

Debate: Eschewing Ecclesiastical Tyranny (Protestant Biblical Separation)

by Greg Barrow

Greg Barrow's sermon emphasizes the necessity of true biblical unity and the exercise of private judgment to combat ecclesiastical tyranny within the Church.

Duration: 1:26:19

Scripture: Matthew 15:14, John 3:10

Topics: "Church Governance", "Protestant Reformation"

Description

The sermon transcripts focus on refuting the false accusations and misrepresentations made by Richard Bacon against the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton. Greg Barrow, the preacher, addresses four primary falsehoods and calls Bacon to repentance. Barrow emphasizes the ongoing spiritual battle for the supremacy of Jesus Christ and the corruption of the church's teachings and practices. He urges readers to hold fast to the classical Protestant doctrines and practices and to strive for unity in the bond of peace.

Transcript

Let us therefore remember that whenever Church unity is commended to us, this is required. That while our minds agree in Christ, our wills should also be joined with mutual benevolence in Christ. Paul therefore, while urging us to it, takes it as his foundation that there is one God, one faith, and one baptism.

Indeed, wherever Paul teaches us to feel the same and will the same, he immediately adds, in Christ, or according to Christ. He means that apart from the Lord's Word, there is not an agreement of believers, but a faction of wicked men. We therefore conclude that among the godly, the communion of the Church ought not to extend so far that if it degenerates into profane and corrupted rites, they have to follow it headlong.

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

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

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

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

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

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

and necessary consequence of sola scriptura.

Because even this most vital teaching is being eroded and attacked, which, if it continues, will plunge the Church back into a full-fledged slavery to error and idolatry, as was the case before the Reformation, I'd like to spend a few moments considering how prominent the doctrine of private judgment is in the Scriptures. By so doing, I hope to fix more firmly in our minds the privilege and duty we have to eschew, or shun, ecclesiastical tyranny, and thereby to enhance the usefulness of Mr. Barrow's concise explanation and defense of private judgment. By giving careful heed to the Word of God and to the testimony of our faithful Reformed forefathers, to which testimony the Bible commands us to listen, Proverbs 1, 8, Jeremiah 6, 16, Hebrews 11, 4, and 13, 17, and so forth, we will be led to a fresh appreciation of one of the chief benefits purchased for us by the blood and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to a renewed holy hatred of all that is contrary to this precious benefit.

By this means we will be equipped to recover and maintain the true biblical unity of Christ's Church, and end the multitudinous schisms currently afflicting her and grieving and dishonoring her Lord. The Scriptures confirm and urge the right and duty of private judgment in numerous ways. First, we see it in the biblical conception of authority, where God alone bears absolute unqualified rule over men's consciences.

The Lord commands us, be not servants to men, 1 Corinthians 7, 23, while insisting as the ultimate reason for believing and obeying Him that I am the Lord thy God, Exodus 20, verse 2, and so forth. Thus the Apostles expressly said they were only helpers of our faith and not lords over it, 2 Corinthians 1, 24, and referred to their ministry as existing only for the purpose of edification, 2 Corinthians 10, 8, and 13, verse 10. They expressly taught they had authority only insofar as their officiations were according to the truth, 2 Corinthians 13, 8, and not simply because they claimed a title and held an ecclesiastical office.

We can only give implicit faith then to the Lord God, and not to any, even the most faithful church or leader. To do otherwise is to ascribe to them an incommunicable attribute of God, blasphemous, idolatrous, and perilous indeed. Moreover, every command to submit to church leadership necessarily implies this duty.

The Bible tells us that we are to submit to, emulate, and follow faithful leaders and churches, for example, 1 Timothy 5, 17 and Hebrews 13, 17. Faithful is not here a meaningless adjective, but rather presupposes sound scriptural evaluation of this leadership on our parts. The same applies to God's command to receive faithful doctrine.

We are as well frankly and soberly told of the existence of false teachers not outside the church, but within the church. We must be certain here, however, to distinguish the various types of false teachers. Some men, like Apollos, are godly and competent, but simply uninstructed in the whole counsel of God.

