covenant. From these and other important reasons, it may appear that all these kingdoms joining together to abolish that oath by law, yet could they not dispense therewith; Much less can any one of them, or any part in either of them do the same. **The dispensing with oaths have hitherto been abhorred as Antichristian, and never practised and avowed by any but by that man of sin;** therefore those who take the same upon them, as they join with him in his sin, so must they expect to partake of his plagues (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 474-475, emphases added).

Did not the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland just equate Mr. Bacon's ideas about covenanting with the man of sin? Truly the darkness of the pit of covenant-breaking makes for strange bedfellows. Sadly, those like Mr. Bacon, who so promiscuously dispense with binding oaths, find themselves in the company of those who suffer the plagues that justly attach to their sin.

And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you; I will even appoint over you terror, consumption, and the burning ague, that shall consume the eyes, and cause sorrow of heart: and ye shall sow

your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. And I will set my face against you, and ye shall be slain before your enemies: they that hate you shall reign over you; and ye shall flee when none pursueth you. And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins. And I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as iron, and your earth as brass: And your strength shall be spent in vain: for your land shall not yield her increase, neither shall the trees of the land yield their fruits. And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins. I will also send wild beasts among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your high ways shall be desolate. And if ye will not be reformed by me by these things, but will walk contrary unto me; Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish you yet seven times for your sins. And I will bring a sword upon you, that shall avenge the quarrel of my covenant: and when ye are gathered together within your cities, I will send the pestilence among you; and ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. (Leviticus 26:15-25, AV).

Now, I will endeavor to prove that the Covenants are intended for the **well-being** of the church and not the **being** of the church. This I'll do by demonstrating that the Covenanters clearly purposed to swear the covenants for the preservation and maintenance of the true church and not for the existence of it. This will demonstrate that Mr. Bacon totally misrepresents our meaning when we say it is necessary to take the Covenant of the Three Kingdoms. We mean that it is necessary for the faithfulness, preservation and maintenance of the church, but not necessary for its existence.

**b. The National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant are intended to maintain and preserve the truly constituted church (well-being), and are not intended to create a truly constituted church (being).**

#### **The Purpose of Swearing the *National Covenant*.**

1. In the preface to the *National Covenant* we read of the direct purpose of the Covenanters when they say,

...subscribed again by all sorts of persons in the year 1590, by a new ordinance of council, at the desire of the General Assembly: with a general bond **for the maintaining of the true Christian religion** and the King's person; and, together with a resolution and promise, for the causes after expressed, **to maintain the true religion...** (emphases added).

2. Later in the same document there is again a direct statement of purpose:

**In obedience to the commandment of God**, conform to the practice of the godly in former times [sounds like attainments - GB], and according to the laudable example of our worthy and religious progenitors [sounds like more attainments - GB], and of many yet living amongst us, which was warranted also by act of council, commanding a general band to be made and subscribed by his Majesty's subjects of all ranks; for two causes: one was, **For defending the true religion**, as it was then reformed, and is expressed in the Confession of Faith above written, and a former large Confession established by sundry acts of lawful General Assemblies and of Parliaments, unto which it hath relation, set down in public

Catechisms; and which hath been for many years, with a blessing from heaven, **preached and professed in this kirk and kingdom, as God's undoubted truth, grounded only upon his written word**(emphases added).

**The Purpose of Swearing the *Solemn League and Covenant*.**

1. The stated purpose of the General Assembly of Scotland for swearing the *Solemn League and Covenant*, viz., the most powerful mean for settling and preserving the true religion.

The General Assembly's approbation of the *Solemn League and Covenant*, August 17, 1643, Session 14, states:

The Assembly... All with one voice approve and embrace the same [the *Solemn League and Covenant* - GB] as the most powerful mean, by the blessing of God, for settling and preserving the true Protestant religion with perfect peace in his Majesty's dominions and propagating the same to other nations, and for establishing his majesty's throne to all ages and generations

2. The first article of the *Solemn League and Covenant* states its primary purpose, viz., the preservation of the true religion in the Church of Scotland

That we shall sincerely, really, and constantly, through the grace of GOD, endeavour, in our several places and callings, **the preservation of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland** in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, against our common enemies (emphases added).

These quotations establish the Covenanter's original intent and purpose in swearing the covenants. To use their own words: "**Let us enter in a perpetual Covenant for ourselves and our posterity, with singleness of heart, intended and sworn to be an everlasting Covenant never to be forgotten,**" for the purpose of "**settling and preserving the true Protestant religion with perfect peace in his Majesty's dominions and propagating the same to other nations, and for establishing his majesty's throne to all ages and generations.**" The PRCE intends and purposes nothing different in the taking of the Covenants than the original swearers did. Why should we alter such a godly purpose when we realize that we are still bound to these original promises? Being bound to these promises is a joy and a help to all who recognize them. These covenants do exactly what they were intended to do by promoting unity in doctrine and uniformity in practice. Truly God has been merciful to open our eyes to our past covenant breaking ways (from which, by His incomparable grace, we have repented). Having stated and demonstrated that we do not plead the necessity of taking the Covenants for the existence of the church, but rather for the preservation and maintenance of the church, we can now move on to our next consideration - that of an examination of some relevant correspondence between Pastor Price and Mr. Bacon.

**Mr. Bacon says it is not necessary to take the Covenant of the three kingdoms.**

In an email discussion between Pastor Price and Mr. Bacon on November 20, 1996,

Pastor Price wrote:

Dick, since you acknowledge you have read the material we have sent regarding covenanting and the perpetual obligation of covenants, do you agree with us or

not? What did you understand by the statement at the first meeting in Atlanta, GA: It is not necessary to take the Covenant of the three kingdoms.

Mr. Bacon replied:

I agree with 100% of what you are saying in the doctrinal and theoretical level. I also agree with 99 44/100% of what you are saying in the practical level. Also, not only I, but you and Greg [Barrow - GB] agreed to the statement that "it is not necessary to take the covenant of the three kingdoms." I still do not think it is, nor do I think the material you sent has demonstrated such a necessity.

I do not understand how Mr. Bacon can honestly say that he agrees with us 100% on a doctrinal and theoretical level and 99 44/100% on a practical level. Isn't this the same man who says that we have "erred on a principle essential to the definition of Protestantism"? Did he not call us "Steelite Popes," and "these newest children of the Pharisees?" (*Defense Departed*). How can such agreement come from one side of his mouth while with the other side he compares our doctrine to Romanists? It would seem to me that Mr. Bacon is either very poor at math or he has severely misstated his degree of agreement with us. Nevertheless, the issue on which I wish to focus at this point is that Mr. Bacon clearly stands by the statement made by the Reformation Presbyterian Church in its pretended court: "it is not necessary to take the Covenant of the three kingdoms." This statement of the RPC, like many of their statements, is unqualified and imprecise, leaving those who are considering its import in a position of guessing exactly what was meant.

When Pastor Price asked for clarification, Mr. Bacon replied evasively:

I would be happy to answer any questions you have about the implications of taking or not taking specific historical covenants, including [the - GB] *Solemn League and Covenant*. But I **probably** meant the same thing you and Greg did when you agreed to the very same phrase. Further, that question came up at our first meeting in October of 1994 and was discussed to a degree that apparently satisfied you at that time. (emphasis added)

It is true that this question did come up at our first meeting in Atlanta, GA, and it was passed with little or no discussion. I know that at the time I could not figure out why such a motion was being made at an organizational meeting. It is also true that we passed the motion in ignorance and have since publicly repented of doing so. The problem is that neither Mr. Bacon nor the Reformation Presbyterian Church have repented of doing so, and until they do, we believe them to be guilty of both obstinate covenant breaking and wilful perjury. This is the main reason for our dissociation from them.

Compare these two contrary statements,

Mr. Bacon and the Reformation Presbyterian Church say, "It is not necessary to take the Covenant of the three kingdoms."

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1638-1649), and the PRCE say, "Let us enter in a **perpetual Covenant for ourselves and our posterity**, with singleness of heart, intended and sworn to be **an everlasting Covenant** never to be forgotten," for the purpose of "settling and preserving the true Protestant religion with perfect peace in his Majesty's dominions and propagating the same to other nations, and for establishing his majesty's throne to all ages and generations." Dear reader, is it not readily apparent that

these two sentiments are at opposite ends of the spectrum?

How can these Covenanters designate their covenants as "everlasting" and "perpetual" if their obligations applied only to the generation of people who actually swore them? To describe something as **everlasting** and **perpetual** when in reality you mean **temporary** is a deception of the highest order and we would need some very compelling evidence set before us to prove that our faithful forefathers were guilty of such dishonesty. Why would they even mention their posterity if the covenants only applied to those who, in the seventeenth century, actually raised their right hand to formally swear these oaths? When Mr. Bacon states that "It is not necessary to take the covenant of the three kingdoms," does he mean that these covenants have become old and inapplicable to our times? Yes, and while he does give lip service to the Covenants' moral obligations, I will show how his neglect of its formal obligation is an error too notable to excuse. Either Mr. Bacon and the pretended presbytery of the Reformation Presbyterian Church are right and the Covenant of the three kingdoms does not intrinsically apply to the Church in Canada and the United States, or the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1638-1649), and the PRCE are right and the intrinsic obligation of the covenant of the three kingdoms does obligate and bind us to an everlasting agreement. If I can prove, as I shall do presently, that these covenants were not simply made between men and nations, but rather between men and God, then we will understand why these covenants were intended and denominated **everlasting and perpetual**. Once we understand that God is the other party in these covenants we will see why neither **time** nor **geography** will release us from the oaths made on our behalf by our covenanted forefathers. Because our promise is to God, and these covenants have been sworn in His name, we can be released from their obligation only upon the authority of God himself. **Mr. Bacon needs to prove that God has released us from this formal obligation and he needs to prove exactly how and when that happened if he hopes to maintain his argument.** To date all he has done is arrogantly declared that it is not necessary to take these covenants, and in so doing he has spoken directly contrary to the original intention of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

To prove the position that these "everlasting covenants" still morally obligate **us**, and that to uphold them is necessary to the **well-being** of the church, we must answer this question: **Who are the parties involved in the Covenant?**

**c. The covenanting parties in the National Covenant are God, the Church of Scotland, and the Nation of Scotland (inclusive of all their posterity).**

To determine who the covenanting parties are we must go directly to the Covenants themselves.

First, I cite the Act Ordaining, by Ecclesiastical Authority, the Subscription of the *Confession of Faith and Covenant [National Covenant - GB]*, with the Assembly's Declaration, to show that the covenanting parties are God Himself and the Church and Nation of Scotland.

The General Assembly considering the great happiness which may flow from a full and perfect union of this **kirk and kingdom, by joining of all in one and the same Covenant with God, with the King's Majesty, and amongst ourselves,** having, by our great oath, declared the uprightness and loyalty of our intentions in all our proceedings; and having withal supplicated his Majesty's high

Commissioner, and the Lords of his Majesty's honourable Privy Council, to enjoin, by act of council, all the lieges in time coming to subscribe the Confession of Faith and Covenant; which, as a testimony of our fidelity to God, and loyalty to our King, we have subscribed (*The National Covenant*, emphases added).

We all and every one of us under-written, protest, That, after long and due examination of our own consciences in matters of true and false religion, we are now thoroughly resolved in the truth by the word and Spirit of God: and **therefore we believe with our hearts, confess with our mouths, subscribe with our hands, and constantly affirm, before God and the whole world** that this only is the true Christian faith and religion, pleasing God, and bringing salvation to man (*The National Covenant*, emphases added).

Neither do we fear the foul aspersions of rebellion, combination, or what else our adversaries, from their craft and malice, would put upon us; seeing what we do is so well warranted, and ariseth from an unfeigned desire to maintain the true worship of God, the majesty of our King, and the peace of the kingdom, **for the common happiness of ourselves and our posterity** (*The National Covenant*, emphases added).

**The Covenanting Parties in the Solemn League and Covenant are God and the Churches of Scotland, England and Ireland, and the Nations of Scotland, England, Ireland, as well as all their posterity (in all the King's dominions).**

THE *Solemn League and Covenant*, for reformation and Defense of religion, the honour and happiness of the King, and the peace and safety of the three kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland; agreed upon by Commissioners from the Parliament and Assembly of Divines in England, with Commissioners of the Convention of Estates and General Assembly of the Church of Scotland; **approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland**, and by both Houses of Parliament, and the Assembly of Divines in England, and taken and subscribed by them anno 1643; and thereafter, by the said authority, **taken and subscribed by all ranks in Scotland and England the same year; and ratified by act of the Parliament of Scotland** anno 1644. (And **again renewed in Scotland**, with an acknowledgement of sins and engagements to duties, **by all ranks**, anno 1648, and by Parliament, 1649; and **taken and subscribed by King Charles II**, at Spey, June 23, 1650; and at Scoon, January 1, 1651) (*The Solemn League and Covenant*, emphases added).

...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 League and Covenant*, wherein we all subscribe, and each one of us for himself, **with our hands lifted up to the Most High GOD, do swear** (*The Solemn League and Covenant*, emphases added).

That we shall sincerely, really, and constantly, through the grace of GOD, endeavour, in our several places and callings, the preservation of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, against our common enemies; the reformation of religion in the

kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the Word of God, and the example of the best reformed Churches; and shall endeavour to bring the Churches of GOD in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, Confession of Faith, Form of Church Government, Directory for Worship and Catechising; **that we, and our posterity after us**, may, as brethren, live in faith and love, and the Lord may delight to dwell in the midst of us. (*The Solemn League and Covenant*, emphases added).

John Cunningham explains the nature of these covenants and their relation to the Covenant of Redemption and the Covenant of Grace as follows:

Covenanting is the exercise of either entering, in an individual or a social capacity, solemnly and formally into the Covenant of Grace, or of renewing it. From the definition it follows, that **by Covenanting men do make a covenant with God**. The renovation of a covenant is not less a covenant than was the original bond. In Covenanting is given that acquiescence in the conditions of the Covenant of Grace which is an essential of a covenant, and the free offer to enter into it being continued, acceptance in the service is enjoyed. As certainly, therefore, as that called the Covenant of Grace, is in reality a covenant, is every lawful engagement entered into by solemnly Covenanting with God possessed of the character of a covenant. But such a covenant is not distinct from the Covenant of Redemption, nor from the Covenant of Grace. It is dependent on that covenant as made with the Mediator, and consistent with it as established with men. **In all the three cases the God of grace is one of the contracting parties** (John Cunningham, *The Ordinance of Covenanting*, 1843, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 8, 9, emphases added).

John Guthrie, faithful minister of Christ (one of the 400 ministers banished by the King in 1660), explains the importance of recognizing that God is a party in the *Solemn League and Covenant*.

**But these three lands are one party, and the God of heaven is the other party;** therefore, though England should break, should Scotland also break the Covenant? It is not after this tenor: - We will endeavour reformation in these lands, but if you break, we will break also. **No; it is each man swearing for himself that he shall, in his place and station, endeavour reformation, so that if it were left all to one man, he must endeavour reformation.** For, consider the last words of the article. Each of them for himself did lift up his hands to the Most High; and so these three lands are one party, and **the other party is the God of heaven.** Consider seriously upon it, for it is the thing that you must either suffer for or sin, ere it be long, without remedy. Whatever England and Ireland have done in breaking the covenant, we say they justly must smart for it, according to the Word of God, if God in mercy prevent it not. Nevertheless, as long as there are in these lands any who keep the covenant, we are bound to keep it; and suppose there are many who had rather suffer for it than sin, as witness the many scattered flocks and shepherds in these lands - and supposing this were not, though both England and Ireland should quit it, yet Scotland is bound to it (John Howie, *Sermons Delivered in Times of Persecution in Scotland*, 1880, SWRB reprint, 1996, p. 668).

Further on in the same sermon Guthrie continues:

Now, a word to that which I mentioned before. What shall we do since these lands have broken covenant with God? I tell you that Scotland is bound to keep it, although England and Ireland have broken it; and although Scotland break it, yet Ireland and England are bound to stand to it. "Though thou Israel play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend;" that is to say, As for you at this present time, though England and Ireland have broken, yet let not Scotland so do too. Suppose there were but one family in these lands that would stand to it, and if all that family should turn their back upon it except one person, truly that person is bound to stand to it. "Choose you whom you will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Here is but a family, so that if all the kingdom should forswear the covenant, yet so long as I am master of a family, I must serve the Lord. I must not serve other gods, that is to say, we should not serve Popes nor Prelates, &c. But what if it come to this, that there be no man to bide by it at all but one man? That man is bound to keep it according to Scripture. "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only am left." From these words I conclude, though England has forsaken yet Scotland is bound; and though Scotland should forsake yet England is bound; and though both forsake yet one family is bound to stand to it. Therefore study to know your duty lest the wrath of God come upon you and your posterity. Believe these things, for our king and princes, nobles and ministers, and all the people, and our posterity, are bound to it. So I leave it to you with this: Happy is that man that shall be steadfast in the covenant, though all the rest should forsake it. But as to the persons who shall continue steadfast, God has reserved that to Himself as a piece of His sovereignty. Again, we hear not tell of a public covenant ever sworn and broken but God visibly plagued the breakers thereof (John Howie, *Sermons Delivered in Times of Persecution in Scotland*, 1880, pp. 673-674).

What could extend and transmit an obligation to posterity if swearing an everlasting covenant with God on behalf of posterity fails to accomplish the task? The evidence already presented must forcibly lead the reader to understand that the obligations of the Covenants are extended far beyond the original covenanters.

### **Mr. Bacon disputes with Thomas M'Crie.**

On December 18, 1996, Mr. Bacon wrote to Pastor Price,

Are you seriously suggesting that not aligning ourselves with a 17th century document is sinful (that seems to be what I've read thus far in both your overture and your posts)? If so, then you have made that 17th century document the rule of faith and practice. Necessity is not laid upon me to hold the traditions of men - else God shares the throne of my conscience with mortals.

Thomas M'Crie replies:

If there is any truth in the statements that have now been made, the question respecting the obligation of the British covenants is deeply interesting to the present generation. The identity of a nation, as existing through different ages, is, in all moral respects, as real as the identity of an individual through the whole period of his life. The individuals that compose it, like the particles of matter in the human body, pass away and are succeeded by others; but the body politic

continues essentially the same. If Britain contracted a moral obligation, in virtue of a solemn national covenant, for religion and reformation, that obligation must attach to her until it has been discharged. Have the pledges given by the nation been yet redeemed? Do not the principle stipulations in the covenant remain unfulfilled unto this day? Are we not as a people still bound by that engagement to see these things done? **Has the lapse of time cancelled the bond? Or, will a change of sentiments and views set us free from its tie? Is it not the duty of all friends of reformation to endeavour to keep alive a sense of this obligation on the public mind? But although all ranks and classes in the nation should lose impressions of it, and although there should not be a single religious denomination, nor even a single individual, in the land, to remind them of it, will it not be held in remembrance by One, with whom, "a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years"** (Thomas M'Crie, *Unity of the Church*, 1821, reprinted in 1989 by Presbyterian Heritage Publications, p. 200, 1821, reprinted 1989, emphases added).

Yes, Mr. Bacon, I am seriously suggesting that you align yourself with these seventeenth century covenants, and you do not have to bind your conscience to the rules of men to do it. You only have to keep a promise and own an obligation intended for your good, made by those who represented you in an everlasting covenant with God. This promise is one that God will require of you even if 354 years have passed since it was sworn. Have you forgotten Saul and the Gibeonite oath?

And Joshua made peace with them [the Gibeonites - GB], and made a league [covenant - GB] with them, to let them live: and the princes of the congregation sware unto them (Joshua 9:15, AV).

Then there was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the LORD. And the LORD answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites. And the king called the Gibeonites, and said unto them; (now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel, but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn unto them: and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah) (2 Samuel 21:1-2, AV).

Scripture says that Saul, in his zeal, and with the best of intentions, broke an approximately 400 year old covenant, made between Joshua and the Gibeonites. God was far more than "seriously suggesting;" rather, He was "definitely requiring" that Saul keep a 400 year old promise made by his forefather Joshua. God sorely punished Israel, and the whole nation had to endure three years famine for Saul's covenant breaking zeal. Is the PRCE seriously suggesting that God will hold us to a 350 year old covenant made by our forefathers? Yes! What will Mr. Bacon and his children have to suffer before he admits his sin and repents? Will his whole house have to suffer before he realizes his error? What will this covenant breaking nation have to suffer before they mend their perfidious ways? God has not changed and He will require us to pay our vows whether they were made in the seventeenth century or in 1997.

Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto (Galatians 3:15, AV).

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain (Exodus 20:7, AV).

When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee (Deuteronomy 23:21-22, AV).

#### **d. Who are the posterity referred to in the Covenants?**

Since Mr. Bacon claims that he is not intrinsically bound by these everlasting covenants, it is very important to answer this question - Who were the posterity to whom the Covenanters intended this everlasting covenant to apply? Are we in Canada and the United States included in these everlasting covenants with God? This is settled beyond all doubt when the General Assembly says that they originally intended to swear an everlasting covenant for settling and preserving peace in "**all his Majesty's Dominions.**" Obviously, this raises yet another question - Who were included among the dominions of Charles I or Charles II at the time this covenant was sworn?

#### **Canada and the United States were a part of "his Majesty's dominions" when the Covenant was sworn and consequently we are morally and formally bound to own, renew and adopt these everlasting covenants.**

I would like to thank Pastor Greg Price for allowing me to use the following draft from his forthcoming book entitled, *A Peaceable Plea or Worldwide Protestant Unity*, in response to this particular question.

Since we acknowledge that we are the individual, ecclesiastical, and national posterity of the covenanted kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland, we confess it to be our solemn duty not only to own the obligation of the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant*, but also, to renew as a public testimony our sworn duty to these covenants as God's people. For the sake of any who would question that those individuals and families of British descent, or those churches that have descended from the Presbyterian churches of the Second Reformation in Great Britain, or those nations, colonies, or territories that have directly descended from Great Britain are morally and formally bound by these solemn Covenants we offer the following brief testimony.

1. The Westminster Assembly, the Church of Scotland, and the kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland swore the *Solemn League and Covenant* on behalf of not only their living posterity, but also on behalf of all their individual, ecclesiastical, and national posterity for all ages to come.

We Noblemen, Barons, Knights, Gentlemen, Citizens, Burgesses, Ministers of the Gospel, and Commons of all sorts, in the kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland, by the providence of GOD, living under one King, and being of one reformed religion. . . after mature deliberation, resolved and determined to enter into a mutual and Solemn League and Covenant, wherein we all subscribe, and each one of us for himself, with our hands lifted up to the most High GOD, do swear. . . **we shall each one of us, according to our place and interest, endeavour that they may remain conjoined in a firm peace and union to all posterity** (*Solemn League and Covenant* [1643 - GLP], emphases added).

a. Note who the "all posterity" (as mentioned in the *Solemn League and Covenant*) includes in a letter written by the Westminster Assembly and sent to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1644):

Those Winds which for a while do trouble the Aire, do withall purge and refine it: And our trust is that through the most wise Providence and blessing of God, the Truth by our so long continued agitations, will be better cleared among us, and so our service will prove more acceptable to all the Churches of Christ, but more especially to you, while we have an intentive eye to our peculiar Protestation, and to that public Sacred Covenant [i.e. the *Solemn League and Covenant* - GLP] entered into by both the Kingdomes [Ireland is not formally omitted here, but is omitted only because this English Assembly is addressing the Scottish General Assembly - GLP], **for** Uniformity in all his Majesties Dominions (*The Acts Of The Generall Assemblies Of The Church Of Scotland* [1638-1649 inclusive], 4 June 1644, Session 7, "The Letter from the Synod of Divines in the Kirk of England, to the General Assembly", SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 231, 232. The original spelling and punctuation have been retained, emphases added).

b. Not only did the Westminster Assembly understand the "all posterity" bound by the *Solemn League and Covenant* to be "all his Majesties dominions", but the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland also officially declared the same to be true in their letter (1648) to Charles I:

As we do not oppose the restitution of your Majestie to the exercise of your Royall Power; So we must needs desire that that which is GODS be given unto Him in the first place, and that Religion may be secured before the settling of any humane interest; Being confident that this way is not only most for the Honour of GOD, but also for your Majesties Honor and Safety. And therefore as it was one of our Desires to the High and Honourable Court of Parliament that they would solite your Majestie for securing of Religion, and **establishing the Solemn League and Covenant in all your Dominions** [the *Solemn League and Covenant* having been sworn and made law by the Parliaments of England and Scotland, it was required that Charles I swear to establish it and to enforce it in all his dominions before he would be allowed to exercise his royal authority - GLP] (*The Acts Of The Generall Assemblies Of The Church Of Scotland* , [1638-1649 inclusive], August 12, 1648, Session 40, The Humble Supplication of the Generall Assembly of the Kirk of Scotland unto the Kings Most Excellent Majesty, p. 439. The original spelling and punctuation have been retained, emphases added).

c. Finally, observe that not only did these ecclesiastical bodies (namely, the Westminster Assembly and the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland) interpret the "all posterity" bound by the *Solemn League and Covenant* to be those who lived within the bounds of "all his Majesties dominions," but it was likewise interpreted to be the case by the parliament of Scotland (February 17, 1649). Furthermore, this parliament identifies the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant* to be laws that constitute the "fundamental constitution of this kingdom" which cannot be made null and void.

As likewise the manifold acts of parliament, **the fundamental constitution of this kingdom** anent [concerning - GLP] the king's oath at his coronation, which judging it necessary that the prince and people be of one perfect religion,

appointeth, that all kings and princes at the receipt of their princely authority, solemnly swear to observe in their own persons, and to preserve the religion as it is presently established and professed; and rule the people committed to their charge, **according to the will of God revealed in his word, and the loveable constitutions received within this kingdom** and do sundry other things, which are more fully expressed therein: And withal, pondering their manifold solemn obligations to endeavour the securing of religion and the covenant, before, and above all worldly interests: Therefore, they do enact, ordain and declare, **That before the king's majesty, who now is [Charles II - GLP], or any of his successors, shall be admitted to the exercise of his royal power**, he shall, by and attour the foresaid oath [i.e. the coronation oath - GLP], assure and declare by his solemn oath, under his hand and seal, his **allowance of the national covenant and of the Solemn League and Covenant, and obligations to prosecute the ends thereof**, in his station and calling. And that he shall consent and agree to acts of parliament establishing Presbyterian church-government, the Directory for Worship, Confession of Faith and Catechisms, as they are approved by the general assembly of this kirk, and parliament of this kingdom, **in all his Majesty's dominions**; and that he shall observe these in his own practice and family, and that he shall never make opposition to any of these or endeavour any change thereof. (John Thorburn, *Vindiciae Magistratus: or, The Divine Institution and Right Of The Civil Magistrate Vindicated* [Edinburgh: D. Peterson, 1773], SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 67, emphases added).

Naturally, since both of the kingdoms of England and Ireland in their national and ecclesiastical capacity also swore the *Solemn League and Covenant* (1643), the *Solemn League and Covenant* legally became a necessary element of the "fundamental constitution" of those kingdoms ("in all his Majesty's dominions") as well.

2. Is it possible to know which nations were solemnly bound as the "all posterity" by the *Solemn League and Covenant* (1643) and thus included in "all his majesties dominions?" Clearly, it was all the subjects and the dominions under the Crown of Great Britain (including the United States and Canada, both of which were then designated as "the dominions in America").

a. The first colonial Charter issued by the English crown (1606) was for the settlement of Jamestown in Virginia. Here it is noted that the colony of Virginia is declared to be one of the kings "Dominions" as much as any other royal dominion, and its members are considered by James I to have the same rights as those living in the "Realm of England."

It provided that all . . . Persons, being our Subjects [i.e. subjects of the Crown of England - GLP], which shall dwell and inhabit within . . . **any of the said Colonies and Plantations, and every [one] of their children, which shall happen to be born within any of the Limits and Precincts of the said several Colonies and Plantations, shall Have and enjoy all Liberties, Franchises, and Immunities, within any of our other Dominions to all Intents and Purposes, as if they had been abiding and born, within this our Realm of England, or any other of our said Dominions** (Cited by Clarence Carson, *Basic American Government*, [Wadley, Alabama: American Textbook Committee, 1993], p. 126, emphases added).

b. In 1663, Charles II granted a charter to eight English gentlemen who had helped him regain the throne of England. The charter document contains the following description of the territory (then designated Carolina) which the eight Lords Proprietors were granted title to:

All that Territory or tract of ground, situate, lying, and **being within our Dominions in America** (Cited on the World Wide Web page entitled, "State Library of North Carolina," <http://HAL.DCR.STATE.NC.US/ncslhome.htm>, emphases added).

c. On November 11, 1743 at Middle Octarara, Pennsylvania, Reformed Presbyterians under the leadership of Rev. Alexander Craighead renewed the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant*. They did so because they realized the colonies in America were "his majesties dominions" (as referred to by the Westminster Assembly, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and the Parliament of Scotland, cf. above), and they also realized that they were a constituent part of the "all posterity" included in the *Solemn League and Covenant*. Therefore, they were bound to own and to renew these covenants as God provided the occasion to do so in His wonderful providence.

There never was any Nation, but the Nation of the Jews and this Realm [note that these Reformed Presbyterians understood the colonies to be within the "Realm" of Great Britain and therefore bound by the national covenants of Great Britain - GLP], that were so highly honoured, as for the whole Nation to enter into Covenant with the Lord; and yet, alas! how little does the Generality of this Nation think of this unspeakable Dignity! how many slight it! yea, how many look upon our National Covenants as a Yoke of Bondage, as if it were a Bondage to come under the most solemn Vows imaginable, to appear for God and his Cause, and against his Enemies? That which our renowned Forefathers gloried in as their greatest Honour and Happiness, we in this corrupt Age, do grievously despise, which discovers what base Spirits we are of, that delight more to be in League with the avowed Enemies of God's Glory, than with himself. . . . And thus our holy Covenants, National and Solemn League, discover themselves **to be perpetual and of constant Obligation upon this Realm**[including the colonies of America - GLP].

1. By their being National in their nature, as is plain from themselves, and so **had the Power of the Nation to confirm them.**

2. By the Terms of them, as appears from several Sentences in the Covenants. [1]. The National [Covenant - GLP], towards the latter End of it, which is as follows, 'And finally being convinced in our Minds, and confessing with our Mouths, that the present and succeeding Generations in this Land, are bound to keep the aforesaid National Oath and Subscription inviolable.' Again, 'We therefore faithfully promise for ourselves, our Followers, and all under us, both in public and in our particular Families and personal Carriage, to endeavour to keep ourselves, &c.'

[2]. From the first Paragraph in the *Solemn League and Covenant*, which is as follows, 'That we and our Posterity after us, may as Brethren, live in Faith and Love, and that the Lord may delight to dwell in the Midst of us!'

3. That these Covenants are perpetual, and of a constant binding Power over this Realm, is further evident by their Agreeableness to the holy Word of God; that they are so, few who call themselves Presbyterians deny; yea, we know of none that ever did or can prove them to be otherwise (Rev. Alexander Craighead, *Renewal of the Covenants* [Middle Octorara, Pennsylvania, 1743], SWRB reprint, 1995, pp. 12, 13).

d. It is certainly worthy of note that the faithful body of Reformed Presbyterians designated as the Reformed Presbytery of Scotland issued a public testimony (entitled *Act, Declaration, and Testimony for the Whole of our Covenanted Reformation*, which testimony was originally emitted in 1761) of the fact **that in one of the dominions of his majesty, namely Canada, Great Britain had violated its covenant obligations by permitting popery to be established as a religion within Quebec** This Reformed Presbyterian body (the Scottish heirs to the Covenanted Reformation as articulated by the Westminster Assembly) clearly understood Canada, a dominion of Great Britain, to be bound by the same covenant obligations as was Great Britain herself.

[T]here has, of late, [been - GLP] a very singular instance of the same kind occurred [i.e an instance of the exercise of tyrannical civil power - GLP], in the course of administration, which the presbytery cannot forbear to take notice of, but must embrace the present opportunity to declare their sense of, and testify against; and especially, as it is one that carries a more striking evidence than any of the former, of our public national infidelity and licentiousness, and of our being judicially infatuated in our national counsels, and given up of heaven to proceed from evil to worse, in the course of apostasy from the cause and principle of the reformation. We particularly mean the instance of a late bill or act, which has been agreed upon by both houses of parliament, and which also, June, 1774, was sanctioned with the royal assent, entitled "**An act for making more effectual provision for the government of the province of Quebec in North America.**" By which act, not only is French despotism, or arbitrary power, settled as the form of civil government, but, which is still worse, popery, the Religion of Antichrist, with all its idolatries and blasphemies, has such security and establishment granted it, as to be taken immediately under the legal protection of the supreme civil authority of these nations **in that vast and extensive region of Canada, lately added to the British dominions of North America** . . . How disgraceful and dishonourable is this public act in favour of popery, even to the nation itself, and its representatives, who are the authors of it. How palpably inconsistent is it with our national character and profession as Protestant, and with our national establishments, civil and ecclesiastical (both which are professedly built upon reformation from popery), to come to take that idolatrous religion under our national protection, and become defenders of the antichristian faith; nay, were it competent for the presbytery as a spiritual court, and spiritual watchmen, to view this act in a civil light, they might show at large, that it is a violation of the fundamental national constitutions of the kingdom [the *Solemn League and Covenant* became a legal and necessary element of the fundamental constitution of Great Britain in 1643 - GLP], and reaches a blow to the credit of the legal security granted to the Protestant religion at home. We need not here mention how contrary this act is to the fundamental laws and constitutions of the kingdom of Scotland [cf. what is said by the Parliament of Scotland concerning the *National*

*Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant* being enacted as a legal and necessary element of the fundamental laws and constitution of that kingdom - GLP], which are now set aside. But it is contrary to, and a manifest violation of the Revolution and British constitution itself; contrary to the Claim of Right, yea, to the oath solemnly sworn by every English and British sovereign upon their accession to the throne, as settled by an act of the English parliament in the first year of William III. By which they are obliged to "profess, and to the utmost of their power maintain, in all their dominions [**here, again, the Reformed Presbytery notes that Canada is within the dominion of Great Britain-** GLP], the laws of God, the true profession of the gospel, and the true reformed religion established by law." But these things the presbytery leave to such whom it may more properly concern. Let it, however, be observed that the presbytery are not here to be interpreted as approving of the abovesaid oath, as it designedly obliges to the maintenance of the abjured English hierarchy and popish ceremonies, which might better be called a true reformed lie, than the true reformed religion. Nevertheless, this being the British coronation oath, it clearly determines that all legal establishments behoove to be Protestant, and that without a violation of said oath, no other religion can be taken under protection of law but what is called Protestant religion only (*The Reformed Presbytery, Act, Declaration, and Testimony*, [1761], SWRB reprint, 1995, pp. 82, 84, emphases added).

e. In a document written by Thomas Jefferson entitled "A Summary of the Rights of British America", the following brief reference to an Act from King George III demonstrates that even those living in America understood they were a dominion of his majesty.

One other act passed in the 6th year of his reign [George III - GLP], entitled "An Act for the better securing dependency **of his majesty's dominions in America** upon the crown and parliament of Great Britain." (Cited from the World Wide Web page at: [gopher://gopher.vt.edu:10010/02/106/8](http://gopher://gopher.vt.edu:10010/02/106/8), emphases added).

f. The following excerpts occur in the newspaper that Benjamin Franklin published in Philadelphia (*The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*) wherein reference is made to colonies in what is now Canada and the United States as being dominions of the Crown.

In considering of these questions, perhaps it may be of use to recollect; **that the colonies were planted in times when the powers of parliament were not supposed so extensive**, as they are become since the Revolution: - That they were planted in lands and countries where the parliament had not then the least jurisdiction: - That, excepting the yet infant colonies of Georgia and Nova Scotia, none of them were settled at the expense of any money granted by parliament: That the people went from hence by permission from the crown, purchased or conquered the territory, at the expense of their own private treasure and blood: **That these territories thus became new dominions of the crown, settled under royal charters, that formed their several governments and constitutions**, on which the parliament was never consulted; or had the least participation. Jan. 6, 1766 (Cited from the World Wide Web page at: [gopher://gopher.vt.edu:10010/02/85/28](http://gopher://gopher.vt.edu:10010/02/85/28), emphases added).

The Colonies had, from their first Settlement, been governed with more Ease, than

perhaps can be equalled by any Instance in History, **of Dominions so distant.**  
February, 1773 (Cited from the World Wide Web page at:  
gopher://gopher.vt.edu:10010/02/85/28, emphases added).

We would further affirm that just as the lawful covenant of a father binds all his children presently living as well as those yet to be born ("Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?" Mal. 2:10), likewise the lawful civil covenants of national parents bind their national progeny. For if one is willing to grant that the lawful covenant of a father can bind any of his descendants, he must be willing to grant that the same lawful covenant binds all of his descendants, for the same moral obligation that rests upon any one descendant rests upon all descendants. Thus, it follows that the United States and Canada as nations (and all other national descendants of Great Britain) are children of Great Britain and are bound by the lawful covenant (i.e. the *Solemn League and Covenant*) of their national father solemnly sworn with uplifted hands to the living God in 1643 and renewed on various occasions in Scotland and the United States by Reformed Christians. Samuel B. Wylie (1773-1852), Pastor of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, noted the personal, ecclesiastical, and national obligations binding those living in America. He cogently responds to several objections raised concerning the formal obligations of covenants made by fathers on behalf of their posterity.

Objection 2: "But these covenants [i.e. the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant* - GLP], for which you contend, were only oaths of allegiance [to Scotland and Britain - GLP], and, consequently, can have no obligation, when you remove to a foreign land."

Ans. It will be admitted, that they were oaths of allegiance; but it was primarily to the Governor of the universe, and secondarily to the government . . . . With respect to the first, let us examine whether any of those circumstances, which can dissolve allegiance [to God - GLP], has actually taken place. Allegiance may cease, by any of the three following means: First, by the dissolution of the dynasty, or government, when things revert to an original state of nature. Second, by emigration. Allegiance and protection being reciprocal, when the latter is no longer necessary, the former, of consequence, ceases. Third, by breach of the mutual compact, on the part of the government. This compact, being necessarily involved in the relation between the governed and the governor, ceases to bind the former, when violated and broken through the latter. Has any of these things taken place, to dissolve our allegiance to the Supreme Ruler? . . . The oath of allegiance to the government of Britain, even were it morally constituted, however, ceases [because we have met the second condition mentioned of above, namely that of emigration from Great Britain to another nation - GLP]. The conditions, on which it was entered into, no longer exist. Seeing we have emigrated from that country, the obligation, of course, is null and void. But, our relation to God still remains the same. And even by that part of the covenant, which respects allegiance to government, we hold ourselves still so far bound, that, whenever we find legitimate rulers, in the land where we live, we will consider the duty of subjection, for conscience sake, not only as a moral duty, required by the divine law, but also, as a duty unto which we are bound by covenant.

Obj. 3. "But these covenants were local, and required the performance only of

local duties, and consequently, are not obligatory in other lands."

Ans. The objection is virtually answered, in removing the one immediately preceding [i.e. objection 2 - GLP]. It is admitted, there are local peculiarities connected with the substance of these covenants. For these local peculiarities, we do not contend. In our terms of communion, adapted to our existing circumstances, in the United States, when recognising the obligation of these covenants, we declare, that "This obligation is not to be considered as extending to those things which are peculiar to, and practicable only in, the British isles; but only to such moral duties, as are substantially the same in all lands." Whatever things in these bonds were of a circumstantial nature, as we have hinted above, may vary with a change of circumstances. But our relation to GOD, is not a circumstantial or local thing. Love to GOD, and our neighbour, will still continue obligatory, though some circumstances, connected with the expression and exercise of it, may, and often do, vary.

Obj. 5. "These covenants were national, and so have no obligation on individuals, when they cease to be members of the national community who entered into them."

Ans. Had the duties, contained in these covenants, been only of a temporary, local, or circumstantial nature, this objection would be relevant. But we have endeavoured, above, to shew, that these bonds contemplated the duties of the moral law, which is obligatory upon all men.... But here we might enquire, of what is a nation composed? Is it not of individuals? Can a nation be nationally bound, and the individuals not be individually bound? To what is the nation nationally bound? Is it not, to yield a cheerful obedience to all GOD's holy and divine commandments, in their national character? Is not the individual individually bound to do the same, in his individual character? If he is thus bound in Britain, does the soil of Colombia loose him of all obligation to, and make him independent of, the Moral Governor? In as far as this moral obligation is concerned, between national and personal covenanting, there is only a numerical difference. In the latter, one individual is personally bound; in the former, three, four, or five millions of individuals, are personally bound. If individuals are not personally bound, they are not bound at all. To talk of an individual being [only - GLP] nationally bound would be a solecism [i.e. an error - GLP] worthy of the greatest blunderer (Samuel B. Wylie, *A Sermon on Covenanting*, SWRB, 1997, pp. 109-112).

Rev. John Cunningham, a Reformed Presbyterian minister from Scotland also drew attention to the perpetual obligation of the *Solemn League and Covenant* upon the nations and churches descending from the Scotland, England, and Ireland.

Being scriptural in its [i.e. the *Solemn League and Covenant* - GLP] matter, and not yet implemented, and besides, having been acquiesced in by the civil power, it is to this day binding on the nations; to this day it binds the Churches in the three kingdoms, the Church of Scotland, and all those who have seceded from it as an establishment, as well as those Presbyterians who never were connected with that Church since the Revolution [the Revolution of 1689 in which William and Mary came to the throne of Britain - GLP] (John Cunningham, *Ordinance of Covenanting*, 1843, SWRB, 1997, pp. 374, 375).

The Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America at its meeting in 1855 clearly elaborated the binding obligation of the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant* upon the posterity in the United States. Although the Reformed Presbyterian Church had by this time defected from some of the testimony of its forefathers (the *Auchensaugh Renovation*, and the **Act, Declaration, and Testimony** as terms of communion), nevertheless, it yet maintained at this point in time a faithful testimony to the binding obligation of these covenants.

These federal deeds [i.e. the *National Covenant* of Scotland and the *Solemn League and Covenant* of the three kingdoms - GLP] we hold to be moral in their nature and scriptural in their character, and that they descend with unabated obligation from the original covenanters to their posterity who were represented in the taking of them; and whilst we abjure any fealty or subjection to the government of that nation with which they were originally connected [i.e. Great Britain - GLP], we now joyfully own and take for ourselves the God-honoring and God-honored place which such obligations impose, as the priceless legacy of our pious ancestors, whose faith we would follow, and whose noble example we would imitate. . . . We approve, moreover, the devotion and faithfulness of our pious predecessors, who, amidst weakness and reproach, from time to time, renewed these sacred bonds, and so contributed to perpetuate and transmit them to us, their posterity. Deploring, therefore, the sin of the profane rejection of these covenants, and their subsequent wide-spread neglect, desiring to be free from any participation in its guilt, seeking to confirm our own souls in a godly purpose of devotion to the service of our God Most High, and to encourage all who shall follow us in our testimony, to hold fast in his ways, we resolve to renew the *National Covenant*, and *Solemn League and Covenant*, in all their obligations, not peculiar to the church in the British Isles, but applicable in all lands, and essentially interwoven in the immutable law and word of our God (The Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, *Form of Covenant Renovation*, 1855, pp. 8, 9).

Pastor Thomas Houston, D.D., pastor of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Knockbracken, also confirms the perpetual obligation of these solemn covenants upon posterity when he writes,

On the ground of the moral character of our fathers' federal deeds [namely, the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant* - GLP], they may be regarded as, in some sort, obligatory upon other Churches and nations, besides those that can trace their descent directly from the original covenanters. And certainly, those who have sprung from the same stock, and who in America, or in the distant colonial dependencies of Britain, owe much of the scriptural light and freedom which they enjoy to the principles developed in the sacred vows of Britain, and to the blessing that has remarkably rested upon a nation, which was married to the Lord, have peculiar reasons to view these covenants as worthy of all admiration, and devoted regard (Thomas Houston, *A Memorial of Covenanting*, 1857, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 68).

And finally, we would draw the attention of our readers to the following words which demonstrate the attitude of faithful Reformed Presbyterians in the United States as it

relates to their moral obligation to own formally the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant*.

To some it may appear strange, that a Church located in the United States of America should give such prominence as it did to the British Covenants [i.e. the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant* - GLP]. Living in another continent, and having no political [present - GLP] connection with Britain, on what ground was this matter embodied in the Testimony, and acknowledgment of the Covenants made obligatory on the members [i.e. members of the Reformed Presbyterian Church which was established as its own church court in 1798 - GLP]? In answer to this it will be sufficient to quote the fourth term of Communion, as adopted by the American Church. It is to this effect: "An acknowledgment that public covenanting is an ordinance of God, to be observed by Churches and nations under the New Testament Dispensation, and that those Vows, namely, that which was entered into by the Church and Kingdom of Scotland, called the *National Covenant*, and that which was afterwards entered into by the three kingdoms, England, Scotland, and Ireland, and by the Reformed Churches in those kingdoms, usually called the *Solemn League and Covenant*, were entered into in the true spirit of that institution; and that **the obligation of these Covenants extends to those who were represented in the taking of them, although removed to this or any other part of the world, in so far as they bind to duties not peculiar to the Church in the British Isles, but applicable to all lands.**" This amounts, we presume, simply to this - that the essential principles of the Covenants concerning liberty and religion, the reciprocal duties of nations and rulers, and the obligation which both owe to Christ as Governor among the nations, were binding on American Churches and on American citizens who were of British origin (Matthew Hutchison, *The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland*, 1893, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 406, 407, emphases added).

(This ends Pastor Price's faithful contribution to this particular question. This writer would like to publicly thank him for his gracious assistance in this regard.)

Next, Mr. Bacon claims he is only morally bound to the covenants and that these covenants have no formal obligation in and of themselves, while the PRCE affirms that we are morally **and** formally bound to the covenants.

In his *Defense Departed* Mr. Bacon says,

So, then, we account the *Solemn League and Covenant* **an edifying historical document** which contains in it several moral duties. But **we deny that the existence of moral duties within a document binds subsequent generations** of the church to the historical and accidental aspects of the document. As Calvin said, these things should be "accommodated to the varying circumstances of each age and nation." It should further be noted that whatever in a document is a moral duty is a moral duty so far and only so far as it is a direct application of God's moral law (*Defense Departed*).

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 (Jeremiah 50:6, AV, emphases added).

Thomas M'Crie replies:

Some of the principles on which it has been attempted to loose this sacred tie are so opposite to the common sentiments of mankind, that it is not necessary to refute them: **such as, that covenants, vows and oaths, cannot superadd any obligation to that which we are previously under by the law of God** and, that their obligation on posterity consists merely in the influence of example (Thomas M'Crie, *Unity of the Church*, 1821, reprinted in 1989 by Presbyterian Heritage Publications, p. 197).

Regarding the necessity of formally taking the *Solemn League and Covenant*, Mr. Bacon shows how he judges this Covenant to be little more than a godly example and an edifying historical document, materially applicable only to the seventeenth century, but not formally binding upon us today.

So the Steelite turns **that which was good and useful and lawful for the church of Scotland to use in time of national and ecclesiastical distress** to that which is nothing more than the imposition of traditions upon the conscience (*Defense Departed*).

Here Mr. Bacon alleges that the Covenants were sworn **simply** to provide a remedy for a temporary and national emergency.

Thomas M'Crie replies to this common objection saying,

The permanent obligation of the Solemn League results from the permanency of its nature and design, and of the parties entering into it, taken in connection with the public capacity in which it was established...**the emergency which led to the formation of the covenant is one thing, and the obligation of the covenant is quite another; the former might quickly pass away, while the latter may be permanent and perpetual.** Nor is the obligation of the covenant to be determined by the temporary or changeable nature of its subordinate and accessory articles. Whatever may be said of some of the things engaged to in the Solemn League there cannot be a doubt that in its great design and leading articles it was not temporary but permanent. Though the objects immediately contemplated by it - religious reformation and uniformity - had been accomplished, it would still have continued to oblige those who were under its bond to adhere to and maintain these attainments. But unhappily there is no need of having recourse to this line of argument; its grand stipulations remain to this day unfulfilled (Thomas M'Crie, *Unity of the Church*, 1821, reprinted in 1989 by Presbyterian Heritage Publications, p. 195, emphases added).

#### **e. The Essence of Covenants - Intrinsic Obligation**

Mr. Bacon asserts:

Whether we speak of the moral duties, the moral and perpetual obligations, or the moral substance, we refer only and always to that which is binding on the conscience because it is from God's moral law (*Defense Departed*).

Pastor Greg Price responds:

We affirm that we are not only morally bound to own and renew the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant* because they are agreeable to the Word of God, but we acknowledge that we are formally bound to own and renew these biblical covenants as well because they were made on our behalf. In other

words, we are not only bound by these covenants because what is contained within them is agreeable to God's moral law, but we are further bound to these covenants because they were sworn on our behalf as their posterity. For if only the fathers who originally made the covenant were formally bound by the terms of the covenant, then the posterity could never be accused of having broken the covenant of their fathers - they could only be accused of breaking God's moral commandments. But time and time again, the posterity are accused of breaking not only the moral commandments of God, but also of breaking the covenant of the fathers. That is simply to say that if the covenant of our fathers only morally binds us, then we are only guilty of transgression of the law of God contained therein. However, if the covenant of our fathers both morally and formally binds us, then in addition to our transgression of God's law, we are guilty of perjury as well. Thus, we have seriously aggravated our guilt by formally breaking the covenant of our fathers. That it is true that national covenants made with God formally bind the posterity is evidenced from Scripture (Greg Price, Draft from a forthcoming SWRB publication entitled, *A Peaceable Plea for Worldwide Protestant Unity*).

Archibald Mason adds:

The lax and prevailing sentiment by which this truth [of solemn covenant obligations - GB] is opposed, is the following. Religious covenants are not formally, but only materially [or morally - GB] binding. They have no real obligation in themselves, but we are bound to the duties therein, because these duties are required in the moral law. **[Is this not Mr. Bacon's exact argument? - GB]** This dangerous opinion appears to be imbibed by many professed witnesses for the Covenanted Reformation, by the influence of which, they seem to be precipitated into the gulf of **public apostasy from these principles**, which they formerly espoused. It is impossible for a person to believe it, without entertaining a secret contempt of religious vows, oaths and covenants; and it is impossible for him to act upon it, without being involved in a practical opposition to them. . . . If this opinion were true, the house of Israel and the house of Judah could not be charged with breaking the covenant: they might be charged with breaking the Lord's law; but he could not have said, they have broken my covenant. If Israel's covenant with God did not bind them, by an intrinsic obligation, their iniquity could not be a breach of the covenant, but only a transgression of the law; nor could it be any way criminal from the relation it had to the covenant, but only from the reference it had to the law. We may easily know what to think of an opinion, which necessarily renders the charges the Lord brings against His backsliding people, absurd and unjust - Were this opinion true, there could be no such thing among the children of men, as the sins of perfidy [i.e. breach of promise - GB], covenant-breaking or perjury. Though we may pledge our veracity, by religious promises and vows unto God, if there is no [formal - GB] obligation in them, there can be no perfidy, or breach of faith in our disregarding them. Though we may join ourselves to the Lord in a solemn covenant, if that deed brings us under no obligation to fulfil it, the sin of covenant-breaking can have no existence. Though we should enter into an oath to walk in the Lord's law, if this oath is not binding in itself, how can the sin of perjury, or despising the oath of God, be charged upon us. We are certain that these sins are mentioned in the Word of God, and that they are committed by men; but this opinion destroys them forever - Were this sentiment right, then all the solemn acts of believers as individuals, and of the church as a body, are rendered void and useless to all intents and purposes. **Of**

**what use are promises, vows, oaths and covenants, if there is no obligation in them? If obligation to performance is refused to them, their very essence is destroyed.** The mind cannot think on any of those transactions without considering an obligation to do as we have said, vowed or sworn as essential to their being. **Promises, without an obligation to fulfil them, vows, without an obligation to pay them, oaths, without an obligation to perform them, and covenants, without an obligation to keep them, are monsters both in divinity, and in morals, which are created by this more monstrous opinion-** It is also the native import of this doctrine, that Christians are under no other obligation to duty, after they have promised, vowed and sworn unto the Lord, or covenanted with him, than they were before they engaged in these solemn and holy transactions. The man who [like Mr. Bacon - GB] can believe this, there is great reason to fear, is actuated by a desire to break the bands of the Lord and His anointed, and to cast away their cords from him. These things both show the gross error of this sentiment, and serve to confirm the truth of the contrary doctrine (Archibald Mason, "Observations On The Public Covenants," 1821, pp. 40, 41, an appendix in *The Fall of Babylon the Great*, SWRB reprint, 1997, emphases added).

And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them (2 Kings. 17:15, AV).

They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, which refused to hear my words; and they went after other gods to serve them: the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers (Jeremiah 11:10, AV).

**Moral obligation without formal obligation is precisely what Mr. Bacon pleads for. This, in essence, destroys the whole concept of covenanting.**

In a December 18, 1996 email correspondence with Pastor Price, Mr. Bacon tells us exactly what he considers to be the moral and perpetual obligation of the *Solemn League and Covenant*:

As far as the moral and perpetual obligations of the *Solemn League and Covenant*, I find them fully spelled out in the documents produced by the Assembly, including the Confession, Catechisms, Form of Presbyterian Church Government, and Directory for the Public Worship of God, etc. And I adhere completely to those moral and perpetual obligations (attainments, if you prefer) (*Defense Departed*).