Others, like Nicodemus, John chapter 3, have no business teaching, not yet at least, as they are incompetent in their doctrinal knowledge. Others have been soundly instructed, but, like Peter, have fallen back into their old sin and errors. Still others are described in the most fearful terms, Satan's ministers, 2 Corinthians 11, 15, deceivers and being deceived, 2 Timothy 3, 13, twice dead and clouds without water, Jude 12, and in the case of the man of sin, who the Reformers identified as the office of the Pope, one who exalts himself above God and is, like Judas, a son of perdition, 2 Thessalonians 2, 3. Obviously, if we are to identify any of these errant teachers, we must judge them ourselves, individually, by criteria independent of their mere profession to be teachers and leaders, or faithful churches and denominations,

or their insistence that the Bible supposedly says we are to submit to them.

And, in fact, this is exactly what we observe in the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit highly commends such examples for our imitation. Thus the Bereans are said to be more noble than the Thessalonians, because they not only heard the Apostle Paul, but heard him with a ready-minded, careful discernment, searching the Scriptures daily whether those things were so, Acts 17, 11. Likewise, the Ephesian elders in Revelation 2 were praised by Christ, because they tried them which said they were apostles and were not, and found them liars, Revelation 2, 2. Whereas the churches of Pergamos and Thyatira were sternly rebuked for merely tolerating false guides, warning that those who tolerated these teachers, though they themselves were orthodox, were nevertheless subject to the judgments sent upon the false teachers.

See also Revelation 18, 4. Finally, as if these overwhelming scriptural evidences and arguments weren't enough, we have the plain command of God throughout the entire Bible. Examples are so numerous that we're forced to limit ourselves to just a few. In Deuteronomy 13, we're forewarned that God will test us by allowing false prophets to arise, who will have every seemingly good qualification to commend us to believe them, and yet whose doctrine will lead us away from the true God.

Solomon is emphatic concerning the need to flee from error and erroneous teachers. Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that caused it to err from the words of knowledge, Proverbs 19, 27. Both Isaiah and the Lord Jesus Christ himself warn us that if we follow unsound instruction, we will suffer the severe consequences.

For the leaders of this people cause them to err, and they that are led of them are destroyed. His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark. Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

Isaiah 9, 16 and 56, 10, Matthew 15, 14. And we should note here, as was alluded above, that it is not simply teachers who we regard to be non-Christians or obstinate opponents to the truth that we are to take heed of and avoid. This ought to be evident, for a teacher as such should be judged by his teaching, not by whether we think he'll spend eternity in heaven, though this is obviously a vital matter.

Just because he's qualified for heaven does not mean he's qualified to teach and lead Christ's sheep. It is also plainly taught in the verses themselves, for they do not say that the primary reason the people are being led astray is because the teachers are unsaved, though in many cases this is indeed the ultimate reason for their teaching error, but because they are blind to and ignorant of the truth, and their doctrine causes the people to err. We are thus forbidden every bit as much from sitting ourselves under ignorant, unsafe teachers, as we are from sitting under those who are likely unsaved, ravenous wolves.

Many more instances can be found in the New Testament. Indeed, one need only consider that most of the New Testament itself was written to refute errors and erring teachers, and thereby to confirm and protect Christ's sheep. Thus, in a very real sense, the New Testament en masse is a direct commandment to judge and reject all false teaching and teachers.

For the sake of brevity, however, we will consider only one more clear command, Romans 16, 17. Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. Notice that there are three commands here, two explicit and one implicit.

The implicit command is that we ensure that we ourselves know the apostolic doctrine, the whole counsel of God, Acts 20, 26, the doctrine which we have learned. The first explicit command is to mark, that is, to identify, to make careful note of, those who deviate from this doctrine, thereby causing schisms and all manner of damage to the Church of Christ. The second explicit command flows from it.