It is notable that Mr. Bacon failed to include the Acts of General Assembly in his list, but I will deal with that distinctly in the forthcoming misrepresentations. For now, we must observe that Mr. Bacon has failed to acknowledge that the swearing of the *Solemn League and Covenant*, in and of itself, created an intrinsic obligation, real and distinct though not separated nor separable from the law of God.

Samuel Rutherford observes that swearing such a covenant is a moral duty and that the omission of it is sinful.

To lay bands of promises and oaths upon a back-sliding heart, is commanded in the third Command, and is not Judicial, Gen. 14:22. Gen. 28:20. Psal. 132:2. Psal. 76:22. And this is sinful omission of a morally obliging duty, and morally obliging one man: so it obligeth a Nation, as affirmative precepts do: **and this smells of Anabaptism to cry down all Gospel-vows** (Samuel Rutherford, *A Survey of the Survey of that Summe of Church Discipline*, 1658, p. 482, SWRB reprint, 1997, emphases added).

Though a man may live and die a Christian without ever swearing or owning a particular national Covenant, Rutherford explains that failing to do so (in a covenanted land) is a sin of omission against the third commandment. The sin is committed when one fails to do all that can be done to restrain a backsliding heart, be it individual or national.

To illustrate the error Mr. Bacon is promoting I ask the reader to consider the following hypothetical situation.

A certain man finds himself backsliding and given over to misrepresenting the beliefs of others. He knows that this is a violation of the ninth commandment and he desires to repent of these foul deeds. He has learned that a lawful remedy to such sin can be found in making a personal covenant with God. Consequently, he swears an oath to God promising to endeavour to carefully read and listen to his opponent's arguments before publicly assaulting and misrepresenting them. Having done this he recognizes that he has laid a new obligation upon himself that is real and distinct though not separated or separable from God's Law. God, by means of the third commandment has instructed him that he would be negligent in not doing everything possible to keep himself from this sin. Understanding this, he views his personal covenant as a way of restraining himself from sin by using the means God has prescribed in His Law. Thus, his personal covenant is neither separated nor separable from God's third commandment. Next, this man knows that he was already bound by the ninth commandment before he took his personal covenant. What then did he accomplish by personally swearing to bind himself to something he was already entirely bound to keep? He voluntarily engaged himself to a specific duty required in God's Law and called upon God Himself to witness his self-engagement. By this act, he formed a new and distinct moral and perpetual obligation which did not exist before his swearing of the covenant. He **superadded** an obligation that is **subordinate** to God's law because it depended upon following the third and ninth commandments. It is for this reason that we can say that this covenant is real and distinct from God's Law. **A new perpetual and moral obligation was formed that could either distinctly be kept or broken** Prior to making his personal covenant this man would be guilty of breaking the ninth commandment every time he misrepresented someone. However after making this self-engagement, he would be guilty of **adding** covenant breaking and perjury to the crime of bearing false witness. A greater band has now been laid upon him to restrain him from wantonly committing this crime. A greater chastisement will follow the violation of his promise, and conversely, a greater reward will attend his faithful keeping of it.

Thomas Houston explains:

The grand and fundamental ground of a religious covenant is the moral law. **The law of God alone can bind the conscience** No oath or bond is of any force that is opposed to it.... **The obligation of the law of God is primary and cannot be increased - that of a voluntary oath or engagement is only secondary and**

**subordinate.** By the Divine law, we are obliged to the performance of duty whether we choose it or not - by covenants we voluntarily bind ourselves.... where the vows made respect duties enjoined by the law of God, they have a intrinsic obligation of the highest and most constraining kind (Thomas Houston, *A Memorial of Covenanting*, 1857, SWRB , 1997, p. 29, emphases added).

Returning to the previously noted hypothetical situation, we see in light of Thomas Houston's concise explanation, that the vow taken by the man given over to misrepresenting others is no new rule of duty, but a new bond to make the law of God his rule. This intrinsic obligation of covenanting applies to all lawful covenants made by man and it is the very essence of all covenants. Once a new bond is sworn **an additional obligation** is formed that can either be kept or broken. This is what happened when the *Solemn League and Covenant* was sworn. This intrinsic obligation is what Mr. Bacon is attempting to avoid when he says "it is not necessary to take the covenant of the three kingdoms." He says he is willing to be bound by the Law of God, but he sees no reason to actually own a seventeenth century covenant any further than that. He believes this covenant to be an edifying historical document that lawfully served its purpose for that particular situation and time. He believes it to be a faithful example, but sadly, to him, it serves only as a mere acknowledgement and reminder that God's law requires obedience and perhaps that extreme circumstances call for more drastic remedies. I think it is safe to say that Mr. Bacon does not think the swearing of the *Solemn League and Covenant* has added any new obligation to himself personally or to the Reformation Presbyterian Church corporately. The same moral and perpetual obligations that existed before the *Solemn League and Covenant* was sworn are precisely the same moral and perpetual obligations to which he is bound after it was sworn: no less, no more. By his reckoning the swearing of the *Solemn League and Covenant* was simply a restatement of already existing moral obligations sworn in an agreement only applicable to the then existing generation. To Mr. Bacon no new, real and distinct, superadded, perpetual obligation was formed when the *Solemn League and Covenant* was sworn. By his reckoning there is no way for Mr. Bacon or anyone else in 1997 to break the actual *Solemn League and Covenant* itself. This is what he is saying when he says that, "it is not necessary to take the covenant of the three kingdoms."

Commenting upon the distinct nature of superadded covenant obligations Thomas Houston explains the error of Mr. Bacon's position:

**But, moreover, religious covenants have an obligation distinct and peculiar. Although the authority of God, expressed in his law and speaking through his word, is supreme and cannot possibly be increased, there may be a superadded obligation on a man's conscience to respect and obey His authority, arising from his own voluntary oath or engagement.** This is easily illustrated. We are bound at all times to speak the truth, and to fulfil our promises and federal engagements. If an oath is taken to declare the truth, this adds nothing, it is true, to the authority of the law; but it brings the person swearing under an additional obligation to speak the truth. This does not increase the original obligation; and yet it may be properly regarded as a new and different obligation. An oath is enjoined by Divine authority, and cannot therefore be useless. When properly taken, it is important and valuable. **Before the oath was taken, if a person deviated from the truth, he was simply guilty of lying - but afterward, if he speaks falsely, he has added to his sin the crime of perjury. In the**

**former case, he rebelled against the authority of God - in the latter, he violates both the authority of God and repugns the obligation of his oath.**The usages of all civil society confirms the doctrine of superadded obligation, arising from oaths and voluntary engagements; and regards perjured persons and covenant breakers as aggravated criminals. It has been justly observed, that a, "**Covenant does not bind to anything additional to what the law of God contains, but it additionally binds.**" (William Symington, *Nature and Obligation of Public Vowing*, p. 22). This superadded obligation of vows oaths and covenants is plainly recognized in Scripture, (See Numbers xxx. 2; Deut. xxiii. 21; Eccles. v. 4,5). Divine threatenings distinctly specify, as a separate ground of punishment, breach of covenant, in addition to the transgression of God's law. (Thomas Houston, *A Memorial of Covenanting*, 1857, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 29, 30, emphases added).

The PRCE believes that a superadded obligation was formed when the *Solemn League and Covenant* was taken. As a result, this obligation, superadded and subordinate to God's law, could now be either broken or kept. By entering into this everlasting covenant, our covenanted ancestors voluntarily engaged themselves and their posterity to God and thus we now must formally own, adopt and renew both the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant*. The obligations, intrinsic to both covenants, cannot be ignored without violating our forefathers agreement with God. This is the reason we say, contrary to Mr. Bacon, that it is necessary to take, own and renew the covenants of the three kingdoms. Please understand that swearing a covenant is not making a new law, neither is it more directly placing ourselves under the law of God (which is impossible), nor is it establishing ourselves in some new relation to God's law. God has strictly commanded us to keep his entire law and it would be foolish to infer that a mere man, by swearing a covenant, could add some new relation to the law of God which He has not already required. To imply such a thing is to strike at the perfection of the law of God, at the perfection of God Himself, and consequently at the perfectly finished work of Jesus Christ. We, like our representative forefathers, are not inventing a new rule of law; rather, we voluntarily engage ourselves to make God's law our rule. Understanding the nature of our voluntary engagement and the intrinsic moral-perpetual obligation of covenants is critical to understanding why we (and all moral persons represented in the covenants) must uphold both covenants in 1997. Mr. Bacon errs when he teaches that it is not necessary to take the covenants of the three kingdoms because he has not properly considered their intrinsic obligation. His misunderstanding of the fundamental concept involved in all covenanting lies at the heart of his error and is one of the prime causes of his gross misrepresentation of our position. As long as Mr. Bacon continues in his present misapprehension of this truth he will fall under the faithful censure of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and we will faithfully honor their ruling and remain withdrawn from him.

On July 27, Session 27, 1649, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland declared: Albeit the League and Covenant be despised by the prevailing party in England, and the work of Uniformity through retardments and obstructions that have come in the way, be almost forgotten in these kingdoms, yet the obligation of that Covenant is perpetual, and all the duties contained therein are constantly to be minded, and prosecuted by every one of us and our posterity. (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 460).

Similarly, on August 6, 1649, they say:

It is no small grief to us that the Gospel and Government of Jesus Christ are so despised in the land, that faithful preachers are persecuted and cried down, that toleration is established by law and maintained by military power and that the Covenant is abolished and buried in oblivion. All which proceedings cannot but be looked upon as directly contrary to the Oath of God lying upon us and therefore we cannot eschew his wrath when he shall come in judgment to be a swift witness against those who falsely swear against His name (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 472-473).

In 1643 the *Solemn League and Covenant* was sworn and a superadded obligation was formed. This obligation bound the moral persons of Church and Nation for the duration of their existence. Consider the following argument framed by John Brown of Haddinton as he explains how the intrinsic obligation of the covenants constitute their very essence and how these obligations are real and distinct though not separated or separable from God's law. **When our nations' ministers understand the implications of this point, they will be much closer to mending their covenant breaking ways.**

The intrinsic obligation of promises, oaths, vows, and covenants which constitutes their very essence or essential form, is totally and manifestly distinct from the obligation of the law of God in many respects.

1. In his law, God, by the declaration of his will as our supreme Ruler, binds us, Deut. xii. 32. **In promises, vows, covenants, and promissory oaths, we, as his deputy-governors over ourselves, by a declaration of our will, bind ourselves with a bond, bind our souls with our own bond, our own vow** Num.. xxx. Psalm lxvi. 13.15. & cxix. 106. &c.

2. **The obligation of our promises, oaths and covenants is always subject to examination by the standard, of God's law, as to both its matter and manner, I Thess. v. 12. But it would be presumption, blasphemous presumption, to examine, Whether, what we know to be the law of God be right and obligatory, or not,** James iv. 11,12. Isa.. viii. 20. Deut. v. 32.

3. The law of God necessarily binds all men to the most absolute perfection in holiness, be they as incapable of it as they will, Matth. v.48. I Pet. i. 15, 16. No man can, without mocking and tempting of God, bind himself by vow or oath to any thing, but what he is able to perform. No man may vow to do anything which is not in his own power, and for the performance of which he hath no promise of ability from God. But, no mere man since the fall is able, in this life either in himself or by any grace received from God, perfectly to keep the commandments of God, Eccl. vii. 23. James iii.2. While God remains God, his law can demand no less than absolute perfection in holiness. While his word remains true, no mere man since the fall, in this life, can possibly attain to it; and therefore ought never to promise or vow it. The least imperfection in holiness, however involuntary, breaks the law of God, and is even contrary to the duty of our relative stations of husbands, parents, masters, magistrates, ministers, wives, children, servants or people, I John iii. 4. Rom.. vii. 14, 23, 24. **But it is only by that which is, in**

some respect, voluntary sinfulness, that we break our lawful vows, Psal. xlv. 47. **Nothing can more clearly mark the distinction of the two obligations, than this particular. There is no evading the force of it, but either by adopting the Arminian new law of sincere obedience, or by adopting the Popish perfection of saints in this life.**

4. The law of God binds all men forever, whether in heaven or hell, Psal.. cxi. 7, 8. No human law or self-engagement binds men, but only in this life, in which they remain imperfect, and are encompassed with temptations to seduce them from their duty. In heaven they have no need of such helps to duty, and in hell they cannot be profited by them. The obligation of lawful promises, oaths, vows and covenants, as well as of human laws, respecting moral duties, however distinct is no more separable from the obligation of God's law, than Christ's two distinct natures are separable, the one from the other, but closely connected in manifold respects. **In binding ourselves to necessary duties, and to other things so long and so far as is conducive thereto, God's law as the only rule to direct us how to glorify and enjoy him, is made the rule of our engagement. Our vow is no new rule of duty, but a new bond to make the law of God our rule.** Even Adam's engagement to perfect obedience in the covenant of works was nothing else. His fallibility in his estate of innocence, made it proper, that he should be bound by his own consent or engagement, as well as by the authority of God. Our imperfection in this life, and the temptations which surround us, make it needful, that we, in like manner, should be bound to the same rule, both by the authority of God, and our own engagements. It is in the law of God, that all our deputed authority to command others, or to bind ourselves is allotted to us. The requirement of moral duties by the law of God obligeth us to use all lawful means to promote the performance of them; and hence requires human laws and self-engagements, and the observance of them as conducive to it. Nay they are also expressly required in his law, as his ordinances for helping and hedging us in to our duty. In making lawful vows, as well as in making human laws we exert the deputed authority of God, the supreme Lawgiver, granted to us in his law, in the manner which his law prescribes, and in obedience to its prescription. In forming our vows as an instituted ordinance of God's worship, which he hath required us to receive, observe, and keep pure and entire, Psal.. lxxvi. 11. & cxix. 106. & lvi. 12. Isa.. xix. 18, 21. & xlv. 23, 24. & xlv. 5. Jer. 1. 5, 2 Cor. viii.5, - we act precisely according to the direction of his law, and in obedience to his authority in it, - binding ourselves with a bond, binding our soul with a bond, Num. xxx. 2-11 - binding ourselves by that which we utter with our lips ver. 2, 6, 12, - binding ourselves with a binding oath, - binding ourselves - binding our soul by our own vow - our own bond, ver. 4,7,14. In forming our vow, we, according to the prescription of his own law, solemnly constitute God, who is the supreme Lawgiver and Lord of the conscience, - the witness of our self-engagement, and the Guarantee, graciously to reward our evangelical fulfilment of it, and justly to punish our perfidious violation of it. The more punctual and faithful observation of God's law, notwithstanding our manifold infirmities and temptations, and the more effectual promotion of his glory therein, is the end of our self-engagements, as well as of human laws of authority. And by a due regard to their binding force, as above stated, is this end promoted, - as hereby the obligation of God's law is the more deeply impressed on our minds, and we are shut up to obedience to it, and deterred from transgressing it. - In consequence of our formation of our vow, with respect

to its matter, manner, and end, as prescribed by God, He doth, and necessarily must ratify it in all its awful solemnities, requiring us by his law, to pay it as a bond of debt, - to perform and fulfil it as an engagement to duties, and an obligation which stands upon or against us, Num. xxx. 5, 7, 9, 11. with Deut. xxiii. 21-23. Psalm lxxvi. 11. & 1. 14. Eccl. v.4, 5. Mat. v. 33. In obedience to this divine requirement, and considering our vow, in that precise form, in which God in his law, adopts and ratifies it, and requires it to be fulfilled, we pay, perform, and fulfil it as a bond, wherewith we, in obedience to Him, have bound ourselves, to endeavour universal obedience to his law, as our only rule of faith and manners. Whoever doth not, in his attempts to obey human laws or to fulfil self-engagements, consider them as having that binding force which the law of God allows them; he pours contempt on them, as ordinances of God, and on the law of God for allowing them a binding force. **Thus, through maintaining the superadded but subordinate obligation of human laws, and of self-engagements to moral duties, we do not make void, but establish the obligation of God's law.** The obligation of a vow, by which we engage ourselves to necessary duties commanded by the law of God, must therefore be inexpressibly solemn. Not only are we required by the law of God before our vow was made; but we are bound in that performance, to fulfil our vow, as an engagement or obligation founded in the supreme authority of his law warranting us to make it. We are bound to fulfil it as a mean of further impressing his authority manifested in his law, upon our own consciences, - as a bond securing and promoting a faithful obedience to all his commandments. We are bound to fulfil it, in obedience to that divine authority, by derived power from which, we as governors of ourselves made it to promote his honour. In those or like respects, our fulfilment of our vows is a direct obedience to his whole law. We are moreover bound to fulfil it, as a solemn ordinance of God's worship, the essential form of which lies in self-obligation, and must be received, observed, kept pure and entire, and holily and reverently used, and so in obedience to Command I. II. III. We are bound to fulfil it, as an ordinance of God, in which we have pledged our own truth, sincerity and faithfulness and so in obedience to Command IX. I. II. III. We are bound to fulfil it, as a solemn deed or grant, in which we have made over our persons, property, and service to the Lord and his Church; and so in obedience to Command I. II. VIII. nay, in obedience to the whole law of love and equity, Mat. xxii. 37, 39. & vii. 12. We are bound to fulfil it from regard to the declarative glory of God, as the witness of our making of it, that he may appear to have been called to attest nothing, but sincerity and truth; and so in obedience to Command I. III. IX. We are bound to fulfil it from a regard to truth, honesty, and reverence of God, as things not only commanded by his law, but good in themselves, agreeable to his very nature, and therefore necessarily commanded by him, - and from a detestation of falsehood, injustice, and contempt of God, as things intrinsically evil, contrary to his nature, and therefore necessarily forbidden in his law; and thus in regard to his authority in his whole law, as necessarily holy, just and good. We are bound to fulfil it, from a regard to the holiness, justice, faithfulness, majesty, and other perfections of God, as the Guarantee of it, into whose hand we have committed the determination and execution of its awful sanction, - as the gracious rewarder of our fidelity, or just revenger of our perfidy, - and hence in regard to our own happiness, as concerned in that sanction. In fine, we are bound to fulfil it in obedience to that command of God, which adopts and ratifies it, requiring us to pay, fulfil, or perform our vow, oath or covenant, Psal. L. 14. & lxxvi. 11. Eccl. v.

4. Deut. xxiii. 21, 23. Mat. v. 33.

**In violating such a vow, We do not merely transgress the law of God, as requiring the duties engaged, before the vow was made. But we also rebel against, and profane that divine warrant, which we had to make our vow. We profane that authority over ourselves in the exercise of which we made the vow, and consequentially that supreme authority in God, from which ours was derived; and so strike against the foundation of the whole law.**

We manifest a contempt of that law, which regulated the matter and manner of our vow. We profane the vow, as an ordinance of God's worship, appointed in his law. By trampling on a noted mean of promoting obedience to all the commands of God, we mark our hatred of them, and prepare ourselves to transgress them, and endeavour to remove the awe of God's authority and terror of his judgments from our consciences. We blasphemously represent the Most High as a willing witness to our treachery and fraud. We pour contempt on him, as the Guarantee of our engagements, as if he inclined not, or durst not avenge our villainy. Contrary to the truth and faithfulness required in his law, and pledged in our vow, we plunge ourselves into the most criminal deceit and falsehood. Contrary to equity, we rob God and his Church of that which we had solemnly devoted to their service. Contrary to devotion, we banish the serious impression of God's adorable perfections. Contrary to good neighbourhood, we render ourselves a plague and curse, and encourage others to the most enormous wickedness. Contrary to the design of our creation and preservation, we reject the glory of God, and obedience to his law from being our end. Meanwhile, we trample on the ratification of our vow, by the divine law in all its awful solemnities, and manifold connections with itself, - and requirement to pay it.

**It is manifest, that our covenanting ancestors understood their vows in the manner above represented. They never represent them as mere acknowledgments of the obligation of God's law, or as placing themselves in some new relation to God's law, or more directly under any command of it.** But declare that a man binds himself by a promissory oath to what is good and just. It cannot oblige to sin; but in any thing not sinful, being taken, it binds to performance. **By a vow we more strictly bind ourselves to necessary duties.** And, in expressions almost innumerable, they represent the obligation of their vows as distinct and different, though not separable from the law of God. They no less plainly declared, that no man may bind himself by oath to any thing, but what he is able and resolved to perform; - no man may vow any thing which is not in his own power, and for the performance of which he hath no promise of ability from God. And in their several forms of covenant, they never once pretend to engage performing of duties in that absolute perfection which is required by the law of God, - **but sincerely, really, and constantly to endeavour the performance of them** (John Brown of Haddinton, *The Absurdity and Perfidy of all Authoritative Toleration*, 1803, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 120-127, emphases added).

While it isn't necessary to take the *Solemn League and Covenant* to become a Christian, it is necessary to own it in a land that is formally bound to this everlasting covenant with God. Once this covenant was sworn it formed an obligation that became a test of Christian faithfulness and a subordinate and secondary rule of faith agreeable to God's Word. The intrinsic obligation of the *Solemn League and Covenant* is real and distinct. Ignoring it or

railing against it will not make it disappear. Many Covenanters and their children died telling us to take this seriously, and all who have now read this can no longer claim ignorance of what God will require at the last day. All who ignore these just claims of God are without excuse.

**Covenant breaking is a heinous sin.**

Suffice it here to warn and indict covenant breakers in the words of our venerable ancestors.

August 20, Session 15, 1647 A declaration and Exhortation of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland to their brethren of England  
Yet we should betray our own sense and betray the truth if we should not resent so great a sin and danger as is the breach of a solemn Covenant, sworn with hands lifted up to the most high God: which breach however varnished over with some colourful and handsome pretexts, one whereof is the Liberty and Common Right of the free people of England, as once Saul brake a Covenant with the Gibeonites in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah. Yet God could not then, and cannot now be mocked; Yea it is too apparent and undeniable, that among those who did take the Covenant of the three kingdoms, as there are many who have given themselves to a detestable indifferency or neutrality, so there is a generation which has made defection on the contrary part; persecuting as far as they could that true reformed religion, in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, which by the Covenant they ought to preserve against the common enemies; hindering and resisting the Reformation and Uniformity, which by the Covenant ought to be endeavored; preserving and tolerating those cursed things which by the Covenant ought to be extirpated (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland* [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 333-334).  
O ye seed of Israel his servant, ye children of Jacob, his chosen ones. He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth. Be ye mindful always of his covenant; the word which he commanded to a thousand generations (1 Chronicles 16:13-15, AV).

**f. Do the circumstantial details of the Solemn League and Covenant bind us?**

Moving on to a different aspect of our present debate, I wish to allow Pastor Price to address Mr. Bacon's concerns relating to the circumstantial details of the *Solemn League and Covenant*. Since our dear pastor had already completed this task, I saw no reason to duplicate his work.

Mr. Bacon states:

The Reformation Presbyterian Church thus has maintained and continues to maintain that the Westminster documents which we have adopted were (see Westminster Bibliography - Bacon) transacted upon the basis of the moral obligations of the *Solemn League and Covenant*. The moral and perpetual obligations of the *Solemn League and Covenant* are met and fulfilled insofar as a church commits itself to those just requirements of God's word. The human constitutions by which those commitments are met may vary from 1643 Scotland to 1997 North America. (*Defense Departed*).

Pastor Price responds,

Are there circumstantial details within these covenants that do not apply to the United

States and Canada? Yes, there are (e.g. the United States has neither king nor parliament, nor national church; Canada has no national church; neither the United States nor Canada as nations acknowledge their obligation to the *Solemn League and Covenant*). But that which is circumstantial does not alter the moral obligations contained within these lawful covenants.

If there is any thing in these instruments [i.e. the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant* - GLP], of a circumstantial nature, we admit it may vary with the circumstances which produced it: but whatever is moral, will remain as permanent as these nations, and as unchangeable as the great Legislator [i.e. the Lord God Himself - GLP] (Samuel B. Wylie, *A Sermon on Covenanting*, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 98).

Consider that when the covenanted nations of Israel and Judah were sent into captivity, they also were unable to keep certain circumstantial elements of the covenant made with their fathers (e.g. they had no king from among their brethren to reign over them, they had no national church, they were unable to keep the worship required in the Law as long as they were separated from the temple and Jerusalem), and yet God preserved a faithful remnant of covenant keepers even in the land of their captivity (e.g. Ezekiel, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-nego, Esther, Mordecai, etc.). How did they keep the covenant of their fathers? They obeyed all of the terms of the covenant that were yet applicable to them while in captivity. All those in captivity were yet formally bound by the covenant of their fathers (despite the circumstantial differences that existed in captivity). Some (like Ezekiel, Daniel, etc.) were covenant keepers while others were enduring the divine curses God had promised to bring upon them for breaking the covenant of their fathers ("And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant. . . I will scatter you among the heathen" Lev. 26:15,33). Observe that Ezekiel makes clear that Israel in captivity could not escape the formal bond of the covenant: "And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant" Ez. 20:37. Calvin's exposition of this verse further evidences that Israel (in captivity) was yet formally bound by the covenant of their fathers and not only morally bound to the law found in the covenant. For Calvin distinguishes between the covenant that formally bound Israel, but did not so bind the Gentiles. Whereas, if God were only speaking of the moral law contained in the covenant, that would equally bind the Gentiles as well.

Hence, the bond of the covenant means the constancy of his covenant, as far as he is concerned: and the simile is suitable, because God had bound his people to himself, on the condition that they should be always surrounded with these bonds. Hence, when they petulantly wandered like untamed beasts, yet God had hidden bonds of his covenant: that is, he persevered in his own covenant, so that he collected them all again to himself, not to rule over them as a father, but to punish their revolt more severely. Here is a tacit comparison between the Israelites and the Gentiles; for the Gentiles, through their never approaching nearer to God, wandered away in their licentiousness without restraint. But the state of the elect people was different, since the end of their covenant was this, that God held them bound to him, even if the whole world should escape from him (John Calvin, *Commentaries On Ezekiel* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1979], p. 332).

Moreover, the faithful covenanters in Scotland, England, and Ireland (of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) could certainly have maintained that certain circumstances mentioned in the *Solemn League and Covenant* no longer applied to them, and therefore they were no longer formally bound to keep it (e.g. when Cromwell ruled as Lord Protector there was no king; or under Charles II and James II the *Solemn League and Covenant* was burned and made illegal; or after 1707 Scotland and England became one nation, etc.). But such evasions were always the proposed excuses on the part of covenant breakers as to why they were not formally obligated to own or to renew either the *National Covenant* or the *Solemn League and Covenant*. The faithful words of the Covenanted and Presbyterian General Assembly of the Church of Scotland should put all such evasions to flight.

Albeit the League and Covenant [i.e. *The Solemn League and Covenant* - GLP] be despised by that prevailing party in England, and the Work of Uniformity, thorow [through - GLP] the retardments and obstructions that have come in the way, be almost forgotten by these Kingdoms, **yet the obligation of that Covenant is perpetual, and all the duties contained therein are constantly to be minded, and prosecute by every one of us and our posterity, according to their place and stations** (*The Acts Of The Generall Assemblies Of The Church Of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], 27 July 1649, Session 27, "A seasonable and necessary Warning and Declaration, concerning Present and Imminent dangers, and concerning duties relating thereto; from the Generall Assembly of this Kirk, unto all the Members thereof," SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 460, emphases added. The original spelling and capitalization have been retained).

(Pastor Price's response ends here, and again I would like to thank him for his faithful work and gracious assistance in this matter.)

## **Positive application of the Covenants to modern times and circumstances.**

### **Covenant Renewal.**

I readily admit that many circumstances have changed from 1643 to 1997. Many circumstances had also changed from 1643 to 1651. The unity of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland was broken and the reigning power had fled the country. Control was in the hands of the conquering usurper Oliver Cromwell. Did this radical change in circumstances change the obligation of the Covenants? Did the intrinsic obligation to own and renew the Covenants suddenly fly away when Cromwell usurped power? Is it true that, "the human constitutions by which those commitments are met may vary from 1643 Scotland to 1997 North America," as Mr. Bacon argues?

If he means that we are to swear **new** covenants, entirely distinct from the *Solemn League and Covenant*, to meet our changing circumstances, then I emphatically say he greatly errs. If he means that we ought to faithfully renew the *Solemn League and Covenant*, recognizing its intrinsic moral obligation, while applying it to contemporary circumstances, then I wholeheartedly agree. This is what was done in Auchensaugh, Scotland (1712) and again in Philadelphia (October 8, 1880). The title of the Auchensaugh deed is instructive of its purpose and pertains directly to this question of accommodating the *Solemn League*

*and Covenant* to our time and position respectively.

The title reads:

The Auchensauigh Renovation of the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant* with the Acknowledgment of Sins and Engagement to Duties as they were Renewed at Auchensauigh, near Douglas, (compared with the editions of Paisley, 1820, and Belfast, 1835). Also the Renovation of these Public Federal Deeds, ordained at Philadelphia, October 8, 1880, by the Reformed Presbytery, with Accommodation of the Original Covenants, in both transactions, to their times and positions respectively.

From this it is readily observable that the Reformed Presbytery intended to accommodate the original Covenants to the time in which they lived. They faithfully recognized their intrinsic moral obligation by holding to the original promises, and they also explicitly testified against any group who unfaithfully attempted to imitate a covenant renewal while evading its moral-perpetual obligation.

We adhere to the Renovation of the National Covenants at Auchensauigh, 1712, as comprising the same grand Scriptural principles with the original deeds, and preserving the identity of the moral person, which became more visible in 1761 by a Judicial Testimony. Re-exhibited in 1858 and 1876. We repudiate the Renovation at Dervock, 1853, as being inadequate, defective, and unfaithful - part of the document couched in abstract and evasive and equivocal language. Also we condemn and reject the Pittsburgh Bond [the present bond of the RPCNA - GB] as ambiguous, self contradictory and treacherous - "a snare on Mizpah" (The Reformed Presbytery of America, *Act of Adherence to our Covenants, National and Solemn League; as adapted to the present time*, emphases added).

**Alexander Henderson agrees with the Reformed Presbytery (the so-called Steelites).** Do the so-called Steelites teach the same doctrine of covenant renewal as the men of the Second Reformation? In answer to this query, I think there is none better to turn to than **the elder statesman of the Scottish commissioners sent to the Westminster Assembly.** Surely Alexander Henderson would give us a true impression of what was intended in the renewing of the *National Covenant* as he preached on the occasion of swearing the Covenant at St. Andrews in early April of 1638.

In his sermon upon Psalm 110:3, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, in the beauty of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of Thy youth,"

Henderson proclaims:

And indeed ye have just reason to be willing now.

Because it is God's cause ye have in hand, and it is no new cause to us. **It is almost sixty years old; it is no less since this same Confession of Faith was first subscribed and sworn to [1580-81 - GB]. And it has been still in use yearly to be subscribed and sworn to in some parts, among those in this land, to this day.** And I think it would have been so in all parts of the land if men had dreamed of what was coming upon us. Whatever is added to it at this time, it is nothing but an interpretation of the former part; and if men will be willing to see the right, that they may see that there is nothing in the latter part but that which may be deduced from the first. And in the keeping of a Covenant we are not found

to keep only these same words that were before, **but we must renew it; and in the renewing thereof we must apply it to the present time when it is renewed, as we have done, renewed it against the present ills** (Alexander Henderson, *Sermons, Prayers, and Pulpit Addresses*, 1638, p. 21, SWRB bound photocopy reprint, 1996, emphases added).

**Henderson's doctrine of covenant renewal is exactly the same as the Reformed Presbytery and the PRCE.** What is Mr. Bacon's doctrine of covenant renewal? He thinks the seventeenth century covenants should stay in the seventeenth century, and the renewal of our father's covenants are not included in his doctrine or his practice. Rather, he seems to be intent in slandering all attempts to accomplish that godly end by hurling aspersion at those who promote it. Notice in the above sermon that Henderson says that the Covenant is now almost sixty years old, and yet it was still being subscribed in some parts of Scotland on a yearly basis. **He urges his flock to renew it, by making application to the present time, that it might strengthen the church of Christ against the devil's wiles** I am very thankful for the Reformed Presbytery, who upheld the same doctrine which Henderson here teaches. If our nation were presently full of ministers like those found in the Reformed Presbytery, we would not so readily wallow in the confusion of the modern day malignants. Men such as Mr. Bacon will have us believe that the so-called "Steelites" taught something different than the great reformers of the Second Reformation, and it is abundantly evident that such a sentiment is grossly inaccurate. Now, dear reader, you have hard evidence to prove who is telling the truth. Mr. Bacon's portrayal that we have no intention of accommodating these covenants to meet our present circumstances is now exposed. The PRCE presently owns both bonds, and is currently working on a Covenant Renewal to accommodate and adapt these original covenants to our time and circumstances respectively. We pray that God will send faithful labourers to strengthen our hands in this complex and difficult task. Moreover, those, like Mr. Bacon, the RPCNA (the pretended Covenanters) or most other so-called Reformed Presbyterians, who wish to avoid or adulterate the intrinsic obligation of these faithful bonds will of course be welcome - only let them first repent and make proper restitution for their past covenant breaking, perjury and present slander against the true Covenanted remnant. Mr. Bacon wishes us to believe that he is a staunch advocate of public covenanting when he says:

The issue between the Steelites and the rest of the body of Christ is not whether we today should practice the ordinance of public covenanting. Not only do the Steelites believe public covenanting is for our present day, so too does the RPC and the RPCNA. In reality every church that practices baptism believes in public covenanting. It is not so clear and central with others of God's people, but when we baptize we are covenanting publicly in an engagement to be the Lord's (*Defense Departed*).

David Steele comments:

The only plausible objection offered by opponents to the doctrine and practice of public social covenanting is taken from the assumption, that it is superceded by the sacraments, especially the Lord's Supper. The assumption has never been proved, and is utterly groundless, as will at once appear to any unbiased mind, by considering that God instituted all three forms of taking hold of his covenant. If it be so that baptism and the Lord's Supper are substantially the same seals of the covenant as circumcision and the passover; then the consequence is inevitable, that

as the whole people of Israel were taken and engaged to God at Sinai, he judged the two preceding forms incomplete. And since the privileges of God's covenant people are enlarged - not abridged, under the New Testament dispensation, and that public covenanting was a matter of frequent prediction and promise under the Old dispensation; it follows that this instrumentality is to be continued and exemplified (*The Two Witnesses*, 1859, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 27)

It is true that our baptismal vow includes the solemn duty of public covenanting, and I would never want to downplay its importance or obligation. The question is whether or not Mr. Bacon's practice of public covenanting in baptism exonerates him from the further duty of renewing the other covenants he is already formally bound to uphold. Alexander Henderson, in the above cited sermon (preached at the renewal of the *National Covenant*), answers this question:

Now is there any of you but ye are obliged to be holy? Ye say that ye are the people of the Lord. If so be, then ye must have your inward man purged of sin, and ye must stand at the stove's end against the corruption of the time, and ye must devote yourselves only to serve and honor God. And your Covenant, that ye are to swear to this day obliges you to this; and it requires nothing of you but that which ye are bound to perform. And therefore, seeing this is required of you, purge yourselves within, flee the corruptions at the same time, eschew the society of those whom you see to be corrupt, and devote yourselves only to the Lord. Yet this is not that we would oblige you to perform everything punctually that the Lord requires of you; there is none who can do that, but promise to the Lord to do so, tell him that ye have a desire to do so, and say to him, Lord, I shall earnestly endeavour to do as far as I can. And, indeed there is no more in our covenant but this, that we shall endeavour to keep ourselves within the bounds of our Christian liberty; **and albeit, none of you would swear to this, ye are bound to it [the *National Covenant* - GB] by your baptism.** And therefore, think not that we are precisians (or these who have set down this Covenant), **seeing all of you are bound to do it** (Alexander Henderson, *Sermons, Prayers, and Pulpit Addresses*, 1638, p. 23, SWRB bound photocopy reprint, 1996, emphases added).

Henderson declares that by baptism we are already bound to the obligation of the Covenant. To him these ideas were joined together like husband and wife rejoicing side by side in the beauty of holiness (1 Chron. 16:29). The one entering in by the washing of regeneration (Tit 3:5, Heb 10:22) and the other endeavoring righteousness and peace with the solemnity of a promise (Rom. 4:13, 2 Pet. 3:13). He argues that neglecting to swear to that to which they were already bound would be contradictory and sinful. To neglect the one while enjoying the other would mar the beauty of both. Each proclaim the glory of God and together they promote unity of purpose and desire for holiness.

Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other (Psalms 85:10, AV).

Whereas Henderson would marry these two ideas together, Mr. Bacon would counsel separation. The covenant made at baptism does not allow us to evade our duty as Mr. Bacon seems to imply; rather our baptismal covenant (in a covenanted land) binds us to further uphold our other lawful Covenant obligations laid upon us by our faithful forefathers (in the same manner as parents obligate their children in baptism). I

acknowledge that Mr. Bacon believes that public covenanting is for the present day. The problem is that he does not recognize his entire Covenant obligation, as taught by Henderson in the above sermon. Like Mr. Bacon, those to whom Henderson spoke were already covenanted by virtue of their baptismal vows, but Henderson evidently believed that there existed an additional obligation to **renew** this sixty year old promise. According to Mr. Bacon's doctrine, Henderson should have been content to let the National Covenant die a natural death due to the fact that he was already promoting social covenanting through baptismal vows. According to Mr. Bacon, Henderson is making this sort of emphasis upon a covenant renewal too "clear and central" in his system of doctrine. Does the taking of a baptismal vow alter the necessity of renewing other previously binding covenants which are agreeable to the Word of God? Not according to Henderson. On the other hand, Mr. Bacon is again mixing his apples and oranges - leading others astray by teaching half-truths. His alleged advocacy for public covenanting falls far short of the faithful example set by the ministers of the Second Reformation. In view of this clear evidence, I cannot see how Mr. Bacon will ever again dare say that he adheres to the doctrine taught and practiced by the Second Reformation Scots regarding covenanting or covenant renewals. It is one thing to say that, "I believe in public covenanting," and quite another to understand the faithful application of the doctrine. Sadly, Mr. Bacon appears to properly understand neither, and it is grievous that he would pass on such ignorance to others. **He needs to publicly repent of what he has written. Under the pretence of upholding public covenanting he has in reality upheld covenant-breaking, and counselled others to follow him in his stiffnecked violation of the third commandment.**

Now be ye not stiffnecked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you (2 Chronicles 30:8, AV).

#### **h. The negative sanction of the Covenants - Withdrawal, censure and separation.**

Has the PRCE "un-churched" all who will not take the covenant as Mr. Bacon falsely claims?

On his church's web page, under the heading of the Necessity of the Covenants, Mr. Bacon represents the PRCE as having "un-churched" all who do not adopt the *Solemn League and Covenant*. As seems to be his practice when slandering others, Mr. Bacon fails to give us a precise definition of the term "un-churched". His sinful and unscholarly lack of precision leaves us wondering (again!) what he is attempting to say. Does he mean "un-churched" as to **being** or "un-churched" as to **well-being**? If, in the future, Mr. Bacon would provide us with a clear definition of what he means by this term perhaps it could then be properly dealt with. As it stands, his present charge is unqualified, undefined, and therefore meaningless. As such, it only serves to further demonstrate his readiness to uncharitably and imprecisely rail at others.

Though it is not presently possible to determine the exact nature of Mr. Bacon's charge, I do think it is wise to briefly discuss dissociation and separation as they pertain to our solemn covenants.

We follow the practice of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1638-1649) and censure (bar from the Lord's Supper), or withdraw, from all those who will not own

their Covenant obligations. Though withdrawal or censure (depending upon the circumstance) removes one from a close and intimate communion with the PRCE, it does not mean that those who are thus dealt with are no longer deemed Christians. As it pertains to the Covenants it simply means that those who are thus censured, or withdrawn from, are considered unfaithful Christians or churches who need to repent of covenant breaking and perjury.

Consider the many Acts of the General Assembly of Scotland from 1638 to 1649 inclusive, (subordinate and agreeable to God's Word) which confirm us in our actions of withdrawing from, or censuring all, who will not take, own and adopt their binding Covenant obligations in this nation.

**Covenant Subscription is a Term of Communion for all members of Church and State (in a Covenanted nation) - An examination of the Acts of The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1638-1649 inclusive).**

1. Act Ordaining the subscription of the *Confession of Faith* and the *Covenant* (1639).

We by our Act and Constitution ecclesiastical do approve the foresaid Covenant in all the heads and clauses thereof and ordains of new, **under all ecclesiastical censure**, that the masters of universities, colleges, and schools, all scholars at the passing of their degrees, all persons suspect of papistry or any other errors; and **finally all the members of this Kirk and Kingdom, subscribe the same** (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 87, emphases added).

2. August 8, Session 6, 1643.

The General Assembly considering the good and pious advice of the commissioners of the last Assembly, upon the 22 of September, 1642 recommending to presbyteries, to have copies of the Covenant to be subscribed by every Minister at his admission, doth therefore ratify and approve the same. And further ordains that the Covenant be reprinted, with this ordinance prefixed thereto, and that every Synod, Presbytery and Parish, have one of them bound in quarto, with some blank paper, **whereupon every person may be obliged to subscribe**: And that the Covenants of the Synod and Presbytery be kept by their Moderator respective, of Universities by their principals, of Parishes by their Ministers, with all carefulness. And that particular account of obedience to this Act, be required hereafter in all visitations of Parishes, Universities, and Presbyteries, and all trials of Presbyteries and Synod books.

The General Assembly considering that the Act of the Assembly at Edinburgh 1639. August 30. **enjoining all persons to subscribe the Covenant, under all Ecclesiastical censure**, hath not been obeyed: Therefore ordains all Ministers to make intimation of the said Act in their Kirks, and **thereafter to proceed with the censures of the Kirk against such as shall refuse to subscribe the Covenant**. And that exact account be taken of every Ministers diligence herein by their Presbyteries and Synods, as they will answer to the General Assembly (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 162 emphases added).

3. August 5, Session 10, 1640.

The Assembly ordains, that if any Expectant [minister - GB] shall refuse to subscribe the Covenant, he shall be declared incapable of Pedagogy, teaching in a school, reading at a Kirk, preaching within a presbytery, and shall not have liberty of residing within a Burgh, university or College: and **if they continue obstinate to be processed** (*Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], SWRB, 1997, p. 94).

4. Aug 1, Session 5, 1640.

The Assembly ordains, that such as have subscribed the Covenant and speaks against the same, if he be a Minister, shall be deprived: And if he continue so, being deprived, **shall be excommunicate**: And if he be any other man, **shall be dealt with as perjured and satisfy publicly for his perjury** (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 93, emphases added).

5. Act Against Secret Disaffecteds of the Covenant (1644).

The General Assembly understanding that diverse persons disaffected to the *National Covenant* of this Kirk, and to the *Solemn League and Covenant* of the three kingdoms, **do escape their just censure**, either by private and inconstant abode in any one congregation, or by secret conveyance of their malignant speeches and practises; Therefore ordains all ministers to take notice when any such person shall come into their parishes, and so soon as they shall know the same, that without delay they cause them to appear before the Presbyteries within which their parish lies.... And the assembly ordains the said commissioners not only **to proceed to trial and censure of such disaffected persons but also to take a special account of the diligence of the Ministers, Elders, and Presbyteries herein respective** (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 220, 221, emphases added).

6. August 20, Session 15, 1647.

And if by the declaration of both kingdoms [Scotland and England - GB] joined in arms, Anno 1643, **such as would not take the Covenant were declared to be public enemies to their Religion and Country and that they be censured and punished as professed adversaries and malignant** (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 335, emphases added).

7. Act for Taking the Covenant at the first receiving of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

The General Assembly according to former recommendations, Doth ordain that all young students take the Covenant at their first entry into colleges; and that **hereafter all persons whatsoever take the Covenant at their first receiving of the Lords Supper**: Requiring hereby Provincial Assemblies, Presbyteries and

Universities to be careful that this Act be observed, an account thereof taken in the visitation of Universities and particular Kirks, and in the trial of Presbyteries (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], SWRB, 1997, p. 422, emphases added).

8. That all students of Philosophy at their first entry and at their lawrecreation, be holden to subscribe the League and Covenant and be urged thereto, and **all other persons as they come to age and discretion before their first receiving the Sacrament of the Lords Supper** (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], SWRB reprint, 1997, p.368, emphases added).

Let us summarize what the above cited Acts are saying.

First, observe who were obliged to subscribe the covenants: "**all the members of this Kirk and Kingdom, subscribe;**" "**every person may be obliged to subscribe;**" "**enjoining all persons to subscribe the Covenant under all Ecclesiastical censure.**" Second, what happened to all who refused to subscribe?

According to these Acts those who refused to subscribe the Covenants were to be censured. Mr. Bacon's noting of an alleged exception (Zachary Boyd) has been proven false though even if his scholarship was accurate it would only serve to prove that the Ministers of Scotland were being inconsistent and unfaithful to their stated Acts of General Assembly. The reader is asked to look again at the language used therein, and to evaluate whether Mr. Bacon has faithfully represented the position of these faithful Covenanters.

The Scottish General Assembly states that, "**such as would not take the Covenant were declared to be public enemies to their Religion and Country and that they be censured and punished as professed adversaries and malignant;**" furthermore the officers of the Kirk were instructed to "**proceed with the censures of the Kirk against such as shall refuse to subscribe the Covenant.**"

Third, what happened to those who broke Covenant after subscribing them? Those who did subscribe and spoke against the covenant suffered the same censure and were additionally cited for perjury. As I have demonstrated, once the distinct and superadded obligation derived from the voluntary self-engagement takes effect, the charge of perjury and covenant breaking are both appropriate and just.

On Aug 1, Session 5, 1640, the General Assembly said "that such as have subscribed the Covenant and speak against the same, if he be a Minister, shall be deprived: And if he continue so, being deprived, **shall be excommunicate: And if he be any other man, shall be dealt with as perjured and satisfy publicly for his perjury.**"

George Gillespie, Scottish Commissioner to the Westminster Assembly George Gillespie states:

**Those that refuse the covenant, reproach it, or rail against it, ought to be looked at as enemies to it and dealt with accordingly.... Refusers of the covenant and railers against it are justly censured.** (George Gillespie,

Miscellany Questions, Works, Vol. 2, 1846, reprinted 1991 by Still Waters Revival Books, p. 81, emphases added).

**Thus, it is clear that all were obliged to take the Covenants - and those who refused or broke their vows were to be excommunicated.**

Next, we must ask ourselves: How long did the General Assembly intend these Acts to remain in effect. 1 year? 10 years? or perpetually? Obviously, these Acts were to be enforced as long as the Covenant to which they refer remains in force. The PRCE recognizes the faithful court of our ancestors and realizes that the everlasting covenant sworn on our behalf still applies to the churches of Canada and the United States (also many other lands - all his Majesty's dominions at the time the Covenants were sworn). Consequently, as Presbyterians, we cannot contradict the ruling of a faithful General Assembly when it is agreeable to the Word of God. Our withdrawing from, admonishing, and censuring, those who are guilty of breaking covenant, is an example of our willingness to uphold their just and righteous rulings.

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. (2 Thessalonians 3:14,15, AV).

The Church of Scotland clearly censured those who would not subscribe the Covenants. This is further evidenced by the following excerpt.

And decerns and declares **all and sundry, who either gainsay the word of the evangel received and approved as the heads of the Confession of Faith** professed in Parliament in the year of God 1560, specified also in the first Parliament of King James VI., and ratified in this present Parliament, more particularly do express; or that refuse the administration of the holy sacraments, as they were then ministrated; **to be no members of the said kirk within this realm, and true religion presently professed, so long as they keep themselves so divided from the society of Christ's body.** And the subsequent Act 69, Parl. 6 of King James VI. declares, that there is no other face of kirk, nor other face of religion, than was presently at that time, by the favour of God, established within this realm (*The National Covenant*, emphases added).

When it is said that, "**all and sundry, who either gainsay the word of the evangel received and approved as the heads of the Confession of Faith**" are to be accounted, "**no members of the said kirk within this realm, and true religion presently professed, so long as they keep themselves so divided from the society of Christ's body,**" they are saying precisely the same thing as the PRCE. Those who will not covenant and confess the truth are to be barred from the sacraments and familiar fellowship. Is that the practice of the pretended presbytery of the RPC? Do they maintain that anybody who speaks or acts against the Confession or Covenants are "no members of the said kirk within this realm"? No, on the contrary, they profess to hold communion and maintain familiar fellowship with a broad spectrum of Christians who openly speak and act against both. This is evidenced by the fact (which they do not deny) that they do not require their members to agree not to speak and act contrary to their church standards prior to partaking of the Lord's Supper, rather such requirements are only required of their officers. **Is it not abundantly evident that they do not uphold the principles of th**

## Second Reformation?

Furthermore, Mr. Bacon's practice is contrary to the example set by the First Reformation under the godly influence of John Calvin in Geneva. As Reg Barrow has accurately stated in his article entitled *Calvin, Covenanting and Close Communion*, "it is a well documented fact that the Genevan Presbytery [Company of Pastors - GB], in 1536, sought to excommunicate anyone who would not swear an oath to uphold the Reformed doctrine as it was set forth in their *Confession of Faith*."

T. H. L. Parker writes,

Since the evangelical faith had only recently been preached in the city, and there were still many Romanists, **the ministers also urged excommunication on the grounds of failure to confess the faith.** *The Confession of faith, which all the citizens and inhabitants of Geneva... must promise to keep and to hold* had been presented to the Council on 10 November 1536. Let the members of the Council be the first to subscribe and then the citizens, in order to recognize those in harmony with the Gospel and those loving rather to be of the kingdom of the pope than of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. **Those who would not subscribe were to be excommunicated** (*John Calvin: A Biography*, Westminster Press, 1975, p. 63, emphases added).

Additionally, the company of Pastors in Geneva took this one step further (enacting negative civil sanctions like those of the covenanted Reformations found in the Old Testament under Josiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, Asa, and Hezekiah) by commanding those who would not swear to the reformation to leave the city:

12 November 1537. It was reported that yesterday the people who had not yet made their oath to the reformation were asked to do so, street by street; whilst many came, many others did not do so. No one came from the German quarter. **It was decided that they should be commanded to leave the city if they did not wish to swear to the reformation** (Johnston, Pamela, and Bob Scribner. 1993. *The Reformation in Germany and Switzerland*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 138, emphases added).

(See Reg Barrow's, *Calvin, Covenanting and Close Communion*, pp. 6-8, also the 5th letter in his response to Doug Wilson in his book entitled, *Saul in the Cave of Adullam*). These complete articles are free on SWRB's web page at:

**<http://www.swrb.com/> (follow the free books link)**

**The faithful contendings of the "Protesters" exemplifying their steadfast application of the biblical principles regarding withdrawal and separation from corrupt individuals and pretended assemblies.**

Another prime example of Reformation principles, in speaking plainly and acting consistently against unfaithful churches and ministers, was manifested by the faithful Protesters of the General Assembly of Scotland in 1651. At this time, an unfaithful majority faction of the General Assembly (called the Resolutioner party) openly broke their covenant vows and initiated a dispute that quickly divided them from the faithful minority (the Protesters). These compromisers under pressure from the King, approved the placement of men (called malignants for their ungodly character) in the army and places of public trust contrary to the covenants and previous Acts of General Assembly.

Thus, by evident perjury, these Resolutioners made themselves co-conspirators and accessories to the crimes that followed the sad division of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

Matthew Hutchison explains:

The former party [the resolutioners - GB] had among them men of high character and worth, some of whom afterwards regretted the position they had taken in this controversy. They were more tolerant in the application of their principles; among them the Second Charles found afterwards many of his willing tools, and they constituted the bulk of those who accepted the Indulgences and Toleration [later compromises - GB] (M. Hutchison, *The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland*, 1893, SWRB, 1997, p. 21).

The compromise of the Resolutioner party within the General Assembly of Scotland led to a division that remains unhealed, and a schism that effectively set aside the original constitution of the Church of Scotland. The seriousness of this schism can be observed in the following excerpts. Note the actions of faithful Protester ministers as they dealt with the unfaithful ministers of the Resolutioner faction. Mr. Samuel Rutherford [Protester - GB] would not serve the Lord's Supper with Pastor's Blair and Wood [Resolutioners - GB] though they had most other points of faith in common.

In the time of the difference between the Resolutioners and Protesters, at a Communion at St. Andrews, **he [Samuel Rutherford - GB]** ran to a sad height and **refused to serve a table with Messrs. Blair and Wood**, after all the entreaty they could make. At length Mr. Blair was forced to serve it himself (Robert Gilmour, *Samuel Rutherford, A Study, Biographical and somewhat Critical, in the History of the Scottish Covenant*, 1904, SWRB reprint, 1996, p. 201, emphases added).

Obviously, I do not concur with the assessment of Robert Gilmour, that Mr. Rutherford, "ran to a sad height," when he refused to serve the Lord's Supper with Robert Blair, or James Wood. Rather I believe that Mr. Rutherford was acting consistently with the doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith in refusing to serve the Lord's Supper with obstinately scandalous (perjured) ministers. Did Rutherford sin by refusing communion with perjured but otherwise godly men? No, instead he acted faithfully and consistently in refusing to serve the Lord's Supper with the scandalous. Was he saying these men were no longer Christians? No, he was attempting to correct and restore the brethren he dearly loved by testifying against their sin and not complying with their compromise. And if Rutherford (who sought to apply faithfully the biblical obligations declared in the *Solemn League and Covenant*) was unable to serve the Lord's Supper "with" those who have scandalously compromised their covenant obligations, much more would he refrain from serving the Lord's Supper "to" those known to be guilty of such sins.

Rutherford aptly states:

Because the Churches take not care, that Ministers be savoury and gracious; from Steermen all Apostasie and rottenness begin. O if the Lord would arise and purge his House in Scotland! As for Church-members, they ought to be holy; and though all baptized be *actu primo* members, yet such as remain habitually ignorant after admonition, are to be cast out, and though they be not cast out certainly, as

paralytick or rotten members cannot discharge the functions of life: **So those that are scandalous, ignorant, malignant, unsound in faith, lose their rights of Suffrages in election of Officers, and are to be debarred from the Seals.**

Nor can we defend our sinful practise in this: it were our wisdom to repent of our taking in the Malignant party, who shed the blood of the people of God, and obstructed the work of God, into places of Trust in the Church State, and the Army, contrary to our Covenants, they continuing still Enemies. (Samuel Rutherford, *A Survey of the Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline*, 1658, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 373, emphases added).

Not only would consistent Protesters not administer the Lord's Supper "with" or "to" the Resolutioners, but applying their doctrine uniformly they called the Resolutioner Assemblies "pretended" and would not compear before their courts. The *Records of the Church of Scotland*, reports the following events which depict their godly and constant principles.

At this session [of General Assembly - GB], Mr. Rutherford gave in a protestation against the lawfulness of the Assembly, containing the reasons thereof in the name of the Kirk, subscribed with 22 hands, and desired it might be read; **but it was delayed to be read, and all that subscribed the remonstrance, with some others, went away** (July 17, 1651, Session 6, *Records of the Kirk of Scotland*, SWRB, 1997, p. 628, emphases added).

Did the Protesters sin when they walked out of the meeting of the Scottish General Assembly (1651)? Were they saying that the Resolutioner churches were not Christian churches? No, they simply would not recognize the pretended authority of the Resolutioners compromised majority.

Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment (Exodus 23:2, AV).

How does Mr. Bacon explain the actions of these Protesters? Does he accuse them of being rash and uncharitable for walking out of the General Assembly? How does he explain Rutherford not serving communion with pastors Blair and Wood? To date, Mr. Bacon's politically correct commentary upon this matter seems decidedly undecided, and I could hardly believe my eyes when I read in his *Defense Departed* that, "The paper on dissociation goes on to speak of the Protester and Resolutioner split in the church of Scotland as though it were germane to our nation and time." Sadly for Mr. Bacon and his indefensible position, the history of the Second Reformation is entirely applicable to our nation and time and he is a living testimony that those who fail to learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them.

Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set (Proverbs 22:28, AV).

The faithful warriors of the First and Second Reformation did not fail in their duty toward those who acted or spoke against their Confessions and Covenants. They admonished, withdrew from, and even excommunicated those compromised brethren who would not repent of their sinful deeds. The fact that these compromisers were otherwise godly Reformed Presbyterians did not stop them from making a clear testimony against them.

They would not recognize their pretended courts and they openly bore witness against their schismatic schemes. We simply seek to follow their godly example while encouraging others to do the same.

Though thou, Israel, play the harlot, yet let not Judah offend; and come not ye unto Gilgal, neither go ye up to Bethaven, nor swear, The LORD liveth. For Israel slideth back as a backsliding heifer: now the LORD will feed them as a lamb in a large place (Hosea 4:15,16, AV).

Accordingly, churches such as the Reformation Presbyterian Church who obstinately retain their unscriptural doctrine and practice must be withdrawn from and testified against by admonition and suspension from the Lord's Table. Their pretended courts must not be recognized as anything other than schismatic attempts to destroy the unity of Christ's church. They must be avoided (not attended!). All the evidence points to the conclusion that they have receded from the truth and apostatized into a backsliding state of spiritual adultery. Although they are yet considered true Churches of Christ (as to being), they must sadly be viewed as unfaithful churches (as to well-being). Like Israel of old, such unfaithful churches have brought their lovers (false doctrine, unauthorized worship, tyrannical government, and undisciplined toleration) into the presence of their heavenly husband.

Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thy filthiness was poured out, and thy nakedness discovered through thy whoredoms with thy lovers, and with all the idols of thy abominations, and by the blood of thy children, which thou didst give unto them; Behold, therefore I will gather all thy lovers, with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them that thou hast loved, with all them that thou hast hated; I will even gather them round about against thee, and will discover thy nakedness unto them, that they may see all thy nakedness (Ezekiel 16:36,37, AV).

John Calvin comments:

That there is an universal Church, that there has been, from the beginning of the world, and will be even to the end, we all acknowledge. The appearance by which it may be recognized is the question. We place it in the Word of God, or, (if any one would so put it,) since Christ is her head, we maintain that, as a man is recognized by his face, so she is to be beheld in Christ: as it is written, "Where the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together," (Matth. xxiv. 28.) Again, "There will be one sheepfold, and one Shepherd," (John x. 16.) But as the pure preaching of the gospel is not always exhibited, neither is the face of Christ always conspicuous, (1 Cor. xi. 19). Thence we infer that the Church is not always discernible by the eyes of men, as the example of many ages testify. For in the time of the prophets, the multitude of the wicked so prevailed, that the true Church was oppressed; so also in the time of Christ, we see that the little flock of God was hidden from men, **while the ungodly usurped to themselves the name of Church.** But what will those, who have eyes so clear that they boast the Church is always visible to them, make of Elijah, who thought the he alone remained of the Church? (1 Kings xix. 10.) In this, indeed, he was mistaken, but it is a proof that the Church of God may be equally concealed from us, especially since we know, from the prophecy of Paul, that defection was predicted, (2 Thess. ii. 3.) Let us hold, then, that the Church is seen where Christ appears, and where his word is heard; as it is written, "My sheep hear my voice," (John x. 27;) **but that at the**

**instant when the true doctrine was buried, the Church vanished from the eyes of men.** This Church, we acknowledge with Paul, to be the pillar and ground of the truth, (1 Tim. iii.,) because she is the guardian of sound doctrine, and by her ministry propagates it to posterity, that it may not perish from the world. For, seeing she is the spouse of Christ, it is meet that she be subject to him. And, as Paul declares, (Eph. v. 24; 2 Cor. xi. 2,3) her chastity consists in not being led away from the simplicity of Christ. **She errs not, because she follows the truth of God for her rule; but if she recedes from this truth, she ceases to be a spouse, and becomes an adulteress** (*Articles agreed upon by The Faculty of Sacred Theology of Paris, in Reference to Matters of Faith at Present Controverted with The Antidote, Calvin's Selected Works, Vol. 1, Tracts, Part 1, pp. 102-103, reprinted in 1983 by Baker Book House and in 1997 by SWRB*).

And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger (Proverbs 5:20, AV)?

They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD (Jeremiah 3:1, AV).

**To properly understand the Reformers' doctrine of dissociation and separation we must distinguish between the "settled" and "broken" state of the church.**

To properly understand the Covenanter position regarding dissociation and separation from pretended authorities, **the reader must become familiar with another important distinction, viz., the settled vs. the broken state of the church.** The nation of Scotland (1638-1649) possessed both a truly constituted General Assembly, and the civil establishment of the true Reformed religion, thereby enabling the church to enjoy the blessed privilege of being "settled" in the land. Our case in 1997 is vastly different. We have no National Presbyterian General Assembly, nor do we possess the civil establishment of the one true Reformed religion. Among the Reformers, such a disorganized state of affairs was referred to as the "broken state" of the church. **One of the most serious errors of Mr. Bacon (and those like him), and one of the main reasons he so frequently misunderstands the Reformers' doctrine of dissociation and separation is his failure to grasp this important distinction** Mr. Bacon is fond of quoting men like Samuel Rutherford, James Durham, and George Gillespie, who wrote extensively regarding true principles of separation. What he fails to take into account is that they were applying their principles to a time when the church was nationally established and bound by faithful reformed covenants. Those who fail to make this distinction are constantly taking the scriptural principles of separation pertaining to a national church (settled) and applying these principles to the church in her "broken" and "unsettled" state. The results are disastrous: books are written like Mr. Bacon's, *The Visible Church in the Outer Darkness* (a book filled with both Popish error and Independent confusion). In his public misrepresentation of Kevin Reed, Mr. Bacon practically ignored the necessary distinctions of the Reformers (being vs. well-being, settled vs. broken state), and consequently led his readers to believe something far different than the doctrine they actually taught. Through his false teaching, sincere children of God are led to believe that separation from a Christian church, even in a time of great apostasy (broken state), should be exceedingly rare. Citing men (like John MacPherson, James Wood, and Thomas Boston) who did not stand upon the biblical principles of

covenanted Protesters (like Samuel Rutherford, George and Patrick Gillespie, James Guthrie, Robert McWard, John Brown of Wamphray, Richard Cameron, Donald Cargill and James Renwick), Mr. Bacon has confused his readers into confounding the faithful teaching of the Second Reformation with the dissimulation of those who were attempting to justify their backsliding and compromise. He must be called to account for his error (see Appendix G). Dear reader, take the time to carefully read the following quotations. Those who understand what is being said will no longer be ensnared by Mr. Bacon's false interpretation of the Reformers.

Faithful martyr of God, James Renwick, explains the importance of this crucial distinction:

We distinguish between a Church in a Reformed and **settled state** and confirmed with the constitutions of General Assemblies and the civil sanctions of Parliament; and a church in a **broken and disturbed state**. In the former, abuses and disorders can be orderly redressed and removed by church judicatories, but not so in the latter. Wherefore the most lawful, expedient and conduceable mean, for maintaining the attained unto Reformation, is to be followed in the time of such confusions and disturbances, and that is, (as we think) abstraction and withdrawing from such disorders in ministers which we cannot get otherways rectified (James Renwick, *An Informatory Vindication*, 1687, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 61, emphases added)

We distinguish between a Reformed Church enjoying her privileges and judicatories and a Reformed church denuded of her privileges and deprived of her judicatories. **In the former**, people are to address themselves unto Church judicatories and not to withdraw from their ministers (especially for ordinary scandals); **But in the latter**, when ministers are really scandalous (though not juridically declared so) and duly censurable according to the Word of God, and their own church's constitutions and censures cannot be inflicted through the want of church judicatories, and yet they still persist in their offensive courses, people may do what is competent to them and testify their sense of the justness of the censure to be inflicted, **by withdrawing from such ministers even without the Presbyterial sentence** (James Renwick, *An Informatory Vindication*, 1687, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 61, 62, emphases added).

We hold, that Schism, or disowning and rejecting of, or groundless and unwarrantable separating from, true and faithful ministers, to be a very heinous, hateful, and hurtful sin; yet this doth not hinder, but that it may be duty, **in a broken state of the Church**, to withdraw from Ministers chargeable with defection. For, seeing this Church hath attained to such a high degree of Reformation; and seeing, by Solemn Covenants to the Almighty, we have bound ourselves to maintain and defend the same; Seeing by reason of the enemy's subtilty and cruelty, and the fainting, falling and failing of Ministers, so many dreadful defections have been introduced, embraced, and countenanced; Seeing, in these times of distemping confusions, **we are now deprived of the remedy of settled Judicatories, where unto we might recur for rectifying of disorders**; And seeing we are bound to witness against these Complying and backsliding Courses, whereby the wrath of God is so much kindled against the Land: Therefore we hold it as our duty, that when a backsliding or defection is embraced, avowed, and obstinately defended, in such things as have been Reformed, either expressly or equivalently, especially being witnessed against doctrinally, and

further confirmed by other testimonies; We judge it lawful, reasonable, and necessary; **in a declining, backsliding, and troubled state of the Church** to leave that part of the Church which hath made such defection, whether Ministers or Professors, as to a joint concurrence in carrying on the public work (according as it is given in Command to Jeremiah 15:19, let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them) and to adhere unto the other part of the Church, Ministers and Professors, whether more or fewer, who are standing steadfastly to the Defense of the Reformation, witnessing against others who have turned aside and declined therefrom; **until the defections of the backsliding party be confessed, mourned over and forsaken:** This is no separation from the Church of Scotland, but only a departing and going forth from her sins, backslidings, and defections, as we are commanded by the Lord (James Renwick, *An Informatory Vindication*, 1687, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 36, 37, emphases added).

Finally, I quote Alexander Shields who wholeheartedly concurs with Renwick:

**In a constitute and settled case of the church**, enjoying her privileges and judicatories, corruptions may be forborne, and the offended are not to withdraw, before recourse to the judicatories for an orderly redress; **but in a broken and disturbed state**, when there is no access to these courts of Christ; then people, though they must not usurp a power of judicial censuring these corruptions, yet they may claim and exercise a discretive power over their own practice; and by their withdrawing from such ministers as are guilty of them, signify their sense of the moral equity of these censures that have been legally enacted against these and the equivalent corruptions, and when they should be legally inflicted. As we do upon this ground withdraw from the prelatie curates, and likewise from some of our covenanted brethren, upon the account of their being chargeable with such corruptions and defections from our reformation, as we cannot but show our dislike of (Alexander Shields, *A Hind Let Loose*, 1797 edition, SWRB bound photocopy, 1996, p. 266, emphases added).

Dear reader, do you see the importance of these distinctions? Do you see the error that can arise from taking the just rules of separation and applying them without distinction? In the settled state of the church, where rightly constituted and established judicatories allow for the orderly redress of abuses, separation should be exceedingly rare (like Rutherford, Durham, and Gillespie teach). However, in our broken state of the church, while we have no recourse to nationally established judicatories (only to independent rival judicatories), we are left to claim and exercise a discretive power over our own practice - as Rutherford and the Protesters practiced when the corrupt Resolutioner majority "broke" the Church of Scotland. (see Appendix G). We testify against the corruptions of our nation's churches and ministers, by barring them from our communion table, writing against their errors and praying for their reformation. In this broken state of the church there is no difference between how we are to treat unfaithful churches and unfaithful individuals. If God has commanded us to withdraw from and avoid disorderly and obstinate brethren, how can we deduce that we are to tolerate disorderly and obstinate churches? If the church is so divided that gross sin and error is protected by false judicatories, then how are the children of God to obtain a lawful hearing for their grievances? Should they submit themselves to those who frame mischief by abusing their pretended authority? When the church is so broken and disorganized that disorderly and obstinate churches are going from bad to worse, the answer is not to plead for toleration. Such toleration proclaims a liberty to sin and promises ecclesiastical protection for unfaithfulness. When the hands of the wicked

are strengthened and the children of God are encouraged to tolerate evil, true religion is destroyed and reformation is hindered. Thus, Scripture teaches that true religion ought never to require toleration and false religion ought never to be tolerated. **Those who rightly understand the distinction between the broken and settled state of the church know that dissociation and separation are the only true means of reformation when the church has divided into rival judicatories and receded from the truth.** Those who follow Mr. Bacon's impropriety will be found propping up the hands of backsliders while condemning those who plead for true reformation.

Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law? They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood. But the LORD is my defence; and my God is the rock of my refuge (Psalms 94:20-22, AV).

If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people (Deuteronomy 13:6-9, AV).

No doubt Mr. Bacon thinks the Reformation Presbyterian Church to be a faithful judicatory, and perhaps he would also include such rival and contradictory judicatories as the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (pretended covenanters) or the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. These churches, ministers and brethren have all broken covenant with God and we can no more own their judicatories than we can own the judicatory of the Church of Rome. While these brethren are more faithful than any Romish communion, their defection and backsliding are of such a scandalous nature that we can in no way tolerate it for the sake of unity. For us to pass over something as serious as perjury and covenant breaking would be for us to join hands in silent compliance with those things which we have sworn in our Covenants to extirpate and uproot. Unless our brethren, whom we love, humble themselves and repent, we see no other option than to continue to pray for their restoration while testifying against their defection.

And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and **against false swearers**, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts (Malachi 3:5, AV, emphases added).

I close this section with a faithful warning from the General Assembly of Scotland (August 6, 1649) and would ask the reader to apply their words to the ministers and professing Christians across Canada and the United States, even unto all the covenanted lands who remain bound by the covenants of their forefathers.

It is no small grief to us that the Gospel and Government of Jesus Christ are so despised in the land that faithful preachers are persecuted and cried down, that toleration is established by law and maintained by military power and that the

Covenant is abolished and buried in oblivion. All which proceedings cannot but be looked upon as directly contrary to the Oath of God lying upon us and therefore we cannot eschew his wrath when he shall come in judgment to be a swift witness against those who falsely swear against His name (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 472, 473).

## **Misrepresentation #4: The Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton (PRCE) is guilty of imposing the traditions of men upon the conscience by requiring terms of communion that are unscriptural.**

Men are always inclined to be critical and misrepresentative when they haven't taken adequate time to understand the issues and study the works of those they are attacking. Mr. Bacon, as demonstrated in his *Defense Departed*, is such a man. It is one thing to read carefully and digest the arguments of one's opponent, and another thing to read one or two short articles for the purpose of drawing numerous inaccurate inferences from them (though the articles in this case are exceedingly clear and in no way support Mr. Bacon's misconstruals). Though there are obvious theological differences between Mr. Bacon and the PRCE, before continuing I must address the issues of fairness and integrity.

### **Has Mr. Bacon accurately represented what the PRCE believes, or has he built a caricature of our belief in an effort to discredit us?**

I contend that Mr. Bacon has so severely, either intentionally or ignorantly, overlooked the plain statements of David Steele, the Reformed Presbytery, and the PRCE, that he should be profoundly ashamed of himself. I have been involved in many debates over the years and I can honestly say that never has an opponent so blatantly ignored our plainest statements. Prejudice, in this form and intensity, must be directly answered by demonstrating that Mr. Bacon has possessed adequate information to leave him without excuse. I intend to do this by setting Mr. Bacon's statements directly against what Pastor Steele, the Reformed Presbytery and the PRCE have said.

We, as a session, sent Mr. Bacon many free books and articles to help him correctly determine what we believe. The careful reader will notice that in his *Defense Departed* he cites 2 or 3 small sources of information, whereas he had been given many volumes for his perusal. The point I am making is this: if Mr. Bacon really cared to honestly and fairly debate this issue with us he would never have been so foolish as to ignore our most explicit statements. I conclude that Mr. Bacon really did not want to debate, but rather wanted to slander and abuse the PRCE in retaliation for our efforts in dissociating from his pretended presbytery.

Considering that Mr. Bacon had been given free access to most of the cited works I am about to quote, I urge you, dear reader, to ask yourself these questions - Has Mr. Bacon been fair to the position he is attacking? Has he clearly demonstrated his opponent's position from their own works? Has he done his homework? Are these acts of poor scholarship or malicious intent, or both? The following scripture characterizes the substance of our response to this current misrepresentation.

Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart (Nehemiah 6:8 AV).

A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour is a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow (Proverbs 25:18, AV).

As we survey the evidence in the next several pages, I think the reader will be amazed at

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

**Mr. Bacon has not done his homework.**

1. Mr. Bacon misrepresents how we view our own church standards when he says, It must seem strange to some who are reading this to be faced with the fact that there are some who call themselves Protestants "yea, Reformed and Presbyterian Protestants who appear to place their **own traditions as the constitution of the church rather than Scripture** (*Defense Departed*).

The *National Covenant (Confession of Faith)* is to be sworn not because the church has required it, but because it is an accurate representation of the sense of God's law. It is not, as **the Steelites claim, because the church's testimony tells us what to believe.** The church's testimony must be judged according to the Word of God, and not vice versa (*Defense Departed*).

Do we, the so-called "Steelites," claim that the church's testimony tells us what to believe? Has Mr. Bacon honestly represented our position?

The Reformed Presbytery of Scotland responds directly to this absurd notion. Convinced of the self-evidencing power, intrinsic worth, and divine excellencies of the Holy Scriptures, **we ever wish them to be considered as a complete and sufficient rule in themselves, independent of oral law, tradition of the fathers, or any human invention whatever; and in opposition to that absurd notion, "That the true sense depends upon the church."** [Can it be stated more clearly than this? - GB] At the same time, in our practical application of the inspired Oracles, we consider them to be a rule, as consistently understood, and properly applied. For though they be an absolutely perfect and sufficient rule in themselves, yet it is possible to mistake their true meaning; but this we endeavour to guard against the conduct of those who, while they pretend to believe in the divine authority of the Scriptures, do, meanwhile, evidently wrest them, imposing glosses which make one part of the Sacred Volume to contradict another, and which lead us away from the true scope and design of the whole (Reformed Presbytery, *An Explanation and Defense of the Terms of Communion*, 1801, p. 161, SWRB bound photocopy, emphases added).

Speaking of using Confessions of Faith and Covenants as a term of communion the Reformed Presbytery states:

It is only after mature deliberation, **carefully comparing them with the Word of God**, and receiving full conviction in our own minds of their **being wholly founded upon it**, that we consider the Confession and Catechisms, or any other human composure whatever, as properly entitled to our belief, and deserving to be ranked amongst the subordinate standards of our church. **But after being convinced of their agreeableness to the infallible rule, we cheerfully receive them. It is not with the remotest intention of supplying a defect in the Oracles of truth, which we ever consider a complete rule in themselves; nor is**

**it at all in the view of putting either the Confession, or any other book in the world, on a level with the Bible, that we adopt these explanatory standards; but purely to ascertain the true meaning of Scripture,** help us to understand one another in our church-fellowship, and, through these mediums, to transmit a faithful testimony for truth from generation to generation (Reformed Presbytery, *An Explanation and Defense of the Terms of Communion*, 1801, p. 161, SWRB bound photocopy, emphases added).

A false witness shall not be unpunished, and he that speaketh lies shall not escape (Proverbs 19:5, AV).

2. Mr. Bacon says, "The Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton has adopted this entire line of thinking by the approach of 'first accept the doctrine, then you can understand it later.' But this is the very **kind of implicit faith** required by Rome and condemned by our confession (*Defense Departed*).

Is it true that David Steele, the Reformed Presbytery, and the PRCE require implicit faith? In their Preface to the *Auchensaugh Renovation*, a committee of the Reformed Presbytery, made up of David Steele, Robert Alexander, and John Clyde state:

The reader may be assured that neither we nor the Reformed Presbytery, whose committee we are, **claim Papal infallibility or Christian perfection; nor do we ask implicit faith in our documents.** But we sincerely believe ourselves that the Auchensaugh Renovation and the Bond, to which the foregoing statements are prefixed, **will be found on examination to be sound,** faithful and in nothing, "contrary to the Word of God" (*Auschensagh Renovation*, SWRB reprint, 1995, emphases added).

**Beware of acting implicit faith. It is long since the error falsely imputed to us,** was broached among professing Covenanters. For example - we heard from the mouth of a minister in that body, more than a quarter of a century ago, the declaration in the pulpit: "The first [term of communion - GB] is the only proper term of communion in the church, and the time is not distant, we trust, when she will have no more:" that is, when all the displays of a covenant God's justice, mercy, faithfulness, etc., in dealing with the Church and her Antichristian opposers, shall have passed into oblivion - an unbelieving and ungrateful hope, or desire. The Protestant world is so denominated because simply of a solemn protest against Rome's impious claim to infallibility and cognate invasions of Messiah's prerogatives. **Attach the attribute of infallibility to any of the subordinate standards of our Christian profession, and we are instantly deprived of them all, as a near and necessary consequence.** We sincerely hope the Covenanter [James M. Willson] will arrive at clearer light on the general subject of creeds and confessions; and, if so, we are sure he will come to a better temper. It is part of the known character of the two witnesses that they contend for the faith once delivered to the saints, as the nearest and surest way to victory. Again, we would say to the reader, **beware of exercising implicit faith in human authority as well as testimony; and hold in dread all assumptions of infallibility by Pope, Prelate or Presbyterian; and especially Reformed Presbyterian, standing by the exclusive supremacy of Zion's King** (David Steele, *The Two Witnesses*, 1859, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 41, emphases added).

David Steele adds:

Let no one imagine that I defend symbols of faith from force of habit, or because they are old, perfect, immutable, or infallible; for I have for many years repeatedly said the contrary: that no document framed by wisdom, learning, or piety of any uninspired man, or body of such, is either perfect or immutable, and much less infallible.... No, I plead not for immutability, but for the faithfulness of subordinate standards, both of doctrine and practice (David Steele, *Reminiscences*, 1883, SWRB, 1997, pp. 135, 136).

Now, does David Steele or other so-called "Steelites" even remotely resemble Mr. Bacon's caricature? Do we teach implicit faith? If the reader had access to this information, as did Mr. Bacon, would he have written what Mr. Bacon wrote? All he had to do was read the books we provided, or listen to Pastor Price's set of tapes on our Terms of Communion (19 cassettes, available at Still Waters Revival Books) to be forever convinced of the contrary. Instead, he ignored the evidence and printed his vain imaginations. This, clearly, shows a serious lack of scholarship and integrity!

These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren (Proverbs 6:16-19, AV).

3. Speaking of the *Solemn League and Covenant* as a term of communion, Mr. Bacon says:

So the Steelite turns that which was good and useful and lawful for the church of Scotland to use in time of national and ecclesiastical distress to that which is nothing more than the imposition of traditions upon the conscience (*Defense Departed*).

On December 18, 1996 (email), Mr. Bacon writes:

Necessity implies some rule other than Scripture which binds the conscience. If you wish to take the *Solemn League and Covenant* (which I assume you have done), no bother to me. However, the term "necessity" implies precisely the position that y'all have now taken - which I believe to be directly contrary to the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*.

Does the PRCE impose the traditions of men upon others when they require the *Solemn League and Covenant* as a term of communion? Is this a denial of "*sola scriptura*"?

The Reformed Presbytery responds:

Concerning these covenants, some have proposed the query, "In what sense can they be said, as they are in our Testimony, to be of divine authority or obligation?" We reply, The divine authority of heaven's great Sovereign is, evidently, interposed, in requiring us to enter into such covenants, "Vow unto the Lord your God." And when once we have entered into them, the same divine authority binds us to performance, "Pay that which thou hast vowed." Add to these, that the great

and dreadful name, THE LORD OUR GOD is invoked in the solemn transaction, while his declarative glory among men is deeply concerned in the faithful fulfilment of our engagements. So that, besides the intrinsic obligation of the covenants, viewed simply as human deeds, whereby men bind their souls, there is, in all such covenants, an obligation of divine authority, requiring first to make, and then to perform our covenants; from the invocation of the divine name, considering JEHOVAH as witness and avenger, and from the interfering with the divine glory, in the keeping or violating of our oath. Hence, in the Scripture, the same oath is, in one respect, considered as the covenant of the man giving his hand; and, in another respect, as the Lord's covenant, whose glory is concerned in it [cf. Ezek. 17: 11-21 - GB]. **Our Testimony, if properly attended to, explains itself; telling us, the covenants "are of divine authority, or obligation, as having their foundation upon the Word of God"** (Reformed Presbytery, *An Explanation and Defense of the Terms of Communion*, SWRB reprint, 1995, p. 161, emphases added).

David Steele adds:

Even the doctrinal propositions of our Confessions and Catechisms are received, **not because they are inspired or infallible; but simply because they are in the apprehension of the Christian, "agreeable to the holy Scriptures."** **Much more does this obviously apply to our solemn covenants as embodying the heroic achievements of our martyred and witnessing fathers.** Add to these, all the real attainments of those who survived the overthrow of the "Second Reformation" (Pastor Steele's Printed Communications with the Editor of the *Covenanter* [James M. Willson], appended to *Notes on the Apocalypse*, in the forthcoming edition from Covenanted Reformed Presbyterian Publishing, pp. 400, 401, emphases added [or in *Apostasy in the RPCNA*, SWRB reprint, 1997]).

The evidence thus far is compelling and clear. Mr. Bacon was not even **trying** to accurately represent David Steele, the Reformed Presbytery or the PRCE. Though this should be enough to convince those who are open to hard evidence, I intend to belabour this point so that Mr. Bacon's dishonesty and irresponsibility will become abundantly evident, and so that none will ever have any justifiable reason for concluding that the so-called "Steelites" teach anything but historic, Reformed doctrine. What more can be done than to prove that the Covenanters have, for hundreds of years, been saying the exact opposite of what Mr. Bacon represents them to say? If our public and explicit statements will not be accepted as our statement of belief, then what can be done to convince the gainsayer?

Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in thy precepts. Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies (Psalms 119:78-79, AV).

4. Mr. Bacon writes:

But one must remember that the Steelites invest a similar meaning in the term historical testimony that the Romanist does with his inspired tradition of the fathers (*Defense Departed*).

Pastor David Steele aptly answers Mr. Bacon, rightly dividing that which is our alone infallible standard in matters relating to salvation from the fallible standards which are to be included in terms of communion.

**No symbols of faith and order framed by uninspired men are faultless - much less infallible, either in substance or form:** otherwise they would not be subordinate. Divine truth is the sole ground of saving faith, and is not to be confounded with Terms of Communion, as ignorance and presumption commonly do [and as Mr. Bacon has overtly done - GB]. Again, the testimony of Christ's witnesses in all its integral parts, is always and necessarily progressive until it shall have been finished. Even their statements of doctrine, their abstract and distinctive principles may, and often must be restated in diversified language, to meet the ever shifting position and subtle sophisms of adversaries. Also our Covenants, National and Solemn League may and ought to be renewed - not that they have become old, as many say; but that they are to be owned as obligatory upon us, and a sense of their permanent obligation deepened upon our own souls, and exhibited to others by the solemnity of an Oath (The Reformed Presbytery, *A Short Vindication of the Covenanted Reformation*, 1879, SWRB reprint, 1996, p. 19, emphases added). And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth (Revelation 11:3, AV).

Commenting on the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3 Pastor Steele says:

Consider the number of these witnesses; they are two, as this is the smallest number that can establish truth, Deut.17:6; 19:15. The Lawgiver himself, addressing the Jews, says: "It is written in your law that the testimony of two men is true," John 8:17. Not that we are to receive the testimony of every two men. The experience of all men is that "a false witness will utter lies;" and it is sometimes found that two may "agree together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord," Acts 5:9. But on the supposition that the witnesses are competent and credible; then it is the decision of Christ, endorsed by the common sentiment of mankind, that "we receive the witness of such men," 1 John 5:9. And although "the witness of God is greater" than that of any number of men; **still, human witnesses do not need to be inspired to render their testimony credible; for then [if the witnesses are inspired - GB], as the reader will perceive, the testimony is that of God, and of course ceases to be human testimony. This point is of the greatest moment, since not one word uttered by these two witnesses is inspired in the proper and formal sense of inspiration! This is too great an honour to confer upon the very chiefest of our covenanted confessors or martyrs. It savours too much of Rome** (David Steele, *The Two Witnesses*, 1859, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 7, emphases added).

Human witnesses do not need to be inspired to render their testimony credible. When did right testimony ever oppose one jot or tittle of the Word of God? Is all human testimony to be rejected because some men lie? Will we throw away the gold because its mixed with the dross? We do not plead for an infallible testimony, since that is both unscriptural and impossible for mere men. That which we plead for is a faithful testimony which is in agreement with the **alone infallible standard** for faith and practice - the Word of God. That does not mean, however, that we cannot use credible testimony, subordinate to the Word of God, to aid us in determining agreement in doctrine, worship, discipline and government.

The Reformed Presbytery explains:

Meanwhile, in exhibiting our testimony, **we make no pretensions to infallibility**

**or perfection.** Our design, we hope, is good, but we are very sensible that human weakness and infirmity must always be discernible in our best performances. We do not assert, either with respect to our own, or the other testimonies which we approve, that there are no incautious expressions in these compositions. Considering the time, and the peculiarly trying circumstances, in which the compilers of them existed, and considering that they were men of like passions with others, it would, perhaps, be rather unreasonable to expect so much. But if none of the precious truths, stated and vindicated in these testimonies, be given up; if none of the errors or immoralities which they condemn be countenanced; or, in other words, if the whole substance be conscientiously retained; we mean not to differ with those who may plead that some particular modes of expression might be altered for the better.

Let it also be carefully observed here, that, with regard to the Deeds of which we speak [the Scriptural testimonies and earnest contendings of Christ's faithful witnesses - GB], we wish to be understood in the same sense as before, concerning the Confession of Faith and the Covenants. **It is only after diligently perusing, pondering, and comparing these testimonies with the Word of God, and after finding them to be founded upon, and agreeable unto it, that we mean to rank them among the subordinate standards of our church.** But, as two, or more, cannot consistently walk together in church-fellowship, unless they be agreed in sentiment concerning the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church, and concerning the proper way of glorifying God upon earth, **we reckon it exceedingly requisite that this agreement should be properly ascertained.** For that important purpose, amongst others, these testimonies seem to be very much calculated. **And it is only to such of them as truly deserve the characteristic epithets of SCRIPTURAL AND FAITHFUL, that we require the assent of our church members.** If any are disposed to question the propriety of applying these designations, either to our own, or to the rest which we approve, we are always ready, as opportunity offers, to reason the matter with them. If we can agree, it is well; "Let us strive together for the faith of the Gospel, and continue steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." If we cannot agree, we must part in peace. **For we never entertained the remotest thought that these matters were to be adjusted by any other weapons than those of Scripture and reason, under the influence and direction of the Holy Spirit** (The Reformed Presbytery, *An Explanation and Defense of the Terms of Communion*, SWRB reprint, 1995, pp. 188-189, emphases added).

Now, compare the above statements of the so-called "Steelites," who plead for fallible historical testimony, **subordinate** to God's Word, with the doctrine of Tradition in the Roman Catholic Church, who pleads for oral and Papal infallibility **equal** to God's Word.

Lorraine Boettner defines the doctrine of Roman Catholic Tradition as follows:

We have said that the most controversial issue between Protestants and Roman Catholics is the question of authority - What is the final seat of authority in religion? - and that Protestants hold that the Bible alone is the final rule of faith and practice, while Roman Catholics hold that it is the Bible and tradition as interpreted by the church. In actual practice the Roman Church, since the infallibility decree of 1870, holds that the final seat of authority is the pope

speaking for the church (Lorraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1962, p. 89).

Steele, to the contrary, comments:

Let no one, however, imagine that we consider our Testimony infallible. No, it still ranks among the subordinate standards of our covenanted profession; and for years we have asked cooperation in its readjustment - cooperation, by those possessing Scriptural and covenant qualification (*The Reformation Advocate*, edited by David Steele, Vol. 1, No. 9, March 1876, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 259).

Has Mr. Bacon been fair? Has he made an honest and accurate comparison between us and the Papists? As the reader examines the statements produced by faithful Covenanters (the so-called "Steelites"), is it his impression that we want to put the Bible on par with anything? In contrast to Mr. Bacon, how does the reader interpret our first term of communion, "**An acknowledgement of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, and the alone infallible rule of faith and practice**"? What does the phrase "alone infallible" mean to him? Does it mean one among many infallible rules?

Mr. Bacon is either guilty of wilful ignorance or malicious intent. Perhaps his intellect is so clouded with anger and emotion that he has abandoned all desire to argue with integrity. Dear reader, can anyone fail to see how Mr. Bacon has grossly misrepresented the position of the PRCE, the Reformed Presbytery, and our faithful covenanted forefathers.

If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the LORD, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you (Deuteronomy 19:16-19, AV).

Consider the testimony for which the faithful and honorable martyr James Renwick suffered and died (and note the similarity between his dying testimony and our terms of communion) and ask yourself - Has Mr. Bacon faithfully represented Renwick's position?

Dear Friends, I die a Presbyterian Protestant; I own the Word of God as the rule of faith and manners; I own the Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Sum of Saving Knowledge, Directory for Public and Family Worship, Covenants, National and Solemn League, Acts of General Assemblies, and all the faithful contendings that have been for the Covenanted Reformation. I leave my testimony approving the preaching in the field, and defending the same by arms. I adjoin my testimony against Popery, Prelacy, Erastianism, against all profanity, and everything contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness; particularly against all usurpation and encroachments made upon Christ's right, the Prince of the kings of this earth, who alone must bear the glory of ruling his own kingdom the Church; and in particular against the absolute power affected by his usurper, that belongs to no mortal, but is the incommunicable prerogative of Jehovah, and against his Toleration flowing from his absolute power (John Howie, *The Scots Worthies*, 1781, p. 547).

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 1:3, AV).

### **What are Terms of Communion?**

"The Bible is my creed," shouts the untutored professor. But such a principle is false. The Bible is no mans creed. It is the very truth itself (Rev. J. M. Foster, *Distinctive Principles of the Covenanters*, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 3).

Since nearly every man who exhibits his intention to join the church of Christ will make a claim to believe the Bible we must expect that something more than the express words of Scripture are necessary to determine with whom we agree. **Terms of communion are terms of agreement in doctrine, principle, and practice (i.e. in doctrine, worship, discipline and government)**. They are statements and explanations of the doctrine and principles necessary for harmonious association. They are not a substitute for Scripture but rather a summary explanation of what we understand Scripture to mean. By this means we testify as to why we have a separate existence from other churches within the nation. If our terms of communion were the same as those of any other known church in our nation we would be duty bound to immediately seek to unite into one body. It is by means of explicitly stated terms of communion that we may glorify God, and honestly try to obey his commandment "to endeavour to keep the **unity** of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3, emphasis added).

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Corinthians 1:10, AV).

Using terms of communion to secure harmony and co-operation within the membership of the church of Christ is an **inescapable concept. Whether implicitly or explicitly, every church has terms that extend beyond the express proclamations of the Word of God.** Those who are deluded into thinking that no further explanation of Scripture is necessary to establish and maintain harmony in the church will be found among those groups who allow persons of diametrically opposed faith and practice to break down all distinction between truth and error. Such pretence is satisfied with a mere worshipping together, and sitting within the same building, whether or not union of sentiment exists to any significant degree. The aim of such pretended union is finding a way to teach those with few fixed beliefs that true unity consists in learning how to "agree to disagree".

The way of peace they know not; and there is no judgment in their goings: they have made them crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace (Isa. 59:8, AV).

The Reformed Presbytery comments:

The doctrine of modern forbearance among persons of opposite belief, inducing them to form a compromise in which they mutually agree to differ, and never more to mention discording tenets, leads, in its native tendency, to the suppression of the truth, and the lasting concealment of so many articles of faith, as the jarring sentiments may happen to hinge upon. And what is the amount of this, but to banish forever from the faith of the Church, a great number of precious truths

contained in the Word of God, and designed by him for the spiritual comfort and edification of the people? And all this to obtain a Catholic union amongst professing Christians, at the expense of losing sacred truth. An agreement to divide, in matter of faith and practice, sounds ill with the injunction, "be perfectly joined together in the same mind" (The Reformed Presbytery, *An Explanation and Defense of the Terms of Communion*, SWRB reprint, 1995, p. 152).

On the other hand, those who understand that an honest and explicit expression of the meaning of God's word, both stated and applied, is a necessary mean to accomplishing the end of promoting God's glory through unity of doctrine and uniformity of practice, will be found insisting that distinct and clear testimony be asserted prior to any membership or association.

And **they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine** and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42, AV).

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive (Ephesians 4:14, AV).

Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing (Philippians 3:16, AV).

Our testimony is framed in statements of **doctrine, argument, and application of principle to the facts of history**. Doctrinal statements such as creeds and confessions exhibit and confirm our agreement in doctrine, worship, discipline and government.

John Anderson explains:

It is vain to say that the confession of a particular church is a human thing: for, candidly interpreted, it may be found to contain nothing but the undoubted truth of God's word. It is either possible for men to express these truths in their own words or it is not. If it is not possible, then his words cannot be understood: and all attempts to state, explain, illustrate or apply them, as in public preaching or writing, are vain; a supposition grossly absurd. But if it be possible for men to express the truths of scripture in their own words, then the doctrines or instructions contained in a confession, may be no other than the truths of God's word; and if they are actually no other, **then a church may warrantably require of her members, and of such as desire admission to her communion, a public assent to her whole confession, nor can that assent be refused without impiety**. No church has a right to require her members to receive any of the doctrines or commandments of men; but her Divine Head authorises her to exact of her members an adherence to all his truths and institutions. In this case he is saying, "he that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me" (John Anderson, *Alexander and Rufus*, 1862, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 36, emphases added).

David Steele comments:

**Even our doctrinal standards we received from our fathers through history alone**. Now, I desire the reader to see with his own mental eye, that our faith in the genuineness of these doctrinal standards rests solely on human testimony: that

is, we believe on the evidence of the generations who have lived before us, that our Confessions, Covenants, etc., are true copies of those documents. But our belief so far is not saving faith - "the faith of God's elect." Having these documents handed down to us through history alone, then we compare them with the Bible. Can we perceive their agreement or disagreement without reasoning? No, surely. Well now, if two persons at first sight take different views of any doctrine, will they not at once enter into discussion, and their future agreement result from honest argument; yet neither their agreement in believing the symbols of their profession to be true copies; no, nor even their belief that a certain doctrine is scriptural, constitutes "the faith of God's elect;" but it does constitute that kind of faith or agreement by which they can "walk together." I hope the reader can now perceive that "the faith of God's elect" is not the condition of fellowship in the visible church, and that the visible is distinct from the invisible church. There are few delusions more prevalent and popular than the old error revived, that "assurance of grace and salvation is essential to saving faith," and that it is, or ought to be one of the terms, or in fact the only condition of fellowship in the visible church. The first judicial Testimony sanctioned by the Reformed Presbyterian Church, in 1761, at Ploughlandhead, Scotland, is the only one that has the formal nature and possesses the essential parts of such a document. These parts are three: history to supply facts, arguments to test the character of the facts, and doctrinal statement as the rule of trial.

Is it not the function of a witness to state facts? Yes, certainly. **And what is history but a statement of facts?** These may be true or false. The character and competence of the witness is to be considered. **The function of the judge is to state and apply the law**, and in the application of the law he is assisted by others called jurors or associates. **Arguments are addressed**, by advocates, to judge and jury. Now, I hope the reader will see that the greatest, the most important cause in the universe, the conflict between truth and error, between righteousness and unrighteousness, between Christ and Belial, which has been on trial since the time of Cain and Abel, **cannot be conducted without history, argument and doctrinal declaration. All testimony-bearing which lacks any of these three cardinal and essential elements is not merely defective, but decidedly pretentious and unfaithful** (David Steele, *Reminiscences*, 1883, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 202-205, emphases added).

Furthermore, Pastor Steele adds:

History is a record of past events, and to deserve the name of history the events recorded must be authentic, for "cunningly devised fables" are not history. Authentic history is of the essential nature of testimony. A witness on the stand gives a statement of facts, evidence, testimony. So true is it that not only minor matters of litigation, but even "death and life are in the power of the tongue"(Prov. 18:21). A very large portion of the Bible is historical. The first words in it announce one of the most important of historical facts: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth," The great importance of this statement appears from the speculations of heathen philosophers, and self-styled scientists in our own age.

For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water (2 Peter 3:5, AV).

Also many of the Psalms are historical, epitomizing the previous facts recorded in the Old Testament, that these might be more indelibly impressed upon the mind and heart of God's people, and that they "might not forget his works;" for then they "forget God their Saviour" (Ps. 16:13,21).

Moreover, the origin and progress of the visible church in the world, under different dispensations of mercy, is matter of historical record. She is on earth the only immortal corporation; and since the canon of inspired Scripture closed, she has had no one infallible historian. Many, indeed, have undertaken "to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among the disciples of Christ;" but "their witness agreed not together" (Luke 1:1; Mark 14:56). Those who take as guides in searching the history of the church, Mosheim, Milner, or many others, are following false guides, whose delineations portray the features of the "scarlet lady" rather than the "Lamb's wife." In this historical fact - the almost universal misrepresentations of the spouse of Christ, the intelligent reader may discover the reason for a select class, whom the Lord Jesus expressly distinguishes from all others as "his witnesses," (Rev. 11:3), and the necessity for their testimony. These and these only are "children that will not lie" (Isa. 63:8); "and in their mouth is found no guile" (Rev.14:5). Hence, the necessity of historical testimony.

Again, history interprets prophecy, which is an ever increasing evidence that the Holy Scriptures are from God. **How could it be known when the canon was settled but mainly by history? Or how can antichrist be identified, or the witnesses themselves but by history?** For the doctrines, the worship, government and discipline of the church have all been misrepresented, counterfeited, and even the church herself (Rev. 17:18)! Thus it is apparent that the only way by which the witnesses can identify the true church is by comparing doctrine and order with the alone infallible rule, the Bible; and this comparing involves reasoning - argument; history and argument do, therefore, constitute the church's testimony and supply her *Terms of Communion*, by which she is distinguished from the "flocks of the companions."

Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the **flocks of thy companions** (Song of Solomon 1:7, AV, emphases added)?

Reader, where did you get all the subordinate standards of your published faith, your confession, catechisms, &c.? You will probably say - from Westminster, England, and from Scotland; but how do you know? For about forty-six years ago, had you been a member in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, this question might have puzzled you. About that time we received new light on that matter, when the following startling statements were first published by professing Covenanters: "Even the fact of the existence of the Westminster Assembly has been for several generations a matter merely of human history. . . . Such a faith" (in the existence of the Westminster Assembly) "could not be the faith of God's elect." Again, "That such covenants were ever entered into has no other evidence than mere historical record, and consequently ought not to be made an article of the believer's faith" - a term of communion.

We have often said, and we now repeat, that there are two kinds of faith by which society is held together. Faith and belief are convertible terms. The **kind** of testimony in any case determines the **kind** of faith. **Divine faith is founded and rests on divine testimony alone; whereas human faith needs as a foundation only human testimony.** All human relations in this world are grounded on human evidence - testimony. Does a husband identify his wife, or the wife her husband by divine testimony? Can the parents know their child, or the child the parents by the Bible? We insist upon this point, "giving precept upon precept," simple though it be; because we know with absolute certainty that even learned divines, including many theological professors, **Doctors of Divinity even, of the Covenanting name, have forsaken the covenant cause of Christ through their sinful and shameful ignorance of this matter.** Our reformed ancestors thoroughly understood this point before there ever was a D.D. known among them. **Why did they attach the word infallible to the first Term of Communion? Because it, and it alone, demands divine faith; all the rest requiring human faith only, because they are fallible-subordinate to the first term. Did our truly learned and godly progenitors stultify themselves by contradicting their own Confession?**

All synods or councils since the apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice, but to be used as a help in both (Westminster Confession of Faith, 31:4). To make this topic in theology and faithful testimony-bearing so plain that "he may run that readeth it," and to render those who prefer to continue "willingly ignorant" inexcusable, we give an illustration adapted, we hope, to the capacity of even babes in Christ: - Question, - Do you believe there is such a place as Scotland? Answer, - I think I do, for it is laid down on the school-atlas, and whoever made the atlas must have believed in its existence. Q. - Do you find Scotland named in the Bible? A. - No. Q. - Do you believe that Richard Cameron, Donald Cargill, James Renwick, and many others associated with them, lived in Scotland in the latter half of the seventeenth century? A. - I do, for I have both heard and read about those ministers. Q. - But you do not read of them in the Bible, do you? A. - No. Q. - Well, have you read of the principles they held, and how they applied their principles? A. - Yes, I know the principles they propagated, and also the way they applied them. Q. - Now, were they malefactors, as most of their countrymen charged, or were they indeed martyrs of Jesus Christ? A. - I believe they were martyrs. So you believe in human testimony, that there is such a place on the earth as Scotland; that Richard Cameron, &c. once lived in Scotland; that they taught certain doctrines and applied them, and for such teaching and practice they suffered a violent death, martyrdom; and yet you find nothing of this in the Bible. **"Human records" alone supply these facts, from which, comparing them with the Word of God, you argue and conclude with certainty that those people were witnesses for Christ. Now, if you reject the history of their principles, practice and sufferings, how can you honestly or rationally claim identity with them?** You thereby sever the only link of connection. You may be pious - a Christian, but not a Covenanted Presbyterian. And if your supreme end is your own salvation, you have mistaken the end of your being (Rev. 4:11), and come short of that type of patriotism which the example of the martyrs supplies. Hence -

1. The British Covenants are manifestly historical documents.
2. The peculiarity of the National Covenant, that it was framed, sworn, and often renewed in Scotland, does not destroy its moral character, or affect the permanency of its obligation; and the same is true of the Solemn League and Covenant.
3. The very names of these covenants - yes, and the principles incorporated in them, which have given Christian liberty and liberty of conscience to many millions, come to us through the medium of history alone.
4. All who have adhered to these covenants have been known for centuries by historic names, and can be identified in no other way; as "Cameronians, Cargillites, Society People, Mountain-men, Covenanters," &c. And by near and necessary consequence -

If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents (Song of Solomon 1:8, AV).

5. All who reject history from their conditions of fellowship, and yet claim kindred with the Reformed Covenanted Church, are "deceiving and being deceived." In this matter they are false witnesses; but "we wot that through ignorance they do it" (*The Original Covenanter*, Vol. 2, No. 12, December 1879, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 353-357).

**History alone** supplies the facts, and **argument** ascertains the validity of these historical facts by **applying doctrinal principles** and taking both to the law of God to pass judgment upon them (Acts of General Assembly and Judicial Testimony). By agreeing that these historical judgments are consistent and agreeable with God's holy word, we bear witness of the faithful contendings of our forefathers and exhibit the uniformity of doctrine and practice intended by the Covenant of God. This agreement in doctrine and practice, both presently and historically, forms our mutual bond of fellowship and communion and is the means by which we as brethren voluntarily and honestly resolve to walk together in peace and sit together in communion.

Can two walk together, except they be agreed (Amos 3:3, AV)?

Pastor Steele continues:

Among consistent Reformed Presbyterians, **unity in the faith, and uniformity in its application**, have ever been the terms of their fellowship. And this unity and uniformity are mutually pledged, not only as required by the Word of God, but as the subordinate standards of both their faith and practice, "were received by the Church of Scotland." Of course the avowed faith - that is, the principles of our covenant fathers, and their Christian practice - are known to us only by evidence of uninspired history; and **while we view neither their system of faith nor their known practice as infallible, we nevertheless own their principle and engage to follow their footsteps** - and both, if need be, with all the solemnity of the oath of God. All this is implied and carried out in covenant renovation (Pastor Steele's Printed Communications with the Editor of the *Covenanter* [James M. Willson],

appended to *Notes on the Apocalypse*, in the forthcoming edition from Covenanted Reformed Presbyterian Publishing, p. 413, emphases added [or in *Apostasy in the RPCNA*, SWRB, 1997]).

Francis Turretin adds:

As we have said before, this is the natural right of all well-regulated societies - that they can separate from their own flock unfit and injurious men and the impurities, disgraces and cancers of their assembly. For the same power by which they have the right of gathering themselves together gives to them the authority to make laws and constitutions for the preservation of the body and for the expulsions of those who will not obey those laws and who, by their rebellion, could taint or corrupt the whole body. And it is a necessity of such a kind that without it no society can long exist. **Now if this is granted to other societies, far more ought it to belong to the church, which is both holier and better regulated.** Nor can they with whom we now argue deny this, who acknowledge (the magistrate not being a believer or neglecting his duty in restraining and punishing the wicked) that each assembly by associated discipline and mutual covenant can assume for itself a certain power of the magistrate, reduce the disorderly (ataktous) to order, drive the impious and unbelievers from itself (and cause them to keep by themselves), and provide for other things conducing to its own conservation. Now it makes little difference whether this is called a right of nature or authority flowing from Christ, since the right of nature is derived from no other source than God himself. Nay, since the church is a sacred and religious society instituted by Christ, no one can deny that she has received from Christ himself whatever power she has, as all other things. For the same one who wished to establish her in the world furnished her also with all things which are necessary for her conservation (Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1696, Vol. 3, p. 296, emphases added).

Pastor Steele explains the broad purpose and progressive nature of terms of communion:

**As the primary object of terms of communion in the church is to exhibit the law and covenant of God, and then agreement of persons in their apprehension of these, together with their joint and declared resolution to walk accordingly; it would appear that they are a rational expedient to reach the proposed end.** Those who oppose creeds, etc., are apt to forget that the acknowledgment of the Holy Scriptures does not itself secure union of sentiment and concert in action. Besides, the witnesses of Christ, in preserving the integrity of their testimony, and their own moral identity, are necessitated to know and expose the errors and ungodliness which prevail under the name of religion. Hence they are obliged so to direct their testimony as to meet the ever-shifting forms and phases of error and immorality. And as their testimony thus progresses toward its consummation, there is a correspondent bearing given to her terms of communion. In case of defection she must ascertain from history, the footsteps of the flock whereto she attained in time past; that she may obey the divine direction, "walk by the same rule and mind the same thing" (David Steele, *The Two Witnesses*, 1859, Appendix Note C, appended to *Notes on the Apocalypse*, in the forthcoming edition from Covenanted Reformed Presbyterian Publishing, pp. 388-389, emphases added [or in SWRB's separate printing of Steele's *The Two Witnesses*]). Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing

(Philippians 3:15-16, AV).

The Reformed Presbytery comments,

This Presbytery believes firmly, that the testimony of Christ's witnesses is necessarily progressive, and that it will assuredly advance in the face of all opposition until it be "finished." There is no such anomalous document recognized among the faithful witnesses as a "Standing Testimony." All such measures of compromise they must repudiate (*Minutes of the Reformed Presbytery*, North Union, September 30th, 1875, cited from *The Reformation Advocate*, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 233).

### **To summarize - What are terms of Communion?**

1. Terms of communion pertain to the external communion of the visible church and not to the internal communion of the invisible church.
2. Terms of communion are intended to exhibit the law and covenant of God, so that members of Christ's visible body can determine whether or not they walk together in unity and uniformity. They are an aid to promoting, preserving and maintaining the peace and purity of the Church, and are based solely upon the infallible Word of God.
3. Terms of communion are composed of abstract doctrinal statements such as creeds and confessions, forms and directories. Though agreeable to God's word, these standards are all deduced from the Word of God and thus understood to be historical and fallible.
4. Terms of communion also include intrinsically and perpetually binding Covenants. Faith without works is dead, as is abstract doctrine without covenanted obligation. Covenants are deduced from God's word and thus are subordinate and fallible.
5. Terms of communion include facts of history judged by the Word of God according to the argument of faithful witnesses and judicatories. Historical acts of General Assemblies, governments, and notable individuals are identified and judged according to the principles of God's Word. Faithful contendings are separated from unfaithful contendings and martyrs are remembered and honoured for their "faithful works created in Christ Jesus from the foundation of the world." These Acts of General Assembly - judging history according to scripture - are all fallible and subordinate to the Word of God.
6. All of these terms are progressive and may be restated (by qualified Assemblies) to meet the ever shifting forms and phases of error and immorality. Consequently, a standing testimony is not sufficient due to the fact that it does not testify against the current sins and the errors of the times.

Now having laid this foundation, let's examine Mr. Bacon's principles according to the words of his own mouth.

### **An examination of Mr. Bacon's Popish principles.**

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

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

I will begin by demonstrating how 140 years ago Mr. James M. Willson [herein called the Covenanter - GB] employed the same sinful tactics as Mr. Bacon.

Pastor Steele says:

...the "Covenanter" made free to charge to us the "damnable heresy" of infallibility avowed by the Romish church. Take the charge in some of his select phraseology: "A great error"; "this writer's great error"; "a strange delusion"; "human history on a par with Bible truth"; "the worst form of the Popish doctrine"; "the radical and most dangerous error"; "fearful error"; "putting human compositions on a par with the Bible." These are but some of the charitable and complimentary terms and phrases by which the "Covenanter" [so-called - GB] "cast dust" in the eyes of the credulous, and eluded the point in argument which he could not meet. And it is to be deplored that a spirit of deep sleep has closed the eyes of many professing witnesses for a covenanted testimony. It is certain that if scripture light and sound reasoning do not prevail to awaken sinners in Zion - judgments must follow. Then woe to blind seers, and to those who say to the seers, see not (David Steele, *The Two Witnesses*, 1859, SWRB, 1997, p. 39).

To these outlandish charges Pastor Steele replies:

We are constrained, however, to roll off the odium attached to a claim of infallibility; and show the reader to whom this fearful error belongs, praying that he who originated it, may be brought to renounce the error and repent of former rashness. We should reflect that a real disciple may, for a time, resist the truth - fundamental truth in the plan of redemption, while his heart is biased by a clouded intellect, Matt. 16:21-23. Such reflection would contribute to the right direction of our charity. But to our present purpose -

**1. Distinguish between the ground of saving faith and terms of communion in the visible church.** These are not identical. Rome's error results from confounding these. Her reasoning (if it may be called reasoning) is this: The Church receives none to communion but believers: - all beyond her pale are unbelievers - heretics: - **there is no salvation but in her communion; therefore, saving faith, or the grounds of saving faith, should alone constitute the bond of fellowship in the church.** In the time of the First Reformation, both in Europe and England, enthusiasts would receive none but "true believers." Luther himself was troubled - perplexed for about three years in dealing with this question, after he had obtained clear views of the grounds of saving faith! The "Covenanter" is entangled in the same difficulty (David Steele, *The Two Witnesses*, 1859, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 39, 40, emphases added).

But it will be asked, "Does not saving faith rest on divine testimony?" Of course it does. But while saving faith **is** the single term of communion for the invisible church, where does the Scripture teach that saving faith is a term, and especially the only term, of communion in the **visible** church of Christ?

Pastor Steele continues,

2. Distinguish between the visible Church and the Church invisible. Saving faith, or the ground of saving faith, is the bond of communion in the invisible church; not so in the visible church, otherwise hypocrites could not be there. **The doctrines, arguments and history of the visible church are all her own deductions from Scripture. None of these has the attribute of infallibility, because the church is not infallible.** An effect cannot be greater than its cause - the stream rise higher than its source (David Steele, *The Two Witnesses*, 1859, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 40, emphases added).

Mr. Bacon says,

The difference between the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton and the RPC is not over creedal subscription. We subscribe fully and without reservation to the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. In fact, our officers are required to declare that we "do sincerely own and believe **the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith, approved by former General Assemblies of this Church to be the truths of God**; and I do own the same as the confession of my faith." This formula, in full, is to be subscribed by probationers before receiving license, and by all ministers, elders, and deacons at the time of their admission. There should be no question at all about the strictness with which we hold the Confession. Any who have known either First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett or the RPC should have no question in that regard (*Defense Departed*).

Here Mr. Bacon declares insistently how strictly he requires the officers of his church to swear to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*. By this he undeniably asserts that he is willing to swear to the truth of fallible doctrine.

Next he says:

But one must remember that the Steelites invest a similar meaning in the term "historical testimony" that the Romanist does with his "inspired tradition of the fathers" (*Defense Departed*).

Here Mr. Bacon further argues, however, that we must never swear to historical testimony because we would place it in the same category of infallibility as the papists do with their tradition. Mr. Bacon's position is this - we may swear to the confessions and catechisms (truth of doctrine) but we may not swear to historical testimony. Why?

David Steele, fittingly provides the devastating response:

But if we, "cannot swear to the truth of history," what is the reason? We assume that the only reason having the shadow of plausibility is this, we cannot be sure that the history is infallibly true. Well, then, if we can swear to the truth of doctrine, the reason must be, because we are sure of its infallibility. We shall not call this the "worst form of popish error," preferring that the reader pronounce upon it according to his own judgment (*The Covenanter*, pp. 73, 74).

Hence, the popish error of Mr. Bacon and all who follow in his footsteps is exposed. He, like James M. Willson, admits that he will swear to uphold fallible, humanly composed confessions, but he won't swear to uphold fallible, humanly composed historical testimony. While he maintains that swearing to uphold historical testimony is popish we wonder why

he won't say the same for fallible, humanly composed confessions. Are confessions and historical testimony not equally fallible? Are they not both humanly composed? Are they not the doctrinal form of historical testimony? The only rational explanation for Mr. Bacon's position is this - that he really believes that his Confession of Faith and its humanly deduced doctrine are infallible. Thus, it is he who implicitly promotes the infallibility of human compositions. It is he who invests a similar meaning to his confession of faith that the Romanist does with his "inspired tradition of the fathers." He has condemned himself out of the words of his own mouth.

Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth, thou art taken with the words of thy mouth (Proverbs 6:2, AV).

Pastor Steele had the same contention with James M. Willson 140 years ago, and the argument concluded with with the same result:

Now we have tested the "Covenanter's" orthodoxy here - on this very point - Popish infallibility. We have supposed that the reason "why he can swear to the truth of doctrine is, because he is sure of its infallibility." (Covenanter, Vol. 12; pp. 73-74). Now let the reader mark the reply: "Certainly, 'infallible' because Bible truth." But how shall it be ascertained that the deductions are Bible truth - infallible? Do we receive this infallibility by tradition from our fathers of Scotland or Westminster? No, indignantly we say, no. In the very body of the doctrinal standards which they framed, they tell us, "All synods and councils, since the apostles' times, may err, and many have erred; therefore they are not to be made the rule of faith or practice," etc. Surely the Assembly at Westminster were not so impious or stupid as to claim an infallibility which they so explicitly denied to all uninspired predecessors. The Covenanter "wonders we do not see, that if we show we have a history with our Testimony, it must be infallible." Besides separating here between history and testimony, we wonder at his persistence in asserting, by plain implication, the infallibility of a human Testimony! We deny, before the world, the infallibility of our own testimony, the "Covenanter's" Testimony - every other uninspired testimony; and, moreover, humbly suggest to the "Covenanter" the danger of encroaching upon the divine prerogatives, and charging such impiety on his neighbours. It is amazing, amidst perpetual displays of supercilious contempt, dogmatic assertion, etc., that such palpable evidence occurs in almost every paragraph, that the "Covenanter" has yet much to learn of the nature, substance and arrangement of the terms of communion and the Testimony of the Reformed Covenanted Church (*The Two Witnesses*, 1859, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 40).

Evidently, Mr. Bacon also has much to learn about about the nature, substance and arrangement of the terms of communion, as well as the proper use of his tongue.

Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge (Proverbs 19:27, AV).

### **A triple standard in the Reformation Presbyterian Church?**

In *Defense Departed* Mr. Bacon states:

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, etc. **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** (*Defense Departed*, emphases added).

Contrary to what he asserts in *Defense Departed*, in his forgotten letter (fully cited in Appendix A) Mr. Bacon says that he **requires** the following of his officers as **terms of ministerial communion**:

We the undersigned Ministers and Elders of the Free Church of Scotland considering that the constitution of the said church as settled in 1843 is contained in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, as approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1647, the *First and Second Books of Discipline*, the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, the *Claim Declaration and Protest* of 1842, the *Protest* of 1843, the *Act of Separation* and *Deed of Demission* executed in the last mentioned year, the formula appointed to be subscribed by probationers before receiving license, and by all office bearers at the time of their admission, together with the Questions appointed to be put to the same parties at ordination and admission, **and the Acts of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland prior to 1843** (*Deed of Separation* cited from *A Manual of Practice of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland based on the Practice of the Church of Scotland in her Several Courts*, 4th edition as revised in 1886, pp. 116-117).

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

Contradicting himself again Mr. Bacon sets forth yet another standard of communion (this time apparently for non-officers) when he says:

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** (*Defence Departed*).

Which is it Mr. Bacon? On the one hand you call for a simple profession of faith as the only term of communion for your members, and on the other you require your officers to swear ordination vows that include hundreds of pages of historical testimony. Let the reader note that Mr. Bacon is clearly speaking out of both sides of his mouth. Again I ask - Are his elders and deacons not members of his church? Do they have some special status and requirement for admittance to the Lord's Table that his members do not share? **Clearly, Mr. Bacon requires historical testimony for his ministerial terms of**

**communion, but simple profession for the rest of his members and visitors.** Are the substance of the RPC's ordination vows not the same as his terms of communion? What would happen to an officer of the FPCR if they obstinately and wilfully opposed the Acts of General Assembly, FPCR Session, or any of the historical deeds cited above? What would happen if they obstinately broke any one of their ordination vows? Would they not be judged scandalous and barred from communion until such time as they repented? Therefore the substance of the RPC's ordination vows are clearly terms of communion (although Mr. Bacon doesn't seem to realize it yet).

Next, if a minister, elder or deacon could not come to the communion table in the FPCR because of obstinately speaking against one of the above mentioned articles, why would it be alright for a member of the church to do so? Does Mr. Bacon advocate one standard of faith for his elders and a different standard of faith for his members? Are there two or three different moral standards in the Reformation Presbyterian Church? It appears so. The members of the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett are not even required to swear to "endeavour" to uphold their own church standards before coming to communion. This triple standard, such as is commonly practiced in the Christian churches of our nation, makes a popish distinction between the clergy and laity. The same terms of communion ought to apply to officers and members alike.

May members of the FPCR come to the communion table if they obstinately teach premillennialism to others? How about if they teach others that singing exclusively psalms (in public worship) is wrong and singing hymns with instrumental accompaniment in public worship is right? Apparently these people can come to Mr. Bacon's communion table, since according to Mr. Bacon a simple profession of faith, like the Ethiopian eunuch, is the only term of agreement necessary. How does Mr. Bacon reconcile that with the fact that he believes that teaching such doctrines are scandalous? Will he allow those who are openly scandalous (doctrinally) to his communion table? Yes, it appears so, since he desires to be so "generous" (more "generous" than Scripture) as to allow a simple profession of faith to be his only term of communion. Furthermore, not only is there a Romish distinction made between the clergy and the laity, but in reality, visitors who come to Rowlett are judged with one standard while the congregation is judged with another. The members of the congregation of FPCR would be censured for obstinately and publicly promoting such doctrine as Dispensationalism, Arminianism, Independency, etc., while a visitor from a Baptist, Arminian or Independent church would be welcomed at the communion table based upon their simple profession of faith. Why shouldn't Arminian ministers and visitors be allowed to come to the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett if a simple profession of faith is all that is required? And if they are not welcomed to the communion table of the FPCR then we must ask - why not? Surely most Arminians will say as much as the Ethiopian eunuch. As you can see, false doctrine breeds confusion and tyranny in the discipline of the church. True liberty of conscience is destroyed by Popish practice lurking under the cloak of tolerance and pretended unity. Ministers have communion on one standard, members on another, and finally visitors on yet another. Each descending standard becomes more latitudinarian and more damaging to the preservation of sound doctrine and uniform practice.

Does Mr. Bacon really require the simple profession of faith of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:35-37)? Does Mr. Bacon only have one simple term of Communion? His terms of communion are never explicitly stated, though I will attempt to infer what he requires from his *Defense Departed*. His practice so contradicts his principle that it is hard to tell

what he believes. Nevertheless, it will become clear as we proceed, that Mr. Bacon's thinking is so far off that, even if we give him every benefit of the doubt, he will still be left holding to Papist principles.

### **An examination of Mr. Bacon's principles in regard to his terms of communion.**

Mr. Bacon's system of toleration can be deduced from the words of his own mouth when he says:

1. In quoting the 1560 confession in defense of the PRCE's status as a true church of Christ, we do not mean that we agree with the terms of communion of the PRCE or that everyone the session of PRCE has barred from the communion table has been justly so barred. **We believe their view of closed communion to be an error**, but we do not believe it is an error that prevents them rightly being called a true church of Christ (*Defense Departed*).

2. Note also what a far cry Steele's position regarding the necessity of uninspired history as part of the terms of communion is from **the simple profession of faith of the Ethiopian eunuch and of Peter** (*Defense Departed*).

3. This point in the six terms of communion seems like a reasonable place to put something about a **personal profession of faith** in Jesus Christ. After all, in Acts 8:37, **that was the only term of communion that Philip the evangelist seemed concerned to enforce** (*Defense Departed*).

4. Finally Paul teaches that females who have been baptized into Christ are also communicant members of the Church (Richard Bacon, *What Mean Ye By This Service*, Appendix A).

5. Like Paul, I fear that these human additions to the requirements of the Lord's table are corrupting minds from **the simplicity that is in Christ** (*Defense Departed*).

From these quotes we can deduce that Mr. Bacon holds the following position regarding terms of communion.

1. Negatively.

a. He does not agree with the six terms of communion of the PRCE and believes our view of close communion to be in error.

2. Positively.

a. A personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ was all that Phillip required as a term of communion. "And he [the eunuch - GB] answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (Acts 8:37)

b. Though Mr. Bacon does not explicitly say which profession of Peter he was referring to, I think it is reasonable to infer that he meant Peter's simple profession of faith found in Matthew 16:16: "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

c. All who are baptized are to be admitted to communion (except of course, infants and children who have not made a profession of faith). This is significant in that (except as it applies to covenant children) Mr. Bacon is equating the qualifications necessary for both Baptism and the Lord's Supper. As the reader shall see in the following examination this is

a serious error.

d. Human additions to the requirements of the Lord's Table are corrupting minds from the simplicity of Christ.

First, I would note that the Ethiopian eunuch did not receive communion, but was simply baptized in Acts 8:36-38. The reader is asked to consult the passage to see if this has anything to do with admission to the Lord's Supper. The only reason Mr. Bacon would cite this in regard to terms of communion would be because he equates the qualifications for Baptism and Communion.

And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him (Acts 8:36-38, AV).

Naphtali Press has done an excellent job of republishing the classic book entitled *Jus Divinum Regiminus Ecclesiastici*, and therein we are furnished with an applicable commentary to undo Mr. Bacon's ill conceived notions regarding the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch. One would hope that in the future Mr. Bacon's publisher would instruct him more clearly in what his republished books contain.

Besides, by the Ordinance of Baptism, we are all admitted into one body, the General visible church (1Cor. 12:12) and some were baptized into the general body **that thereby were not admitted into any particular church**, as the Eunuch in Acts 8 (*Jus Divinum Regiminus Ecclesiastici*, p. 69, Naphtali Press, emphases added).

How do terms of communion apply to someone who has yet to be admitted to a particular church? How would the Eunuch partake of communion outside of a particular church? Furthermore, Peter's profession (Matt. 16:16) is entirely unrelated to a communion service. Neither of these instances provide Mr. Bacon with any proof of his position.

**Second**, I would point out that, by his own words, Mr. Bacon appears to require nothing more than a simple profession of faith to admit someone to the Lord's Table. A simple profession of which "particular statements" of faith, he doesn't say. I assume that this profession would have to include at least some of so-called simple fundamentals of the faith. One would hope that he would at least enquire as to whether someone is Trinitarian, believes the Bible is God's Word, or whether the prospective communicant believes in the bodily return of our Lord and Saviour. Whatever his minimal standard is, we can by his own words (as cited above) reasonably infer that Mr. Bacon is promoting an extreme form of latitudinarian communion, and conversely that he unabashedly denounces the idea of a close communion.

John Anderson comments on this latitudinarian scheme,

In the first place, it is a sectarian communion. Its existence supposes that there are sects and parties in the catholic [i.e. universal - GB] church; and that the variety of men's opinions, habits and feelings, is sufficient to justify the continuance of them. Scriptural, sacramental communion [close communion - GB] admits of no sects; requiring all partakers of it to be one bread, one body; perfectly joined together in

the same mind and in the same judgment.

In the second place, it is an unfaithful and dishonest scheme. It is unfaithful to the Lord Jesus; for under the pretext of expressing love to him at his table, it regards the denial of some of his truths or institutions, however openly or obstinately persisted in, as a trivial matter, deserving no church censure. When the advocates for this scheme represent the truths and institutions of Christ, that are publicly opposed by corrupt churches as sectarian and local peculiarities, they are chargeable with great unfaithfulness to the Lord Christ, to these churches and to the whole catholic church. They are chargeable with attempting to heal the wound of God's people slightly, saying peace, peace while there is no peace.

Thirdly, it is a backsliding scheme. There is nothing more incumbent on a particular church than steadfastness in maintaining all the articles of Divine truth stated in her confession and testimony. But as soon as the practice obtains in any particular church of having sacramental communion with the open and obstinate opposers of any of these articles, that church, thereby, falls from her steadfastness, and **is chargeable, in some measure, with apostasy** (John Anderson, *Alexander and Rufus*, 1862, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 93-94, emphases added).

Hence, we teach that all churches which do not base their communion upon faithful and explicit terms of agreement are to be avoided and withdrawn from.

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them (Romans 16:17, AV).

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

Third, we in the PRCE teach that the ground of the church's profession is based upon God's word alone, though we recognize that the acts and modes of preserving and maintaining the true religion in the visible church (as to well-being) are necessarily human. Mr. Bacon, in his arrogance and ignorance, labels us a "Popes" and "Pharisees" for adhering to human constitutions that are agreeable to the Word of God. By means of our terms of communion we are simply explaining and applying our alone infallible rule of faith while neither adding nor detracting from its authority. Why does Mr. Bacon deride us for that which is unavoidable - especially when he clearly does the same thing?

Thomas M'Crie powerfully explains,

But while the matter, as well as the ground, of the church's profession is properly speaking divine, the acts and modes of professing and maintaining it are necessarily human. When false and corrupt views of Christianity become general, it is necessary that confessions of the truth in opposition to them be embodied in formal and written documents, which may be known and read by all men. *Vox emissa perit: litera scripta manet* (a voice sent forth disappears: a written letter remains).

It is not enough that Christians confess their faith individually: to comply with divine commands, to answer to their character as church members, and the better to gain the ends in view, it is requisite that they make a joint and common confession. When the truths contained in the Word of God have been explicitly stated and declared, in opposition to existing errors, by the proper authority in a church, an approbation of such statements and declarations may be required as a test of soundness in the faith and Christian fidelity, without any unwarrantable imposition on conscience, or the most distant reflection on the perfection of Scripture. **The same arguments which justify the use of creeds and confessions will also justify particular declarations or testimonies directed against errors and corruptions prevailing in churches which still retain scriptural formularies. Those who allow the former cannot consistently condemn the latter.** It is not sufficient to entitle persons to the character of faithful witnesses of Christ, that they profess a general adherence to the Bible or a sound confession of faith, provided they refuse or decline to direct and apply these seasonably against present evils. It might as well be said that the soldier has acquitted himself well in a battle, because he had excellent armor lying in a magazine, or a sword hanging by his side, although he never brought forth the armor nor drew his sword from its scabbard. The means alluded to are the unsheathing of the sword and the wielding of the armor of the Church. So far from setting aside the authority of Scripture, they are necessary for keeping a sense of it alive on the spirits of men, and for declaring the joint views and animating the combined endeavors of those who adhere to it. **By explaining and applying a rule, we do not add to it, nor do we detract from its authority** (Thomas M'Crie, *Unity of the Church*, 1821, reprinted in 1989 by Presbyterian Heritage Publications, pp. 135-137, emphases added).

Mr. Bacon charges us with requiring implicit faith when he says:

The PRCE has adopted this entire line of thinking by the approach of "first accept the doctrine, then you can understand it later." But this is the very kind of implicit faith required by Rome and condemned by our confession, where in 20-2 it states, "the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also" (*Defense Departed*).

In reality, it is Mr. Bacon's latitudinarian communion that is founded in ignorance, delusion and blind obedience. Consequently, it is his pretended unity that attacks true liberty of conscience. Mr. Bacon's solution is one in which Christians are to attend the Lord's Supper based upon "simple profession" or "fundamentals" only. The distinction between what is fundamental and non-fundamental is not made in the Word of God, and thus remains vague and arbitrary in the minds of church officers. This emphasis upon the "necessary" truths of Scripture, while helpful to didactic theology, is not useful - indeed, it is dangerous - in this connection. When applied to the communion table, the tendency of this emphasis is to lead others to consider that some truths of Scripture are of little or no importance. Consequently, these "little" truths are considered too minute to be contended for, and they are relegated to the realms of indifference and minutia. Those who promote this unscriptural emphasis constantly whine about conscientious Christians being overly concerned with so-called minutia such as singing psalms, Sabbath keeping, and instrumental music in public worship. Under the cloak of charity, forbearance and peace the so-called neutral principle of upholding the fundamentals only becomes a law by which the tolerance of all others is judged. The law of "communion by fundamentals only", not being founded upon, nor determinable by Scripture, becomes a law to be believed upon

the authority of the Church only and thus a certain degree of blind obedience is required to observe it. This is the scheme proposed by Mr. Bacon and as we have observed repeatedly, his own accusations are continually recoiling upon his own head. According to his principles and to his law of "communion by fundamentals only," he should be holding communion with the Church of Rome. He makes the supposed state of an individual profession "the rule" by which one is received or rejected and denies that the communion table is fenced by the doctrinal and practical testimony of the church corporate. When a Roman Catholic comes to his communion table and professes personal faith like the Ethiopian eunuch, Mr. Bacon should, if he were to be consistent with his doctrine, receive this Roman Catholic professor. If he allows a Roman Catholic to partake individually I cannot see what would stop him from proceeding to the logical conclusion of actually partaking with the Church of Rome herself. This law of simple profession is simply a dangerous error which shifts the ground of external church communion from a corporate agreement in faith and practice to a law requiring the toleration of sectarian, individual doctrine and practice. The concealment of truth for the sake of peace is certainly as dangerous as an outright propagation of lies. Latitudinarian schemes of communion, though often coupled with the best intentions, are direct assaults upon the Christian liberty of God's people and the purity of the visible church.

### **The danger of latitudinarian schemes of union and fellowship.**

Thomas M'Crie further explains:

Mournful as the divisions of the Church are, and anxious as all its genuine friends must be to see them cured, it is their duty to examine carefully the plans which may be proposed for attaining this desirable end. **We must not do evil that good may come; and there are sacrifices too costly to be made for the procuring of peace with fellow Christians.**

Is it necessary to remind you, that unity and peace are not always good, nor a sure and infallible mark of a true and pure church? We know that there is a church which has long boasted of her catholic unity notwithstanding all the corruptions which pollute her communion; and that within her pale the whole world called Christian once enjoyed a profound repose, and it could be said, "Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language" (Gen. 11:6). It was a union and peace founded in ignorance, delusion, implicit faith, and a base subjection to human authority; and supported by the arts of compulsion and terror.

But there are other methods by which Christians may be deceived, and the interests of religion deeply injured, under the pretext or with the view of uniting its friends. Among these I know none more imposing, nor from which greater danger is to be apprehended in the present time, than that which proceeds on the scheme of principles usually styled latitudinarian.

**It has obtained this name because it proclaims an undue latitude in matters of religion, which persons may take to themselves or give to others. Its abettors make light of the differences which subsist among religious parties, and propose to unite them on the common principles on which they are already agreed, in the way of burying the rest in silence, or of stipulating mutual forbearance and charity with respect to everything about which they may differ in opinion or in practice.**

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

But the ground on which this plan is ordinarily made to rest is a distinction made among the articles of religion. Some of these are called essential, or fundamental, or necessary, or principal; others circumstantial, or non-fundamental, or unnecessary, or less important. The former, it is pleaded, are embraced by all true Christians; the latter form the subjects of difference among them, and ought not to enter into the terms of ecclesiastical fellowship. On this principle some of them would conciliate and unite all the Christian denominations, not excepting Papists, Arians, and Socinians; while others restrict their plan to those called evangelical, who differ mainly in their views and practice as to the worship, order, and discipline of the Church.

The distinction on which this scheme rests is itself liable to objections which appear insuperable. It is not warranted by the Word of God; and the most acute of its defenders have never been able to state it in a manner that is satisfactory, or which renders it subservient to any practical use. The Scripture, indeed, speaks of certain truths which may be called the foundation, because they are first laid, and others depend on them - first principles, or elementary truths, which are to be taught before others. But their priority or posteriority in point of order, in conception or instruction, does not determine the relative importance of doctrines, or their necessity in order to salvation. Far less does it determine the propriety of their being made to enter into the religious profession of Christians and Christian churches.

There are doctrines, too, which intrinsically, and on different accounts, may be said to have a peculiar and superior degree of importance; and this, so far as known, may properly be urged as a motive for our giving the more earnest heed to them. It is not, however, their comparative importance or utility, but their truth and the authority of him who has revealed them, which is the formal and proper reason of our receiving, professing, and maintaining them. And this applies equally to all the contents of a divine revelation. The relations of truths, especially those of a supernatural kind, are manifold and incomprehensible to us; it is not our part to pronounce a judgment on them; and if we could see them as God does, in all their extent and at once, we would behold the lesser joined to the greater, the most remote connected with the primary, by necessary and indissoluble links, and all together conspiring to form one beautiful and harmonious and indivisible whole. Whatever God has revealed we are bound to receive and hold fast; whatever he has enjoined we are bound to obey; and the liberty which we dare not arrogate to ourselves we cannot give to others. It is not, indeed, necessary that the confession or testimony of the Church (meaning by this that which is explicitly made by her, as distinguished from her declared adherence to the whole Word of God) should contain all truths. But then any of them may come to be included in it, when

opposed and endangered; and it is no sufficient reason for excluding any of them that they are less important than others, or that they have been doubted and denied by good and learned men. Whatever forbearance may be exercised to persons, "the Word of the Lord," in all its extent, "must have free course and be glorified" (cf. 2 Thess. 3:1). **And any act of men - call it forbearance or what you will - which serves as a screen and protection to error or sin, and prevents it from being opposed and removed by any proper means, is contrary to the divine law, and consequently is destitute of all intrinsic force and validity.**

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

In fine, there is reason for complaining that the criteria or marks given for determining these fundamental or necessary articles are uncertain or contradictory. It is alleged that "they are clearly taught in Scripture?" This is true of the others also. "That they are few and simple?" This is contradicted by their own attempts to state them. "That they are such as the Scripture has declared to be necessary?" Why then have we not yet been furnished with a catalogue of them? "That they are such as embraced by all true Christians?" Have they a secret tact by which they are able to discover such characters? If not, can they avoid running into a vicious circle in reasoning, by first determining who are true Christians by their embracing certain doctrines, and then determining that these doctrines are fundamental because they are embraced by persons of that description?

Many who have contributed to give currency to this scheme have been actuated, I have no doubt, by motives which are in themselves highly commendable. They wished to fix the attention of men on matters confessedly of great importance, and were anxious to put an end to the dissensions of Christians by discovering a mean point in which the views of all might harmoniously meet. But surely those who cherish a supreme regard for divine authority will be afraid of contemning or of teaching others to think lightly of anything which bears its sacred impress. They will be disposed carefully to reconsider an opinion, or an interpretation of any part of Scripture, which seems to imply in it that God has given men a power to dispense with some of his own laws. And they will be cautious of originating or countenancing plans of communion that may involve a principle of such a complexion.

These plans are more or less dangerous according to the extent to which they are carried, and the errors or abuses which may prevail among the parties which they

embrace. But however limited they may be, they set an example which may be carried to any extent. **So far as it is agreed and stipulated that any truth or duty shall be sacrificed or neglected, and that any error or sin shall be treated as indifferent or trivial, the essence of latitudinarianism is adopted, room is made for further advancements, and the way is prepared for ascending, through successive generations, to the very highest degree in the scale.**

Another plan of communion, apparently opposite to the former, but proceeding on the same general principle, has been zealously recommended, and in some instances reduced to practice, in the present day. According to it, the several religious parties are allowed to remain separate, and to preserve their distinct constitution and peculiarities, while a species of partial or occasional communion is established among them. This plan is liable to all the objections which lie against the former, with the addition of another that is peculiar to itself. It is inconsistent and self-contradictory. **It strikes against the radical principles of the unity of the Church, and confirms schism by law: while it provides that the parties shall remain separate, at the same time that it proceeds on the supposition that there is no scriptural or conscientious ground of difference between them.** [Note that this is Mr. Bacon's plan of communion - GB]

By defending such occasional conformity, English Dissenters at a former period contradicted the reasons of their dissent from the establishment, and exposed themselves to their opponents: for where communion is lawful, **it will not be easy to vindicate separation from the charge of schism. The world has for some time beheld annually the spectacle of Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, Methodists, and Seceders, sitting down together at the Lord's Table, and then going away and maintaining communion, through the remainder of the year, on their own separate and contradictory professions.** Nay, it has of late become the practice to keep, in the same church, an open communion table for Christians of different denominations on one part of the day, and a close one for those of a particular sect on the other part of the day; while the same ministers officiate, and many individuals communicate, on both these occasions. And all this is cried up as a proof of liberality, and a mind that has freed itself from the trammels of party.

**It is difficult to say which of these plans is most objectionable. By the former, that church which is most faithful, and has made the greatest progress in reformation, must always be the loser, without having the satisfaction to think that she has conveyed any benefit to her new associates.** It behoves her profession and managements to yield, and be reduced to the standard of those societies which are defective and less reformed. And thus, by a process opposite to that mentioned by the Apostle, those who have built on the foundation "gold, silver, precious stones," are the persons who shall "suffer loss" (1 Cor. 3:12, 15).

**By the latter, all the good effects which might be expected from warrantable and necessary separations are lost, without the compensation of a rational and effective conjunction; purity of communion is endangered; persons are encouraged to continue in connection with the most corrupt churches; and a faithful testimony against errors and abuses, with all consistent attempts to**

**have them removed or prevented, is held up to odium and reproach, as dictated by bigotry, and as tending to revive old dissensions, and to defeat the delightful prospect of those halcyon days of peace which are anticipated under the reign of mutual forbearance and charity** (Thomas M'Crie, *Unity of the Church*, 1821, reprinted 1989 by Presbyterian Heritage Publications, pp.106-118, or free on Still Waters Revival Books web page at: <http://www.swrb.com>, emphases added).

As you can see, it is not necessary to quote a Covenanter to expose Mr. Bacon's latitudinarian tendencies. Those who boast of liberal forbearance are typically most liberal in spewing out severe accusations upon those who plead for true liberty of conscience. It is an undoubted maxim of our tolerant age that there are none so violently intolerant as the so-professedly tolerant man who contends with those who are steadfast in the true religion. Their harshest criticism and sharpest intolerance is reserved for those who have the courage to tell them they are wrong. It is one thing to recognize the relative importance of fundamental and non-fundamental truth, and quite another to say that the former are the only truths which the Church of Christ is bound to confess and require as a profession at her communion table. **Mr. Bacon must recognize that truth is no enemy to peace and that human constitutions when agreeable to God's word are no enemy to liberty of conscience.**

All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies (Psalms 25:10, AV).

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to his Word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience; and the requiring an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 20:2).

### **The Apostle's Creed as a Term of Communion?**

For the sake of further discussion, let us conjecture that all Mr. Bacon requires for a term of communion is a simple profession and understanding of the *Apostle's Creed*. Isn't that an historical document which is both fallible and uninspired? It sets forth the fundamental doctrines of the Church of Christ in beautiful order and brevity, but is it inspired? Would Mr. Bacon actually use a fallible historical document as a term of communion? If he can use the *Apostle's Creed*, then all his objections against our terms of communion fall to the ground and all his accusations recoil upon his own head. This historical creed teaches things agreeable to God's Word - though in every case they are uninspired deductions from Scripture. This one fact - the fact that the *Apostle's Creed* is not inspired - completely overthrows Mr. Bacon's slanderous arguments. Where can he run? Does he plead for a deduction from Scripture even more simple than the *Apostle's Creed*? Whatever he chooses can be said to be uninspired and fallible, short of repeating the Scriptures word for word.

What should we ask if Mr. Bacon used the *Apostle's Creed* (or something like it) as his sole subordinate standard for admission to the communion table?

Is it humanly composed? Yes, man accurately deduced it from Scripture. Does it qualify as

a human addition and composition? Yes it was written by man. In its present form it is of no later date than the fourth century. Is it historical and uninspired? Yes. Thus even the *Apostle's Creed* could not qualify as a subordinate standard for examination to come to the Lord's Supper. In fact, to be absolutely consistent with Mr. Bacon's notions, no profession of faith in the fallible uninspired words of men could be used to examine one who comes to the Lord's Supper. Is the *Apostle's Creed* the standard Mr. Bacon uses for his terms of communion? It is difficult to tell given his present state of confusion and inherent self-contradiction. His officers have one standard, his members another, and sadly, his visitors have yet another.

For the pastors are become brutish, and have not sought the LORD: therefore they shall not prosper, and all their flocks shall be scattered (Jeremiah 10:21, AV).

Again, for Mr. Bacon to use the *Apostle's Creed* or any other humanly deduced creed, and then to reject our terms of communion because they are fallible is to imply that his deduction and his creed is infallible. No matter which way he turns he finds himself in the Popish camp and supping with the whore of Babylon. Whether he has failed to distinguish between the visible and the invisible church or whether he lifts his own scriptural deductions to a level of infallibility, he sits on the beast. Either way his argument is proved entirely erroneous. **Mr. Bacon's error lies in the fact that he cannot seem to understand that uninspired deductions are binding when they agree with the Word of God.** If history is judged correctly, and is agreeable to the truth of God's word, then it is reasonable and fair to require it as a bond of agreement and a term of communion. The same goes for any uninspired and true deduction from Scripture. **Truth is a binding term of communion in whatever form it comes.**

### **Does joining the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton (PRCE) require implicit faith?**

Mr. Bacon writes,

The Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton has adopted this entire line of thinking by the approach of "**first accept the doctrine, then you can understand it later.**" But this is the very kind of implicit faith required by Rome and condemned by our confession.... **They [the Steelites - GB] assure us that we must simply agree to it [all their subordinate standards - GB] and they will explain to us later what it says.** This is no difference in principle from the Papist who explains to the Protestant, "Just come home to mother church and accept her historic footprints based on history and argument as conditions of fellowship. We will explain all that this entails as we think you have a need to know" (*Defense Departed*).

Here the PRCE is slanderously portrayed as requiring implicit faith by requiring people to agree to doctrine they don't yet understand. Is this true? First accept the doctrine then understand it later - simply agree to it and we will explain it later - that is what Mr. Bacon represents as our view. We have neither required nor asked such an unlawful thing from any prospective member of our church. **Membership in the PRCE is based upon a simple, voluntary, sincere, profession of faith and this is not to be confused with an examination based upon our terms of communion.** Simple profession of faith precedes examination for communion and Mr. Bacon entirely confounds the long standing order of the Reformed Churches when he attempts to connect the two. New converts are brought into the schoolhouse of Christ (the visible church), to receive feeding and instruction from

good shepherds who make them ready to partake worthily of the Lord's Table. These babes join the church and are baptized in their simplicity, but must have their ignorance removed so that they might be given the understanding to communicate properly, and worthily "remember and discern the body and blood of the Lord". This is done to protect them from their own ignorance and to protect the congregation from tolerating error and false doctrine around the Lord's Table.

### **How does one become a member of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton (PRCE)?**

Samuel Rutherford describes the three primary prerequisites of becoming member of the PRCE:

... though the church have not a positive certainty of the judgment of charity, that they are regenerated, so they be known

**1. To be baptized.**

**2. That they be free of gross scandal.**

**3. And profess that they be willing hearers of the Doctrine of the Gospel.**

Such a profession, as giveth evidences to the positive certainty of the judgment of charity, of sound conversion, is **not** required to make and constitute a true visible church. (Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries*, 1644, p. 251, SWRB bound photocopy reprint, 1995, emphases added).

In addition to these three prerequisites, we require that prospective members agree not to speak publicly or act scandalously contrary to the publicly professed standards of the Church, and we ask if they are willing to abide by all lawful rulings of the Session of the PRCE. This is all that is required to become a member of the PRCE - a simple profession of faith combined with a life free of gross scandal and an agreement to endeavour not to be publicly scandalous in the future. We have had people become members of the church within 1 or 2 weeks of their professed conversion. These babes are baptized (if necessary), brought under the oversight of the session, and nurtured by the sound preaching of the Word of God. We have never asked anyone to agree to something they do not yet understand, nor would we ever counsel someone to accept a doctrine before explaining it to them, and giving them a chance to compare our teaching to the Word of God. By representing us in this light, Mr. Bacon has shown how unacquainted he is with our profession and practice. As seems to be his practice, it appears that he would rather not be confused by the facts - so he simply invents his own version of the story. It is much easier to dupe the general public with contrived stories than actually deal with the reality of the situation, and Mr. Bacon has evidently chosen this shortsighted approach. His scandalous lies and distortions would have worked well had we chosen not to answer.

Notwithstanding Mr. Bacon's own lack of integrity, I would like to ask the reader another question - In the PRCE membership process described above (which typically takes 30 minutes or less), where did we ask someone to agree to something or to affirm something that they didn't believe? **We ask for a simple profession of faith and an agreement to endeavour not to speak or act contrary to the truths of God's word as found in our subordinate standards. Where do we require implicit faith?** On the contrary, we counsel all of our members not to believe anything until they have confirmed it by the alone infallible rule of faith and practice, viz., God's Word.

Francis Turretin comments,

**Our opinion has nothing in common with papal tyranny** because as it gives the

power to command to pastors, so it ascribes to believers the power of proving all things and holding fast to what is good (1 Thess. 5:21); wishes to call forth the judgment of believers themselves (1 Cor. 10:15; 1 Jn. 4:1); and rejects the blind obedience of the Romanists. On account of the abuse of a thing, its use is not to be given up. Nor if the pontifical tyranny should be avoided, should we on that account pass over to the other extreme of the confusion and anarchy of the Anabaptists. **Rather we must hold the mean of lawful ecclesiastical and ministerial power between these two extremes** (Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1696, P&R, 1997, Vol. 3, p. 281, emphases added).

When we indicate that prospective members must not speak or act contrary to the infallible Word of God and the fallible and subordinate standards of our church, we are simply requiring them to walk obediently up to their present degree of light. If someone should ignorantly, through inexperience or misunderstanding, say or do something contrary to our standards, they would be patiently taught the nature of their error from God's holy Word. The membership requirements of the PRCE are exceedingly simple, and can be attested to by any present member of our congregation. Our membership requirements are no different than that required of the Ethiopian eunuch, viz., simple profession of faith, baptism and freedom from gross scandal. Mr. Bacon, again, through failure to do his homework, has misrepresented both our belief and practice. One phone call would have kept Mr. Bacon from his folly. It seems he would rather assert his own imagination than investigate our practice.

### **The Rights of Visible Church Members.**

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

To illustrate - In Canada (assuming that a legitimate government was ruling), each child who is born within Canadian boundaries has a right to vote. Though they "possess" the right to vote, they cannot "exercise" that right until they meet the qualifications of Canadian law. When they turn 18 years old they may then "exercise" their right. Thus a distinction is made between "possessing" a right and "exercising" a right. While little qualification is needed to possess a right, more is required for its lawful exercise. In the visible church of Christ, membership involves different privileges for which one must be duly qualified. To hear the Word regularly preached does not automatically qualify a person for baptism, nor does being baptized automatically qualify a person to attend the Lord's Table. Each privilege of the church has its own distinctive prerequisites.

Samuel Rutherford explains,

Some be members of the visible church properly and strictly, such as are admitted to all the seals of the covenant and holy things of God. Others are less properly, or in an inferior degree, members of the visible church, such as are baptized and are ordinary hearers of the Word, but not admitted to the Lord's Supper, of old the *Catechumanoi* were such. As there are degrees of citizens, some having all the privileges of the city and some only right to some privileges, but not to all three. Some have right to all and are most properly in the visible church (Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries*, SWRB reprint, 1995, p. 268).

What Rutherford just finished saying gives us an important summary of the privileges of church membership. He explains that all members do not have equal access to the signs and seals of the covenant. Some have a **right** to all privileges while others have a **right to exercise** all privileges. I am saying the same thing as Rutherford but in slightly different terms. Though we may "possess" the right to all the privileges of the visible church, by virtue of our profession of faith, visible interest in the covenant of grace, and freedom from visible scandal, we are only entitled to "**exercise**" those rights after we have met the visible qualifications set down in the Word of God.

George Gillespie makes the same distinction (remote right vs. proxime [nearest - GB] right):

There is *jus ad rem*, and *jus in re*. There is a remote right, or right in *actu primo*; that is such a right, relation or habitude, as entitleth a person to such a privilege or benefit, to be enjoyed and possessed by him when he shall be capable and fit to enjoy it. Such is the right of a minor to his inheritance. Such was the right of lepers of old to their tents houses and goods, when themselves were put out of the camp, and might not (during their leprosy) actually enjoy their own habitations.... There is again a *proxime* right, or a right in *actu secundo*, which rendereth a person actually and presently capable of that thing which he is entitled to (George Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, 1646, Sprinkle Publications, 1985 reprint, p. 225)

## **What are the qualifications for Baptism?**

### **Qualification #1: Profession of Faith**

When a person becomes a member of the church he does so by simple profession of faith.

The visible Church, which is also catholic or universal under the gospel, (not confined to one nation as before under the law,) consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation(*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 25:2).

Those born within the church have, by their birth, interest in the covenant and therefore ought to be baptized. **Visible profession** of faith gives a **visible interest** in the covenant of grace.

Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized. (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 28:4)

### **Qualification #2: Freedom from obstinate scandal (doctrinal or practical)**

*Larger Catechism* question #166 asks,

Question 166: Unto whom is Baptism to be administered?

Answer: Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible church, and so strangers from the covenant of promise, **till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him**, but infants descending from parents, either both, or but one of them, professing faith in Christ, and obedience to him, are in that respect within the covenant,

and to be baptized.

Those who "possess" a visible right to the covenant seal of Baptism may, immediately, by virtue of their (or their parents) visible, credible profession, and visible freedom from scandal (doctrinal and practical), "exercise" that right and have the sign of the covenant administered (see Appendix F for an important qualification to this statement). Any known to be wolves, apostates, or heretics do not qualify for this ordinance while those who, in their simplicity, profess "obedience to Christ," may proceed.

In *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, George Gillespie summarizes his opponent's (Mr. Prynne) argument as follows:

Such as in all ages, yea, by the very Apostles themselves, have been deemed fit to receive and could not be denied, the sacrament of baptism, ought to be (being baptized and unexcommunicated, and willing to communicate) admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. But in all churches from Christ's time to the present, all external professors of Christ, even carnal persons, "only upon a bare external profession of faith and repentance," were deemed fit to receive, and were never denied, the sacrament of baptism (yea saith he, "we read in the very Apostle's times, that a mere slight confession of sin, and profession of the Christian faith was sufficient to enable sinners to be baptized"); therefore all external professors of Christ ought to be admitted to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper (George Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, 1646, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications 1985, p. 226).

Note that Mr. Prynne's argument is also Mr. Bacon's argument when he says:

Finally Paul teaches that females who have been baptized into Christ are also communicant members of the Church. (*What Mean Ye By This Service*, Appendix A).

Both Prynne and Bacon contend that all who are baptised (adults) are entitled and qualified, by virtue of their membership in the visible church, to attend the Lord's Supper. George Gillespie responds to Mr. Prynne, and consequently to Mr. Bacon as well:

I retort the argument thus: Such as have been deemed by the Apostles, and by all well constituted churches, unworthy to be admitted to baptism, **ought also to be deemed unworthy, though baptized, to be admitted to the Lord's Table**. But all known wicked and prophane livers, how able and willing soever to make confession of the true Christian faith, have been, by the Apostles and all well constituted churches, deemed unworthy to be admitted to baptism; therefore all known and wicked, &c. [ and profane livers, though baptized, ought to be deemed unworthy to come to the Lord's Table - GB] (George Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, 1646, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications, 1985, p. 226, emphases added)

We see that Gillespie does not appreciate the argument of Mr. Prynne (or Mr. Bacon). If simple profession of faith does not, in and of itself, qualify a person for baptism, then it certainly does not qualify a person for the Lord's Supper. Known heretics, wolves and apostates are to be kept from both ordinances, and elders are responsible not to profane the covenant of God by promoting or participating in a promiscuous admission to either of

its signs and seals.

Baptism differs from the Lord's Supper due to the fact that a participant receives baptism passively while at the table the participant eats, drinks and examines himself actively. In the forthcoming section we shall see that this difference necessitates an enlargement of the qualifications necessary for worthy participation at the Lord's Table.

### **What are the qualifications for admission to the Lord's Table?**

Like Baptism, we "possess" the right to the Lord's Supper by virtue of a visible, credible profession of faith (giving us a visible interest in the covenant of grace) and visible freedom from scandal (both doctrinal, and practical). As in baptism, so also in the Lord's Supper, any known to be wolves, apostates, or heretics do not qualify for this ordinance. The difference in qualification between the two ordinances is due to the amount of knowledge required to accomplish the necessary duties associated with worthily partaking of the bread and wine. The key difference between these two ordinances is one of positive knowledge. To exercise our right to attend the Lord's Table we must meet the necessary qualifications as they are set down in Scripture and summarized in our *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms*.

In addition to requiring all the qualifications of Baptism, the additional qualifications necessary to attend the Lord's Table can be broken into positive and negative categories.

### **Regarding Positive Qualifications.**

#### **Qualification 1. Age and ability to examine themselves.**

We are explicitly taught in the *Larger Catechism* how God's two sacraments differ.

Question 177: Wherein do the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper differ?

Answer: The sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper differ, in that Baptism is to be administered but once, with water, to be a sign and seal of our regeneration and ingrafting into Christ, and that even to infants; whereas the Lord's Supper is to be administered often, in the elements of bread and wine, to represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul, and to confirm our continuance and growth in him, and that **only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves** (emphases added).

#### **Age**

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged (1 Corinthians 11:28, 31, AV).

Those who are not old enough to examine and judge themselves obviously cannot meet the knowledge requirements necessary to worthily partake. If, as our *Larger Catechism* states, only such as are of years and ability to examine themselves may partake of the Lord's Supper, then more than simple profession is required. Very young children may make a simple, visible, and credible profession of faith while remaining unable sufficiently to examine themselves or to discern the Lord's body to any significant degree. God may reveal himself to a child well before he can articulate an accurate understanding of the true

religion. Until he is able to visibly demonstrate his understanding of the truth, no mere man ought to presume what lies in his thoughts and intentions. This argument alone should eliminate the foolish practice of the paedocommunion camp. Those who contend for a simple profession, if they were consistent (God forbid), should be serving the bread and wine to any child who has made a simple profession of faith. Sadly, there are many unfaithful church officers foolish enough to abuse their children by admitting them to this ordinance based upon a consistent application of this deceptive principle. Faithful officers, who take their *Confession* seriously would, of course, more carefully attend to their duty. George Gillespie mentions the three necessary categories (profession, knowledge and practice) to be examined by the elders of the church.

... and that they who are the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God, ought to admit none to this sacrament except such as are qualified and fit (so far as **can be judged by their profession, knowledge and practice, observed and examined by the eldership**, according to the rules of the word, no human court being infallible) to have part and portion in the communion of saints, and to receive the seals of the covenant of grace (George Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, 1646, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications, 1985, p. 236, emphases added).

Gillespie adds,

The eldership judgeth of words and works, professions and practices. "By their fruits ye shall know them" (George Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, 1646, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications, 1985, p. 227).

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

## **Ability**

**Ability can be broken into two categories.**

### **1. Ability To Properly Prepare for the Lord's Supper.**

Ruling officers of the church have a sworn duty to uphold their *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* by judging whether a prospective communicant can properly prepare themselves to partake worthily. If a person does not have the tools to prepare for the job, how will they ever get the task completed? If a new convert cannot properly understand how to make the proper preparations, how can we as elders allow them to partake? Love does not allow others to recklessly harm themselves. Should we allow our "babes" to use the stove prior to proper instruction and examination? How much more will our "babes" in Christ be burnt by improper preparation at the Lord's Table.

In regard to such preparation necessary to come to the Lord's Supper, the *Larger Catechism* states:

Question 171: How are they that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to prepare themselves before they come unto it?

Answer: They that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper are, before they come, to prepare themselves thereunto, by examining themselves of their being in Christ, of their sins and wants; of the truth and measure of their knowledge, faith, repentance; love to God and the brethren, charity to all men, forgiving those that have done them wrong; of their desires after Christ, and of their new obedience; and by renewing the exercise of these graces, by serious meditation, and fervent prayer.

These requirements lay no small task upon any believer, never mind a new convert or young adult. The rulers of the church have been ordained to decide whether a prospective communicant is ready to worthily partake or whether more preparation is required. This duty, so seriously neglected in our present day, is not optional, and God will surely inquire of the lazy elders who shirk their responsibilities. Those elders reading this, who have become ensnared in sessions that overtly shirk their sworn, and ordained responsibilities should fall to their knees in fear and repentance for so poorly ruling the little ones of the Lord.

It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones (Luke 17:2, AV).

## **2. Ability to Discern the Lord's Body.**

The *Larger Catechism* further elaborates concerning those who come to the Lord's Supper:

Question 174: What is required of them that receive the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the time of the administration of it?

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

Question 175: What is the duty of Christians, after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper?

Answer: The duty of Christians, after they have received the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is seriously to consider: How they have behaved themselves therein, and with: What success; if they find quickening and comfort, to bless God for it, beg the continuance of it, watch against relapses, fulfil their vows, and encourage themselves to a frequent attendance on that ordinance: but if they find no present benefit, more exactly to review their preparation to, and carriage at, the sacrament; in both which, if they can approve themselves to God and their own consciences, they are to wait for the fruit of it in due time: but, if they see they have failed in either, they are to be humbled, and to attend upon it afterwards with more care and diligence.

We see immediately upon reading the above cited Catechism that, according to the divines who wrote it, an accurate discerning of the Lord's body is a task quite beyond the ability of a novice, though well within reach of a diligent seeker of truth. **According to *Larger Catechism* #174, and #175, simple profession of faith is definitely not enough.** Here Mr. Bacon's assertions regarding the simple profession of the Ethiopian eunuch violate his professed commitment to uphold the Westminster standards. Prospective communicants who examine themselves worthily must possess, at least, some knowledge of God's law and the ability to make application of it to their daily lives. If they would "hunger and thirst after Christ," they must not hunger for a Christ of their own devising - thus, they must be instructed in the doctrine of His person and work. If they would "feed on Christ by faith," they must understand what faith is. Those who trust in "Christ's merit" must understand the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Those who rejoice in God's love must have an orthodox concept of the Trinity. Those who are to "renew their covenant with God, giving thanks for His grace," must understand something of the covenants of redemption, works and grace. One must come to the schoolhouse of Christ to be nurtured upon the sincere milk of the Word before they can reasonably expect to be ready to attend His table. If an elder is to take the instruction of the *Westminster Larger Catechism* seriously he must realize that these requirements are not simply suggestions. Those who have sworn an oath to uphold these standards, "as being agreeable to God's word," will be called to account for the violation of their promise unless they repent and begin faithfully to examine their flock, judging whether or not their beloved sheep are ready to partake worthily. Failure to examine diligently the profession, knowledge and practice of all prospective communicants displays neither love nor watchfulness for their souls. To, "leave it to the people to decide for themselves," is an abdication of duty, a direct violation of ordination vows, and a profaning of the covenant of God. God will not hold him guiltless who is found to be slothful in this regard.

Mr. Bacon writes:

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 (*Defence Departed*, emphases added).

Again, I would note that the Ethiopian eunuch did not receive communion but was simply baptized in Acts 8:36-38. Does Mr. Bacon's doctrine accord with the *Larger Catechism* he so strenuously insists he upholds? Should everybody who professes faith in Jesus Christ, and is baptized, be automatically admitted to the Lord's Table? Was Phillip the Evangelist concerned with enforcing a personal profession of faith as the "only" term of communion? As we have seen, the answer to all three questions is a resounding NO! Furthermore Mr. Bacon's confusion continues when he states:

Paul teaches that females who have been baptized into Christ are also communicant members of the Church (Richard Bacon, *What Mean Ye By This Service*, Appendix A).

This sentiment is both absurd and irresponsible. A woman could theoretically be baptized within hours after conversion, and yet be in a state of ignorance comparable to a very young covenant child. To allow her to come to the Lord's Table in this relatively high degree of ignorance is contrary to Scripture, the *Confession of Faith*, and the light of

nature. Significant knowledge and preparation are required to partake worthily of the Lord's Table, and baptism is but one element of the preparatory qualification. If the Ethiopian eunuch possessed the ability to judge himself, and properly discern the Lord's body, he would then be examined (after joining a particular church) by the elders administering the Lord's Supper. Following a successful examination he would be allowed to partake. The Scripture is silent about whether the eunuch was ready or whether he ever partook of the Lord's Table. Mr. Bacon's comments upon the communion principles of Phillip the Evangelist are based upon no discernible evidence, and as such, I judge them to be nonsense.

### **Regarding Negative Qualifications.**

#### **Freedom from natural or sinful ignorance in doctrine, and freedom from scandal in doctrine or practice.**

*Larger Catechism #173* asks:

Question 173: May any who profess the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's Supper, be kept from it?

Answer: Such as are found to be ignorant or scandalous, notwithstanding their profession of the faith, and desire to come to the Lord's Supper, may and ought to be kept from that sacrament, by the power which Christ has left in his church, until they receive instruction, and manifest their reformation.

*Westminster Confession of Faith 30:8* states:

Wherefore all ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's Table, and can not, without great sin against Christ, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries, or be admitted thereunto.

According to our church standards, those who are too ignorant to properly judge themselves or discern the Lord's body, as well as those who obstinately violate God's law, are to be kept from the communion table. Therefore, those, like Mr. Bacon, who teach that a simple profession of faith is all that is required to come to communion do not believe the same doctrine as the men who wrote our standards.

George Gillespie states,

1. Are persons grossly ignorant able to examine themselves?
2. Are drunken persons able to examine themselves?
3. Are men of corrupt minds, and erroneous, yea, prophane principles, who call evil good, and pervert Scripture to the defending of some gross sins, are these able to examine themselves?
4. Are those who are known that they had never any work of the law upon their conscience to convince or humble them ("for by the law is the knowledge of sin"), able to examine themselves? **If the answers be affirmative, then surely this self examination is not rightly apprehended what it is.** If the answers be negative, then those who, in their addresses to the Lord's Table, are found ignorant, or presumptuous and unconvinced, and do manifestly appear such, though they be **NOT** excommunicated and being professed Christians and desiring the sacrament, yet ought **NOT** to be admitted (George Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, 1646, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications, 1985, p. 225, emphases added)

Additionally, Gillespie more clearly makes the distinction between natural and sinful disability:

But where there is no disability in the **natural faculties**, may not a **sinful disability**, which a man hath drawn upon himself (**as ignorance, drunkenness, corrupt and atheistical opinions, presumptuous excusing or defending of sin**), make him unable to examine himself? Shall men that are unable to examine themselves be admitted to the sacrament, because not disabled by any natural disability? Sure this was far from Paul's thoughts, when he delivered that rule concerning examining ourselves before the sacrament. Whoever they be who are unable to examine themselves, **whether naturally or sinfully, much more they who manifestly appear unwilling to examine themselves**, if they be admitted and allowed to come to the Lord's Supper, it is a high and heinous profanation of that ordinance. (George Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, 1646, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications, 1985, p. 256, emphases added).

Earlier, when Mr. Bacon directly implied that the Ethiopian eunuch's scandal free profession of faith (which qualified him for baptism) was also enough to qualify him for communion, he ignored the scriptural and catechetical requirements that bar those who are too ignorant from partaking worthily of the Lord's Table. If a simple profession of faith and freedom from scandal are all that's required, then what could our standards possibly mean by the word "ignorant"? What do the Scripture, Confession, and Catechisms mean when they instruct elders to keep the ignorant person from sinning against the body and blood of Christ? Has the PRCE required more than than the Word of God, or is Mr. Bacon unfaithfully requiring far less?

### **What did the Reformers mean by such as are "found to be ignorant" in Larger Catechism #173?**

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

1. Alexander Henderson, Scottish Commissioner to the Westminster Assembly writes: All baptized persons, **when they come to age and discretion are not admitted to the Lord's Table**; but such only as either upon examination are found to have a competent measure of knowledge in the principles of religion, do profess that they are believers and do live unblameably, or coming from another congregation bring with them sufficient testimony that they are such or are otherwise well known and approved (Alexander Henderson, *The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland*, 1641, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 39, emphases added).

We glean from this that the Scottish Church of the Second Reformation required what Henderson called "**a competent measure of knowledge** in the principles of religion," and that even those who have come to age and discretion are not to be automatically allowed to come to the Lord's Table. Unless Mr. Bacon wishes to call a "simple profession" a "competent measure of knowledge in the principles of religion" he must admit that he and

Henderson believed different things regarding terms of communion.

2. In the winter of 1644-45 the Westminster Assembly was occupied with the issues relating to *The Directory for Church Government*. The matter of the jurisdiction of church courts and the extent of their respective powers developed into a debate which resulted in the direct discussion of our present question. What did the Westminster Assembly deem to be "competent knowledge," or to put it another way, how did they define the terms "ignorant and scandalous" in relation to a prospective communicant's admission to the Lord's Table?

William Beveridge explains:

Just before the Directory [*The Directory for Church Government* - GB] was completed the Assembly resolved to petition Parliament. The result of this first petition was that the House of Commons required a detailed enumeration of everything included under the terms "ignorant and scandalous." **The Assembly in reply declared that no one should be admitted to communion without a competent understanding of the doctrines of the Trinity, of the Deity, of the state of man by his creation and by his fall, of redemption by Jesus Christ, and the means to apply Christ and his benefits; of the necessity of faith, repentance, and a godly life; of the nature and use of the Sacraments, and of the condition of man after this life.** Upon this, the House of Commons wished to know what was meant by "a competent understanding." The Assembly at once replied (William Beveridge, *A Short History Of The Westminster Assembly*, Greenville, South Carolina: Reformed Academic Press, p. 76, emphases added). On March 27th, 1645, the House of Commons made their request to the Westminster Assembly as follows:

Resolved, &c. That it be referred to the Assembly of Divines, to set down, in particular, **What they conceive to be such a competent Measure of Understanding**, concerning the State of Man by Creation, and by his Fall; the Redemption by Jesus Christ; the Way and Means to apply Christ, and his Benefits; the Nature and Necessity of Faith, Repentance, and a godly Life; the Nature and Use of the Sacraments; and the Condition of Man after this Life; without which, none shall be admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper (*Journal of the House of Commons*, Vol. 4, p. 95, emphases added).

Alexander Mitchell adds an interesting historical account of what followed the House of Commons request.

This they [the Westminster Divines - GB] did without delay, and brought up on the 1st April [1645 - GB] that terse statement which on the 17th [April, 1645 - GB] was substantially passed by the Houses and embodied in their subsequent ordinance [Oct. 20, 1645, cited below - GB], and soon after made the basis of various catechisms intended to prepare the catechumens for Communion (Alexander Mitchell, *The Westminster Assembly, Its History and Standards*, 1883, reprinted by SWRB in 1992, p. 291).

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

*Die Jovis*, April 17, 1645.

Prayers.

According to former Order, the Grand Committee of the whole House proceeded to the further Consideration of the Business concerning such as are not to be admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Mr. Whittacre called to the Chair.

Mr. Speaker resumed the Chair.

Ordered, That the Report concerning the Prince Elector be made on Tuesday next.- Mr. Whittacre reports from the Grand Committee, the Votes passed the Committee, concerning such ignorant and scandalous Persons as are not to be admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord's supper.

Resolved, &c. That an incestuous Person, appearing to be such, upon just Proof, shall not be admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Resolved. &c.

That an Adulterer: appearing to be such, upon just Proof, shall not be admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

That a Fornicator: appearing to be such, upon just Proof, shall not be admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

That a Drunkard: appearing to be such, upon just Proof, shall not be admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

That a Profane Swearer or Curser: appearing to be such, upon just Proof, shall not be admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

That One that hath taken away the Life of any Person maliciously: appearing to be such, upon just Proof, shall not be admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Resolved, &c. That whosoever shall blasphemously speak, or write, any thing of God his Holy Word or Sacraments, shall, upon just Proof thereof, not be admitted to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Resolved, &c. That they have not a competent Measure of Understanding, concerning the State of Man by Creation, and by his Fall, who do not know, That God created Man after his own Image, in Knowledge, Righteousness, and True Holiness: That, by one Man, Sin came into the World, and Death by Sin; and so Death passed upon all Men, for that all have sinned: That thereby they are all dead in Trespasses and Sins; and are, by Nature, the Children of Wrath; and so are liable to eternal Death the Wages of every Sin.

Resolved, &c. That they have not a competent Measure of Understanding, concerning the Redemption by Jesus Christ, who do not know, That there is but One Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus, who is also, 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 Fulness we receive all Grace necessary to Salvation.

Resolved, &c. 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, &c. 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, &c. 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 for them, and turn from them to the Lord; and that, except Men repent, they shall surely perish.

Resolved, &c. 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, &c. 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, and 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 every one is to examine himself, lest he eat and drink Judgment to himself; not discerning the Lord's Body.

Resolved, &c. 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 the 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. &c. 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 (Journal of the House of Commons, Vol. 4, pp. 113, 114).

J. R. DeWitt explains that the outcome of these resolutions resulted in a Parliamentary ordinance issued six months later:

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, portrayers of the

Trinity or any person thereof, duellers, 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, etc., were not to be admitted to the sacrament (J. R. DeWitt, Th.D., *Jus Divinum*, p. 188, emphases added).

This ordinance was recorded in the Journal of the House of Lord's, Vol. 7, Oct. 20, 1645, pp. 649, 650, and the relevant portions of this ordinance read as follows:

*Die Lunae, 20 die Octobris - An Ordinance of the Lord's and Commons assembled in Parliament; together with 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 Classis 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 fulness 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 of God shall no see Life, but shall perish eternally.

That they who truly repent of 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 and 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 every One 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 and 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.**

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 thereof made, 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 any thing of God, His Holy Word or Sacraments; an incestuous Person; an Adulterer; a Fornicator; a Drunkard; a prophane Swearer or Curser; one that hath taken away the Life of any Person maliciously; all Worshippers of Images, Crosses, Crucifixes, or Relics; all that shall make any Images of the Trinity, or of any Person thereof; all Religious Worshippers of Saints, Angels, or any mere Creature; any Person that shall profess himself not to be in Charity with his Neighbour; 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 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 Foot-ball or Stool-ball, 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 Fowling; or that shall publicly expose any wares to Sale, otherwise than as is provided by an Ordinance of Parliament of the 6 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 Barretry, Forgery, Extortion, or Bribery: And the severall 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 (*Journal of the House of Lords*, Vol. 7, 1644, pp. 649, 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 the "simple profession of faith" espoused by Mr. Bacon. Also observe the multiplicity of items listed as terms of communion (i.e. uninspired beliefs and practices deduced from Scripture for which wilful 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: 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*).

Finally Paul teaches that females who have been baptized into Christ are also communicant members of the Church (Richard Bacon, *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?

3. Furthermore, the following list (for a more complete list see Alexander Mitchell's, *Catechisms of the Second Reformation*, pp. lxxiii-xci) of Catechism titles (1580-1648) serves an instructive purpose, allowing us to accurately determine the intent of the ministers of the First and Second Reformations who originated these documents. 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.

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 Fountain, minister of the same church there, and lately translated into English by t.w. London, 1579. It has at the end an "Advertisement **we are accustomed to give the Saturday going before the Supper at the prayers, to**

**the end that every one may prepare himself as he ought to the worthy communicating and partaking thereof.**

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 end of 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 Abridgment 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**, etc. Like No. 6, modelled 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 has 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. Mayer. D.D. London, 1646.

A Short and Fruitful Treatise of the profit and necessity of catechising, that is, of instructing the youth and ignorant persons in the principles and grounds of Christian Religion, by Robert Caudrey, one of the ministers and preachers of the Word of God in the County of Rutland. London, 1580. At the end of Caudrey's Treatise is a copy of the injunction of the High Commissioners, headed by Grindal,

Archbishop of Canterbury, and bearing the date of 1576, "**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 practised 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 Gere, sometime minister of the Word in Tewsbury, 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 Attersol. London, 1635.

Th. 8vo, m. 56. Motives to Godly knowledge, with a brief instruction very **necessary to be learned and understood of every one 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 **Immanuel Bourne**, M.A., of Asheover, in the County of Darby, 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.

The Parliaments Rules and Directions concerning Sacramental Knowledge: Contained in an ordinance of the Lord's of Commons of the 20th of October 1645. Drawn into questions and answers. By Robert Austin D.D.

(All 19 references cited from Alexander Mitchell, *Catechisms of the Second Reformation*, 1886, SWRB reprint, 1996, pp. lxxiii-xci., emphases added).

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, 28 they say:

V.18. [*that there be no divisions among you*] Or schisms. To celebrate the Lord's Supper aright, *it is requisite that there be not only consent of doctrine, but also of discipline and affections, that it be not profaned.*

V. 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 mans 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 mad-men, and all such as either have no knowledge of Christ, or no competent measure thereof, though they profess the Christian Religion* (*The Westminster Annotations and Commentary on the Whole Bible* [1657] by some of the Westminster Divines and other Puritans, Gouge, Gataker, *et al.*, cited from SWRB photocopy edition, Vol. 6 of 6, "Annotations on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians," SWRB reprint, 1997, double emphases added).

Again note, that even though one professes the Christian Religion, these divines require 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 Genevan commentators also do not agree with Mr. Bacon's position.

5. *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.

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 pass 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 (*First and Second Books Discipline*, p. 94, Presbyterian Heritage Publications, emphases added).

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, Penult Maii [May - GB], 1592:

Forasmuch 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 (Alexander Peterkin, *The Booke of the Universal Kirk of Scotland*, 1839, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 359, emphases added).

David Calderwood adds:

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 (David Calderwood, *The True History of the Church of Scotland*, 1678, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 268, emphases added).

The full text of this "form of examination before communion" can be found in Appendix D (it is also available for free on the Still Waters 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 [Moderator of the General Assembly of 1592 - GB], Andrew Melville, Robert Rollock - among many other early Scottish reformers. Notice also, how much these men differ from requiring 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 (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

- I. 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 in 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 pretence 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:

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 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 (*Calvin's Commentaries*, Vol. 12, pp. 20, 21, Baker Book House, emphases added)

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy (James 3:17, AV).

7. 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 a unfaithful latitudinarian admission to the Lord's Table.

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:

1. To say nothing that, in some places, few or none are at all 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.

2. **That the bare repeating of the Lord's prayer, the belief [*The Apostle's Creed* - GB], 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** (*The Causes of the Lord's Wrath Against Scotland*, 1653, cited in *The Works of George Gillespie*, 1846 edition, Still Waters Revival Books, reprinted 1991, Vol. 2, p. 16, emphases added).

Notice the similarity in language between the passages cited in *Causes of the Lord's Wrath*, and *The First Book of Discipline*. In 1560, the Church of Scotland says, "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." 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 Reformations we may reasonably conclude the following:

1. The attitude of all faithful elders ought to be - "be more careful to instruct the ignorant than ready to satisfy their appetites; and more sharp in examination than indulgent" (*First Book of Discipline*).

2. 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 (Alexander Henderson, *The Government and Order of the Church of Scotland*, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 39, emphases added).

3. **The bare repeating of the Lord's prayer, the [articles of - GB] 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 Against Scotland*, cited from *The Works of George Gillespie*, p. 16, Still Waters Revival Books, emphases added).

4. Forasmuch as at the special desire of the Kirk, **a [96 question - GB] 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 (Alexander Peterkin, *The Booke of the Universal Kirk of Scotland*, 1839, p. 359, emphases added).

5. 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.

6. 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.

7. According to the writers of the Westminster Annotations (Mr. Ley, Dr. Gouge, Meric Casaubon, Francis Taylor, Dr. Reynolds, Mr. Smallwood, Mr. Gataker, Mr. Pemberton, Dr. D. Featly etc.), **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 Larger Catechism.**

Mr. Bacon says:

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*, emphases added).

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.

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 Examen. Arminianismi Page 12. says Tho' an Article of Faith be but suprafundamental, 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. i.e. brings Damnation; **because whoever denieth the evident necessary Consequent, by the same Reason he denys the Antecedent, which is a Fundamental Article beyond all Controversie.** And Turretin holds the same, in Theolog. Elenct. Part 1. Page 56: in arguing against Papists. **Mr. Gillespie** in his Miscellany Questions Chap. 9. Page: 111, 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; altho' happily such an Error to 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 A. B. C. of a Catechism [this most likely is a reference to**

***The A. B. C. or A Catechism for Young Children appointed by the Act of the Church and Council of Scotland to be learned in all families and Lector Schools in the said Kingdom, 1644 - GB)* 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, says he, that Heresie is always contrary to some Fundamental Truth: And in the 112 Page he Cites Wallaeus, Tom. 1. Page 57. Calvin: Institute: Lib. 4. cap. 2. Sect. 5. and Peter Martyr, Loc. commun: Class 2.cap. 4. Sect. 60. who all hold the same. And Augustin and Cyprian did thus understand Heresy, as Calvin in his Institutions Lib. 4 cap. 2. Observes. And Learned Ravanel in his Bibliotheca Sacra, Part 1. Page 702. Saith, An Heretick 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, Rom. 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 Hereticks to be avoided, and shunned as Wolves among Christ's Sheep** (*Protestors Vindicated*, 1716, Still Waters Revival Books, 1997, p. 105, emphases added).**

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 *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 by-ends 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 (Samuel Rutherford, *Survey of the Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline*, 1658, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 14)

Visible church members possess a visible right to the signs and the seals of the Covenant of Grace, viz., Baptism and the Lord's Supper. I also stated that 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 we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight 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 4:11-15, AV, emphases added).

## **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 communicants knowledge of the major heads of religion. Though these Catechistical 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 example 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 Cor. 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, AV).

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, Paraeus 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 who, 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 consenter fall under the same breach of law)** (George Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, 1646, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications, 1985, p. 254, emphases added).

Gillespie adds:

He [Mr. Prynne - GB] tells us, that the minister only gives the sacrament, and the unworthy receiving is the receiver's own personal act and sin. [Gillespie answers - GB] 1. He begs again and again what is in question. 2. **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 partake of other mens sins** (George Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, 1646, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications, 1985, p. 229, emphases added).

... for if the saying of *God speed* to a false teacher, make us partakers of his evil deed, 2 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 (George Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, 1646, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications, 1985, p. 53).

Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger (Proverbs 19:15, AV).

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 (John Calvin, *Calvin's Selected Works*, Vol.2, *Tracts*, Part 2, p. 35, emphases added).

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 advise of the Westminster Assembly regarding "a competent measure of knowledge" was embodied in the ordinance of parliament [Oct. 20, 1645] and was **"soon after made the basis of various catechisms intended to prepare the catechumens for Communion"** (Alexander Mitchell, *The Westminster Assembly, Its History and Standards*, 1883, reprinted 1992, p. 291, emphases added). 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 advise 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 partially 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** (Alexander Mitchell, *Catechisms of the Second Reformation*, 1886, p. xxvii., SWRB bound photocopy, emphases added).

Add to this the further testimony of the guiding principle used by the Assembly in constructing this "ripest fruit of the Assemblies thought and experience":

The guiding principle of the [Westminster - GB] Assembly and its Committee in its composition [of the Shorter Catechism - GB] was that announced by Dr. Seaman in one of the earliest debates about it, viz., **"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"** (Alexander Mitchell, *Catechisms of the Second Reformation*, 1886, p. xxx., SWRB bound photocopy, emphases added).

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 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 (Leviticus 10:10, AV).

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 vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them (Jeremiah 15:19, AV).

The huge majority of the Reformed Churches across North America ignore the requirements of the Confession and Catechisms 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:

**I dare say divers 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 endeavour. And if, here or there, it be too much neglected by some Archippus, who takes not heed to fulfil the ministry which he hath received of the Lord, let him and his eldership bear the blame and answer for it (George Gillespie, *The Works of George Gillespie, Nihil Respodes*, 1642, reprinted in 1991 [SWRB] from the 1846 edition, Vol. 1, p.12, emphases added).

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 30 minutes later to jointly profess their "agreement in Christ" at the Lord's Table. Reformed, Catholics, Baptists, Charismatics, etc., 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" (1Cor. 1:10) 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 shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest 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, AV)?

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* and *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 hailstones, shall fall; and a stormy wind shall rend it (Ezekiel 13: 10,11, AV).

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 (*Calvin's Commentaries*, Vol. 12, p. 21, Baker Book House).

Please read carefully as J. A. Wylie 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 - GB]. The great bell Clemence had tolled its summons. The throng of worshippers 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, force their way in 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 relieved 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 unabashed, the congregation opening a passage for their retreat. A deep calm succeeded and the, "sacred ordinance," says Beza, "was celebrated with profound silence, and under a solemn awe in all present, as if the Deity himself had been visible among them (J. A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism*, 1878, Vol. 2, p. 327, emphases added).

**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 M'Crie 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" (cf. 2 John 2). (Thomas M'Crie, *Unity of the Church*, 1821, reprinted in 1989 by Presbyterian Heritage Publications, p. 25).

## **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 M'Crie explains that such agreement is necessary to the stability and preservation

of any society:

The exercise of authority and 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 Tim. 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 regularity 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 (Thomas M'Crie, *Unity of the Church*, 1821, reprinted in 1989 by Presbyterian Heritage Publications, p. 24)

Opposition to church standards is the greatest source of strife and division in the church, and as M'Crie just pointed out, standards are necessary for the preservation and orderly government of God's people. Without securing **agreement to abstain** (negative agreement) from obstinately and wilfully 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 "cliches" 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 counsel of God" we are left with the "half counsel of men." Under the pretence of genuine concern for their fellow brethren, these schismatics slither their way into sessions, and set out to fundamentally neutralise 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 (Galatians 5:1, AV).

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** (Psalms 78:5-8, AV).

Mr. Bacon says,

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, etc. **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** (*Defense Departed*, emphases added).

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 acknowledgement 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 acknowledgement 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 witness, 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 co-exist 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 the boy of six years, will fit a full grown man (Rev. J. M. Foster, *Distinctive Principles of the Covenanters*, 1892, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 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's 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 *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 in 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 counselled anyone to implicitly accept something with which they disagree. Although new members of 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, *Protesters 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 expeditly, the Ministry whereof is committed unto them,

Exod. 3:4. and 14: 31. Deut. 17: 9,10. Mal 2: 4,6. Ezek. 3:17. Jer. 23:28. and 1:6. Matth. 28:19. Acts.15:10.

2ndly, 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, Isa. 8:19, 20. Mal. 2:6,7. Matth. 28:19.

3rdly, That Church-power is not a Lordly and Magistratical Power, but a lowly and Ministerial Power, and not an absolute Autocratorick, but a limited and hyperetick Power; and that Church Decrees and Sentences are all of the REGULAE REGULATAE, Rules that are Subordinated, and do not bind but in the Lord, and so far as they are conform to that first inflexible and unerring Rule prescribed by himself, Luke 22:25,26,27. 1 Pet. 5:2,3. 2 Tim. 3:15, 16, 17. 1 Thess. 5:12. Eph. 6:1. (and Pag. 96).

4thly. 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, Isa. 40:6,7,8. Rom. 3:4 1 Cor. 13:9,12.

5thly. That in so far as any of these do actually err and decline they do in so far act without Power and Authority from Jesus Christ, they may do nothing by his Commission against the Truth, but for the Truth, 2 Cor. 13:8. The power that he hath given is to Edification and not to Destruction.

6thly. That sad Experience almost in every Generation doth teach us, That church Guides and Church Judicatures do often times decline from the straight Ways of the LORD and decree unrighteous Decrees, and write grievous things, which they have prescribed, Isa. 9:15,16. Jer 8:8,9. Mal 2:8,9. Jer 2:8. And that whilst 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 these who adhere thereto, Jer 18:18. Isa 66:5. Job 7:48, 49.

7thly. (in Pag. 97) The same LORD who hath commanded us not to despise Prophesying, 1Thess 5:19. hath also commanded us, to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good. Ver. 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. Job 4:1. And that whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin, Rom 14:15. And that we ought not to be Servants of Men. 1 Cor 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 Pet. 4:2. **And it is therefore both the Duty and privilege of every Church Member to examine by the Judgment of Discretion every thing that the Church Judicatory injoineth, whether it be agreeable or repugnant to the Rule or 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 Judice Controversiarum*), have shewed us, That this doth not make a private Man, or an inferior, Judge of the Sentences of his Superiors, but only of his own Actions (Pag. 98.99)**

(*Protesters no Subverters*, p. 95, cited from *Protestors Vindicated*, 1716, SWRB reprint, 1997, pp. 93-95, emphases added).

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 *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,

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 League and Covenant*, and the 1712 *Auchensaugh Renovation*. Further, acceptance of "the Judicial Testimony emitted by the Reformed Presbytery in North Britain 1761 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 20-2 it states, "the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also" (*Defense Departed*).

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 their 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?

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?** (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 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,

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, etc. 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. (*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, viz., nonsense.

Was the Scottish General Assembly saying, "first accept the doctrine and we'll explain it later?" Of course not! **Mr. Bacon doesn't seem to understand that every time he accuses us he accuses the men of the Second Reformation.** Is requiring external conformity to church standards to be equated with compelling others to believe something against their will? Is requiring external compliance with terms of communion forcing others to trust in a standard other than Scripture? God forbid! I am truly amazed that Mr. Bacon would substitute such railing for argument. We do not require the ignorant to affirm what they don't understand, nor are we encouraging an unthinking acceptance of our church standards. On the contrary, we urge all who join with us to become as familiar as possible with the standards of our church. Like the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, we simply require those who wish to join with us to not speak, write or act contrary to our standards, while they profess to be members of our church. If one of our brethren comes to a studied and settled disagreement with something in our standards, we

then patiently work together to find out if the issue can be resolved. If he obstinately promotes a doctrine or practice contrary to that which our standards teach, we will not pretend to have familiar fellowship or close communion until we can come to an honest agreement in the truth. To proceed otherwise is sectarian, dishonest and sinful. **Why does Mr. Bacon fight with us for governing the church by the same principles as the General Assembly of Scotland (1638-1649)? Why does he call us Popes and Pharisees for upholding the standards of the Second Reformation? Why does he rail so violently against the Covenanter cause? Why? Because the whole drift of his erroneous system of latitudinarian toleration drives him through this mire. He cannot tolerate those who speak up against his errors. His erring principles lead him to false practice and his false practice leads him to fight against those who contend for the truth.**

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matthew 5:10-12, AV).

And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved (Mark 13:13, AV).

### **The Extensive Nature of Terms of Communion.**

Next, so as to establish the extensive nature of faithful terms of Communion, I will employ the *Acts of the General Assembly of Scotland* to expose Mr. Bacon's vain imagination that the Church of Scotland (1638-1649) required (for admission to the Lord's Table) a simple profession of faith as displayed by the Ethiopian eunuch in the book of Acts. I will assume from what has been said thus far that I may dispense with proving that the *Acts of General Assembly* require, "An acknowledgement of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, and the alone infallible rule of faith and practice," as a legitimate term of communion. Consequently I will begin with our second term of communion - That the whole doctrine of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, and the *Catechisms, Larger and Shorter*, are agreeable unto, and founded upon the Scriptures.

#### **a. Fully subscribing to Confessions and Catechisms is a term of communion.**

Did the General Assembly require negative agreement with the *Confession of Faith*, and *Catechisms*, before allowing people to the Lord's Table? Was it necessary to refrain from speaking or writing against these standards if one wished to come to their communion table? Yes.

March 26, Session 7, 1638.

The Assembly alloweth this article.

Whereas the Confession of Faith in this Kirk concerning both doctrine and discipline so often called in question by the corrupt judgment and tyrannous authority of the pretended Prelates, is now clearly explained, and by this whole Kirk represented by this General Assembly concluded, ordained also to be subscribed by all sorts of persons within this said Kirk and Kingdom: 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** (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], p. 51, emphases added).

Here we find that all who would obstinately speak or write against the *Confession of Faith*, the General Assembly or any Act of General Assembly would incur the censures of the church (i.e. would expose themselves to all censures of the church including suspension from the Lord's Table or excommunication if obstinate and scandalous). Is this binding one's conscience with the unlawful use of ecclesiastical power?

Notice in the following quote that the Church of Geneva agrees with the so-called Steelites that faithful creeds and confessions (i.e. fallible human compositions that are agreeable to the Word of God) may lawfully bind the conscience, and be used as terms of ecclesiastical communion.

Francis Turretin states,

We treat here of the first part or the power concerning articles of faith... This power is properly to be attended to in the judgment which the church ought to make concerning doctrine; also in the creeds and confessions **which she ought to compose for the conservation of doctrine and the bond of ecclesiastical communion** (Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1696, Vol. 3, p. 282, emphases added).

Turretin clearly states that the church is to compose uninspired creeds and confessions (agreeable to God's Word), and is to use them as a bond of ecclesiastical communion. Notice what a far cry Mr. Bacon's simple profession of faith is from the doctrine of the Church of Geneva. Perhaps Mr. Bacon would say Turretin also is "elevating human constitutions to the level of absolute necessity" (*Defense Departed*).

With Turretin I would respond,

However, two things can be asked about these confessions: first, their necessity; then, their authority. As to the necessity, **we say that it is not absolute**, as if the church could not do without them. For there was a time when she was without them, being content with ecumenical creeds alone or even without these, content with the formula of Scripture alone; but hypothetical on the hypothesis of a divine command and of the condition of the church, from the time when heresies, the danger of contagion, the calumnies of adversaries and intestine discords in religion began to disturb her, that the necessity and justice of our secession from the church might be manifested, that they might be held together in one body and so all distractions, dangerous dissents and schisms, wounding the truth and unity of the church, might be shunned.

Their authority ought indeed to be great with the pious in the churches, but still sinking below the authority of the Scripture. For the latter is a rule, they the thing ruled. It [the Scripture - GB] alone is self-credible (*autopistos*) with respect to words as well as to things, divine and infallible; they, as divine in things, still in words and manner of treatment are human writings. Faith is immediately and absolutely due to it [the Scripture - GB]; to them an examination is due and that having been made, if they agree with the word, faith. It [the Scripture - GB] is the constant and immutable canon of faith; while they are subject to revision and new examination, in which it is right not only to explain and amplify them, but also to

correct whatever fault should be found in them and reform according to the rule of the word. Hence it is evident that they err here in excess who hold such confessions as the rule of the truth itself and make them equal to the Word of God. **They are at best secondary rules, not of truth, but of the doctrine received in any church, since from them can be seen and decided what agrees with or what differs from the doctrine of the church.**

**Therefore, their true authority consists in this - that they are obligatory upon those who are subject to them in the court of external communion because they were written by the churches or in the name of the churches, to which individual members in the external communion are responsible (1 Cor. 14:32).** Hence if they think they observe anything in them worthy of correction, they ought to undertake nothing rashly or disorderly (*ataktos*) and unseasonably, so as to violently rend the body of their mother (which schismatics do), but to refer the difficulties they feel to their church and either to prefer her public opinion to their own private judgment or to secede from her communion, if the conscience cannot acquiesce in her judgment. **Thus they cannot bind in the inner court of conscience, except inasmuch as they are found to agree with the Word of God (which alone has power to bind the conscience).**

Therefore, they err in defect who acknowledge no authority or a very slight authority in confessions; such are the neutrals and Libertines, who, to consult their own interests, profess nothing certain and determinate, but amid the conflicts of contradictions are undecided and fluctuate and, falling in with the winds of fortune, bend their sails to their influence. Their religion, consequently, you would properly call (if they have any) a monthly faith; nay, even a daily (*hemerobion*) or hourly. Unorthodox persons and heretics are such who, seeing that they are checked by such formulas as by a bridle that they may not scatter their errors to the winds, endeavor in every way, either openly, or secretly and by cunning, to destroy their authority. **As was done by the Arminians, who frequently (*in considerationibus suis in Confess. et Catech. Belgi.* +) have calumniously charged us with ascribing to these formulas an authority canonical and equal to the Scriptures, when they were read and explained in the public assembly, as if they were considered as the very Word of God. But the groundlessness of this accusation appears from the acknowledged difference between confessions and the Word of God (Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1696, Vol. 3, pp. 284, 285, emphases added).**

We ask the reader to notice that Turretin charges those like Mr. Bacon of being guilty of using the tactics of the Arminians when they unjustly and calumniously attack others and charge them with making faithful subordinate standards equal to the Word of God.

Mr. Bacon applies these Arminian tactics when he says:

The *National Covenant (Confession of Faith)* is to be sworn not because the church has required it, but because it is an accurate representation of the sense of God's law. It is not, as the Steelites claim, because the church's testimony tells us what to believe (*Defense Departed*).

We praise God for his grace that the Apostles did not multiply burdens and lay them on the backs of God's people as did the Pharisees and Rome and now these

newest children of the Pharisees, the Steelites (*Defense Departed*).

The Steelites are at a significant disadvantage here in that they do not have a Pope. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that they have too many popes (*Defense Departed*).

Notice how Mr. Bacon will label us with the odious names of "Popes" and "Pharisees" in the vain hope of convincing the simple-minded by the use of disparaging language. Before I continue, and to restrain evil thoughts from rising up from within those who agree with my sentiments, I will quote from James Pierce's, *Vindication of Dissenters* (1718, SWRB reprint, 1997):

Bear patiently, my brethren, the indignity offered you; and the less you see there is of respect, and civility in their treatment, the more cheerfully accept our friendship (cited from the dedication).

Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile (Psalms 34:13, AV).

Mr. Bacon seems to think it is warrantable to accuse the PRCE of making her *Confession of Faith* equal to the Word of God simply because we use it as a bond or term of communion for all our members. Like Turretin, we respond by saying,

This power [of preserving and vindicating articles of faith - GB] is properly to be attended to in the judgment which the church ought to make concerning doctrine; also in the creeds and confessions **which she ought to compose for the conservation of doctrine and the bond of ecclesiastical communion... their true authority consists in this - that they are obligatory upon those who are subject to them in the court of external communion because they were written by the churches or in the name of the churches, to which individual members in the external communion are responsible** (Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1696, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1997, Vol. 3, pp. 284, 285, emphases added).

Not only does Mr. Bacon's slander fly against the PRCE and the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, but now we have seen that he wishes to accuse the Church of Geneva as well. While I do not conclude that Mr. Bacon is an Arminian, nevertheless, he has spoken like one for the second time. Rutherford rebuked him the first time and Turretin the second - First Scotland and then Geneva! I pray that he will recognize his folly and that there will be no need for a third rebuke.

He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly (Proverbs 14:29, AV).

**b. Term #3 - That Presbyterial Church Government and manner of worship are alone of divine right and unalterable; and that the most perfect model of these as yet attained, is exhibited in the Form of Government and Directory for Worship, adopted by the Church of Scotland in the Second Reformation.**

1. The determination of superior courts are authoritative and obligatory and NOT consultatory only.

Our unanimous judgment and uniform practice, is, that according to the order of the Reformed Kirks, and the ordinance of God in his Word, not only the solemn execution of Ecclesiastical power and authority, but the whole acts and exercise thereof, do properly belong unto the Officers of the Kirk; yet so that in matters of chiefest importance, the tacit consent of the Congregation be had, before their decrees and sentences receive final execution, and that the Officers of a particular Congregation, may not exercise this power independently, but with subordination unto greater Presbyteries and Synods, Provincial and National: Which as they are representative of the particular Kirks conjoined together in one under their government; so their determination, when they proceed orderly, whether in causes common to all, or many of the Kirks, or in causes brought before them by appellations or references from the inferior, in the case of aberration of the inferior, **is to the several Congregations authoritative and obligatory and not consultatory only** (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 108, emphases added).

I note this letter from the General Assembly to show that they especially detested the false doctrine of the Independents who vainly believed that superior courts were consultatory only. May the Lord's people pray earnestly for an end to this gross delusion brought into the church by the promoters of anarchy.

## 2. A list of dangerous errors

Nevertheless, we also very sensible of the great and imminent dangers into which this common cause of religion is now brought by the growing and spreading of most dangerous errors in England to the obstructing and hindering of the begun Reformation, as namely (beside many others) Socinianisme, Arminianisme, Anabaptisme, Antinomianisme, Brownisme, Erastianism, Independency, and that which is called (by abuse of the word) Liberty of Conscience, being indeed Liberty of Error, Scandal, Schisme, Heresy, dishonouring God, opposing the Truth, hindering Reformation; and seducing others (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 333).

Notice that the General Assembly faithfully included Independency as a dangerous error. As discussed earlier in this book, this is one error that deceives the majority of the professing Reformed churches in the United States and Canada. **Independent denominationalism and Independent congregationalism equally drink from the foul well of Independency.** Presbyterianism as promoted by the Westminster standards defends neither Independent denominationalism nor Independent congregationalism, but rather promotes the establishment of one church in each nation - a covenanted Presbyterian church. It is notable that the General Assembly included Independency in the same list with other gross heresies.

## 3. Those who hold opinions contrary to *Form of Government* or *Directory for Worship* are Schismatic and Sectarian.

Whosoever brings in any opinion or practice in this Kirk contrary to the Confession of Faith, Directory of Worship, or Presbyterian Government may be justly esteemed to be opening the door to schism and sects (*The Acts of the*

*General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland* [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 396).

Knowing that the General Assembly would censure anyone who was opening the door to schism and sects, we may safely infer that the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland believed that the Presbyterian Church Government and manner of worship are alone of divine right and unalterable; and that the most perfect model of these as yet attained, is exhibited in the Form of Government and Directory for Worship, adopted by the Church of Scotland in the Second Reformation. These things were undoubtedly made terms of communion by the Scottish General Assembly.

**c. Taking and Renewing Covenants are a term of communion.**

**Term #4** - That public, social covenanting is an ordinance of God, obligatory on churches and nations under the New Testament; that the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League* are an exemplification of this divine institution; and that these Deeds are of continued obligation upon the moral person; and in consistency with this, that the Renovation of these Covenants at Auchensaugh, Scotland, 1712 was agreeable to the Word of God.

Act for Taking the Covenant at the first receiving of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

The General Assembly according to former recommendations, Doth ordain that all young students take the Covenant at their first entry into colleges; **and that hereafter all persons whatsoever take the Covenant at their first receiving of the Lords Supper**: Requiring hereby Provincial Assemblies, Presbyteries and Universities to be careful that this Act be observed, an account thereof taken in the visitation of Universities and particular Kirks, and in the trial of Presbyteries (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], p. 422, emphases added).

That all students of Philosophy at their first entry and at their lawrecreation, be holden to subscribe the [Solemn - GB] League and Covenant and be urged thereto, and all other persons as they come to age and discretion **before their first receiving the Sacrament of the Lords Supper** (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 368, emphases added).

Why would the General Assembly ordain that "**all persons whatsoever** take the Covenant at their **first receiving of the Lord's Supper**," or that, "**all other persons** as they come to age and discretion [must take the Covenant - GB] before their **first receiving of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper**," if knowledge of the *Solemn League and Covenant* was not a prerequisite term of communion? Those who were ignorant of the Covenant or who wouldn't take it were clearly to be kept from the Lord's Supper until such time as they were prepared. How do these actions of the General Assembly square with Mr. Bacon's notions? Does he say to the Scottish General Assembly, "Note also what a far cry Steele's [read: the General Assembly's - GB] position regarding the necessity of uninspired history [read: Covenants - GB] as part of the terms of communion is from the simple profession of faith of the Ethiopian eunuch and of Peter (*Defense Departed*).

**From this we learn that knowledge of and compliance with the Covenant was required as a term of communion. Failure to take the Covenant was clearly judged**

**as a public scandal and such refusers were barred from the Lord's Supper.**

August 20, Session 15, 1647

And if by the declaration of both kingdoms [Scotland and England - GB] joined in arms, Anno 1643, such as would not take the Covenant were declared to be public enemies to their Religion and Country and that they be censured and punished as professed adversaries and malignant (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 335).

George Gillespie, Scottish commissioner to the Westminster Assembly writes,

That which is not only sinful in itself, but a great dishonor to God, a great scandal to the church, and withal a disobedience to the lawful ordinance of authority, may and ought to be punished by this Christian and reforming parliament. **But their offence which still refuse to take the covenant is not only sinful in itself, but a great dishonor to God, a great scandal to the church [therefore a term of communion - GB] and withal a disobedience to the lawful ordinance of authority.** Therefore the offense of those who still refuse to take the covenant, may and ought to be punished by this Christian and reforming parliament.

It is no tyranny over men's consciences to punish a great and scandalous sin (such as the refusing and opposing of the covenant or a dividing from it), although the offender in his conscience believe it to be no sin, yea, peradventure, believe it to be a duty, otherwise it had been tyranny over the conscience to punish those who killed the Apostles, because they thought they were doing God service, John 16:2-3 (George Gillespie, *The Works of George Gillespie, A Treatise of Micellany Questions*, 1642, SWRB reprint, 1991, Vol. 2, p. 87, cf. pp. 80-81, emphases added).

As Gillespie unequivocally states, barring people from the Lord's Table for refusing to take the Covenant is not imposing tradition upon the conscience of men, but rather it is consistent with, and agreeable to, the Word of God and our subordinate standards. Those, like George Gillespie, who drew up our subordinate standards understood their obligations, and so does the PRCE. Mr. Bacon, on the other hand, is again clearly out of sync with the doctrine and practice of our reformed and covenanted forefathers.

**d. Historical testimony as a term of communion.**

**Term #5** - An approbation of the faithful contendings of the martyrs of Jesus, especially in Scotland, against Paganism, Popery, Prelacy, Malignancy and Sectarianism; immoral civil governments; Erastian tolerations and persecutions which flow from them; and of the Judicial Testimony emitted by the Reformed Presbytery in North Britain, 1761 with supplements from the Reformed Presbyterian Church; as containing a noble example to be followed, in contending for all divine truth, and in testifying against all corruptions embodied in the constitutions of either churches or states.

Finally, what about historical testimony as a term of communion? This is by far the most maligned and least understood term. Mr. Bacon makes his most foolish comments in regard to this particular term.

He says,

But one must remember that the Steelites invest a similar meaning in the term "historical testimony" that the Romanist does with his "inspired tradition of the fathers" (*Defense Departed*).

The Reformed Presbytery registers their protest against those who would palm off upon a credulous world a confession instead of a testimony when they state:

1. The Bible, both Old and New Testament, is largely historical - the books of Genesis and Matthew beginning with narrative, the wonderful works of God. It is thus adapted to the rational nature of man, and equally to the spiritual nature of the new man (*Minutes of the Reformed Presbytery*, Sept. 30, 1875, *The Reformation Advocate*, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 250).

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. (Psalms 78:5-8, AV, Scripture proof added, emphases added).

2. [Without the use of uninspired history - GB] The church cannot ascertain the fulfilment of prophecy - the cumulating external evidence of its divine original: especially can Christ's witnesses no otherwise than by history identify her confederated enemies - the man of sin and son of perdition, his paramour - the well favoured harlot, and her harlot daughters - the off-spring of her fornication with the kings of the earth (*Minutes of the Reformed Presbytery*, Sept. 30, 1875, *The Reformation Advocate*, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 250).

Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. **And it shall turn to you for a testimony**. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer (Luke 21:10-14, AV, Scripture proof added, emphases added).

3. The present cannot in faith confess the sins, or express thanks to God for the mercies, of a former generation, except on the credibility of human history (*Minutes of the Reformed Presbytery*, Sept. 30, 1875, *The Reformation Advocate*, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 250).

And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and **confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers** (Nehemiah 9:2, AV, Scripture proof added, emphases added).

4. No otherwise can a Christian know the time or place of his birth, or the persons whom God commands him to honour as his father and mother, than by uninspired testimony; and the same is true of his covenant obligation, if baptized in infancy. Against all who ignorantly or recklessly reject or oppose history as a bond of fellowship, in the family, in the state, but especially in the church, we thus enter

our solemn and uncompromising protest (*Minutes of the Reformed Presbytery*, Sept. 30, 1875, *The Reformation Advocate*, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 250). My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother (Proverbs 1:8, AV, Scripture proof added).

Did the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1638-1649) include history as a term of Communion?

1. Robert McWard, amanuensis to Samuel Rutherford at the Westminster Assembly, was a zealous minister and Protester against the faction calling herself the Church of Scotland. This protege of Rutherford collected and edited *Rutherford's Letters* and is notable for many of his faithfully written works, not the least of which is his excellent book entitled, *Earnest Contendings for the Faith*.

Citing a letter from John Welch to Robert Bruce, Robert M'Ward comments upon the importance of judicial history to the Church of Jesus Christ:

But whether I have reason to deny what is so confidently asserted, let the following Testimony be considered, that it may decide. Great Mr. Welch in his letter to Mr. Bruce writes thus, "What my Mind is (saith he) concerning the Root of these Branches, the Bearer will show you more fully. They are no more to be accounted ORTHODOX, but APOSTATES. They have fallen from their CALLINGS, by receiving an Antichristian, and bringing in of Idolatry, to make the Kingdom culpable, and to expose it to fearful judgments, for such an high Perfidy, against an Oath so solemnly exacted and given; and are no more to be accounted Christians; but Strangers and Apostates and Persecuters; and therefore not to be heard any more either in Publick or in Consistories, Colleges, or Synods. For what Fellowship hath Light with Darkness? &c. Calderwood's Hist: Page 743. Now, Sir, here is not only a Testimony of one of the greatest Lights that ever shined in our Church, directly contradicting what you assert; but **considering, how carefully this History was Revised by our General Assembly, we are to look upon it as the Judgment of our whole Church;** that Letter being therein insert, as a Commendation and Vindication of that eminent Man of God (Robert McWard, *Earnest Contendings for the Faith*, 1723, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 127, emphases added).

As a second witness I quote from, the preface to the reader in the eighth book of Calderwood's History of the Kirk of Scotland:

As, therefore, we are hopeful, that this notable history, compiled and written by such an accomplished and credit worthy author, **thereunto appointed and authorised by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland; several times revised, amended, and at length approved, (as could be evidenced by the Acts of our Assembly, which herewith had been published for verification, if our church registers had not been seized,)** will be the more commended and endeared unto thee, that it is almost the only monument left (all the public Registers of the Church of Scotland having (as was hinted) by Divine permission, for our farther trial and affliction, lately fallen into the hands of the Prelates, and their partners, the known enemies of her true liberties) (David Calderwood, *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, Vol. 8, p. 21, emphases added).

Especially notice these words, "...but considering how carefully this History [Calderwood's history - GB] was Revised by our General Assembly, **we are to look upon it as the judgment of our whole church.**" Why would Robert McWard say such a thing? Imagine! **History being looked upon as the judgment of the whole church.** Would such a statement come out of Mr. Bacon's mouth? I doubt it. Considering that Robert McWard was a close friend of Samuel Rutherford, and of John Brown of Wamphray, this is quite a statement to hear him make. Consider that the General Assembly was pouring their resources into, and carefully revising Calderwood's history. Why would the General Assembly of 1648 allow David Calderwood an annual pension while he laboured upon this massive task of writing *The True History of the Church of Scotland*? Because this history was written and, **"thereunto appointed and authorised by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland; several times revised, amended, and at length approved, as could be evidenced by the Acts of our Assembly, which herewith had been published for verification, if our church registers had not been seized"** for the purpose of passing on an authentic judicial and historical testimony to posterity. It was entered into the Registers of the Church of Scotland to show that with one voice the General Assembly concurred with its contents, and that it could be considered a credible testimony of the application of their principles and subordinate standards to their history. They knew that history is not neutral and that the uninterpreted facts of history do not speak for themselves. They would not rely upon the godless world to testify against the faith of their forefathers. They understood that they must come to an agreement about who contended for the truth and who contended against it - they understood that they had a duty to extinguish the remembrance of the wicked, and to exalt the mighty works of the Lord through his children. Like Israel of old, they would write it for a memorial and rehearse it to their children; they would remember the covenant of their ancestors and pass it on from generation to generation. Why? Because God is the creator of time and history, and he is glorified when we rehearse his mighty works. Our agreement upon the mighty deeds of God is essential to our communion with one another. The General Assembly knew this and so did the faithful Covenanters who followed in their footsteps. Sadly, Mr. Bacon seems to imply that communion and agreement in the truth has little to do with the history of our forefathers or their mighty victories in Christ Jesus. Do not be fooled by his false argumentation. He opposes himself and the testimony of the faithful when he speaks against history as a term of communion. Under the disguise of Christian tolerance he teaches that which would steal away our Covenanted inheritance.

And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and **rehearse it in the ears of Joshua:** for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven (Exodus 17:14, AV).

They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, **there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the LORD,** even the righteous acts toward the inhabitants of his villages in Israel: then shall the people of the LORD go down to the gates (Judges 5:11, AV).

**Remember his marvellous works that he hath done,** his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth; O ye seed of Israel his servant, ye children of Jacob, his chosen ones. He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth. Be ye mindful always of his covenant; the word which he commanded to a thousand generations; Even of the covenant which he made with Abraham, and of his oath

unto Isaac; And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant (1 Chronicles 16:12-17, AV).

We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. **Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies;** but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea (Psalms 106:6-7, AV).

15 That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past (Ecclesiastes 3:15, AV).

### **How did the General Assembly of Scotland view their own history?**

2. What does the General Assembly of Scotland say about all the General Assemblies that preceded them? How do they view their own history? Do they make compliance with former Acts of General Assembly a term of communion?

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** (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 51, emphases added)?

And likewise **in case they acknowledge not this Assembly, reverence not the constitutions thereof, and obey not the sentence,** and make not their repentance, conform to the order prescribed in this Assembly, **ordains them to be excommunicated** and declared to be of these whom Christ commanded to be holden by all and everyone of the faithful as Ethnics and Publicans (*The Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 22, emphases added).

Who would believe that a faithful General Assembly would not expect their rulings to be implemented year after year? As soon as these Acts are determined they become historical, judicial testimony which bind the church in so far as the human constitution itself agrees with the Word of God. As is standard Presbyterian practice, those who wilfully and obstinately refuse to abide by the faithful rulings of General Assembly are excommunicated. This makes their historical testimony - the application of their principles in history - binding upon subsequent generations and a term of communion. Dear reader, consider the Presbyterian position of the Scottish General Assembly, and ask yourself - Are they using historical testimony as a term of communion?

- a. The General Assembly censures (bars people from the Lord's Table) people for ignorance and scandal year after year.
- b. Each censure that sets a new precedent becomes a historic testimony for truth and against error.
- c. Over the years the record of church censures grow into a body of judicial testimony.
- d. These provide subsequent generations with a record of judgment that bind posterity

inasmuch as these judgments are agreeable to God's Word.

e. This record of censures becomes a basis for terms of communion since they are an historical and judicial record of scandalous sins and errors for which professing Christians have been barred from the Lord's Supper by a faithful General Assembly from the past. Therefore, historical and judicial testimony in the form of historical church censure is a direct statement of their terms of communion.

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2, AV).

Does Mr. Bacon object to this kind of historical testimony? Will he also fight against the censures of our faithful forefathers? Are the faithful Acts of General Assembly too much for him to read? Perhaps our forefathers held their principles too strictly and needed Mr. Bacon to temper their harsh judgment. I speak this to his shame.

Next, let us proceed to some concrete examples of the use of historical testimony.

1. Pretended assemblies **and** their pretended policies were censured.

First, I contend that a clear example of the use of historical testimony as a term of Communion is exemplified by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1638 where they declared the Prelatical General Assemblies to be pretended assemblies, pronouncing all their Acts null and void in the years 1606, 1608, 1610, 1616 and 1618.

December 4, 1638, Session 12.

The Assembly with universal consent of all, after the serious examination of the reasons against every one of these six pretended Assemblies apart, being often urged by the moderator, to inform themselves thoroughly, that without doubting they might give their voices, declared all these six assemblies of Linlithgow 1606 and 1608, Glasgow 1610, Aberdeen 1616, St. Andrews 1617, Perth 1618, And every one of them to have been from the beginning unfree, unlawful, and null Assemblies, and never to have had, nor hereafter to have any Ecclesiastical authority, and their conclusions to have been, and to be of no force, vigour, nor efficacy: Prohibited all defence and observance of them, and ordained the reasons of their nullity to be inserted in the books of the Assembly (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], p. 9).

The General Assembly realized that historical testimony of all faithful preceding Scottish General Assemblies set precedent for them to follow. Upon retaking power from the Prelates, they immediately declared the Prelatical Assemblies and all their Acts null and void to distinguish between those historical testimonies that were unscriptural, pretended, and of no authority from those historical testimonies that were scriptural, faithful, and authoritative. Thus they dissociated themselves from these Pretended Assemblies and judged them and all their pretended Acts to be null and void. In effect they declared themselves to have no agreement or communion with those who countenanced, obeyed or defended the authority of those Assemblies. The entire policy of the Prelates and all their pretended authority was wiped away with one act, and from henceforth this Act became a term of communion in the Church of Scotland. This is nothing less than a judicial

testimony against an historical body being used as a term of communion.

2. False principle and practice is censured.

On December 10, 1638, Session 17, the General Assembly of Scotland declared the Five Articles of Perth to be abjured and removed.

The matter was put to voicing, in these words: Whether the five articles of Perth, by the confession of Faith, as it was meant and professed in the year 1580, 1581, 1590, 1591, ought to be removed out of this Kirk: The whole Assembly all in one consent, one only excepted, did voice that the five articles above specified were abjured by this Kirk, in that Confession, and so ought to be removed out of it: And therefore prohibits and discharges all disputing for them, or observing of them, or any of them in all time coming, and ordains Presbyteries to proceed with the censures of the Kirk against all transgressors (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 36).

Can you find the Five Articles of Perth listed in your Bible or must you look to uninspired history alone to know for what cause the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland would censure the people of Scotland? The Assembly plainly tells us that they would censure anyone, who would dispute for, or observe these five articles of Perth. The General Assembly applied their Scriptural principles to the historic circumstances of their time and set precedents, agreeable to God's Word, that bind us (their ecclesiastical descendants) even today to the same moral principles. Should we observe and promote the Five Articles of Perth in 1997? Of course not, and if anyone does so obstinately, they should be censured and barred from the communion table. History alone records these Five Articles of Perth, and we acknowledge them as heresy in our testimony and include them among the our terms of communion. As we rehearse to our posterity God's mighty work of overthrowing the wicked, we must teach them that these Five Articles of Perth are heresy and that those who love and defend them them must be considered scandalous. This was clearly the practice of the Church of Scotland in the Second Reformation, is identical to the practice of the faithful Covenanters of Scotland and America in later years, and continues as the practice of the PRCE today.

3. Schisms from the past were censured, and association or agreement with them were made terms of communion in all "time coming."

Not only was promoting and defending the pretended authority, the unbiblical principles and practices of the Prelates censurable (and thus a faithful term of communion), but even presently associating with and promoting these historically censured groups is a faithful term of communion. While the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1638-1649) would maintain that the Episcopal church was a true church as to its being or essence, they would not recognize the authority of the Prelates pretended judicatories, and they sternly warned all professors of the true religion in Scotland that censure would certainly follow anyone who accepted, defended or obeyed their pretended authority.

Act of the Assembly at Glasgow, Session 16, December 8, 1638.

It was also cleared that Episcopacy was condemned in these words of the Confession, HIS WICKED HIERARCHY.... We have in the book of Policy or Second Book of Discipline, in the end of the second chapter this conclusion agreed

upon. Therefore all the ambitious titles invented in the Kingdom of Antichrist, and his usurped hierarchy which are not one of these four sorts, To wit, Pastors, Doctors, Elders, and Deacons, together with offices depending thereupon, in one word ought to be rejected....The whole Assembly most unanimously, without contradiction of any one (and with the hesitation of one allanerly) professing full persuasion of mind, did voice, That all Episcopacy different from that of a Pastor over, a particular flock, was abjured in this Kirk, and to be removed out of it. **And therefore prohibits under ecclesiastical censure any to usurp, accept, defend, or obey the pretended authority thereof in time coming** (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland* [1638-1649 inclusive], p. 34, emphases added).

Do you think that these men intended their posterity to continue to censure those who obeyed the Episcopalian daughter of Antichrist? Their historical testimony was, and is to be upheld, published and promoted in "time coming," and all who fail to recognize that is agreeable to God's word are to be kept from the Lord's Table. Again we see in the Acts of the General Assembly a judicial testimony binding subsequent generations to obedience, and censuring all who will not comply for all "time coming."

Each of these attainments are not to be receded from. We must gratefully receive the faithful judgment of past General Assemblies and compare their rulings with the Word of God.

Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing (Philippians 3:16, AV).

Once we confirm that their ruling was agreeable to holy Scripture we may continue to apply their judgment to the present day. Not only are we to adhere to faithful attainments of the past, but we are duty bound to testify against the prevalent sins of our times. Again, the General Assembly recognized the need for constant vigilance in this regard and they protected the church from the contagion of backsliding ministers by framing yet another needful term of communion.

Act for censuring Ministers for their silence, and not speaking to the corruption of the time. August 3, 1648. Ante Meridiem. Session 26.

The General Assembly, taking to their serious consideration, the great scandals which have lately increased, partly through some Ministers their reserving and not declaring of themselves against the prevalent sins of the times, partly through the spite, Malignity, and insolency of others against such Ministers as have faithfully and freely reprov'd the Sins of the times without respect of persons, Do therefore for preventing and removing such scandals hereafter, Appoint and Ordain, that every Minister do by the word of Wisdom apply his Doctrine faithfully against the publick Sins and Corruptions of these times, and particularly against the Sins and Scandals in the Congregation wherein he lives, according to the Act of the General Assembly 1596, revived by the Assembly at Glasgow 1638. **Appointing that such as shall be found not applying their Doctrine to corruptions, which is the Pastoral gift, cold, and wanting of Spiritual zeal, flatterers and dissembling of publick sins, and especially of great Personages in their Congregations, that all such persons be censured according to the degree of their faults and**

**continuing therein be deprived; And according to the Act of General Assembly 1646, Sess. 10, That beside all other scandals, silence, or ambiguous speaking in the public cause, much more detracting and disaffected speeches be seasonably censured** (*The Records of the Church of Scotland*, p. 509, emphases added).

These Acts of General Assembly contain hundreds of pages of judicial testimony which declare the things censured and why they were censured. Every precedent-setting censure adds to their list of terms of communion. Every new heresy and every new enemy testified against is added to a growing list of those things that will bar someone from the Lord's Supper. Every time an authoritative judicatory rules correctly (i.e. in accordance with Scripture) and precedentially, they make a new judicial testimony for the truth and against error. Is Mr. Bacon also against the authority of General Assemblies? As a professed Presbyterian he should recognize that historical testimony and judicial testimony are terms of communion in every church court that has a history. What does Mr. Bacon call judicial precedent? Is this not binding historical testimony? Why does he rail at us for doing what is unavoidable? The Acts of faithful General Assemblies provide us with a record of historical terms of communion and are the single most important source we have in determining the footsteps of the flock at that period of time. Though these documents are fallible, they nevertheless, once confirmed to be agreeable to God's word, may be considered faithful until proved otherwise. Though they are subordinate, they may be considered authoritative until proved otherwise and adjusted. Because mere men have pronounced judgment upon the events of history does not necessarily mean they have done so incorrectly. These testimonies serve their intended purpose in promoting peace and uniformity in the church.

David Steele comments:

Whether in the light of God's word, history and argument are to be inseparably joined with doctrine in the Testimony of the church, is the question. The affirmative we maintain, - the negative is asserted in the "Preface" to *Reformation Principles Exhibited* [formerly the "Testimony" of the RPCNA - GB], and urged by the Covenanter [the magazine - GB]. "What saith Scripture?" The case of Stephen the protomartyr under the Christian dispensation, will serve for both proof and illustration, (Acts 7:1, etc). This witness begins his testimony with history, commencing with the call of Abraham, and ending at his own time. From the 51st to the 53rd verse, he applies the facts of history and doctrines declared to the case in hand; and this he does in argumentative form. Take the case of the blind man restored to sight, (John 9:13-34). The former of these witnesses was stoned to death [i.e. Stephen - GB]; the latter excommunicated [i.e. the blind man restored - GB], for stating facts, and arguing from them. These two examples are deemed sufficient at present for proof and illustration. But it may be said - "These are inspired records - scriptural examples." True, and just because they are inspired instances of testimony-bearing we adduce them, to establish and illustrate our position, which they irrefragably do. "But what has this to do with uninspired, mere human history, as a part of testimony?" "Much every way," chiefly with reference to Covenanting. Their very designation, COVENANTERS, one would suppose sufficient, if received in its historical import, to establish the truth of our position. But we waive that for the present. **There are two kinds of faith - distinct, but inseparable; and, as already stated, the kind of faith is determined by the kind of testimony, while both are required by God's word**

**and by the condition of human society. The one, for the sake of a distinction, is called divine faith; the other, human.** "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater," I John 5:9. Christ said to the Pharisees - "It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true," John 8:17. See also Matt. 18:16. Now it is obvious that facts, rather than principles, constitute testimony. And it is undeniable that the holy Scriptures sustain the credibility of human testimony, though uninspired. Still, "the witness (testimony) of God is greater." Hence I reason thus - The Lord Jesus, whose name is the Word of God, the faithful and true Witness, having it in charge to reveal and execute the purposes of God; and the devil, the father of lies, who sinneth from the beginning, being assiduously engaged in falsifying the revealed will, and resisting the execution of the purposes of Jehovah, (Rev. 5:9; 12:7); both these leaders are accompanied by their respective partisans of the human family. Protestants generally agree that Popery is a diabolical organization against Christ and truth. That Christ is a divine person, is a doctrine of Scripture, (John 1:1); but this is questioned by the devil, (Matt. 4:6), though admitted by the church of Rome. Christ, being divine, is the object of worship. To this Popery assents. But Christ is also Mediator between God and man. Well, Popery admits this also, and resists only the exclusive mediation of Christ; which office the Romish church distributes among Christ, Mary, angels, etc. And we know both the errors and idolatries as FACTS in the history of Popery. True, we may and ought to try both by God's word. On the other hand, we know that Christ is the Son of God, and that we ought to "honor the Son, even as we honor the Father," - we know these things, I say, not only as doctrinally declared, but also as exemplified in the faith and practice of the church of God in all ages. Of the three men who visited Abraham, (Gen. 18:2), the patriarch worships one only (v. 22). The unbelieving Jews claim Abraham as their father, but refused to do the works of Abraham, and so falsified their claim, (John 8:33,39). We claim to be the seed of Christ's covenanted witnesses in Britain and Ireland; but unless we "walk in the steps of their faith," our professed attachment to that faith will avail us nothing.

But it may be said, Who denies all this, or what has this to do with the matter of a testimony? Everything. That many of our former brethren are aiming to copy their "noble example," including *the Covenanter*, is matter of our joy and thanksgiving to God. But how? As individuals? - as congregations? - as judicatories? If so, it is all right, so far as they followed Christ. Still Christ enjoins it upon us to "go forth by the footsteps of the flock," (Song 1:8). These footsteps are Christian practices; that is, they are the application of principle, scriptural principle, to individual and social life. Let it be noticed that Christ counsels inquirers to follow the footsteps of the flock; thus making those footsteps at once directive and authoritative. **We can know the footsteps, the Christian and social practice of our Covenanted fathers, only by HISTORY; and through the same medium alone do we come to ascertain the very arguments by which they defended both their faith and practice.**

**My faith may be designated human; or, if you will, even Popish; still I am not ashamed to own that the practice of Cameron, Cargill, Renwick, and those with whom the martyrs were associated, is directive to me and authoritative also! Indeed, I am bound to bring even their principles and arguments to the "law and to the testimony," but history alone will supply me with these;**

**which, that it may do, I must have it in an authenticated form. In this matter the Lord Jesus will not allow us to walk at random.** "Go thy way... by the footsteps of the flock." **The great outlines of the Mediator's special providence, and of the church's faithful contendings must ever be before her children, sanctioned by her authority in a judicial form, that posterity may see how she has walked with God in the wilderness; as also wherein she may have acted perfidiously in view of her solemn covenant engagement** (*The Covenanter*, May 1856, p. 303, emphases added).

Again, our 5th term of communion reads,

An approbation of the faithful contendings of the martyrs of Jesus, especially in Scotland, against Paganism, Popery, Prelacy, Malignancy and Sectarianism; immoral civil governments; Erastian tolerations and persecutions which flow from them; and of the Judicial Testimony emitted by the Reformed Presbytery in North Britain, 1761 with supplements from the Reformed Presbyterian Church; as containing a noble example to be followed, in contending for all divine truth, and in testifying against all corruptions embodied in the constitutions of either churches or states.

We in the PRCE approbate the "faithful" contendings of the martyrs and uphold their judicial testimonies as "noble examples" (which could not be called noble if they were contrary to God's Word) to be followed in contending for all divine truth. This is a testimony for the truth and against error which any Christian who desires to come to the communion table should be more than willing to make. What sin are we committing by requiring that people approbate the faithful contendings of the martyrs? For someone not to approbate their faithful contendings implies either ignorance of, or opposition to these. I have already demonstrated that those who come to the communion table must "all speak the same thing," having no divisions, and "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." This is not fulfilled in the case of opposition to noble and faithful contendings. Those who cannot take the time to enquire about the covenants and contendings of our ancestors, or those who are too busy to remember and rehearse the mighty acts of God done through his servants are simply not yet ready to come to communion. Neither are those who oppose the conscientious approving of such faithful historical deeds. Failure to attend to these important aspects of our Christian duty is scandalous and we would have to inquire as to what is so time consuming that these things cannot properly be considered. Additionally, we do not ask for a perfect understanding, nor do we require agreement with every minute sentiment contained in our judicial documents. These are "noble examples" in contending for all divine truth and not "infallible examples." We seek an honest effort and professed agreement to our standards. By reasonable examination we determine whether we can walk together, and jointly profess our faith before our Saviour, each other, and the world as one bread and one body. If someone is not willing to sacrifice enough time and energy to seek an honest estimate of our agreement in the truth, then I fear that they are not redeeming the time, or they have seriously confused their priorities in life.

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness (2 Timothy 2:15-16, AV).

**Are our terms of communion too lengthy?**

Mr. Bacon says,

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, etc. 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.

I respond with the words of the Reformed Presbytery:

**Ministers who sought popularity affected the favour of the unlearned, by representing the testimony as too profound for the comprehension of the common people. It was, moreover, too prolix [lengthy - GB]; so that few could find time to examine it thoroughly.** But the greatest objection was, that it was too severe against other churches; and this last objection is, in truth, the only one. Aspiring ministers felt ashamed of "sackcloth;" they longed to get out of the "wilderness" and get nearer to "king's palaces" (*The Reformation Advocate*, March 1876, SWRB, 1997, Vol.1, p. 260, emphases added).

He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him (Proverbs 11:27, AV).

What is required is not too hard for those who wish to turn off their televisions and use that time for study. Video rental shops may suffer a drop in profits but the congregation of the Lord will rejoice in agreement. This objection - "I don't have time" - is the same used by those who will not pray in secret, worship daily with their families, or honor the Lord's Day.

O hearken to this all ye that live quietly in the omission of closet or family prayer, of solemn fasting, or communion in the blessed Supper of the Lord. Hath God abated you of the price that others must give? Hath he granted a new way of heaven for you? Must others make religion their business, and you neglect it where you please (Richard Steele, *A Remedy for Wandering Thoughts in Worship*, 1673, Sprinkle, reprinted 1988, p. 225)?

The objections that "its too hard" and "I don't have time" are typically spoken by the same people who can sing along with the television commercials and name every actor and actress in Hollywood. Who is Harrison Ford? "No problem!" they say, "If that was on the communion exam, we could study all day." What is the doctrine of justification by faith? "Come on" they say, "now you're asking too much." Is it asking too much to become acquainted with the standards of truth that our martyred forefathers died to uphold? To those who won't be "inconvenienced," and to those who might be convinced by Mr. Bacon's arguments, I plead with you to look forward to the day of judgment and see if you will then say "I didn't have time."

"Ephraim compasseth me about with lies." Hos. 11:12. Oh how often may the Lord say over us, These people compass me about with lies. What a generation of vipers are here! like the viper that is speckled without, and poisonous within! Moses took a veil when he spake to Israel, and put it off when he spake to God; **but the hypocrite doth quite contrary; he shews his best to men, his worst to**

**God, but the Lord sees the veil and the face; and it is hard to say, whether he hates more the veil of dissimulation or the face of wickedness** (Richard Steele, *A Remedy for Wandering Thoughts in Worship*, 1673, Sprinkle Publications, reprinted 1988, p. 153, emphases added).

Do not deceive yourself, you do have time to read what is required for preparation to come to the communion table and in most cases you have already been given more than enough time. Mr. Bacon may want to accommodate his practice to the lax sentiments of the modern man, but God's requirements are still the same. Mr. Bacon may wish to find the lowest common denominator (simple profession) so that everybody who visits his church in Rowlett can participate in communion, but thankfully we know that this Romish view will be judged and destroyed forever. Until then, we will continue to pray against this latitudinarian view and pray for the repentance of all who seduce God's people with these lies.

The holy Lord of hosts will not allow it. If you will not sanctify him, he will sanctify himself. If you that worship him, will not bear witness of your serious attendance to his holiness, he must bear witness to it by his judgments on you; which, indeed, are not always visible, but ever certain; not a man in the congregation, but the holy God is sanctified by him or upon him. Little do we know what invisible dreadful effects there are of this daily in our congregations. And if our dear Redeemer did not stand as a screen between us and his wrath, the best of us would quickly feel the effects of his displeasure (Richard Steele, *A Remedy for Wandering Thoughts in Worship*, p. 34).

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee (Revelation 3:1-3, AV).

**Is the PRCE guilty of imposing the traditions of men upon the conscience by requiring terms of communion that are unscriptural as Mr. Bacon slanderously misrepresents?**

We ask no more than Scripture requires.

1. Scripture is our alone infallible foundation; subordinate standards are used to promote purity and agreement.
2. We subscribe our *Confession of Faith* and *Catechisms* because they agree with God's word.
3. Our *Form of Government* and *Directory for Worship* are identical to the Scottish Church in her best and purest times, and we uphold them because they agree with God's Word.
4. Our perpetually binding covenants are remembered and renewed, again, because they agree with God's Word.

5. The testimony of the faithful contending of the martyrs is not forgotten, and historical testimony is observed in so far as it agrees with the Word of God.

O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer (Psalms 31:23, AV).

**Mr. Bacon absurdly condemns our last term of communion.**

1. The last major insult that Mr. Bacon has levelled against us regards our last term of communion. I have separated it from the others to draw special attention to the absurdity of this attack.

Our sixth term of communion reads, "Practically adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour by walking in all His commandments and ordinances blamelessly."

Mr. Bacon says,

But this brings us to the sixth term of communion, "Practically [i.e. in practice] adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour, by walking in all his commandments and ordinances blamelessly." We should carefully examine this term of communion. It is not promised, "as God gives me grace," or "I shall endeavor." Rather the promise is simply to do it (*Defense Departed*).

This ridiculous allegation is really too childish and mean spirited to dignify with a response, but I have been given the task, and I will attempt to carry it faithfully to completion.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour (Exodus 20:16, AV).  
Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness (Exodus 23:1, AV).

Mr. Bacon, in his sinful effort to try to attack and misrepresent every term he can, has taken this to the ultimate extreme.

The *Solemn League and Covenant* states:

That we shall sincerely, really, and constantly, through the grace of GOD, **endeavor**, in our several places and callings, the preservation of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, against our common enemies; the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the Word of God, and the example of the best reformed Churches; and shall **endeavour** to bring the Churches of GOD in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, Confession of Faith, Form of Church Government, Directory for Worship and Catechising; that we, and our posterity after us, may, as brethren, live in faith and love, and the Lord may delight to dwell in the midst of us (*The Solemn League and Covenant*, emphases added).

How many time does Mr. Bacon want us to say endeavour? Would 100 be enough? Does he not possess a copy of the *Solemn League and Covenant*? He reminds me of the Calvinist who is ready to call you an Arminian if you do not put "by grace" at the end of

every sentence. It is not hard to see that Mr. Bacon will go to any length to misrepresent our position. When a person is called upon to interpret a document, is it fair to dissociate all the previous articles from the last one? Is that the scholarship of a man of integrity?

2. We now proceed from bad to worse.

Mr. Bacon says,

Additionally, we must remember that this promise is coming from one who has not been required anywhere in the terms of communion to confess his own sinfulness, his own inability, his own profession of faith in Christ, or his own dependence upon the mercy of God and his Spirit (*Defense Departed*).

a. "A Solemn Acknowledgment of Public Sins and the Breaches of the Covenant" is two pages long and is included in our terms of communion under term #4.

b. "The Acknowledgement of Sin" in the *Auchensaugh Renovation* (term #4) is 42 pages long.

c. "The Confession of Public Sins" penned by the Reformed Presbytery of America, October 8, 1880, is five pages long - these are included in the 5th term of communion by the phrase, "with supplements from the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

That makes a total of **49 pages of confession of sin** in our terms of communion alone and Mr. Bacon says it is not required anywhere. When we own these confessions of sin we do so with humility, and an understanding that we, too, are guilty of the sins mentioned.

And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers (Nehemiah 9:2, AV).  
O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: **because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers**, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us (Daniel 9:16, AV, emphases added).

Does Mr. Bacon require confession of private and personal sins before he allows his people to communion? Is that what he is asking for? If he is, then he is more Romish than I feared. **If 49 pages of confession of sin are not enough for Mr. Bacon, I doubt that 50 pages would make any difference. How can he explain his failure to mention 49 pages of confession of sin?**

3. Next, Mr. Bacon says that we do not confess our own inability before God since it is nowhere mentioned in our terms of communion.

Our own inability is mentioned in our Confession of Faith (term #2)

a. *Westminster Confession of Faith* 9:3 states:

Man, by his fall into a state of sin, **hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation**; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.

b. Our inability is also mentioned in *Larger Catechism* #149 and *Shorter Catechism* #82 which we own in our second term of communion.

When we own the *Westminster Confession of Faith* with the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms* what does Mr. Bacon think we are saying about our own ability before God? Does he think we are saying that we own everybody else's inability but it doesn't apply to us? I must attribute this accusation to malicious intent since even the dullest of ministers would not conclude such a thing. I know that Mr. Bacon is smarter than that, and I cannot conceive of an adequate excuse that would justify his slander.

4. Next, Mr. Bacon charges us with failing to include a profession of faith in our terms of communion.

Though it can easily be proved that this is implied in the previous five terms of communion I would remind the reader that we ask for a profession of faith before baptism. Since it is already accomplished when one becomes a member the church, it is inappropriate and unnecessary to ask again at the examination for communion. Again, this clearly reveals Mr. Bacon's confusion as to the nature of terms of communion, and the difference between membership in the visible church, and admission to the Lord's Table.

5. Next, we are charged with failing to confess our own dependence upon the mercy of God and His Spirit.

We own the *Directory for the Public Worship of God* (term #3), which instructs us to pray in the following manner:

To acknowledge and confess, that, as we are convinced of our guilt, so, out of a deep sense thereof, we judge ourselves unworthy of the smallest benefits, most worthy of God's fiercest wrath, and of all the curses of the law, and heaviest judgments inflicted upon the most rebellious sinners; and that he might most justly take his kingdom and gospel from us, plague us with all sorts of spiritual and temporal judgments in this life, and after cast us into utter darkness, in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth for evermore.

Notwithstanding all which, to draw near to the throne of grace, encouraging ourselves with hope of a gracious answer of our prayers, in riches and all sufficiency of that only one oblation, the satisfaction and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of his Father and our Father and in confidence of the exceeding great and precious promises of mercy and grace in the new covenant, through the same Mediator thereof, to deprecate the heavy wrath of God, which we are not able to avoid, or bear; and humbly and earnestly to supplicate for mercy, in a full and free remission of all our sins, and that only for the bitter sufferings and precious merits of that our only Saviour Jesus Christ (*The Directory for Public Worship*, "Of Public Prayer Before the Sermon").

Have we then, as Mr. Bacon argues, failed to confess our own dependence upon the mercy of God and His Spirit, and failed to mention such things in our terms of communion? Perhaps, if one wishes to ignore all the documents we own in terms one through five. On the one hand, Mr. Bacon slanders us for having too much in our terms of communion and now he argues that we have too little. What a mockery of common sense and judgment from one in the office of a minister of Jesus Christ.

But the king shall rejoice in God; every one that sweareth by him shall glory: but the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped (Psalms 63:11, AV).

6. Finally, upon the weight (or weightlessness?) of the rest of his accusations he leads up to his big conclusion. Mr. Bacon insinuates that our sixth term of communion, "takes on sinister proportions," and that the PRCE is really teaching "righteousness by works" and "legalism" like the Pharisees.

He says:

If it be objected that this is not a promise to sinful [sic] perfection, I must reply that it would be a simple thing to add "in the Lord." Why did the covenanted attainment never attain to so simple a thing as that? But if it is the case that the entire Steelite error can be reduced to the same legalism and self righteousness found in the Pharisees, then the sixth term of communion takes on sinister proportions (*Defense Departed*).

Mr. Bacon's insinuation and implication is that the PRCE is really attempting to bind people to a doctrine of works righteousness. Does he really believe that we have abandoned the doctrine of justification by faith alone? Does he really believe that we have adopted the doctrine of works righteousness?

I could quote a hundred and possibly a thousand places in our doctrinal and historical standards that would deny such an absurd conclusion. Herein, we see to what lengths Mr. Bacon will go to attack the PRCE. He denies to us precisely those things that we explicitly own; he plugs his ears when we speak and he closes his eyes to obvious and rational proof. Based upon everything that has been said up to this point, I can only respond by saying that "there is none so blind as he who will not see." If he cannot receive our plainest statements in the context they were intended, then I fear that he will never hear what we are saying. For him to separate the sixth term of communion from all the others, ignore the testimony of the multiple standards mentioned in the first five terms, and then draw conclusions like he has, is perhaps the single worst display of scholarship and integrity I have ever encountered. He should be embarrassed and ashamed for what he has done and we will continue to pray that God will grant him repentance.

When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom (Proverbs 11:2, AV).

Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me. Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up. Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me. Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long (Psalms 35:24-28, AV).

## **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, Prelatical, 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 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 (Jeremiah 23:2, AV).

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 Popery 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 nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us (Isaiah 8:9, 10, AV).

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), viz., 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 ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us (2 Thessalonians 3:6, AV).

### **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 Covenanter 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 and 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 toward covenanted 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 (2 Thessalonians 3:14,15, AV).

Many times throughout this response I have called for Mr. Bacon's repentance and I will continue to plead with our Lord and Saviour 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.

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*. The 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 honour, his crown, his laws, his kingdom. Our eyes are towards 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" (George Gillespie, *Aaron's*

*Rod Blossoming*, 1646, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications, 1985, p. 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 perfidiously 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 desert 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 ("On Shunning the Unlawful Rites of the Ungodly," *Calvin's Selected Works*, SWRB reprint, 1997, vol. 3, p. 411; also in booklet form as published by Presbyterian Heritage Publications).

# Appendix A

## **Mr. Bacon falsely claims that the Puritan Reformed Church broke lawful vows made to the Reformation Presbyterian Church when they dissociated.**

### **Preliminary Remarks.**

1. Dissociation and separation are two different things. At the outset I think it is important to note that we did not separate from the Reformation Presbyterian Church, but rather we dissociated from it. The difference lies in the fact that the pretended presbytery was never actually constituted at any time or in any way. You cannot separate from that which is a nonentity.

2. I also affirm that the PRCE did not actually swear any vows to the pretended presbytery of the Reformation Presbyterian Church.

### **Mr. Bacon's Forgotten Letter**

Our first order of business in regard to Mr. Bacon's slanderous charge is to complete the record of correspondence between our two congregations. Mr. Bacon perhaps forgot to publish his letter of April 23, 1996, on his website, so I thought it wise to do so now for the purpose of providing a more complete record of correspondence. In so doing, we can allow Mr. Bacon to argue his case in his own words.

His correspondence is as follows:

Date: Tue, 23 Apr 1996 11:47:12 -0500  
From: Richard Bacon <dBacon@airmail.net>  
To: Puritan Reformed Church of Edmontondm@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca,  
davese@microsoft.com, ScotKirk@aol.com,  
tWorrell1@aol.com  
Subject: Question re. vow

The question came to my mailbox as to what membership and subscription vows the officers of the Reformation Presbyterian Church either had taken or were required to take. I submit the following from the July 22, 1995 minutes [inter alia]: "Being obliged to keep pure the Faith once delivered to the saints, and to hold fast the form of sound words, we, the office-bearers of Reformation Presbyterian Church (Reformation Presbyterian Church), fully subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, Larger and Shorter. Through this full subscription, we adopt and receive (without amendment or scruple) these aforesaid Westminster Standards as our individual confession of faith, the very system of truth taught in holy Scripture, To these landmarks we voluntarily, yet conscionably, pledge our engagement, in doctrine and judicature, extending through the duration of our communion with this body."

"Our full subscription to the Westminster Standards is founded upon our love of, and duty to, veracity and sincerity, as we interpret them in the plain and univocal sense, striving to discern the original intent of the framers. We bind ourselves to an

immediate and forthright disclosure of our particular interpretation, should it be questioned by an office-bearer, communing member, or should our adherence to this full subscription fluctuate, we will agreeably submit (with utmost care, faithfulness, and humility) to the lawful hearing and determination of the supreme judicatory."

Not only does this statement contain such words as "subscribe, adopt, receive, confess, covenant of union, pledge our engagement, and agreeably submit," the court went on to divide the vote so as to demonstrate the unanimity of the statement. The division of the vote was 5-0 with NO ABSTENTIONS. Further, it was spread upon the minutes:

"This vote was considered by those voting as the taking of a vow obliging compliance with the statement. The moderator's vote was included in the number recorded above."

Further, these minutes were accepted and approved as accurate at the subsequent Presbytery meeting held April 12-13, 1996.

Additionally, it should be noted that the Presbytery FORMALLY and unanimously repented of its previous act of breaking covenant with Whitestone Presbyterian Church of Biloxi, MS at the same (April 12-13) meeting. The sinful handling of the Whitestone situation cannot therefore be precedential in any manner.

Finally, with the formal (and again, unanimous) adoption of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Manual "insofar as it applies to us," the Reformation Presbyterian Church has from the time of its adoption committed itself to these formal vows by all those either then or in the future seeking ordination at her hands:

1. Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and the only rule of faith and manners?
2. Do you sincerely own and declare the Confession of Faith, approved by former General Assemblies of this church, to be the confession of your faith; and do you own the doctrine therein contained to be the true doctrine, which you will constantly adhere to?
3. Do you own and acknowledge the Presbyterian Church Government of this church by kirk-session, Presbyteries, Provincial Synods, and General Assemblies, to be the only government of this church; and do you engage to submit thereto, concur therewith, and not to endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion thereof.
4. Do you believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, as king and head of the church, has therein appointed a government in the hands of church officers, distinct from, and not subordinate in its own province to, civil government, and that the Civil Magistrate does not possess jurisdiction or authoritative control over the regulation of the affairs of Christ's Church; and do you approve of the general principles embodied in the Claim, Declaration, and Protest, adopted by the General

Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1842, and in the Protest of ministers and elders, commissioners from Presbyteries to the General Assembly, read in presence of the Royal Commissioner on 18th May, 1843, as declaring the views which are sanctioned by the Word of God, and the standards of this church, with respect to the spirituality and freedom of the church of Christ, and her subjection to him as her only Head and to his Word as her only standard?

5. Do you promise to observe uniformity of worship and of the administration of all public ordinances within this church, as the same are at present preformed and allowed?

6. Do you approve of the Deed of separation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland adopted by its first Presbytery at Portree on the 14th day of August, 1893?

7. Do you accept the office of an Elder (Deacon) of this Congregation and promise, through grace, faithfully, diligently, and cheerfully, to discharge all the duties thereof?

Moreover, the formula of subscription for all Probationers, Ministers, Elders, and Deacons at the time of their admission in the presence of the congregation is to be as follows:

"I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby declare, that I do sincerely own and believe the whole doctrine contained in the Confession of Faith, approved by former General Assemblies of this Church to be [sic] the truths of God; and I do own the same as the confession of my faith; as likewise I do own the purity of worship presently authorised and practised in the Reformation Presbyterian Church, and also the Presbyterian Government and discipline thereof; which doctrine, worship, and Church government, I am persuaded, are founded on the Word of God, and agreeable thereto; I also approve of the general principles respecting the jurisdiction of the church, and her subjection to Christ as her only Head, which are contained in the Claim of Right and in the Protest referred to in the questions already put to me; and I promise that, through the grace of God, I shall firmly and constantly adhere to the same, and to the utmost of my power shall, in my station, assert, maintain, and defend the said doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of this Church, by Kirk-Sessions, Presbyteries, Provincial Synods, and General Assemblies, together with the liberty and exclusive jurisdiction thereof; and that I shall, in my practice, conform myself to the said worship, and submit to the said discipline, government, and exclusive jurisdiction thereof; and not endeavour, directly or indirectly, the prejudice or subversion of the same; and I promise that I shall follow no divisive course from the doctrine, worship, discipline, government, and exclusive jurisdiction of this Church, renouncing all doctrines, tenets, and opinions whatsoever, contrary to, or inconsistent with, the said doctrine, worship, discipline, or jurisdiction of the same. While some may wish to argue that the particular deeds and declarations which created first the Free Church of Scotland and the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland do not apply directly to our situation (see queries #4 and 6), that would not negate the fact that the subscription act of July 22, 1995 does clearly and simpliciter apply to us.

I believe all the recipients of this post have access to the deeds and protests mentioned in the queries above.

Dick Bacon  
dBacon@airmail.net

The above cited letter clearly demonstrates the content of the Reformation Presbyterian Church's present ordination vows.

### **Three significant observations.**

#### **1. The PRCE dissociated before the approval of the disputed minute that allegedly constituted the Presbytery.**

Mr. Bacon alleges in his correspondence that we swore a vow on July 22, 1995, and dissociated from presbytery on March 27, 1996. Subsequently (eight months later), on April 12-13, 1996, the Presbytery approved the minutes of July 22, 1995.

I point this out to demonstrate that the PRCE dissociated two weeks before the approval of the minutes containing the alleged constitution of the Presbytery. We neither had, nor desired to have, any say in their approval. I contend that these alleged vows never took place. What Mr. Bacon misrepresents to be vows were simply an agreement to the wording of a statement of confessional subscription.

#### **2. The minutes were inaccurately stated and do not reflect what took place at that meeting.**

I contend that the minutes of July 22, 1995 were inaccurately stated (by the clerk) and erroneously approved by the remaining members of the Presbytery. The questionable approval of these minutes in no way reflects the belief of the PRCE. The Reformation Presbyterian Church can affirm and approve all the minutes they wish, but the fact remains that, in our judgment, the clerk misstated and misrepresented what took place at that meeting. We believe the following statement to be an editorial remark by the clerk as to his own interpretation of the vote on the subscription statement: "The vote was considered by those voting as the taking of a vow obliging compliance with the [subscription - GB] statement. The moderator's vote was included in the number above." Mr. Seekamp's (the clerk) private opinion, should have been removed from the record at the following meeting but sadly it was not.

#### **3. Every member of the pretended presbytery except the FPCR Session agrees that no vow was taken to constitute presbytery (See Appendix B).**

The pretended Presbytery of the Reformation Presbyterian Church had six voting members (four ministers and two ruling elders). Mr. Price (pastor of the PRCE) was absent and therefore could not have taken any alleged vows. I (Greg Barrow), attended this meeting, representing the Session of the PRCE, but I did not take any vows as the minutes inaccurately record. Of the three ministers present at that meeting, two of them (Mr. Robinson and Dr. Crick) both argue that no vows were taken at that meeting or at any other time. One lone session consisting of Mr. Bacon and Mr. Seekamp (ruling elder) stands by itself alleging that vows were taken in the meeting of July 22, 1995. Four out of six men who had voting privileges deny that any vows were taken at that meeting, yet sadly Mr. Bacon continues to assert that they were. The voting majority has spoken but

Mr. Bacon refuses to believe that the emperor (presbytery) has no clothes. No constitution was formally adopted, and no ministerial vows were sworn in God's name. What Presbytery in the history of Presbyterian polity has ever claimed to constitute in this way? Let Mr. Bacon explain why 66% of the pretended presbytery and 75% of the ministers have concluded that no vows were taken in that meeting or in any other meeting. Mr. Bacon's appeal to his erroneous minutes are sadly self-serving and he should admit that the clerk misstated the actual events and intentions of the men present.

**Three arguments to prove that the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton (PRCE) did not break their alleged vows.**

The fallacy of begging the question is committed when, instead of offering proof for its conclusion, an argument simply reasserts the conclusion in another form.

1. According to Mr. Bacon the PRCE broke her vow when she vowed to, "agreeably submit (with utmost care, faithfulness, and humility) to the lawful hearing and determination of the supreme judicatory," and then without submitting to their authority, proceeded to unilaterally dissociate from the presbytery. However, the very point in question is whether or not a lawful authority of any kind existed in the Reformation Presbyterian Church. Mr. Bacon is simply reasserting his conclusion and begging the question when he says that we broke our vow by not submitting to something that we didn't believe existed.

2. Furthermore, I contend that even if this vow was actually taken, it was an unlawful vow. We could not lawfully promise to submit to a judicatory that did not exist. Because, in our judgment, no lawful judicatory did exist at the time of the supposed vow, the alleged vow would have been unlawful, forbidden by God, and therefore not binding. This is consistent with the doctrine taught in the *Confession of Faith* which states:

**No man may vow to do any thing forbidden in the Word of God** or what would hinder any duty therein commanded, or which is not in his own power, and for the performance of which he hath no promise or ability from God (*Westminster Confession of Faith* 22:7).

Question 113: What are the sins forbidden in the third commandment?

Answer: The sins forbidden in the third commandment are, ... perjury; all sinful cursings, oaths, vows, and lots; violating of our oaths and vows, if lawful; and **fulfilling them, if of things unlawful**; (*Westminster Larger Catechism*).

3. Moreover, I affirm that we are forbidden by the Word of God to take any oaths contrary to the lawful oaths that already bind us. We are already bound by *Solemn League and Covenant* and therefore bound to:

...sincerely, really, and constantly, through the grace of GOD, endeavour, in our several places and callings, the preservation of the reformed religion in the Church of Scotland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, against our common enemies; the reformation of religion in the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the Word of God, and the example of the best reformed Churches; and shall endeavour to bring the Churches of GOD in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, *Confession of Faith, Form of Church Government, Directory for*

*Worship and Catechising*; that we, and our posterity after us, may, as brethren, live in faith and love, and the Lord may delight to dwell in the midst of us (*The Solemn League and Covenant*).

As already discussed in Misrepresentation #2, we believe that at the time of the swearing of the *Solemn League and Covenant*, both Canada and the United States were part of "his Majesty's dominion." Consequently, we believe that we are the "posterity" of these covenanters and are formally bound to uphold these covenants.

The church may be very culpable in neglecting the duty of public covenanting, whereby they give a formal consent, in their own persons, to these solemn obligations; or there may be seasons passing over the church, in which they may not have a call to engage in this solemn service; yet no neglect of this kind, whether sinful or necessary, can hinder this obligation from descending to posterity. Neither can the communication of this obligation to future generations be obstructed, by the wickedness of a people, in withdrawing their neck from the yoke of God, in acting contrary to their solemn engagements, and in openly denying that this obligation is remaining on them. No doubt, all this was the case with some of the generations of the house of Israel and Judah, nevertheless they were under the obligation of the covenants which God had made with their fathers, and the obligation of it was even through them transmitted to their posterity (Archibald Mason, "Observations On the Public Covenants," 1821, pp. 47, 48, appended to *The Fall of Babylon the Great*, , SWRB reprint, 1997).

Since we, as parties to the Covenant, are already bound to, "promoting Reformation and endeavouring to bring the Churches of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, *Confession of Faith, Form of Church Government, Directory for Worship and Catechising*;" we could not be bound by the contrary oath that the Reformation Presbyterian Church is claiming we swore. We could neither promote reformation, nor uniformity in religion, by swearing to submit to a pretended independent denomination who were not themselves submitted, but rather opposed to our already binding Covenants. The independent Presbytery of the Reformation Presbyterian Church is submitted to no one; they have no published terms of communion and they have ordination vows that are sinful in and of themselves. Even if the PRCE swore an oath (which we didn't) to this independent body, we wouldn't have been bound to keep such a unlawful and contrary oath.

**Mr. Bacon and the Reformation Presbyterian Church say, "it is not necessary to take the covenant of the three kingdoms,"** but we say that we already have, whether they understand it or not. Their slighting and censuring of our covenanted forefathers by slandering the intrinsic obligation of their representative promises is directly spoken against by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland:

The second sort of enemies, from which our present dangers arise, are secret malignants and dis-covenanters who may be known by these and like characters: Their slighting or censuring of the public resolutions of this Kirk and State. Their consulting and labouring to raise jealousies and divisions to retard or hinder the execution of what is ordered by public judicatories. Their slandering the Covenant of the three kingdoms and expedition into England, as not necessary for the good of religion (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*,

[1638-1649 inclusive], p. 397).

To summarize. These are three main arguments we use to defend ourselves against Mr. Bacon's slanderous misrepresentation that we have broken our vows.

1. Mr. Bacon's charge is begging the question.
2. We could not lawfully promise to submit to a judicatory that did not actually exist.
3. We were already bound by the Covenants of our forefathers, and it is unlawful to take a contrary oath. An unlawful oath is not binding.

**Three irreconcilable inconsistencies which prove that the pretended Presbytery of the Reformation Presbyterian Church is unlawfully constituted.**

Did the Reformation Presbyterian Church ever lawfully constitute itself as an independent denomination and if so when?

I set before the reader a partial list of serious inconsistencies in the Reformation Presbyterian Church's failed attempt to constitute itself.

According to Mr. Bacon's own correspondence (as published above), the presbytery was constituted by a vow taken on July 22, 1995. If that is true (and he cannot deny that he said it), then how does he explain the following so-called actions of presbytery?

1. Ministers and congregations were received into the Reformation Presbyterian Church, Jan 28, 1995, approximately six months before the Reformation Presbyterian Church was allegedly constituted by the above mentioned vow. How does an unconstituted group receive ministers and congregations? What were they received into? This inconsistency is the most serious. All the supposed churches and ministers of the RPC were received into a nonentity. Mr. Bacon admits that the Presbytery was not constituted until six months later. How does he reconcile this irreconcilable evidence? He is condemned out of his own mouth.
2. How did an unconstituted presbytery compose a commission to examine John Cripps for licensure on Jan. 28, 1995, if the Reformation Presbyterian Church was constituted by a vow six months later? Composing a commission is an act of presbytery. How does Mr. Bacon reconcile this with the fact that according to his own words Presbytery did not yet exist?
3. As an unconstituted presbytery how was Tim Worrell licensed to preach (June 22, 1995) with no constitutional questions directed to him? No constitutional questions at a licensure is bad enough, but further Mr. Bacon must explain upon what basis Mr. Worrell was licensed. He couldn't have been examined by Presbytery, that's for sure, since it didn't yet exist according to Mr. Bacon's own words. It should also be noted that I received an email from Tim Worrell (October 21, 1997), indicating that he is no longer affiliated with the Reformation Presbyterian Church.

This sample of condemning evidence clearly shows that the Reformation Presbyterian Church was seriously confused about how to properly constitute itself. When these inconsistencies began to be vocalized, Mr. Bacon and Mr. Seekamp began their attempt to justify the pretended Presbytery's existence. The fact of the matter is that Mr. Bacon, in his self justifying haste, chose a date (after the fact) for the constitution of the Reformation

Presbyterian Church that was far to late to make sense with the RPC's previous actions. Sadly, trying to cover up bad policy simply landed him in a worse position now that all of this is being made public. Mr. Bacon's present congregation, at least, should demand answers and repentance for the way he has led them into this embarrassing public spectacle. He has already seen this evidence and rejected the correction from the other members of the group. His obstinacy is sinful. He needs to repent in the same way that each of the other men in the group has. We all should be ashamed (and are ashamed) at this ludicrous attempt at constituting a presbytery. The PRCE, as a session, formally and publicly repented at the time of our dissociation and also publicly repented before our congregation for so poorly representing the cause of Christ and Presbyterian polity. We now plead with Mr. Bacon and Mr. Seekamp to recognize their folly and do likewise.

## **Two more serious sins in the Reformation Presbyterian Church's alleged constitution - they have taken sinful vows and broken binding vows.**

### **1. The Reformation Presbyterian Church requires sinful and and unlawful ordination vows.**

To further illustrate the confusion of the Reformation Presbyterian Church's alleged constitution, we direct the readers attention to the way in which they have qualified their adoption of the *Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Manual of Practice*.

In the forgotten letter cited above, Mr. Bacon writes,

Finally, with the formal (and again, unanimous) adoption of the *Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Manual* "**insofar as it applies to us,**" the Reformation Presbyterian Church has from the time of its adoption committed itself to these formal vows by all those either then or in the future seeking ordination at her hands.

How are we to judge a group of men, calling itself a presbytery, who claim that they are constituted upon formal vows and manuals of practice, "**insofar as it applies to us?**" What if couples swore their marriage vows, "insofar as it applies to us"? Who knows what these men have sworn to uphold? With this clause anything could be included or excluded at the whim of the so-called presbytery. This leaves the pretended Presbytery's doctrine and practice open to extreme abuse and leaves the so-called constitution of the Reformation Presbyterian Church on a totally arbitrary footing.

I submit that by using this phrase, "insofar as it applies to us," the Reformation Presbyterian Church has adopted **inherently unlawful ordination vows**. Either the ordination vows stated in the *Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Manual of Church Practice* apply or they don't, but to leave them up in the air provides no certain rule or protection for their congregation. Truly this is a gross blunder on the part of the remaining two men that call themselves a presbytery. A vow (constitution?) based on subscription, doctrine and practice, "insofar as it applies to us," is no Biblical vow. There is a mental reservation built right into the ordination vows of all their officers, and this is inherently unlawful. This should not inspire confidence in those over whom these men pretend to rule.

An oath is to be taken in the plain and common sense of the words, **without equivocation or mental reservation** It can not oblige to sin; but in any thing not sinful, being taken, it binds to performance, although to a man's own hurt: nor is it

to be violated, although made to heretics or infidels (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 22:4, emphases added).

## **2. The Reformation Presbyterian Church violates the binding obligations of the Solemn League and Covenant.**

Finally, I would note that Mr. Bacon and the Reformation Presbyterian Church have chosen these inherently sinful vows over the intrinsically binding obligation of the *National Covenant* and the *Solemn League and Covenant*. Mr. Bacon's open antipathy to the Covenants has already been discussed in the previous section. Men who neglect what already binds them will be given over to a work of their own imagination. In the case of the Reformation Presbyterian Church they have rejected the Covenants and have taken contradictory and inherently unlawful vows, further aggravating their already serious crime of covenant breaking and perjury.

July, Session 21, 1648.

That they beware of all things which may ensnare their consciences, as evil council, evil company, false information, rash promises, and especially that they beware taking any Oaths, subscribing any Bonds, which may relate to the Covenant and cause of God unless such Oaths and Bonds be approved by the General Assembly or their Commissioners for the public affairs of the Kirk (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], 1682, , SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 399).

December 20, Session 26, 1638.

Concerning the subscribing of the *Confession of Faith* lately subscribed by his Majesties Commissioner, and urged to be subscribed by others.

And in the mean time, **lest any should fall under the danger of a contradictory oath, and bring the wrath of God upon themselves and the land, for the abuse of His name and Covenant;** The Assembly by their ecclesiastical authority, prohibits and discharges, that no member of this Kirk swear or subscribe the said Confession so far wrested to a contrary meaning, under pain of all ecclesiastical censure (*The Acts of the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland*, [1638-1649 inclusive], p. 63, emphases added).

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 shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5, AV).

## **Did the pretended presbytery of the Reformation Presbyterian Church ever lawfully constitute?**

Mr. Bacon's so-called constitution is a fiction and a non-entity. To recognize this independent group of men as a legitimate Presbytery would be both sinful and unscriptural. Upon investigation we have seen how seriously far off the mark they really are. Thankfully Mr. Robinson and Dr. Crick have taken the correct action and dissociated. All that is left is for Mr. Bacon and Mr. Seekamp to admit that the emperor has no clothes and this whole sordid mess can be dismissed to the scrap heap of historical anomalies in the Presbyterian church.

## **1. Mr. Bacon has Purposely Included Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Ordination Queries # 4 and # 6 in his list of Ordination Vows.**

While Mr. Bacon's forgotten letter is fresh in the reader's mind, I wish to move on to note that Mr. Bacon requires some very surprising things of all the ordained men in his group. Let the reader keep in mind that Mr. Bacon and the Reformation Presbyterian Church have (at least in their own judgment) vowed to uphold the *Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Manual of Practice*. Any and all Probationers, Ministers, Elders, and Deacons at the time of their admission in the presence of the congregation must subscribe all of the vows listed in the above mentioned letter.

Perhaps Mr. Bacon will answer that he said (in his above cited letter):

While some may wish to argue that the particular deeds and declarations which created first the Free Church of Scotland and the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland do not apply directly to our situation (see queries #4 and 6), that would not negate the fact that the subscription act of July 22, 1995 does clearly and simpliciter apply to us.

I respond by saying, that according to the letter cited above Mr. Bacon has included queries #4 and #6 in his ordination requirements. He could have left them out, but chose not to. Furthermore, we note that the Reformation Presbyterian Church has purposely removed items #8, #9, #10 and #11 from the list of vows listed in the *Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Manual*, which would lead us to believe that they purposely included queries #4 and #6. Next, let the reader remember that Mr. Bacon has condemned us for requiring historical testimony as terms of communion and let the reader consider that Mr. Bacon is again doing precisely the same thing as he condemns. In requiring all officers of the RPC to answer queries #4 and #6 in the affirmative, he is saying that understanding and agreeing with this historical testimony is necessary if a man wants to preach or govern in the church. Does Mr. Bacon require the approbation of the traditions of men for ordination and government in the Reformation Presbyterian Church? Is this not in substance that for which he has condemned us? I am speaking as he did for the purpose of illustrating the obvious contradiction that Mr. Bacon faces. Again his own accusations are recoiling upon his own head.

### **A Brief Survey of the Reformation Presbyterian Church's Ordination Vows.**

**Querie #4.** ...Do you approve of the **general principles embodied in the *Claim, Declaration, and Protest***, adopted by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1842, and in the Protest of ministers and elders, commissioners from Presbyteries to the General Assembly, read in presence of the Royal Commissioner on 18th May, 1843, as declaring the views which are sanctioned by the Word of God, and the standards of this church, with respect to the spirituality and freedom of the church of Christ, and her subjection to him as her only Head and to his Word as her only standard? (Ordination Vow of the Reformation Presbyterian Church cited from *A Manual of Practice of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland based on the Practice of the Church of Scotland in her Several Courts*, 4th edition as revised in 1886 p. 98, emphases added).

To be ordained, to preach or govern in the Reformation Presbyterian Church you must approve of the following judgments of history.

### **1. The Reformation Presbyterian Church (by requiring the approval of the Claim**

## **Declaration, and Protest of 1842) approves of the Revolution Church.**

To be ordained in the RPC you must approve of the installation of William of Orange and Mary (both Erastian) as lawful King and Queen of Scotland. You must approve of the Revolution Settlement and consequently the constitutionality of the Revolution Church as set up by Parliament on the grounds of the common consent of the people (rather than upon the biblical grounds of divine right).

What follows is a short excerpt provided as an example of what is required by the Reformation Presbyterian Church in her ordination vows.

First, the said Confession itself, containing the doctrine and principle above set forth, was, "ratified and established, and voted and approved as the public and avowed Confession of this Church," by the fifth Act of the second session of the first parliament of King William and Queen Mary, entitled, "**Act Ratifying the Confession of Faith, and Settling Presbyterian Church Government**" (1690, c.5) (*Claim, Declaration, and Protest* cited from *A Manual of Practice of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland based on the Practice of the Church of Scotland in her Several Courts*, 4th edition as revised in 1886, p. 98, emphases added).

It is evident that all who seek ordination in this Presbytery must agree that the way Presbyterianism was settled in this act was lawful. They must approve of an Erastian King and Queen calling upon the popular sentiment of the majority to establish the Form of Government in the Church of Christ. It is easy to see that this is a direct repudiation of the divine right Presbyterianism set up in the Second Reformation.

## **2. The Reformation Presbyterian Church (by requiring the Deed of Separation in her ordination vows) recognizes the Revolution Church as valid and its Acts of General Assembly as authoritative.**

To further illustrate the pernicious principles inculcated in the Reformation Presbyterian Church's ordination vows I direct your attention to their sixth ordination querie.

6. Do you approve of the Deed of separation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland adopted by its first Presbytery at Portree on the 14th day of August, 1893?

A sample portion of the Deed of Separation reads as follows:

We the undersigned Ministers and Elders of the Free Church of Scotland considering that the constitution of the said church as settled in 1843 is contained in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, as approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1647, the *First and Second Books of Discipline*, the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*, the *Claim, Declaration, and Protest* of 1842, the *Protest* of 1843, the *Act of Separation* and *Deed of Demission* executed in the last mentioned year, the formula appointed to be subscribed by probationers before receiving license, and by all officebearers at the time of their admission, together with the Questions appointed to be put to the same parties at ordination and admission, **and the Acts of the Assembly of the Church of Scotland prior to 1843...** seeing that the present Church now calling herself the Free Church of Scotland has... repeatedly passed resolutions having for their object the separation of church and state... by sanctioning the use of uninspired hymns, has departed from the original standard of the Free Church of Scotland; and by the authorization of instrumental music in the public worship of God has altered the ancient and

universal practice of the Church of Scotland... not only tolerates but supports office bearers who do not hold the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith... have practically embraced Voluntaryism.... has ceased to represent the church of Scotland as settled in 1843.... we do hereby separate from the present subsisting church calling herself the Free Church of Scotland (*Deed of Separation* cited from *A Manual of Practice of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland based on the Practice of the Church of Scotland in her Several Courts*, 4th edition as revised in 1886, p. 116-117, emphases added).

Here Mr. Bacon and the RPC vow to embrace the Revolution Church and all the Acts of General Assembly prior to 1843. This proves, unless this is one of the vows that do not apply to Mr. Bacon, that he has finally declared himself as approving of an Erastian government (at least as being lawful in a covenanted nation), and that all officers of the Reformation Presbyterian Church must approve of the Revolution settlement before their ordination.

### **What is the Revolution Church?**

The Revolution Settlement was founded in compromise and as we shall see, was composed of men not fit to constitute the true Church of Scotland. These were men who founded the church upon constitutional principles different than those of the previously established and covenanted Church of Scotland (1638-1649). In effect, the Revolution Church was a group of men, of whom, the vast majority were unqualified (by means of perjury) to be ministers of God, and who brought forth a schismatic body (a pretended Assembly) upon a backslidden version of the original constitution of the Church of Scotland. At the Revolution Settlement, the scriptural attainments of the Second Reformation were thrown aside. These men were ready to change the constitution of the Covenanted Church of Scotland to suit the fashion of their circumstances. They broke covenant with God by changing the Constitution and Form of Government from that of the faithful General Assembly of the Church of Scotland (1649), to that of "The Act for the Abolishing of the Acts Contrary to the True Religion" (1592). By the notorious action of the Parliament of 1690, the higher attainments of the Second Reformation were wilfully buried in the interests of political expediency.

Andrew Clarkson explains:

Now let it be considered, that this retrograde Settlement [1690 - GB], or this Act of Parliament unto which this church fled back and founded on the late Revolution, was before the Church had been reformed from several abuses, viz., Before she had got the heavy yoke of the King's Erastian Supremacy and Patronages shaken off, and long before she had Ecclesiastically asserted, and practically maintained her scriptural Claim of Right, viz., the Divine Right of Presbytery, and intrinsic power of the church, the two prime branches of Christ's headship in and over his own House and before the *National Covenant* was explained as condemning Prelacy, together with the Five Articles of Perth, and the civil places and power of Kirk-men; and before the *Solemn League and Covenant* was made, and before the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, *Catechisms Larger and Shorter*, *Directory for Public Worship*, *Form of Presbyterian Church Government*, were made and established, as parts of the Covenanted Uniformity in Religion between the Churches of Christ in the three kingdoms of Scotland, England and Ireland; and exceeding far short of that blessed, attained, Covenanted Reformation so happily established in this church in 1649: I say, the accepting of, and going into this way

of settling, thereby deserting and shamefully disregarding so many excellent and truly valuable pieces of Reformation, privileges and liberties sworn to, in our sacred and solemn Covenants, attained between 1637 and 1650, seems to be a plain yielding to them, who deny Presbyterian government to be of Divine Right though often clearly proven, and judicially asserted by the Church, and legally established in her purer and better times; yea, this amounts to such a Step of Defection and apostasy, as seems without parallel in sacred or profane history and withal too shrewdly discovers this Revolution Church to be upon another footing, and to be called by another name, than the successors of the true and genuine Reformed Covenanted Church of Christ in Scotland; namely Changelings, yea, Backsliders (Andrew Clarkson, *Plain Reasons for Presbyterians Dissenting From the Revolution Church of Scotland*, 1731, SWRB reprint, 1996, pp. 14-15).

The friends of the Reformation must regret that this Parliament did not repeal those iniquitous Acts which condemned the *National Covenant* and *Solemn League* as in themselves unlawful oaths: which annulled all Acts and Constitutions, ecclesiastical and civil, approving of these covenants which stigmatized the General Assembly that met at Glasgow, 1638, as an unlawful and seditious assembly... and that instead of modifying the law of patronage, it did not restore the Act of 1649, by which this evil was utterly abolished ("Secession Testimony," 1831, cited in J.C. Johnston, *Treasury of the Scottish Covenant*, 1887, SWRB reprint, 1995, p. 151)

Not only did the Revolution Church principally change the constitution of the Second Reformation, most if not all of the constituent ministers who made up this pretended Assembly were guilty of complying with the corruptions and evils of those times. This body was composed of Resolutioners (the first compromisers, covenant breakers and overturners of the Second Reformation); Indulged ministers (those who would paid allegiance to bloodthirsty tyrants rather than defend the crown rights of Christ over His Church); those who gave their bond of security to the bloody council; and those who accepted the Duke of York's Popish toleration which promoted Antichrist's sects, heresies and errors. This Revolution Church was made up of men who would use all their force and pretended authority against any witnesses of Christ who would remind them of their sins and stand for the cause of Christ (especially the United Societies). These Revolution ministers kept silent about the burning of the Covenants (1661), the Abjuration Act (1662) which declared the *National* and *Solemn League and Covenant* to be unlawful oaths, and the Act Recissory (1661), which annihilated all the civil and religious liberties of the people of Scotland. The character of these men and their fitness for the ministry is well described in the following statements:

There was one thing in which it proved practically disastrous, but which at the time there seemed to be no way of evading. This was the receiving without very rigid test of the "curate" as they were called into the Presbyterian ministry. **There were at that this period about 900 parishes in Scotland, and these were occupied by men who had conformed to Prelacy. Of the ejected ministers only about 90 survived. Even after room, therefore, had been made for them, there remained many charges which would have been left unoccupied if the former incumbents had not been employed. That they were ready to change their colours to suit the fashion of the hour did not say very much for their strength of principle; and that before that they had approved themselves to a**

**government whose hands were red with the blood of martyrs was not a point in their history from which very favourable conclusions could be drawn a to their personal piety...** They were incorporated into the church accordingly; and we shall see how their presence came to complexion after its history. In point of fact they became the founders of the moderate party - that party to whose spirit and policy may be ascribed a good many of the misfortunes of the church of Scotland ("Our Church Heritage," cited in J.C. Johnston, *Treasury of the Scottish Covenant*, 1887, SWRB reprint, 1995, pp. 151-152, emphases added).

When the faithful witnesses (the United Societies) petitioned this pretended Assembly calling them to repent of these defections and calling these men to admit their compliance with the corruption and evils of the times, how did this Revolution Assembly respond? Matthew Hutchison in his book entitled *The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland*, summarizes their response as follows.

Its [the Revolution General Assembly - GB] meaning was simply this: there is no hope of obtaining what you ask for from the Assembly, your only course is to follow the example of your ministers, fall quietly in with the church as now constituted, and make the best of it (*The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland*, 1893, SWRB, 1997, p. 104).

The Assembly of the Revolution Church made no formal effort toward repentance and no protests to the King to undo the evils that were done since 1649. Indeed, these men are notable for nothing but cowardly compliance with the Erastian government. At the First Reformation (1560-1596) and at the Second Reformation (1638-1649), the church adopted its own Form of Government and the civil government afterward sanctioned it. Under the compromise and silence of these Revolution Church leaders, we find that the restoration of Presbytery was a state act altogether - not adopted upon the biblical ground of the divine right of Presbyterian church government but instead grounded upon that which was agreeable to the inclinations of the people.

This is what Mr. Bacon and the Reformation Presbyterian Church would have their officers swear to uphold and embrace at the time of their ordination.

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them (Romans 16:17, AV).

I again ask whether the pretended presbytery of the Reformation Presbyterian Church is lawfully constituted? No, not lawfully! When she finally got around to adopting the Constitution of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, she adopted an unlawful constitution that approves of the Revolution Church and all the unlawful acts of her unfaithful and pretended Assemblies. Ultimately, the Reformation Presbyterian Church is swearing to uphold the testimony of the church that overthrew the Covenants and the original constitution of the Second Reformation. I unswervingly affirm that the officers of the Reformation Presbyterian Church are required to swear to a false constitution which is schismatic and destructive to the Church of Christ. If the Reformation Presbyterian Church truly approves of the Revolution Settlement (as they profess by their present ordination vows), then let the reader consider that Mr. Bacon stands atop a mountain of corporate backsliding. It is not hard to understand why anyone would be justified in

staying separate or dissociating from him until he repents.

Then again Mr. Bacon may simply say that he vowed to hold to these ordination vows, "insofar as they applied to us," and that he doesn't approve of the Revolution Settlement. I have already discussed how it is impossible to pin down a man who places a mental reservation in his vows. Either way, Mr. Bacon has a real problem. He can choose between the Revolution Settlement and his mental reservation in his ordination vows. Whatever he chooses he needs to repent. I pray that he recognizes that either option is sinful.

This is a brief explanation of the events and circumstances that led to Mr. Bacon's frivolous and sinful charges. I have demonstrated that his charges are unwarranted and that the pretended presbytery of the Reformation Presbyterian Church is sadly confused about what constitutes a presbytery. This nonentity called the Reformation Presbyterian Church should be disbanded and remembered as a mistake of gross ignorance and foolish pride. Every original member of this group, except for the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett Session, has admitted that no constitutional vows were taken and has since dissociated. Mr. Bacon needs to realize that the emperor has no clothes, and then perhaps he will repent of his slanderous charges against the PRCE. If the public presentation of his **serious inconsistencies, covenant breaking and promoting unlawful ordination vows** won't do it, then I am afraid that he may continually labour under his delusion. His charge that the PRCE has broken her vows is a sad testimony of a man either lacking integrity or too proud to admit his sin. I pray it's not both.

## **Appendix B**

### **Letters from Pastor Bruce Robinson (former moderator of the Reformation Presbyterian Church) and Dr. Jerry Crick, proving that none of the original members (except the Rowlett Session) of the pretended Presbytery believed that constitutional vows were taken.**

The following letters are circulated by permission of Pastor Bruce Robinson. Pastor Robinson is presently not affiliated with the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton (PRCE) in any way and the views expressed in the following letters are not necessarily to be understood as those of the PRCE. My sole purpose in publishing this letter is to show that Pastor Robinson is in agreement with the PRCE session and affirms along with us that no vows were ever taken to constitute the pretended presbytery of the RPC. In addition to his letter of dissociation (Dec. 9, 1996), Pastor Robinson has graciously provided us with an additional remonstrance regarding the recent unseemly behavior of the Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett. This article and the following letter of dissociation have not been altered in any way.

#### **The Visible Church and her Displaced Order, or, An Open and Terse Remonstrance against the Cyber-Unseemliness of Rowlett, by Pastor Bruce Robinson**

"...yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." - 2 Tim 2:5. "...so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth." - Pr 26:20. "...a busybody in other men's matters" - 1 Pt 4:15.

Since this minister's declaration was originally emitted nearly one year ago, his judgment (which Edmonton did not influence, as opposed to the chimera of Rowlett's session) has not changed regarding the past or current legitimacy of the RPC [Reformation Presbyterian Church - GB] presbytery (sic) as a true judicatory. The FPCR [First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett - GB] session purports that a duly constituted presbytery (sic) existed, and even continues... Through its web pages, however, the FPCR session strangely omits that its particular claim respecting the RPC'S lawfulness is not that of other participating ministers and elders from that prior association.

Yet it is more puzzling upon what proper justification the FPCR session now webposts primary and derivative information from that association (reader's note: information for public review may only be released by express permission of both a presiding officer and secretary of a society). The sites also record instances of previously sent "minutes" of the RPC, and forwarded information to an individual regarding another's censure. An idle browser might conjecture that the FPCR session either considers itself a duly constituted classical presbytery, or perhaps, an ecumenical council to the church universal.

The former unlawfulness notwithstanding, Rowlett's specific web posting of Kevin Barrow's letters (previously addressed to, and received by, the PRCE session) was a singularly ignoble act. The FPCR session alone possessed neither the jurisdiction, nor the freedom to receive and disseminate the letters on its websites without the prior release and

consent (which Rowlett did not obtain) of the Edmonton session. The Texas session may have judged Edmonton's position as an aberration from true presbyterianism, and requiring rebuttal. Still, this dispute was not so extraordinarily injurious to the visible church that the Rowlett presbyters were liberated from observing the canons of rectitude and propriety. Contrary to the practice of Messrs Bacon and Seekamp, "all is not fair" when battling antagonists - even those derided as proselytes of David Steele.

By illegitimately receiving and publicizing Kevin's letters, the FPCR session and The Blue Banner have needlessly displaced outward order and peace in the visible church. The web pages of FPCR and The Blue Banner owe a written amendment to its browsers, and particularly to the Edmonton session. This formal apology unquestionably includes a complete retraction of Kevin Barrow's letters.

To this writer, the aforesaid misdeeds of whispering and meddling validate that before FPCR accedes from independency, a receiving presbytery is obliged to address extensive interrogatories to the FPCR session concerning these, and other unsettling occurrences.

To: Presbyters David Seekamp, Richard Bacon, Greg Barrow, Lyndon Dohms, Greg Price, and Jerry Crick  
From: Presbyter Bruce Robinson

Dear Brethren:

With brokenness of spirit, humiliation of face, and invoking the help of the Strength of Israel, I, the undersigned, on this ninth day of December, in the year of our Lord, one thousand nine hundred ninety six, cease my duplicitous participation in the society of ministers and elders heretofore known as the presbytery of the Reformation Presbyterian Church. In keeping with this certification, I formally request a record of my transferred [sic] credentials.

This testimony is not a judicial secession; I believe there is no due judicatory from which to secede. Neither is this attestation a personal withdrawal to initial independency; I believe, and lamentably acknowledge, that our entire fellowship has resided in independency almost two years. (This admission is also the studied consensus of three additional presbyters).

What was the nature of our group? I believe we were an aggregation of ministers and elders desirous of presbyterian doctrine, worship, and polity. Though never duly constituted as a presbytery through regular vows, and subsequently, with a single session, we persistently regarded our fellowship as a due presbytery. We later complicated our errors through a "provisional adoption" of new affirmations of doctrine, worship, and polity (viz., The FPCS [Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland - GB] MANUAL). We borrowed the nomenclature and emulated the practice of a de jure presbytery. I believe the aforesaid actions were altogether specious. Again, it is not inconsequential that, at least, three ministers (including myself) and two elders now concur with this determination. The genesis of my doubts concerning our due constitution occurred during our July, 1995 meeting in Atlanta. My doubts amplified after our June, 1996 meeting in Charlotte. Last week after much prayer and anguish, I acknowledged without reservation our state of independency. Once realizing this, my continued participation as an official presbyter with an unlawful judicatory would have only compounded my offenses.

I entertained lofty expectations for our embryonic association in October, 1994; my hubris was foolish and deceitful. The history of our group was a workshop of variance, imprecision, hastiness, arrogation, dissension, disorder, and peevishness. As much as any, perhaps more, I bear a sizable share of culpability. Please forgive me of these sins and errors, and others I may have committed.

I would be open to a future meeting with a minimum of three sessions (including our original society of ministers and elders) to discuss the feasibility of "beginning again." May Christ have mercy upon us.

In a feeble effort to maintain a good conscience, amend my dissimulation, and lift the ensign of presbyterianism. I am,

Yours in Christ Jesus,  
Bruce Robinson

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The following letter is circulated by permission of Dr. Jerry Crick. Dr. Crick is presently not affiliated with the PRCE in any way, and the views expressed in the following letter are not necessarily to be understood as those of the PRCE. My sole purpose in publishing this letter is to show Dr. Crick's agreement with the position of the PRCE session that no vows were ever taken to constitute the pretended presbytery of the RPC. One section of the original letter was removed for the purpose of protecting the confidentiality of certain individuals. The removal of this section in no way affects the opinion of Dr. Crick regarding the present controversy.

December 5, 1996 A.D.  
Elder David Seekamp  
Clerk of Session  
First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett  
6501 Mesquite Tr.  
Plano, Texas 75023

Dear Elder Seekamp:

Having given considerable time, effort, and thought with much prayer and supplication before God, I desire to inform you of the following conclusions to which I have finally come:

1. In keeping with the plain declaration and teaching of Holy Scripture, historic Presbyterianism has always set forth the view of a plurality of elders in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. This also applies to a plurality of Sessions constituting a Presbytery. With the departure of the Edmonton Session, there remains only one Session in what has been called the Reformation Presbyterian Church. As such, there does not exist a Presbytery.
2. Although at the April meeting in Charlotte, I had thought that vows had been properly taken, I have since re-examined the issue and have concluded that, in fact, no vows were taken. At the April meeting, I had thought that the PCA BCO section on the Constitution Defined was sufficient justification; however, I have since come to the realization that that section was only a definition and not an instance of taking or making vows. Therefore, I now acknowledge and own that I was in error in coming to that conclusion at that time. It

is also the fact, that no one of any of the officers has officially or formally taken any vows; and I recognize that this claim has been and might still be contested. As such there never existed a true Presbytery as we thought ourselves to have been.

3. Considering 1 and 2 together, it is my firm conviction that we have been in a state of independency since the time of transfer of ministerial credentials from our former respective denominations. I also am convinced that my departure from the PCA was hasty, improper, and schismatic, which conclusion is based partly on Rutherford's material printed in Naphtali Press' Anthology, vol. 2, number 2, as well as on other materials by Scottish Presbyterian theologians.

4. Therefore, it is my intention to seek denominational affiliation in the near future; however, I am unresolved at this time as to the specific direction I will take.

5. As to the Edmonton Session, even if we did constitute a Presbytery, there is nothing of a judicial, ecclesiastical, disciplinary nature which could be done with reference to them. It is impossible to discipline a Session and Congregation which have removed themselves. This is not a matter of dismissing to independency as has been claimed by reference to the PCA BCO related chapter and sections. I have received corroboration on this point from men who are highly seasoned in their ministries.

I have no resignation to tender or to propose, since there is nothing from which to resign, either formally or informally. Therefore, I fully acknowledge my present and past condition of independency which sin, by God's grace, I hope to rectify as soon as is practicable. In light of these conclusions and present circumstances, I would be most grateful if you would be so kind as to forward to me my ministerial credential file so I will have it readily available.

Please be assured that there is no tone of anger, cynicism, malice, contumacy, subterfuge, disrespect, or any other like disposition in this communication. I pray that God will give each of us the necessary wisdom and humility to labor faithfully for the Gospel and advancement of the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

I do desire to make it certain and clear that my conclusions have not been influenced or precipitated by the events involving the Edmonton Session. I have not communicated with them since before the April meeting, excepting only to receive the e-mail which they sent and to order books from Still Waters for my own instruction in Presbyterian history and theology.

Finally, I humbly ask forgiveness for the errors I have made in attempting to pursue that which I now firmly believe to be improper and without Scriptural justification. I do understand the awkward situation in which each of us is; and it has not been my intent to increase the awkwardness but simply terminate my contribution to it at this time.

Please exercise the liberty to copy and forward this communication to whomever you may desire, and of course, especially to those with whom we have had association over the past two years.

Respectfully, and for Christ's Crown and Covenant,  
Jerry W. Crick

## Appendix C

### **Mr. Bacon falsely claims that the Puritan Reformed Church has rejected modest means of reconciliation.**

Mr. Bacon writes:

However, because more modest means have not prevailed; because these men desire not a dialogue but a diatribe; because they have such a public profile and have since May of 1996 made their case in a public way, it has now become necessary for us to answer their error in a public way (*Defense Departed*).

In as much as it has become a matter of public record (in Mr. Bacon's, *A Defence Departed*) that the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton allegedly has not availed itself of the "modest means" employed by Mr. Bacon and **several** other men in order to be reconciled to the Reformation Presbyterian Church, let it further become a matter of public record (by the following correspondences) that by several modest means the Session of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton earnestly, gently, and respectfully sought to address the significant issues that led to their dissociation. The Session of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton made several different suggestions in correspondences to the Reformation Presbyterian Church as to how they might informally meet together in order to discuss the reasons for their dissociation, but not once did they receive any correspondence from the Reformation Presbyterian Church stating a willingness to meet with them informally (to the contrary, all that the PRCE received were threats of censure for contumacy from the Reformation Presbyterian Church if they refused to appear as cited).

In effect, the Session of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton was told that the only way the Reformation Presbyterian Church would meet with them was if they officially appeared before their court (thus compelling the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton to recognize the lawful jurisdiction of the Reformation Presbyterian Church which was the very point at issue). Although the Session of the PRCE was cited to appear officially in the courts of the RPC and threatened with censure for contumacy if they did not appear (Note: contumacy is an obstinate resistance to lawful authority), the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton attempted to explain respectfully in its correspondence that their unwillingness to accede to these "citations" **was not contumacious, but rather conscientious** (i.e. it was not due to a rebellious spirit against God or any lawful court, but rather it was due to a submissive conscience to God and His Word).

Furthermore, let the reader observe that the letters sent to the Reformation Presbyterian Church by the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton contain sincere entreaties and earnest pleas that the Reformation Presbyterian Church might agree to meet with the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton in an unofficial setting in order to discuss any and all issues related to their dissociation and in order to pursue a faithful reconciliation in the truth. Such an informal meeting required neither the Reformation Presbyterian Church nor the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton to acknowledge either the lawfulness of one another's courts or the legitimacy of actions taken by either side. Is it a spirit of contumacy when one declares his sincere desire to talk with brethren (in order to be reconciled in the truth), but only desires that brethren accede to one request for the sake of conscience?

"Brethren, let us meet informally."

In the correspondence published on First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett's web page, Pastor Price writes (October 19,1996):

Brother, here we reach an impasse. For you maintain that we must recognize your jurisdiction and compear before your courts which is to (sic) in effect to declare our dissociation to be sinful. We maintain that we cannot recognize your courts until we have settled certain issues that led to our dissociation. Thus, we cannot discuss our dissociation apart from the matters of truth and conscience that led to our dissociation. If I might paraphrase the problem: You want us to make null and void our dissociation and begin by admitting our sin in that matter by compearing before your courts; whereas we want to begin by discussing in an informal forum the reasons which led to our dissociation. Dick, we can no more concede to this request, than our protesting forefathers would acquiesce to the demands of the Resolutioner Assemblies to compear before their pretended courts. If you maintain the only way to resolve these issues is first to appear before you and confess our sin, then we will never get to the matters that led to our dissociation.

**Mr. Bacon refuses an informal face to face meeting with the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton.**

Mr. Bacon responds (October 20, 1996):

Yes, and I also could not in good conscience concede to your request. So in what way do you think things will change by having a coffee-klatch type meeting? I do not see that as a solution.

Why wouldn't Mr. Bacon talk to us informally? We simply asked for a face to face context in which we could explain our dissociation and carefully listen to any objections made? How would this violate Mr. Bacon's conscience?

While Mr. Bacon very forthrightly declares how meeting together with the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton is against his conscience, he shows his double standard and his lack of concern for our case of conscience when he sinfully says:

By the same token, if they [the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton - GB] believed their position to be true regardless of the state of their conscience, they could have brought an overture to the Reformation Presbyterian Church (*Defense Departed*, emphases added).

Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh (Matthew 18:7, AV).

How can Mr. Bacon say we should have overtured the Presbytery "regardless of the state of our conscience?" What faithful minister counsels people to act, "regardless of the state of their conscience?" Should we do evil that good may come? This clearly shows how far Mr. Bacon is willing to go in order to avoid any attempt at reconciliation except on his terms and in submission to his authority. This, again, is a sad commentary on the credibility of his counsel and his integrity as a minister.

And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence

toward God, and toward men (Acts 24:16, AV).

While the Scripture clearly teaches us not to do evil that good may come, we ask where the Scripture teaches that the men of the pretended presbytery of the Reformation Presbyterian Church were required to speak with us only in the official context of a judicatory? Mr. Bacon, in saying that he could not in good conscience concede to our request, needs to produce a scriptural reason (and perhaps an historical reason would be helpful as well) for his case of conscience. He needs to demonstrate where the Scripture teaches that brethren should not informally meet together as individuals for the purpose of reconciling differences. This we are certain he could never do since we know that the Word of God teaches that we must be ready and willing to reconcile with any offended brother who is willing to meet with us.

Matthew Henry comments:

If a professed Christian is wronged by another, he ought not to complain of it to others, as is often done merely upon report, but to go to the offender privately, state the matter kindly, and show him his conduct. This would generally have all the desired effect with a true Christian, and the parties would be reconciled. The principles of these rules may be practised every where, and under all circumstances, though they are too much neglected by all. **But how few try the method which Christ has expressly enjoined to all his disciples!** In all our proceedings we should seek direction in prayer; we cannot too highly prize the promises of God. Wherever and whenever we meet in the name of Christ, we should consider him as present in the midst of us (*Matthew Henry Commentary on Matt. 18:15*, emphases added).

Furthermore, Mr. Bacon says it would be against his conscience to meet with us in what he terms, a "coffee-klatch type meeting." This is to disparage the reconciliation process before it has even begun. If anyone, even those who will not recognize our church court, should wish to reconcile a matter of offence with us, we should meet with them privately and endeavor to begin the process of reconciliation. How can we start the process if we refuse to meet?

Furthermore, Mr. Bacon says:

First, it is our intention by making the correspondence between the PRCE and other members of the Reformation Presbyterian Church and its churches public, to demonstrate that we have, in fact, made use of more private and modest means of reconciliation. We will leave it to the reader to determine for himself if the PRCE session has been reasonable or easily entreated (*Defence Departed*).

Since Mr. Bacon desires the reader "to determine for himself if the PRCE session has been reasonable or easily entreated" (*Defence Departed*), why did he not give to the reader particular public communications that passed between the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton and the Reformation Presbyterian Church? The reason is obvious - it is because these public correspondences are so damaging to the case he wishes to make (i.e. the slanderous allegations he has made concerning the so-called obstinacy exhibited by the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton).

The Reformation Presbyterian Church (in its correspondence with the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton) desired to address first the way in which the Puritan Reformed

Church of Edmonton dissociated (and the reasons subsequently), whereas the Session of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton desired to address first the reasons for their dissociation (and the way subsequently). The Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton argued that the only means by which one can know whether the way in which they dissociated was lawful, was to know first whether the reasons for which they dissociated were lawful. If the reasons for dissociation proved groundless, then the way would likewise prove groundless. However, if the reasons for dissociation were warranted by biblical and historical testimony, then the way in which they dissociated would likewise prove warranted. The Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton realized that if they officially appeared in the court of the Reformation Presbyterian Church and thereby recognized their lawful jurisdiction, they would by their actions deny the very biblical and constitutional principles that led to their dissociation. "Give up your principles and your conscience, confess that you sinned in the way that you dissociated, and then we may meet together" was the message coming from the Reformation Presbyterian Church. The Session of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton responded, "We long to be reconciled in the truth, and we are willing to meet in any informal setting possible in order to discuss both the reasons and the means of our dissociation, but to ask us to lay down our biblical and constitutional principles or offer our conscience on the altar of compromise is unreasonable - that we can never do!"

The Session of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton argued that the Reformation Presbyterian Church was not a lawful court of Jesus Christ, and therefore no other resort remained to the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton except to dissociate. It is again worthy of note that of the four original ministers who identified themselves with the Reformation Presbyterian Church (Mr. Bacon, Mr. Robinson, Dr. Crick, and Mr. Price), three of them (Mr. Robinson, Dr. Crick, and Mr. Price) concluded that the Reformation Presbyterian Church was not a lawfully constituted court of Jesus Christ (each of these three ministers subsequently dissociated - see Appendix B). Of the three original ruling elders serving on Sessions identified with the Reformation Presbyterian Church (Mr. Seekamp, Mr. G. Barrow, and Mr. Dohms), two of them (Mr. G. Barrow and Mr. Dohms) concluded that the Reformation Presbyterian Church was not a lawfully constituted court of Jesus Christ (each of these two ruling elders subsequently dissociated). After the dissociation of the three ministers and two ruling elders mentioned above, the Reformation Presbyterian Church was left with one minister (Mr. Bacon), one ruling elder (Mr. Seekamp), and one Session (First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett). Although the mere number of men that dissociated from the Reformation Presbyterian Church does not in and of itself determine the lawfulness of their reasons, it should drive the cautious reader to explore the reasons why such a vast majority of these men dissociated.

If the Reformation Presbyterian Church sincerely cared for the souls of the Session and Congregation of the Puritan Reformed Church Edmonton (believing they had fallen into some serious schismatic error), why would the Reformation Presbyterian Church not agree to meet with the Session of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton in an informal setting (whereby their consciences before God and His Word would not be violated) in order to convince them of their error and in order to reclaim them to Christ? Is that using authority for the purpose of edification (even conceding for the sake of argument that the authority of the Reformation Presbyterian Church was lawful)? Is it being easily entreated not to concede to a sincere request to meet with brothers in an informal setting so as to avoid offence of conscience before God and His Word? Is it seeking to restore brethren in

a spirit of gentleness when earnest pleas are made to meet in an informal setting and all that is received in return is a threat of censure for contumacy?

It should also be interjected that it was not Mr. Bacon who first initiated personal correspondence to be reconciled with the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton, but rather the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton (through Mr. Price) who first initiated personal correspondence with Mr. Bacon (Oct. 18, 1996) with prayerful anticipation that such correspondence might lead to a reconciliation between brothers in Christ. It was the express desire of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton to use modest means by which to be reconciled in the truth with the Reformation Presbyterian Church. It should also be noted that it was Mr. Price who last corresponded with Mr. Bacon (Jan. 9, 1997) and **that it was Mr. Bacon who ended the personal correspondence with Mr. Price just as some of the significant issues that divided them were being addressed.** Mr. Bacon never gave to Mr. Price a reason why he abruptly ended his correspondence (although Mr. Bacon subsequently published on his web page that it was allegedly due to Dr. Crick and Pastor Robinson speaking with the PRCE). Those who have read Appendix B will readily see that neither Dr. Crick, nor Pastor Robinson, needed the PRCE to convince them that a lawful vow was never taken to constitute the RPC presbytery. The facts and events surrounding the alleged vow speak so clearly for themselves that everyone present at that meeting (except the Rowlett Session of course) has independently concluded that Mr. Bacon and Mr. Seekamp have misrepresented the matter.

The reader is invited to read the following correspondence which passed between Mr. Price and Mr. Bacon and to judge for himself whether Mr. Price was obstinate or whether Mr. Price was respectfully pursuing reconciliation in the truth. Let the reader judge whether it was right for Mr. Bacon to refuse a meeting of all the ministers and elders when the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton continually offered to clear our differences. **More modest means did not prevail because Mr. Bacon was not willing to use more modest means.** What more modest means could have been proposed, under the circumstances, than to meet together informally as brothers in order to discuss the matters related to the recent dissociation? Mr. Bacon says that he refused to do this because he didn't see what such "a coffee-klatch meeting" would accomplish. Perhaps he would have been proved right, but the fact is that the **Session of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton was willing to try, but (as the evidence clearly demonstrates) he was not.** Offers from the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton to meet face to face have always been and continue to be open. For Mr. Bacon to accuse the Session of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton of rejecting modest means of reconciliation is a slanderous lie. The evidence is clear and simple. The Session of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton offered to meet informally with the Reformation Presbyterian Church, and Mr. Bacon said, "No." No amount of lying or misrepresentation can cover up that fact.

Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour (Ecclesiastes 10:1, AV).

Let the reader judge for himself from the correspondences that follow who evidenced and displayed modest means of reconciliation and a spirit of gentleness in their communications.

**Letter #1 - April 13, 1996, from Mr. Seekamp (Stated Clerk of the Reformation Presbyterian Church) to the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton.**

The biblical and historical reasons for the nonattendance of the Session of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton at this meeting of the Reformation Presbyterian Church had been communicated to them prior to this meeting of Presbytery. It was made clear that nonattendance was not due to personal issues at all, but only due to matters of conscience related to biblical and constitutional principles. Furthermore, an earnest plea and desire for reconciliation in the truth had been communicated to the Reformation Presbyterian Church in the letter of dissociation sent by the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton. This was the first response received by the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton from the Reformation Presbyterian Church subsequent to their dissociation. In this first official communication from the Reformation Presbyterian Church already the charge of contumacy is laid upon the table.

From: Dave Seekamp

Sent: Saturday, April 13, 1996 11:01 PM

To: 'prcedm@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca'; 'lwdohms@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca'

Cc: 'dbaon@airmail.net'; 'scotkirk@aol.com'; 'TWorrell1@aol.com'

Subject: 2nd Notice to Appear before the Presbytery

Dear Edmonton Session members,

As Clerk, I have been asked to convey the following message to you. Here is the official action of presbytery from the meeting held 4/6/96.

It was moved and seconded that in light of the Edmonton session's non-appearance at the presbytery meeting, that we cite them a second time to appear. This meeting is to occur in Charlotte, NC on June 22, 1996 to convene at 9:00 AM. If they do not appear at this meeting charges of contumacy will be filed against them.

The motion passed without opposition.

In view of this motion, the Edmonton session is cited the second time to appear before the Presbytery of the Reformation Presbyterian Church on June 22, 1996 at 9:00 AM. We will notify you of the exact location in Charlotte, NC as soon as this is determined.

The reasons for appearing are as formerly stated: "...the Edmonton session is summoned to appear to personally explain the rationale for, and consequences of, their recent adoption of the Covenants, National and Solemn League, in addition to, the Terms of Communion as set down in the RPC North Britain of 1761".

Additionally, during the presbytery meeting held 4/6/96, it was moved, "that we remind Elder Greg Barrow of his duty to keep the Presbytery informed about his progress as a man under care". Please consider this memo as a reminder directed to Elder Barrow and forward this communication to him.

Please notify us upon receipt of this mail.

For Christ's Kingdom and glory,  
David Seekamp  
Clerk of Presbytery

Reformed Presbyterian Church

**Letter #2 - April 20, 1996, from the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton to Mr. Seekamp (Stated Clerk of the Reformation Presbyterian Church).**

This is the first response of the Session of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton to the citation and threatened charge of contumacy issued by the Reformation Presbyterian Church. Let the reader compare both the tone and the modest means used in the public correspondence of the Reformation Presbyterian Church and that of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton.

Date: Sat, 20 Apr 1996 12:22:16 -0600  
From: prcedm@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca  
Subject: /u/010/prcedm/mail/Notice

Mr. David Seekamp  
The Clerk of Presbytery  
The Reformation Presbyterian Church  
April 18, 1996

Dear Brethren,

We acknowledge receipt of your correspondence (dated April 15, 1996) concerning "a second notice to appear before the Presbytery." We request that the clerk please provide us with minutes from the most recent meeting of the Presbytery as soon as he is able.

The motion passed by the Presbytery ("It was moved and seconded that in light of the Edmonton session's non-appearance at the presbytery meeting, that we cite them a second time to appear. This meeting is to occur in Charlotte, NC on June 22, 1996 to convene at 9:00 AM. If they do not appear at this meeting charges of contumacy will be filed against them.") begs the very question which this session has already put to the Presbytery in our correspondence of March 27, 1996: Is the Reformation Presbyterian Church a duly constituted court of Jesus Christ? Not only have we maintained that the constitution of The Reformation Presbyterian Church is unfaithful to the terms of communion established by our covenanted and presbyterian forefathers of The Second Reformation (cf. our correspondence of March 27, 1996), but we also maintain that The Reformation Presbyterian Church is not duly constituted for the fundamental reason that no formal vows have yet been taken by officers of The Reformation Presbyterian Church to any constitution. Certain subordinate standards and a subscription statement have been adopted by The Reformation Presbyterian Church, but no formal vows have yet been publicly taken by any officer in owning these as subordinate standards. Churches that profess to be reformed have universally maintained that a binding union is established between a church officer and a church when he publicly promises (vows) and owns the constitution of the church before witnesses. This is even required by A MANUAL OF THE PRACTICE OF THE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND (pp. 123-127). This formed the reason why The Reformation Presbyterian Church at its meeting of July 22, 1995 in Snellville, Georgia rightly chose not to censure Mr. John Cripps for breaking any vows, for he had not broken any formal vows which constitutionally bound him to The Reformation Presbyterian Church. Thus, brethren, if you maintain that you are lawfully constituted, we request the Presbytery to produce from the minutes of presbytery formal vows which any officer has taken to the constitution of

The Reformation Presbyterian Church (as distinguished from motions which only adopt certain documents as subordinate standards of The Reformation Presbyterian Church).

Brethren, until you present us with answers to these constitutional questions, we cannot own you as a duly constituted court of the Lord Jesus Christ. For these reasons we have necessarily declined the jurisdiction of The Reformation Presbyterian Church. We are not acting from a spirit of contumacy at all, but from a biblical and historical necessity to establish duly constituted order and authority within a church court before it can lawfully rule on behalf of Christ. Therefore, we believe the Presbytery cannot lawfully (*de jure*) cite us to appear before it as a true church court (even if it does so *de facto*), nor can it lawfully charge us with contumacy if it be not a lawfully constituted church court. We plead with the Presbytery to answer these questions. We do not desire to remain separated from you brethren. The issue of a duly constituted authority cannot be avoided.

Furthermore, we have made known our willingness to discuss these matters with the Presbytery. In our e-mail correspondence to the Presbytery (March 27, 1996), we stated this to be our desire, and in phone conversations with the Presbytery through the Moderator before the last Presbytery meeting, we assured the Presbytery of our willingness to meet with them via conference call. We waited to see if the Presbytery desired to meet with us, but we received no communication to that effect. Though unable to afford the expense of flying our entire session to Rowlett, we willingly consented to appear before the Presbytery by conference call to discuss our actions. Thus, we did not wilfully refuse to "appear" before the Presbytery on even the first occasion. Concerning "the second notice" to appear, we request that the venue of the meeting be changed to Edmonton since we have borne a greater financial burden in previous meetings due to the greater distance we have had to travel. If the Presbytery should yet choose to meet in Charlotte, NC, we must decline appearing personally at that meeting (for financial considerations), though we would yet be willing to consider the possibility of a conference call on that date. We do not consider our non-appearance at these meetings for financial reasons to be the result of contumacy on our parts. Such a trip for our entire session would cost us in the vicinity of \$3,000 (Canadian). Our church budget will not permit such an expenditure. So you see, brethren, we are not refusing to discuss these issues with you, nor are we refusing to meet with you. Please seriously consider our request for a change of venue if you desire to meet with us personally, or consider a conference call on June 22 if you desire to discuss these matters with us at that time in Charlotte.

We acknowledge as well that we have received the Presbytery's motion (of 4/6/96) "that we remind Elder Greg Barrow of his duty to keep the Presbytery informed about his progress as a man under care." Brethren, since we have declined the jurisdiction of The Reformation Presbyterian Church due to its absence of duly constituted authority as a church court, we must maintain that Mr. Barrow was never under care of a truly constituted Presbytery. We implore you to join with us in establishing a duly constituted Presbytery that is agreeable to the Word of God and to the standards of our covenanted and presbyterian forefathers of The Second Reformation. To that end shall we continue to work and pray.

For Christ's Crown And Covenant,  
The Session of Puritan Reformed Church

**Letter #3 - April 23, 1996, from Mr. Seekamp (Stated Clerk of the Reformation Presbyterian Church to the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton.**

Date: Tue, 23 Apr 1996 07:49:10 -0700

From: Dave Seekamp <davese@MICROSOFT.com>

To: "'prcedm@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca'" <prcedm@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca>,  
"'<lwdohms@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca>' <lwdohms@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca>

Cc: 'Richard Bacon' <dbacon@airmail.net>, 'Jerry Crick' <scotkirk@aol.com>, 'Tim Worrell ' <TWorrell1@aol.com>

Subject: RE: Response to Second Notice from Presbytery

Dear Pastor Price and Edmonton Session,

As Clerk, I acknowledge the receipt of your correspondence. Your response will become part of the records of the case. I will be forwarding a copy of your correspondence to Pastor Robinson since he is not on email.

A full copy of the minutes from the April presbytery meeting will be mailed out very soon.

In the Lord's Name,

Dave Seekamp

**Letter #4 - May 13, 1996, from Mr. Seekamp (Stated Clerk of the Reformation Presbyterian Church) to the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton.**

In this letter Mr. Seekamp makes certain allegations against the Session of the Puritan Reformed Church for which (to his credit) he subsequently repented and was forgiven. Thus, this letter and the following one are only included to give a faithful transmission of public correspondence that passed between the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton and the Reformation Presbyterian Church.

Date: Mon, 13 May 1996 17:57:53 -0700

From: Dave Seekamp <davese@MICROSOFT.com>

To: "'prcedm@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca'" <prcedm@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca>,  
"'<lwdohms@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca>' <lwdohms@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca>

Cc: "'dbacon@airmail.net'" <dbacon@airmail.net>, "'scotkirk@aol.com'" <scotkirk@aol.com>, "'TWorrell1@aol.com'" <TWorrell1@aol.com>

Subject: RE:2nd Notice to Appear before the Presbytery

Dear Edmonton Session:

This is an official response to you from the Clerk of the Presbytery. The previous notice will be mailed to you by certified letter and will constitute the 2nd notice to appear according to our book of order adopted at the last meeting of Presbytery: A Manual of the practice of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

The place of meeting, date and time of the meeting remain the same as in the previous communication:

With reference to the cost considerations, this was never an issue as long while you were committed to the Presbytery. Speaking for the Presbytery (I may be overruled when we convene), we may be willing to provide financial assistance under the following conditions:

1) If your purpose is to come and repent, recognizing your vow breaking with us by your disassociation, then some kind of financial assistance might be possible. Otherwise, you need to pay your own expenses. We are not interested in financing a pattern of vow breaking with respect to vows made before the Lord. Please send me email if this is your purpose for attending.

2) Also, it is necessary that you make your reservations within the next 4 days of the receipt of this letter in order to get the lowest fares possible. Considering the appraisal of the costs, you should find something for substantially less than a \$1000. Pastor Bacon found tickets (at the time of your previous response) for less than \$600 round trip with one connection through a travel agency.

It is not necessary for all the members of your session to appear. Your church is entitled to one vote in presbytery according to our book of order. If the church has a pastor, he also has a vote as a member of Presbytery. However, neither are able to vote in their own case. As a member of presbytery, Pastor Price's attendance is required. Believing in representative government as we do, one or more members of your session can represent the other session members before presbytery.

Best regards in the Lord's name,  
David Seekamp  
Clerk of Presbytery

**Letter #5 - June 19, 1996, from the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton to Mr. Seekamp (Stated Clerk of the Reformation Presbyterian Church).**

Especially note the reference made to the many brotherly attempts initiated on the part of the Puritan Reformed Church to speak with the men of the Reformation Presbyterian Church concerning reconciliation. Where were the attempts on the part of the Reformation Presbyterian Church to use modest means to be reconciled to the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton?

Date: Wed, 19 Jun 1996 22:43:35 -0600  
From: prcedm@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca  
Subject: /u/010/prcedm/mail/seekamp2  
To: The Reformation Presbyterian Church

David Seekamp, Clerk of Presbytery  
June 19, 1996  
From: The Session of Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton

Dear Brethren,

In light of your upcoming meeting of Presbytery (June 21-22, 1996) in Charlotte, NC, we believe it would be advantageous to address several matters that have been communicated to us from members of presbytery since your last meeting (April 6, 1996) in Rowlette, TX.

1. We have been cited a second time to appear before presbytery, and if we do not appear we will be charged with contumacy. As we made clear in our communication to presbytery by e-mail (April 18, 1996), we have been willing to address the issues related to our dissociation and continue to be willing to do so. This fact is established by our

communications with presbytery via the moderator before the last presbytery meeting in Rowlette (April 6, 1996), wherein we agreed to meet with presbytery by means of conference call. We understood this would be acceptable to presbytery since Dr. Crick would be attending that meeting of presbytery by means of conference call as well. However, we were not contacted to set up a conference call. Why were we not contacted? Contumacy implies an obstinate refusal to hear or listen. For the record, we were willing then to speak with you, and are still willing to do so. Our willingness to address the matters of our dissociation is further evidenced by the number of phone calls (approximately 8) we have made to members of presbytery. Would you honestly accuse us of obstinately refusing to talk with you? Since presbytery has not initiated a single phone call with us, has the presbytery demonstrated as much willingness to talk with us as we have with them? If presbytery sincerely views our session as having been led astray, where is presbytery's willingness to talk with us by conference call so as to lead us back into the paths of righteousness?

2. In a recent e-mail communication (May 13, 1996) from presbytery via the clerk, it was stated, \*This is an official response to you from the Clerk of the Presbytery. . . . Speaking for the Presbytery (I may be overruled when we convene), we may be willing to provide financial assistance under the following conditions: (1) If you're (sic) purpose is to come to repent . . . .\* We call the presbytery's attention to the fact that the presbytery has not yet charged us with a sin for which to repent. This appears to us to be a case of having been found guilty by presbytery before even having been charged with a specific sin (a violation of the ninth commandment or any faithful book of church order). Upon your supposition that we are yet members of presbytery, is this proceeding by due process of law?

3. One of our stated reasons for not appearing in person before the members of presbytery (namely, our present financial circumstances), appears to be dismissed by presbytery via the clerk (in an official presbytery communication by e-mail, dated May 13, 1996) as either irrelevant or fabricated since \*this was never an issue as long while (sic) you were committed to the Presbytery.\* As a matter of record, we asked the presbytery to consider meeting in Edmonton in an official communication (dated March 8, 1996) and in unofficial communications (both verbal and e-mail). We have discussed this as one of the significant issues for not attending the meeting at Rowlette and Charlotte in recent session meetings as well. In all previous meetings of presbytery, our representatives have travelled by far the furthest distance and have incurred the most significant costs. Since presbytery has no evidence to the contrary, why does presbytery cast doubt upon our testimony as if it were spurious? If evidence to the contrary is available, please provide such evidence.

4. The presbytery apparently refuses to accept our willingness to meet with them by conference call, and yet it agreed to have Dr. Crick attend the last meeting of presbytery by conference call. We were cited for not appearing because we did not appear in person. Did Dr. Crick appear in person at the last meeting of presbytery? This appears to us to be an inconsistency. Why is Dr. Crick's excuse acceptable and ours unacceptable?

5. Does presbytery have unanimity amongst itself as to when individuals were constituted as members of presbytery by virtue of public and formal vows? Were formal vows to be united as members of presbytery taken at the first meeting of presbytery (October 1, 1994), or the second meeting (January 28, 1995), or the third meeting (July 22, 1995), or the fourth meeting (April 6, 1996), or were they taken on any previous occasion? We have

received a diversity of opinion from the members of presbytery to such a simple question? Such should not be the case if the answer is so clear. This is our reason for not officially recognizing the constituted authority of presbytery to cite us to appear before it. Beyond the matters related to our differences in terms of communion, we wish to communicate to you that at no time in the process of determining the wording of our form of subscription did we conceive or in any way understand that we were taking formal vows. We can only ask that you believe our sincere testimony. Can you cite for us any presbyterian body that was constituted implicitly without formal vows?

6. Our session would propose that we meet as brothers in a neutral location (such as Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane, or Calgary) to informally discuss our differences. Due to the difference that exists in our terms of communion, we cannot in good conscience meet together formally in the context of a church court. If the conference call arrangement is not acceptable to presbytery, we ask presbytery to meet with us in person at a location that will considerably minimize our expenses.

We do pray that you will seriously consider the matters we have raised at your meeting in Charlotte, NC, June 21-22, 1996. We do love you as fellow brethren in Christ and do pray that there might yet be a reconciliation of significant issues that presently separate us.

Respectfully,  
The Session of Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton

P.S. Since the moderator cannot receive this communication by e-mail, please see that he receives a copy. Please confirm that you have received this communication.

**Letter #6 - June 20, 1996, from Mr. Seekamp (Stated Clerk of the Reformation Presbyterian Church) to the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton.**

Date: Thu, 20 Jun 1996 12:10:08 -0700  
From: Dave Seekamp <davese@MICROSOFT.com>  
To: "prcedm@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca" <prcedm@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca>  
Cc: 'Richard Bacon' <dbacon@airmail.net>, 'Jerry Crick' <scotkirk@aol.com>, 'Tim Worrell' <TWorrell1@aol.com>  
Subject: RE: Presbytery/Charlotte

Your communication has been received. I will suggest that the Presbytery as a whole should answer the points you have raised.

**Letter #7 - October 18, 1996, from Mr. Price (Pastor of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton) to Mr. Bacon (Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett).**

This was an earnest attempt *initiated* on the part of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton to continue to seek reconciliation with Mr. Bacon. There intervened a series of communications between Mr. Price and Mr. Bacon which were abruptly ended (for no stated reason at that time) by Mr. Bacon (Jan. 9, 1997, cf. the communication below).

Date: Fri, 18 Oct 1996 17:42:01 -0600 (MDT)

From: prcedm@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca  
To: Richard Bacon <dbacon@airmail.net>  
Subject: Request To Dialogue

Dear Dick,

Members of our session have communicated with other members of The Reformation Presbyterian Church in the past several months. However, we have not corresponded directly with you or your session. I would like to know if you would be interested in engaging in a dialogue with me concerning any matters related to our dissociation, or matters related to our convictions concerning church or state? As we have expressed in writing and in verbal communication, so I emphasize again: We do desire to be reconciled together as one body again. However, the **conscientious reasons** for our necessary dissociation must first be addressed. If you are interested, you may begin by stating your question, observation, conviction etc. I hope to hear from you soon.

Respectfully,  
Greg L. Price

**Letter # 8 - November 23, 1996.**

Date: Sat, 23 Nov 1996 20:27:27 -0800  
From: Dave Seekamp <davese@MICROSOFT.com>  
To: "dbacon@airmail.net" <dbacon@airmail.net>, "scotkirk@aol.com" <scotkirk@aol.com>, "prcedm@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca" <prcedm@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca>, 'Greg Barrow' <gbarrow@portal.connect.ab.ca>, 'Lyndon Dohms' <lwdohms@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca>, 'Tim Worrell I' <TWorrell I@aol.com>  
Subject: Called and Ordinary Meetings of Presbytery

Dear Fathers and Brethren,

The moderator has announced a called meeting of Presbytery on Saturday, December 7, 1996 to be convened at 11:00 AM in Rowlett, Texas at the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett, 8210 Schrade, Rowlett, Texas.

**The stated purpose of this pro ra nata meeting is to consider the Petition received from Elder Seekamp and reports that have been circulated regarding the character of Pastor Bacon.**

The ordinary Fall meeting of Presbytery will be on Saturday, January 25, 1997 to convene at 9:00 AM. This meeting will be held in Simpsonville, SC at the Scottish Presbyterian Kirk of the Covenant, 119 Woodcliff Court, Simpsonville, SC. More details will be distributed regarding this meeting very shortly [emphases added - GB].

Best regards in the Lord,  
David Seekamp  
Clerk of Presbytery

**Letter #9 - December 3, 1996, from Mr. Price (Pastor of the Puritan Reformed**

**Church of Edmonton) to Mr. Bacon (Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett) and Mr. Seekamp (Clerk of Session of the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett).**

The following personal note was issued by Mr. Price upon receiving a communication from Mr. Seekamp (cited above - Letter #8) concerning a call to a special meeting of the Reformation Presbyterian Church to be held in Rowlett, Texas in order to address reports concerning problems within the Rowlett congregation. Is this the correspondence of one who does not care to use modest means in order to be reconciled with brethren? What more (short of ignoring our conscience) could have been done to demonstrate our sincere desire for reconciliation?

Date: Tue, 3 Dec 1996 09:07:51 -0700 (MST)

From: prcedm@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca

To: Richard Bacon <dbacon@airmail.net>, David Seekamp <davese@Microsoft.com>

Subject: Prayer

Dear Brothers,

**I wanted you to know that neither myself nor our session takes delight at what we have read concerning the grievous situation in Rowlett. To the contrary, our hearts are grieved. We do not bear you any animosity. We have sought (by God's grace) to prevent a root of bitterness from springing up in our hearts, so that we might yet be reconciled to you, our brothers. Our concerns are yet of a theological nature, and not of a personal nature. Please know that sincere prayers for a righteous settlement of the problems in both church and family are offered up on your behalf[emphases added - GB].**

The God of our fathers be with you,  
Greg

**Letter #10 - January 9, 1997, from Mr. Price (Pastor of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton) to Mr. Bacon (Pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett).**

This is the final personal correspondence between Mr. Price and Mr. Bacon. The series of communications between Mr. Price and Mr. Bacon (which had been initiated by Mr. Price) were abruptly ended (for no stated reason at that time) by Mr. Bacon. Several months later, the web page for the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett posted that the reason Mr. Bacon ended his personal correspondence with Mr. Price was due to the continued contact between the PRCE and the other ministers of the RPC. This communication has been included in order that the reader may see for himself that there was exhibited no spirit of obstinacy by Mr. Price, but there difficult questions proposed by Mr. Price for which Mr. Bacon provided no answer at the time nor since.

Note: the headings and dates to all of the following correspondence are supplied by Greg Barrow to assist the reader.

Date: Thu, 9 Jan 1997 21:44:15 -0700 (MST)

From: prcedm@freenet.edmonton.ab.ca

To: Richard Bacon <dbacon@airmail.net>

Subject: Re: Request To Dialogue (fwd)

Dick,

We are finally getting settled in from our move and hope I will be able to reply to email messages more regularly.

**Mr. Price wrote from a previous letter (12-18-96):**

The problem we faced was one in which we had come to firm convictions that the terms of communion in the Reformation Presbyterian Church were contrary to the biblical and covenanted reformation as attained to in the Church of Scotland (1638-1649). We then realized the Reformation Presbyterian Church was not rightly constituted by virtue of what I just mentioned as well as by virtue of not having formally taken vows as church officers. We yet believe we acted appropriately in dissociating ourselves and then calling the Reformation Presbyterian Church to repentance in light of the unconstituted establishment of the Reformation Presbyterian Church.

**Mr. Bacon responded in a previous letter (12-19-96):**

That was NOT the problem you wrote to us about in February (nor earlier still in December). You did not express that this was a case of conscience at that time and in fact as late as February continued to assure me that separation was NOT on your agenda.

**Mr. Price responds in the present letter (1-9-97):**

It was not a case of conscience until March. When it became a case of conscience we wrote to you explaining our reasons for dissociation. The reason separation never came up in our email correspondence in December or February was because we were not considering it at that point in time.

**Mr. Bacon writes in a previous letter (12-19-96):**

In your opinion, the RPC was not rightly constituted prior to March of 1995 [1996 - GB]. So, please explain what irremedial position the the RPC had taken that prohibited your calling the presbytery to repentance prior to your departure?

**Mr. Price responds in the present letter (1-9-97):**

We never indicated that the situation in the RPC was \*irremedial.\* We stated we could not be apart of a \*pretended\* presbytery which had not been lawfully constituted and whose terms of communion were contrary to our own. We have always maintained that our dissociation from the RPC could be remedied if the constitutional issues and terms of communion were resolved.

**Mr. Price writes in a previous letter (12-18-96) concerning the wording of the subscription statement:**

It is true that we sinfully agreed to accept the statement to which you refer above. We have repented of our sin and have asked the Reformation Presbyterian Church and the Puritan Reformed Church to forgive us for agreeing to what we now believe to have been perjury on our parts in disowning the SLC [Solemn League and Covenant - GB]. What did you precisely understand the following statement to mean: "It is not necessary to take the covenant of the three kingdoms"? This seems to be one of the most significant issues that separates us. We (the session of Edmonton) understood that we were abjuring the Solemn League and Covenant as

not obligating us (as did Bruce Robinson). Can you explicitly explain whether you believe the Solemn League and Covenant is perpetually binding upon posterity (and if you believe it is, what aspects of the covenant bind posterity?). Are only blood-line descendants bound? Are any nations today bound by the SLC? Are any churches so bound?

**Mr. Bacon replies in a previous letter (12-19-96):**

The very fact that you are using such terms as "sin and repentance" indicate that you regard the SL&C as the rule of faith and conscience. "Not necessary" means that God alone is Lord of the conscience. I do not have Bruce Robinson's testimony as to "what" he understood. If he so understood it as you do, then why did he not leave the presbytery at the same time you did? Why has he not communicated to the presbytery?

**Mr. Price responds in the present letter (1-9-97):**

We do not regard either the National Covenant (NC) or the Solemn League and Covenant (SL&C) as \*the rule of faith and conscience.\* We do regard these covenants as subordinate standards that are agreeable to the Word of God which is "the only infallible rule of faith and practice." Thus, because these covenants (and all the standards emitted by the Westminster Assembly) are agreeable to the Word, approved by a lawful General Assembly, and specifically bind the ecclesiastical and national descendants of Scottish, English, and Irish Presbyterianism, we're bound to them.

Dick, was it necessary to subscribe the Westminster Confession of Faith? Why was it necessary to subscribe the WCF but not the SL&C? Was it necessary for Rutherford, Gillespie, or Brown to swear these covenants? To say that it is necessary to take these covenants (or the WCF), or to say that it is sinful not to take these covenants is not to make them our infallible rule of faith and practice, nor is it to deny sola scriptura (if such were the case we would condemn both the first and second reformation for the reformers insisted it was necessary (not for salvation, but for faithfulness to the precepts of God) to own faithful covenants and confessions. They are "a" rule of faith and practice (not "the" rule of faith and practice) because they are agreeable to and founded upon God's Word. Such was the position of our reformers:

**[Note: Mr. Bacon never answers the questions put to him in this section - GB]**

Register of the Council of 24

12 November 1537. It was reported that yesterday the people who had not yet made their oath to the reformation were asked to do so, street by street; whilst many came, many others did not do so. No one came from the German quarter. It was decided that they should be commanded to leave the city if they did not wish to swear to the reformation.

26 November 1537. Some people have been reported to have said that it was perjury to swear to a confession which had been dictated to them in writing. . . [Farel or Calvin] replied that if the contents of the written confession were studied carefully it would be seen that this was not so, but that it was a confession made according to God. Examples from holy Scripture (in Nehemiah and Jeremiah)

proved that the people should all be assembled to swear to keep faith with God and observe his commandments (Cited in *The Reformation in Germany and Switzerland* by Johnson and Scribner, p. 138).

What ever we are obliged to believe and profess as the saving truth of God, that we may lawfully swear to profess, believe and practice, that the bond of faith may be sure: but wee are obliged to believe and profess the national confession of a sound church. . . . and we also swear a National covenant, not as it is mans word, or because the Church or Doctors, at the Churches direction, have set it down in such and such words, such an order or method, but because it is Gods Word, so that we swear to the sense, and meaning of the platform of confession, as to the Word of God; now the Word of God, and sense and meaning of the Word is all one; Gods Law and the true meaning of the Law are not two different things. . . . Therefore it is all one whether a Church swear a confession, in express words of Scripture; or a covenant in other words expounding the Scriptures true meaning and sense according to the language and proper idiom of the Nation and Church; for we swear not words or a platform as it is such, but the matter, sense, and meaning of the Scriptures of God set down in that platform. . . . To swear to the true religion, the defence and maintenance thereof is a lawful oath; as to swear to any thing that is lawful and lay a new band on our souls to perform holy duties, where we swear a breach, and find by experience there hath been a breach; is also a dutie of moral and perpetual equity . . . (*The Due Right Of Presbyteries*, Rutherford, pp. 132-134).

At the treaty of Uxbridge, the propositions for religion (of which the confirming of the covenant is the first and chieftest) were acknowledged to be of such excellency and absolute necessity, as they were appointed to be treated of the first place. . . . But their offence which still refuse to take the covenant is not only sinful in itself, but a great dishonour to God, a great scandal to the church, and withal a disobedience to the lawful ordinance of authority (*Miscellany Questions*, Chapter XVI, Gillespie, pp. 85, 86, 87).

It is a moral duty to abjure all the points of Popery, which was done in the national covenant; and it is a moral duty to endeavour our own reformation and the reformation of the church, which was sworn to in both covenants; it is a moral duty, to endeavour the reformation of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline and government, which was sworn to in the league and covenant; it is a moral duty to purge out all unlawful officers out of God's house, and to endeavour the extirpation of heresy and schism, and whatsoever is contrary to sound doctrine, which was sworn to there also; it is a moral duty to do what God had commanded toward superiors, inferiors and equals, which, by the league and covenant, all were bound unto; and, therefore, the covenants are strongly obliging, being more absolute than other covenants, because they bind et vi materiae et vi sanctionis, - \*both by reason of the matter and by reason of the oath, and so are perpetual, Jer. 1.5. . . . \* (*An Apologetical Relation*, John Brown of Wamphray, p. 173). Yet it is a sin to refuse an oath touching any thing that is good and just imposed by lawful authority (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 22:3).

Dick, all of the authorities cited above indicate that it is \*necessary\* to take a lawful covenant and not to do so is sin.

**Mr. Price addresses in a previous letter (12-18-96) why the PRCE has not broken any vows:**

I couldn't agree with you more. However, our yeas cannot be yeas if our yeas lead us to sin. In such a case our yeas must become nays.

**Mr. Bacon replies in a previous letter (12-19-96):**

Exactly. You have made the SL&C the rule of faith and practice. By referring to the non-necessity of taking a particular covenant as a sin, you have made it the (or at least "a") rule of faith and practice.

(WLC 3) What is the word of God?

The holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, the only rule of faith and obedience.

(WSC 2) What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him?

The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy him.

**Mr. Price responds in the present letter (1-9-97):**

Did the reformers contradict themselves in the necessity of taking lawful covenants, oaths, and vows? According to your view they must contradict their own standards, for WCF 22:3 affirms that it is a sin not take a lawful oath.

**Mr. Price addressing the dissociation of the Puritan Reformed Church from the Reformation Presbyterian Church states in a previous letter (12-18-96):**

Our request for such a meeting as we proposed did not imply that nothing at all had happened. This meeting was intended to address exactly that issue: What has happened? Brother, how we handle disagreements in our marriage is one thing and whether or not we are married is another thing. What we are addressing is the matter that we could not discuss our "disagreements" while pretending as if we were married (when we believed we were not married).

**Dick Bacon replies in a previous letter (12-19-96):**

I disagree with you. On the one hand we have a group claiming that it made UNLAWFUL vows (I do not refer here to rash vows, since such must be kept). Yet for you to be released from those vows, you have the burden to demonstrate that those vows were, in fact, unlawful. We do not believe that it is possible for two men to become lawfully married (or for one presently in the state of matrimony to vow to marry another, etc.); however, it is necessary for a couple who have lived as married to demonstrate that their vows were non-binding.

**Greg Price responds in the present letter (1-9-97):**

I took no vows. No one took vows for me. Furthermore, approving the wording of a subscription statement and formally taking subscription vows are two different matters altogether. Moreover, even if (for the sake of argument) vows were taken, they cannot bind if they require us \*to do any thing forbidden in the word of God, or what would hinder any duty therein commanded\* (WCF 22:7). Since it was stated in the supposed formation of the RPC that it is \*not necessary\* to take the

covenant of the three kingdoms, it would be necessary to disavow such an unlawful vow for the reasons cited above.

**Mr. Price clears up a miscommunication in a previous letter (12-18-96):**

You counted correctly. Math never was my favorite subject. I think I may have meant to say \*these issues\* rather than \*three issues.\* Oh well.

**Mr. Bacon agrees in previous letter (12-19-96):**

That makes sense.

**Mr. Price asks in a previous letter (12-18-96) for clarification regarding Mr. Bacon's recollection of discussion surrounding the statement adopted at the "organizational meeting" in Atlanta, GA (Oct.1, 1994): "It is not necessary to take the Covenant of the three kingdoms."**

I must confess, I do not remember the discussion. If you do, please jog my memory. I believe that meeting was taped as well. Perhaps the tape would reveal what was said.

**Mr. Bacon replies in a previous letter (12-19-96):**

Quite simple really. Necessity implies some rule other than Scripture which binds the conscience. If you wish to take the SL&C (which I assume you have done), no bother to me. However, the term "necessity" implies precisely the position that y'all have now taken - which I believe to be directly contrary to the doctrine of *sola Scriptura*.

**Mr. Price responds in the present letter (1-9-97):**

If we have violated sola Scriptura by making the SL&C a necessity, so have the Westminster divines. For they made it such a necessity that not to take it meant enduring the censures of both the church and state.

**Mr. Price discusses in a previous letter (12-18-96) the willingness of the RPC to meet with the PRC:**

No, I never suggested that you had stubbornly refused to discuss these issues of conscience with us. However, neither did you agree to meet with us as we proposed so as to discuss these matters. Furthermore, we did not receive any official response to our concerns which were addressed to the Reformation Presbyterian Church (except to note in the minutes that our Overture was not in the right form. We agree that under circumstances that would allow us to remain in a rightly constituted presbytery, we should take the steps outlined above. But that is the very assumption that has not been proven (Was it rightly constituted?). As we continued to indicate by means of email communication to the presbytery, we wanted to talk. We just could not do so while considering ourselves members of a presbytery that was not rightly constituted.

**Dick Bacon replies in a previous letter (12-19-96):**

Your accusation that I did not agree to meet with you is simply not true. We had a meeting of Presbytery scheduled to meet in Feb. of 1995 [1996 - GB]. We were all willing to postpone that meeting until April in order to give your session time to prepare its case and to prosecute an overture. That does NOT demonstrate an unwillingness to talk, brother - quite the opposite in my opinion. Again, if in

February of 1995 [1996 - GB] you believed that Presbytery was not rightly constituted, you could have brought that information, proved your case, called us to repentance, and so on. I cannot see from any of your argumentation thus far (including that which was sent to the Presbytery in March 1995 [1996 - GB] and which you did not then follow up), that the Presbytery has done anything of an irremedial nature.

**Mr. Price responds in the present letter (1-9-97):**

You were unwilling to meet with us in any setting except one in which we would have to recognize your jurisdiction. We were willing to come to a meeting when you held your presbytery. We only asked that such a meeting with us not be held while you met in some "official" capacity.

**Mr. Bacon writes in a previous letter (12-12-96) regarding the Revolution Settlement:**

(2) It was a compromise of the position previously taken by the kirk of Scotland with respect to uniformity of religion.

**Mr. Price replies in a previous letter (12-18-96):**

I would add, it was an abominable abjuration of the covenanted reformation.

**Mr. Bacon responds in a previous letter (12-19-96):**

Yes, that is a more inflammatory way of saying the same thing.

**Mr. Price attempts to clarify the question in a previous letter (12-18-96):**

I am sorry if the question was too vague. Perhaps this may communicate my concern more clearly: Do we have a duty to dissociate ourselves from all ecclesiastical descendants of the Revolution Settlement Church of Scotland (i.e. all those churches that disown or disregard the attainments of the second reformation in their constitutions)?

**Mr. Bacon responds in a previous letter (12-19-96):**

See, that depends entirely on how you view "attainments." What is one person's "attainment" is another's "traditions of men." As far as the moral and perpetual obligations of the SL&C, I find them fully spelled out in the documents produced by the Assembly, including the Confession, Catechisms, Form of Presbyterial Church Government, and Directory for the Publick Worship of God, etc. And I adhere completely to those moral and perpetual obligations (attainments, if you prefer).

**Mr. Price responds again in the present letter (1-9-97):**

Then why was it necessary at the time of the second reformation to take the SL&C at all? If it did not add any thing by way of moral or perpetual obligation why was it the first and chief document emitted by the Assembly? If it was a moral obligation for them to take the SL&C, why is it not a moral obligation for us to take it? Do you consider the SL&C an attainment or a tradition of men?

**Mr. Bacon asks in a previous letter (12-12-96) what the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland being a descendant of the Revolution settlement in its constitution has to do with the PRCE's dissociation:**

(4) What has that to do with us or with anything that took place prior to your letter of disassociation?

**Mr. Price replies in a previous letter (12-18-96):**

With all due respect brother, it has everything to do with our letter of dissociation. For the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has adopted in substance the original constitution of the Free Church of Scotland which adopted in substance the original constitution of the Revolution Settlement Church of Scotland. In other words, there is a direct line of ecclesiastical descent from the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland to the Revolution Settlement Church of Scotland. I have already described the constitution of the Revolution Settlement Church of Scotland to be an abominable abjuration of the attainments of the second reformation (cf. Plain Reasons For Presbyterians Dissenting by Clarkson). Since one of those points of sinful and wilful abjuration was the neglectful silence concerning the previous burning and burying of the sacred covenants of Scotland and thus the necessary implication that "it was not necessary to take the covenant of the three kingdoms," and since this was the language adopted toward the SLC at the first meeting in Atlanta, and since the Reformation Presbyterian Church subsequently adopted the standards of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, it is directly to the point of our concern as to what you presently believe concerning the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland (which church has not yet set the record straight concerning her own sinful abjuration of the attainments of the second reformation).

**Mr. Bacon responds in a previous letter (12-19-96):**

But you have not spelled out, other than your desire to take a 17th century vow for three (count'em) kingdoms precisely WHAT is the abjuration of and what the attainment is. Are you seriously suggesting that not aligning ourselves with a 17th century document is sinful (that seems to be what I've read thus far in both your overture and your posts)? If so, then you have made that 17th century document the rule of faith and practice. Necessity is not laid upon me to hold the traditions of men - else God shares the throne of my conscience with mortals.

**Mr. Price responds again in the present letter (1-9-97):**

Who are the \*posterity\* bound by the SL&C (articles I & V)? Furthermore, "all his majesties dominions" are comprehended as descendants upon whom obligations fall (that includes Canada and the U.S.). Do you really think the passage of time releases posterity from its obligation to lawful covenants (\*Are you seriously suggesting that not aligning ourselves with a 17th century covenant is sinful?\*) Yes, the covenants are of moral and perpetual obligation upon "posterity." We are both national and ecclesiastical posterity to those who swore the SL&C.

**Mr. Bacon answers the question in a previous letter (12-12-96) - whether or not he believes the US constitution is immoral (but does not answer either the question as to who are the posterity bound by the Solemn League and Covenant or who are comprehended as descendants under the phrase, "all his majesties dominions"):**

(5) It is an immoral constitution. I think the second part of your question was intended to ask a moral question, but I cannot tell what it is.

**Mr. Price replies in a previous letter (12-18-96):**

Since you believe the U.S. Constitution is immoral, ought a Christian to hold an

office which would require him to take an oath of allegiance to the constitution (and further, ought a Christian to vote for any one that will be required to take an oath of allegiance to the constitution)?

**Mr. Bacon responds in a previous letter (12-19-96):**

Of course not. One may not promise to sin. Why are you just now getting around to asking these questions?

**Mr. Price discusses subscription vows in a previous letter (12-18-96):**

Thus, if I understand correctly the above biblical citation and response, you do believe that church officers may take subscription vows for other church officers without their consent or approval, or without such being understood by those witnessing the vows. Again I ask you to cite any presbyterian book of church order to that effect. You later imply that you agree that Mr. Barrow did not take vows for me. So what is the point of your argument here? Biblical covenants or vows that bound succeeding generations, were understood by those who were present that such was the case.

**Mr. Bacon responds in a previous letter (12-19-96):**

And I so understood the promises I made on July 22, 1995. I made those promises for me. Mr. Seekamp, as the duly appointed representative of the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett, made them for the church. Any subsequently elected officers of FPCR must adhere to the same subscription.

**Mr. Price answers in the present letter (1-9-97):**

The only problem is that it was not made clear that constitutional vows were being made.

**Mr. Price continues from a previous letter (12-18-96):**

This is precisely my point, this was not the case as it relates to me (i.e even assuming for the sake of argument that Mr. Barrow took a legitimate vow by which he himself is bound, no one understood that Mr. Barrow was taking a vow on my behalf of Mr. Price).

**Mr. Bacon agrees in a previous letter (12-19-96) that Mr. Price did not take any constitutional vows:**

I agree that your status was not being represented by Mr. Barrow. I do, however, understand that he was there for the Edmonton church qua church.

**Mr. Price responds again in the present letter (1-9-97):**

Yes, he represented the Edmonton Church, but he did not know he was taking a vow.

**Mr. Price asks in a previous letter (12-18-96) concerning the videotape of the meeting where the constitutional vow was allegedly taken:**

Dick, I intend no disrespect, but I must ask: Why have you had access to this video tape while others have been denied access to this video tape? I understand Bruce Robinson asked David Seekamp if he could view this tape and was denied access to it.

**Mr. Bacon responds in a previous letter (12-19-96):**

I have no knowledge of others being denied access to anything. The videos are mine. They are not and never have been regarded as an official document or property of the presbytery. Since Mr. Seekamp does not have access himself I'm not sure how he could "deny" access to another.

**Mr. Price asks for a copy of the tape in the present letter (1-9-97):**

Would you please send me a copy of the video of that meeting (July 1995)? I will gladly reimburse you for your expenses.

**[As of January 2, 1998, Dick Bacon has not yet responded to this request - GB]**

**Mr. Price writes in a previous letter (12-18-96) concerning the proper method of correcting erring minutes of presbytery as it applies to the alleged vows that were taken July 22, 1995:**

My point in directing you to the Free Presbyterian Book of Church Order was to demonstrate that minutes (even approved minutes) may be subsequently corrected if they are found to be in error. Moreover, since there is no higher court to which to appeal in such a matter, the presbytery itself may subsequently correct its own minutes if they are in error. To maintain a contrary position is to say that error that is formally approved, is error that can never be corrected until there is a higher court. Is that your understanding of approved minutes?

**Mr. Bacon replies in a previous letter (12-19-96):**

Not at all. Nor has anything I have said implied such. What I "have" stated is that there is an onus probandi that falls to those who believe that approved minutes are incorrect.

[Note: Is there not yet sufficient warrant (prima facie) to question whether the minutes accurately reflect what occurred in the meeting of July 22, 1995 when three of the four ministers and two of the three ruling elders on Sessions agree that no vows were taken? - GB]

**Mr. Price responds in the present letter (1-9-97):**

I would think that the testimony of a ruling elder and the moderator to the effect that no recollection of vows being taken would be sufficient to warrant further corroboration from other sources or other witnesses such as video tapes.

**Mr. Price discusses in a previous letter (12-18-96) the subscription statement that Mr. Bacon identifies as a constitutional vow:**

Dick, the nature of the motion (it appears to me as I read the minutes) was simply to approve the subscription statement as one by which officers would subsequently be admitted into the presbytery. If it were clearly understood by all to be the case that they were formally taking vows then it is unclear to me why it was necessary to add the notation that this motion constituted vows on the part of all who voted. Thus, this is the reason why we have appealed to a tape of the meeting to determine whether that notation was made clear. For without that notation, I would not understand that the motion was any more than a motion to approve of the wording of the subscription statement. Whether our session approved of the subscription statement at that time is not really relevant to the issue. Even if we maintain we did approve of the wording of the statement and that our approval

was so indicated by Mr. Barrow's vote, the issue of whether vows were consciously taken still remains.

**[Note: And the question as to why Mr. Bacon refused to produce the video tape of this meeting continues to be an issue. Since he has the video tapes that could beyond a shadow of doubt once and for all demonstrate that vows were taken by those men present at the July 22, 1995 meeting, why has he not produced them? This was a major cause for the dissociation of three ministers and two ruling elders. If he possesses evidence that they took vows, why has he not produced it? - GB]  
Mr. Bacon replies in a previous letter (12-19-96):**

OK, we disagree on this point; but please allow me to assume your pov [point of view - GB] for the sake of some agreement. If it is the case that Mr. Barrow did believe the subscription statement was the one by which officers would \*subsequently\* be admitted to the presbytery, why did he vote for it? Was he willing \*at some future unspecified date\* to subscribe it? If so, then how might he or any other conscionable reader have understood the term "covenant" as used in the document? If he later changed his mind, and believed that it was an unlawful requirement that would "at some future unspecified date" become necessary for officers to subscribe, then why was it necessary to withdraw "prior" to that future date coming about, when there was still opportunity to call the presbytery to repentance?

**Mr. Price responds in the present letter (1-9-97):**

At that point in time, he did approve of the wording of the subscription statement. That is why he voted for it. I have already addressed why it was necessary to withdraw from the presbytery in the manner we did.

**Mr. Price asks in a previous letter (12-18-97) for a videotape of the July 22, 1995 meeting in question (wherein vows were allegedly taken):**

I cannot possibly understand how if that were understood by all, how the majority of officers who were present at that meeting deny that such formal vows were consciously taken. Again I request you to provide me with either a copy of that tape or a transcript of the tape that would help clarify this whole matter. Thanks Dick.

**Mr. Bacon replies in a previous letter (12-19-96):**

Well, I cannot understand how people who have behaved in the manner that has been done will stand before the judgment seat of Christ and expect to be exonerated. But obviously you disagree with me on that. You say that you are asking "again." Please produce a copy of your first or subsequent request.

**Mr. Price responds in the present letter (1-9-97):**

I do believe I had previously requested a copy of the tape (I do not have the time presently to look back at the email messages), but even if you are correct, I request that you send me a copy of the tape (at my expense of course).

**Mr. Bacon writes in a previous letter (12-19-97) regarding his willingness to dialog as a private believer:**

As I have stated to you in previous posts, I am fully willing to "dialog" as a private

believer. Further, that is all either of us has done. I would say the same thing is true of any correspondence you may have had with Messrs. Robinson and Seekamp, or Dr. Crick. None of these things has come before Presbytery for resolution.

**Mr. Price asks in the present letter (1-9-97):**

With Mr. Robinson's and Dr. Crick's dissociation from the RPC, do you believe there is yet a presbytery?

**[Note: This question was never answered by Mr. Bacon - GB]**

**Mr. Bacon writes in a previous letter (12-19-97) regarding the propriety of the PRCE's dissociation:**

You do not think you have done anything wrong. I think the session of Edmonton PRC has behaved itself badly. I think you have been hasty and rash. Further, I think some of the statements that you made to me prior to the March 1995 [1996 - GB] disassociation were misleading at best.

**Mr. Price responds in the present letter (1-9-97):**

None of my statements were misleading at the time they were written. They represented my views. It was in the month of March that we realized we must dissociate in order to be faithful to the Lord.

**Dick Bacon asks in a previous letter (12-19-96):**

What else would you like to "dialog" about? I think I've answered your five questions, but if I have been unclear about any of it, let me know and I'll try to clarify my positions.

**Mr. Price responds in the present letter (1-9-97):**

Could you cite any divine of the first or second reformation that holds your view that if a confession or covenant is considered "necessary" to take, that by that fact it replaces the Word of God and denies sola Scriptura?

**[Note: This question was never answered by Mr. Bacon. This is significant in that Mr. Bacon has in effect condemned the whole reformation with his position that it is not necessary to swear Covenants and Confessions of Faith that are agreeable to the Word of God. How can it be a denial of sola Scriptura to swear a biblical Covenant or Confession when it is the Scripture itself (as the alone infallible rule of faith and practice) by which the Covenant or Confession is judged to be one to which a nation or church can swear? - GB]**

**This concluded the email conversation between Pastor Price and Mr. Bacon. Mr. Bacon ceased communication without informing Pastor Price or the Session of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton.**

Finally, I ask Mr. Bacon to name those "many men" whom he claims have attempted to use modest means of reconciliation with us. The only man I can name who used a godly approach toward the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton was Mr. Todd Ruddell (though, at that time, not even a member of the Reformation Presbyterian Church), and though his argument was seriously flawed, his tone was exemplary. We ask Mr. Bacon to describe how these so-called "many men" used

modest means to reclaim us from our alleged errors. We do not know to whom he is referring and would be willing to examine his evidence if he cited it.

Now that the reader has had an opportunity to hear both sides of the story let him judge who it was that would not use more modest means of reconciliation.

I close this Appendix with a quote from John Calvin:

For what were we to do? The only terms on which we could purchase peace were to betray the truth of God by silence.... What else, then, at the very least, could we do, than testify with a clear voice that we had no fellowship with impiety? We have, therefore, simply studied to do what was our duty (John Calvin, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, p. 184)

The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee (1 Samuel 24:12, AV).

# **Appendix D**

## **Form of Examination for Communion approved by the Scottish General Assembly of 1592.**

The following brief biographical sketch concerning the author of this Catechism was supplied by Mr. Kevin Reed.

John Craig (1512-1600) was a Scottish reformer. Previously a Dominican Friar, Craig was converted to the Protestant Faith. The Roman Inquisition condemned Craig to death, yet he escaped and returned to Scotland. In 1560, Craig became co-pastor with John Knox in Edinburgh. Later, Craig became a chaplain to James VI. At the direction of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Craig composed this catechism, which was subsequently approved by the Assembly in 1592.

### **Communion Catechism by John Craig**

#### **I. Of Our Miserable Bondage Through Adam**

Q. 1. What are we by nature?

A. The children of God's wrath, Eph. 2:3.

Q. 2. Were we thus created of God?

A. No, for he made us to his own image, Gen. 1:26.

Q. 3. How came we to this misery?

A. Through the fall of Adam from God, Gen. 3.

Q. 4. What things came to us by that fall?

A. Original sin, and natural corruption, Rom. 5:12, 18, 19.

Q. 5. What power have we to turn to God?

A. None at all, for we are all dead in sin, Eph.2:1.

Q. 6. What is the punishment of our sin?

A. Death eternal, both in body and soul, Rom. 6:23.

#### **II. Of Our Redemption by Christ**

Q. 7. Who may deliver us from this bondage?

A. God only who bringeth life out of death.

Q. 8. How know we that he will do it?

A. By the promise and sending of his Son Christ Jesus in our flesh, John 3:16, 17.

Q. 9. What kind of person is Christ?

A. Perfect God and perfect man, without sin, Matt. 1:23; Luke 1:31.

Q. 10. What needed this wonderful union?

A. That he might be a meet Mediator.

Q. 11. How did he redeem us?

A. Through his obedience to the law, and death of the cross, Phil. 2:8.

Q. 12. Suffered he only natural death?

A. No, but he suffered also the curse of God, in body and soul, Gal. 3:13.

Q. 13. How know we that his death brought life to us?

A. By his glorious resurrection and ascension.

Q. 14. Wherefore that?

A. For if he hath not satisfied for all our sins perfectly, he hath not risen, nor we by him, 1 Cor. 15:14, 17.

Q. 15. Is it needful that we believe these mysteries?

A. No doubt, but yet that is not enough, Jam. 2:17, 20.

Q. 16. What more is required?

A. That we be made partakers of Christ and his merits, John 15:4-7.

### **III. Of Our Participation with Christ**

Q. 17. How is that wrought?

A. Through his continual intercession for us in heaven, Heb. 7:25.

Q. 18. Declare how that is done?

A. Hereby the Holy Spirit is sent, John 14:16, 26.

Q. 19. What doth the Spirit in this work?

A. He offereth Christ and his graces to us, and moveth us to receive him.

Q. 20. How doth he offer Christ to us?

A. By the preaching of the evangel, Rom. 10:13-15.

Q. 21. How doth he move us to receive him?

A. Through printing in our hearts true faith in Christ, Acts 16:14.

Q. 22. What thing is faith in Christ?

A. A sure persuasion that he is the only Saviour of the world, but ours in special, who believe in him, John 6.

Q. 23. What doth this fruit work?

A. Our inseparable union with Christ and his graces, Eph. 3:16-19.

Q. 24. What is the first fruit of this union?

A. A remission of our sins, and imputation of justice, Rom. 5:19.

Q. 25. Which is the next fruit of our union with him?

A. Our sanctification and regeneration to the image of God, John 3:3, 5.

Q. 26. Who doth this, and how?

A. The Holy Spirit through our union with Christ, in his death, burial, and resurrection, Rom. 6.

Q. 27. What are the chief parts of our regeneration?

A. Mortification of sin, and rising to righteousness, Rom. 6.

Q. 28. How know we sin and righteousness?

A. By the just and perfect law of God, Rom. 7.

#### **IV. Of the Word**

Q. 29. Where shall we find the Word of God?

A. Only in the holy scriptures, Rom. 15:4.

Q. 30. Are the scriptures sufficient for our instruction?

A. No doubt, as the apostles do testify, John 20:31; Gal. 1:8; 2 Tim. 3:16.

Q. 31. How should we receive and use the word ?

A. We should read it privately and publicly with all reverence, Deut. 31:12.

Q. 32. Is this sufficient for our instruction?

A. No, if public teaching may be had, Eph. 4:11, 12.

Q. 33. Wherefore that?

A. For as God raiseth public teachers and pastors, so he hath commanded us to hear them, Mal. 2:7.

Q. 34. How long should we continue in this school?

A. All the days of our lives, seeing we are ignorant, forgetful, and easy to be deceived, Col. 3:16.

Q. 35. What then serve the sacraments?

A. They are added for our further comfort and admonition as a visible Word, Gen. 17:9-11; Ex. 12.

#### **V. Of Our Liberty to Serve God**

Q. 36. What good things may we do now being thus regenerated ?

A. We may serve our God freely and uprightly, Rom. 12.

Q. 37. May we do it perfectly according to the law?

A. No, truly, for our regeneration is not perfect, Gal. 5:17, Eccl. 7:22.

Q. 38. What followeth upon that?

A. A certain rebellion of the flesh against the Spirit, Rom. 7:15-25.

Q. 39. Is not this rebellion cursed by the law?

A. Yea, truly, but yet it is not imputed to us, 2 Cor. 5:19.

Q. 40. Wherefore that, seeing it is sin, and the root of all our sins?

A. Because Christ satisfied all the points of the law for us, Rom. 3:21, etc.

Q. 41. What are we then who believe in Christ?

A. Just in him, but sinners in ourselves, Rom. 8.

Q. 42. What craveth this confession of us?

A. A constant faith in Christ, and continual repentance.

Q. 43. What then is our only joy in life and death?

A. That all our sins bypast, present and to come, are buried; and Christ only is made our wisdom, justification, sanctification, and redemption, 1Cor. 1:30.

Q. 44. What fruit cometh of this faith?

A. A peace of conscience, and joy in the Spirit, in all our troubles within and without, Rom. 5:2; 2 Cor. 6:4.

Q. 45. What shall we gather of this whole discourse?

A. How miserable we are through Adam, and how blessed through Christ, Phil. 3:8.

Q. 46. When should we remember of this doctrine?

A. At all times, but chiefly when we are touched with a proud opinion of our own worthiness, or are troubled in conscience for sin, Luke 18:19.

Q. 47. Then this meditation serveth for a preparation to the holy sacraments?

A. Yea truly, if they be rightly considered.

## **VI. Of the Sacraments**

Q. 48. Declare that in baptism.

A. We see there the seal of our spiritual filthiness through our communion with Adam, and our purgation by our communion with Christ.

Q. 49. Declare the same in the Supper.

A. We see, feel, and taste there also, the seal of our spiritual wants, and death through Adam; and likewise of our spiritual treasures and life through Christ only.

Q. 50. How contract we our spiritual filthiness from Adam?

A. Through our natural communion with him, Rom. 5:12, etc.

Q. 51. How came we to our spiritual purgation, and life by Christ?

A. Through our spiritual communion with our second Adam, Head, and Spouse, Eph. 5:30.

Q. 52. Do the word and the sacraments work this communion?

A. No, for it is the work of the Spirit only, Eph. 3:16.

Q. 53. Whereunto do the word and sacraments lead us?

A. Directly to the cross and death of Christ, 1 Cor. 1:17, 18, 23, 24.

Q. 54. Wherefore that?

A. Because through his cross and death the wrath of God was quenched, and all his blessings made ours, Gal. 3:13, 14.

Q. 55. Why was this high mystery represented by these weak and common elements?

A. Because they express most lively our spiritual purging and feeding, which we have by Christ, John 6:32, etc.

Q. 56. When doth he these things to us in very deed?

A. When he is so joined with us, and we with him, that he abideth in us, and we in him spiritually, John 15:4, 5.

Q. 57. How is this union and abiding expressed here?

A. By natural washing, eating, drinking, digesting, feeding, and abiding in us.

Q. 58. How may we feel and know this spiritual abiding in us?

A. By the testimony of the Spirit in us, and external actions agreeable to Christ in us, Matt. 7:16; Rom. 8:16.

Q. 59. Then Christ is not an idle guest in us?

A. No truly, for he came not only with water and blood, but also with the Spirit, to assure us, in some measure, of his presence in us, 1 John 5:6.

## **VII. Of Baptism**

Q. 60. What signifieth baptism unto us?

A. That we are filthy by nature, and are purged by the blood of Christ, Titus 3:5.

Q. 61. What meaneth this our union with the water?

A. Our spiritual union with Jesus Christ, Rom. 6:3, 8; Gal. 3:27.

Q. 62. What followeth upon this our union with him?

A. Remission of sins and regeneration, Rom. 6:4, 18, 22.

Q. 63. From whence cometh our regeneration?

A. From the communion with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, Rom. 6:4, 5, 8.

Q. 64. How long, and by what way doth baptism work in us?

A. All the days of our life, through faith and repentance, 1 Cor. 6:19, 20.

Q. 65. How then are infants baptized?

A. Upon the promise made to the faithful and their seed, Gen. 17:7, 10.

Q. 66. How doth baptism differ from the Supper?

A. In the elements, action, rites, signification and use.

Q. 67. Wherefore is baptism but once ministered?

A. It is enough to be received once in the house of God, Rom. 8:16.

Q. 68. Declare the cause of that.

A. For they are never casten out, who are once truly received in his society, John 6:37.

Q. 69. Why is the Supper so oft ministered?

A. We have need to be fed continually, John 6:55.

Q. 70. Why is not the Supper to be ministered to infants?

A. Because they cannot examine themselves, 1 Cor. 11:28.

### **VIII. Of the Supper**

Q. 71. What signifieth the action of the Supper?

A. That our souls are fed spiritually, by the body and blood of Jesus Christ, John 6:54.

Q. 72. When is this done?

A. When we feel the efficacy of his death in our conscience by the Spirit of faith, John 6:63.

Q. 73. Why is this sacrament given in meat and drink?

A. To seal up our near conjunction with Christ.

Q. 74. Wherefore is both meat and drink given?

A. To testify that Christ is the whole food of our souls, John 6.

Q. 75. Is Christ's body in the elements?

A. No, but it is in heaven, Acts 1:11.

Q. 76. Why then is the element called his body?

A. Because it is a sure seal of his body given to our souls.

Q. 77. To whom should this sacrament be given?

A. To the faithful only, who can examine themselves.

Q. 78. Wherein should they examine themselves?

A. In faith and repentance, with their fruits.

Q. 79. What should the pastors do when men are negligent, and abuse the sacraments?

A. They should use the order of discipline established in the word.

### **IX. Of Discipline**

Q. 80. Who should use this discipline?

A. The pastors and elders by their mutual consent and judgment.

Q. 81. What is the office of the eldership?

A. To watch upon their flock, and exercise the discipline.

Q. 82. How is this done?

A. By private and public admonition, and other censures of the kirk, as need requireth.

Q. 83. Who ought to be excluded from the sacraments?

A. All infidels, and public slanderers.

Q. 84. Wherefore are these excluded?

A. Lest they should hurt themselves, slander the kirk, and dishonour God.

## **X. Of the Magistrate**

Q. 85. What is the office of the Christian magistrate in the kirk?

A. He should defend the true religion and discipline, and punish all troublers and contemners of the same.

## **XI. Of the Table in Special**

Q. 86. Why use we a table here, and not an altar as the fathers did at God's commandment?

A. Because we convene, not to offer a sacrifice for sin, but to eat and drink of that sacrifice, which Christ once offered upon the cross for us, Heb. 7:23, 24, 27, and 10:11, 12, 14, 18.

Q. 87. What protest we when we come to the table?

A. That we are dead in ourselves, and seek our life only in Christ.

Q. 88. Shall this confession of our unworthiness be a stay to come to the communion?

A. No, truly, but rather a preparation to the same, if faith and repentance be with it, Mark 2:17.

Q. 89. Wherefore is there mention made here of Christ's body and blood severally?

A. To testify his death, by the which only he was made our spiritual meat and drink, John 6:51, 55.

Q. 90. For what cause is this action called the communion?

A. Because it is the true cause of our mutual society with Christ in all things, good and evil.

Q. 91. Declare how that is performed.

A. Hereby he removeth all evil things from us, which we have by nature, and we receive of him all good things, which we want by nature.

Q. 92. Declare these things more plainly.

A. The wrath of God and sin is removed, which we have by nature, and the favour of God, and adoption, with the joy of heaven, is restored to us, the which things we have not by nature, Rom. 8.

Q. 93. What thing may the faithful soul say?

A. Now live I; not I, but Christ liveth in me; it is God that justifieth, who shall condemn?

Q. 94. Let us therefore give thanks, and pass to this holy action, every one of us, saying and singing in his heart, The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup; thou shalt maintain my lot; the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a fair heritage, Ps. 16:5-6.

A. Let it be done so, with heart and mouth, to the confusion of all idolaters, and glory of our God.

## **XII. The End of Our Redemption**

Q. 95. To what end are we thus redeemed, and brought in hope of that endless joy to come?

A. To move us effectually to deny all ungodliness, worldly lusts, and unrighteousness, and so live godly, soberly, and righteously in this present world, looking for the coming of Christ, for our full redemption, Tit. 2:11-13.

Q. 96. What shall be the final end of all these graces?

A. God shall be glorified for ever in mercy, and we shall enjoy that endless life with Christ our Head, to whom with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be all honour and glory for ever. Amen.

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### *About the Text*

The text of this edition is based upon *An Form of Examination before the Communion*, as published in volume 2 of William Dunlop's *Collection of Confessions of Faith, Catechisms, Directories, Books of Discipline, etc.* (Edinburgh: James Watson, 1722). Spelling and punctuation have been revised to reflect contemporary usage.

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## **Appendix E**

### **The Six Terms of Communion of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton.**

- 1.** An acknowledgement of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, and the alone infallible rule of faith and practice.
- 2.** That the whole doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, are agreeable unto, and founded upon the Scriptures.
- 3.** That Presbyterian Church Government and manner of worship are alone of divine right and unalterable; and that the most perfect model of these as yet attained, is exhibited in the Form of Government and Directory for Worship, adopted by the Church of Scotland in the Second Reformation.
- 4.** That public, social covenanting is an ordinance of God, obligatory on churches and nations under the New Testament; that the National Covenant and the Solemn League are an exemplification of this divine institution; and that these Deeds are of continued obligation upon the moral person; and in consistency with this, that the Renovation of these Covenants at Auchensaugh, Scotland, 1712 was agreeable to the word of God.
- 5.** An approbation of the faithful contendings of the martyrs of Jesus, especially in Scotland, against Paganism, Popery, Prelacy, Malignancy and Sectarianism; immoral civil governments; Erastian tolerations and persecutions which flow from them; and of the Judicial Testimony emitted by the Reformed Presbytery in North Britain, 1761 with supplements from the Reformed Presbyterian Church; as containing a noble example to be followed, in contending for all divine truth, and in testifying against all corruptions embodied in the constitutions of either churches or states.
- 6.** Practically adorning the doctrine of God our Savior by walking in all His commandments and ordinances blamelessly.

## Appendix F

### **Qualification - God did not intend the 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 Elects 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 (Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries*, p. 248).

#### **Here we must understand two things.**

1. 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.

2. 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,

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 baptising of infants to be lawful (Acts 2:38-39). 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, Jer. 32:38, "And I will be their God and they shall be my people, Jer. 31:33, I will put my law in their inward parts and Jer. 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 - GB] Jer. 31:33-34 (Samuel Rutherford, *The Due Right of Presbyteries*, 1644, SWRB reprint, 1995, p. 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.

## Appendix G

**A brief examination of Mr. Bacon's principles regarding the visible church and the use of private judgment. Also, some observations regarding his ignoble attack upon Mr. Kevin Reed in his book entitled *The Visible Church in the Outer Darkness*.**

Mr. Bacon says:

In February of 1996 I expressed concern that Jim Dodson, **a man who is a member of no church at all** and has no ministerial credentials from any church anywhere, had the session's ear more so than did their own presbytery (*Defense Departed*, emphases added).

Mr. Bacon again displays his formidable ignorance when making such comments. How can he say that Mr. Dodson is, "a man who is a member of **no** church at all"? According to the *Westminster Confession of Faith* 25:2, Mr. Dodson's credible profession of faith makes him a member of the universal visible church of Jesus Christ. How then is he a member of "no church at all?" Sadly, it seems that Mr. Bacon makes the ministry, ordinances and discipline of the church essential to its **being**. To him, unless you are formally a member of a local church you are, **in the outer darkness**. This is the doctrine of Papists, viz., pastors, elders and deacons are necessary to the existence of the visible church (as to being).

Perhaps Mr. Bacon would also deride John Calvin for giving the following godly advice to his flock.

As for the babblers 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 **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 worshipped purely**, let him at least groan night and day, 'Thine altars, Lord; it is only thine altars that I desire, my God, my king' (John Calvin, *Come Out From Among Them, The Anti-Nicodemite Writings of John Calvin*, a forthcoming book to be published by Protestant Heritage Press, The Third Sermon, On Psalm 27:4, pp. 192, 193, emphases added).

Some one 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 [i.e. relocate - GB] 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**(John Calvin, *Come Out From Among Them, The Anti-Nicodemite Writings of John Calvin*, a forthcoming book to be published by Protestant Heritage Press, "A Short Teatise",

pp. 93, 94, emphases added).

Would Mr. Bacon say to those who dwell in some Egypt or Babylon, "would to God they had the courage to gather in the name of 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 worshipped purely, are libelled 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" (*The Visible Church & the Outer Darkness*, p. 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 PRCE. 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 strait 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 [faithful - GB] minister; yea and in some cases, it is worse.** For those that are utterly 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 (*The First Book of Discipline*, p. 37, emphases added).

Worse yet, we find Mr. Bacon elevating the authority of corrupt judicatories above the

right of the 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 believers conscience.

In Mr. Bacon's ignoble attack upon Mr. Kevin Reed he says,

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 (cp. Joshua 6:26 & First 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** (Jeremiah 23:21). Those who remove themselves from true churches under such a pretext prophesy without God speaking to them (*The Visible Church & the Outer Darkness*, p. 49).

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 **"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:

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 in so far to receive and believe the same, as he understands them to agree with the Scriptures** (George Gillespie, *A Dispute Against The English Popish Ceremonies*, pp. 364-365, emphases added).

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. **Presbyterial 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*, but desireth they may do in faith what they do (George Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, 1646, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications, 1985, pp. 83, 84, emphases added).

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. Reed 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 than 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 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 a 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 (Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1696, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1997, p. 84, emphases added).

Notice the language of Turretin. We are to believe that individual believers, "**can better find out the meaning of Scripture in things necessary to salvation than whole synods receding from the Word of God and than 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." It must not be considered, "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:

The obedience which he [i.e. Christ - GB] 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) (Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1696, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1997, Vol. 3, p. 288, emphases added).

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.  
(Hebrews 13:7, AV).

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 (Heb.13:17); 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 (i.e., **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**) (Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1696, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1997, Vol. 3, p. 244, emphases added).

From Heb.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 (Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1696, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1997, Vol. 3, p. 289, emphases added).

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. (*Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1:10).

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 (*The Visible Church and the Outer Darkness*, p. 15).

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 (Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1696, Presbyterian and Reformed, 1997, Vol. 3, p. 287, emphases added).

George Gillespie also responds:

Howbeit, even in such cases, when the consent of the church cannot be had to the execution of this discipline [i.e. excommunication - GB], faithful pastors and professors [i.e. professing Christians - GB] 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 [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 cautel [caution - GB] and animadversion [warning - GB]. And so says the Archbishop of Spalato, 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 (George Gillespie, *A Dispute Against The English Popish Ceremonies*, p. 382, emphases added).

If Mr. Bacon will not allow private individuals to search the Scripture and ultimately appeal to their own judgment of discretion, to whom does he turn to as a final court of appeal?

Mr. Bacon says,

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 (*The Visible Church and the Outer Darkness*, p. 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 Turretin 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 Cor. 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 those things were so (Acts 17:10-11, AV).

For Mr. Bacon to assert that, "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 Lord of the conscience.

Mr. Bacon says,

Independents invariably elevate the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer to a sort of papacy of the believer (*The Visible Church and the Outer Darkness*, p. 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 PRCE).

Noble martyr of God, James Renwick explains:

**If this [the right of private judgment - GB] 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 they are to do nothing doubting but to be fully persuaded in their own minds, Rom.**

**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, Rom.14:17, Eph.11:2, 2 Thess.3:14, and many such like places. Also, Rutherford saith, in his Peaceable Plea, chap 4, p. 25, "that the law of nature will warrant a popular and private subtraction and separation from the ministry of a known wolf and seducer," and alloweth what Parker saith, from Saravia, *Licet tetula inculcata uti si malus rector ab ecclesia deponi nequit*, "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. For the latter is an act of authority, belonging to those to 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, chap. ix. p. 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 (W. H. Carlsaw, *The Life and Letters of James Renwick, The Last Scottish Martyr*, 1893, SWRB bound photocopy reprint, 1997, p. 139, emphases added).

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 [pretended covenanters], 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 sub-committee 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 and 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 and 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 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." ("Antipharmacum Saluberrimum," *The Works of John Flavel*, Vol. 4, p. 532, emphases added. Also reprinted by SWRB [1996] as "A 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, AV).

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 (the settled state of a faithful church) and erroneously applied them to our contemporary context (the broken state of a corrupt church).

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences 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 (Romans 16:17,18, AV).

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 - GB], agreed with him on this point in his "Assertion" (*The Visible Church in the Outer Darkness*, p. 21, emphases added).

Again, Mr. Bacon is impersonating someone who has actually read what George Gillespie wrote. George Gillespie believed 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, classis, 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 favour 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 Tim. 5:22, "Be not partaker of other mens 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, classis, or synod, is contrary to the Word of God, before he refuses to do the thing**(George Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, 1646, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications, 1985, p. 224, emphases added).

If, as Gillespie says, an individual minister may defy an eldership, classis 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 (*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 church officers (*The Visible Church and the Outer Darkness*, p. 11).

John Brown (of Wamphray) directly contradicts Mr. Bacon:

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 (John Brown of Wamphray, *An Apologetical Relation of the Particular Sufferings of the Faithful Ministers and Professors of the Church of Scotland*, 1660, 1845, SWRB reprint, 1996, p. 146).

Robert M'Ward adds,

What way can the practice of private persons toward others, in abstaining from some acts of church communion *hic & 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 Christians private censuring, by judgment of discretion, the practice of another, and carrying according to that other, to do with taking the government off its hinges** (Robert McWard, *Earnest Contendings for the Faith*, 1723, SWRB reprint, 1997, p. 121)?

### **The sad irony of Mr. Bacon's position.**

Mr. Bacon says,

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*, p. 26). 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 and the Outer Darkness*, p. 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 that 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 (George Gillespie, *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, 1646, reprinted by Sprinkle Publications, 1985, p. 201).

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 and 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 shortsightedness 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 and 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, AV).

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" (Ezek. 34:4); as "lords over God's heritage" (1 Pet. 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 Thess. 5:21). *Non numeranda suffragis, sed appendenda* [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 schoolmen 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, "everyone ought to be able, by the command of God: therefore they remove their own blame," says Paraeus. "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, "*jurare in verba magistri*" [to echo the sentiments of a

teacher ], nor yet be Pathagorean disciples to the church herself, **but we will believe her and obey her in so far only as she is the pillar and ground of the truth** (George Gillespie, *A Dispute Against The English Popish Ceremonies*, Naphtali Press edition, pp. 29-30, emphases added).

## Quotations

The topics treated are not adapted to the tastes of many in this age, and to most persons the principles discussed will be as riddles - quite enigmatical (Ps. 128:2). The testimony of Christ's witnesses has never been acceptable to the world, least of all to backsliders. Nevertheless, there is warrantable ground to expect that what is contained in the following pages will be helpful to some in following ages, who may be moved by the Spirit of God to inquire and search for the "landmarks which the fathers have set." Among these will be found that grand "international document," the Solemn League (and Covenant - RB), ready to be placed in the foundation of the millennial temple. "When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory," and, with an eye to that highest and most desirable end, this contribution is with humble confidence committed to his patronage (David Steele, *Reminiscences: Historical and Biographical of a Ministry in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, During 53 Years*, [1883] SWRB reprint 1997, pp. 3-4).

These modern pigmies are too far dwarfed in intellectual stature to measure the altitude -too long, and too deeply steeped in earth's politics, to estimate the latitude, of our glorious Covenanted Reformation -a Reformation which, imbedded in the law and the covenant of God, has already brought civil and ecclesiastical freedom to many millions; and which is doubtless destined to be laid in the foundation of reconstructed society in the millennial period of the world (Reformed Presbytery, *A Short Vindication of Our Covenanted Reformation*, [1879] SWRB reprint 1996, p. 4).

(T)hese two witnesses have always testified -not formally against pagans or infidels as such; but -against *apostate Christians*, as composing an organized and complex system of opposition to the Lord and His Anointed. And just here, the witnesses have detected the secret of Antichrist's successful enterprise among the human family... "Many false prophets are gone out into the world... this is a deceiver and an Antichrist," 2 John 7. The combination is ostensibly on the side and in the interest of Christ, and the elements of which Antichrist is composed were obviously professing Christians, "They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us," 1 John 2:19. Here is the apostasy, and so the witnesses are fully borne out in asserting that Antichrist is a great Christian apostasy! To trace the origin and development, in the organization and modifications of this enemy of all righteousness, is the special work of Christ's witnesses (David Steele, *The Two Witnesses: Their Cause, Number, Character, Furniture and Special Work*, [1859] SWRB reprint 1998, pp. 17-18).

(T)hese witnesses are called and commissioned to testify especially against Antichrist -a false christ, and therefor an opposing christ. But Christ is to be considered either personally or mystically; either abstractly in his personal rights and prerogatives, or in the concrete, in the rights and immunities of his church. There is this prejudice, too prevalent, *against Christians testifying against Christians!* This we are often told, is contrary to the law of charity. We have not so learned Christ. They are not all Israel which are of Israel. Much of the business of these two prophets is to oppose prophets -to prophesy against the shepherds, Ezek. 34:2. Moses with his miracles must confront the magicians with their enchantments, Exod. 8:19. Elijah must confront the prophets of Baal, 1 Kings 18:25. Paul must counteract false apostles, 2 Cor. 11:13. In short, the direct object of these witnesses' testimony is apostate christendom -those who depart from the faith, 1 Tim. 4:1 -who have gone out from fellowship and renounced the doctrines of the apostolic church, 1 John

2:19. Their special work is to testify against error and its propagators and abettors, together with ungodliness, the natural fruit of error, rather than against pagans (David Steele, *The Two Witnesses: Their Cause, Number, Character, Furniture and Special Work*, [1859] SWRB reprint 1998, p. 14).

We shall also, according to our places and callings, in this common cause of religion, liberty, and peace of the kingdoms, assist and defend all those that enter into this League and Covenant, in the maintaining and pursuing thereof; and shall not suffer ourselves, directly or indirectly, by whatsoever combination, persuasion, or terror, to be divided or withdrawn from this blessed union and conjunction, whether to make defection to the contrary part, or to give ourselves to a detestable indifferency or neutrality in this cause, which so much concerneth the glory of God, the good of the kingdom, and honour of the king; but shall, all the days of our lives, zealously and constantly continue therein against all opposition, and promote the same, according to our power, against all lets and impediments whatsoever; and what we are not able ourselves to suppress or overcome, we shall reveal and make known, that it may be timely prevented or removed: All which we shall do as in the sight of God (*The Solemn League and Covenant*, subscribed by the Westminster Divines in 1643, Article VI).

The LORD said, Verily it shall be well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat thee well in the time of evil and in the time of affliction. Shall iron break the northern iron and the steel? Thy substance and thy treasures will I give to the spoil without price, and that for all thy sins, even in all thy borders. And I will make thee to pass with thine enemies into a land which thou knowest not: for a fire is kindled in mine anger, which shall burn upon you. O LORD, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy longsuffering: know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke. Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts. I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation. Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail? 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 vile, thou shalt be as my mouth: let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the LORD. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible (Jer. 15:11-21).