We are to avoid, shun, or eschew all such teachers, churches, or denominations. For it is obvious that if one teacher who thus causes schism is to be avoided, how much more an entire church or denomination which is causing such division by its false doctrines. Interestingly, the command to mark in this passage is the same Greek word used in Philippians 3.17, where we are commanded to mark faithful teachers and to emulate their faithfulness.

Finally, note how serious a matter it is for us to identify and separate from such false teachers and teachings. Paul beseeches us, earnestly entreating that we do so, and commands us by invoking the terrible name of the Lord Jesus Christ. This single consideration alone, the invocation of the name of the Lord, recall the language in Exodus, I am the Lord thy God, should overwhelmingly compel us to follow through carefully on this command.

All the more should we do so when in conjunction with this we consider that it is taught either expressly or by implication from one end of the Bible to the other. Even from this cursory view of the doctrine of private judgment, its prominence in Scripture and the great care employed by the Holy Spirit in communicating it to us are manifest. It is precisely because Christ's sheep do not use this precious gift and then separate from those who are ignorant blind guides or who are obstinately holding to error, that the blindness, error, disunity, and decline in practical godliness characterizing the church today continue and thrive.

With the exercise of private judgment, these grievous sins could not continue. Without the exercise of private judgment, they will not cease. Dear brethren, we have a command not from the Reformers, but from the Lord Jesus Christ to use this private judgment and to act on it accordingly.

Indeed, we have more than a command. He has purchased it for us with his own blood and given us the Holy Spirit in order to employ it. He will bless us if we practice it scripturally, and his anger will follow us if we don't.

He is honored greatly when we faithfully exercise it. It is the height of impiety and blasphemy when we neglect it. Let us then not be those who maintain and even widen the breaches in the walls of Christ Jerusalem, but those who instead endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, Ephesians 4.3. May God bless all of us with peace and joy as we stand fast in the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free.

As chewing ecclesiastical tyranny, the duty of Christ's sheep being Appendix G of Greg Barrow's book, *The Covenanted Reformation Defended Against Contemporary Schismatics*. Please note that this entire book is free on Stillwaters Revival Books website www.swrb.com. It is also available in hardcover from Stillwaters along with a treasure trove of the finest Protestant, Reformed, and Puritan literature available anywhere in the world today. Stillwaters can be reached by phone at area code 780-450-3730 or by email at swrb at swrb.com. Also note that since Barrow's work is an unequalled modern remedy for the disunity and impurity rampant in the church, after this appendix I will be reading the foreword that he requested me to write.

This foreword surveys the book and I believe it gives a concise and powerful presentation of why the Covenanted Reformation Defended is so important for the well-being of Christ's bruised and battered bride. Appendix G, a brief examination of Mr. Richard 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 and the Outer Darkness.

Mr. Bacon says, quote, 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, that is the session of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton, more so than did their own presbytery. That's from Defense Departed. 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, chapter 25, section 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, that is, that 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. Quote, 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 to set up some sort of church, either in their houses or in those of their neighbors, to do in their place what we do here in our temples.

And whoever has no means of being in the Christian church where God is worshiped purely, let him at least groan night and day, Thine altars, Lord, it is only Thine altars that I desire, my God, my King. That's John Calvin from his book Come Out from Among Them, the anti-nicodemite writings of John Calvin, which is forthcoming from Protestant Heritage Press, pages 192 and 193. And again, quoting Calvin, someone will therefore ask me what counsel I would like to give to a believer who thus dwells in some Egypt or Babylon where he may not worship God purely, but is forced by the common practice to accommodate himself to bad things.

The first advice would be to leave, that is, to relocate if he could. If someone has no way to depart, I would counsel him to consider whether it would be possible for him to abstain from all idolatry in order to preserve himself pure and spotless toward God in both body and soul. Then let him worship God in private, praying him to restore his poor church to its right estate.

And that's from the same book, pages 93 and 94. Would Mr. Bacon say to those who dwell in some Egypt or Babylon, would to God they had the courage to gather together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ wherever they are and set up some sort of church either in their houses or in those of their neighbors to do in their place what we do here in our temples? Or then let him worship God in private, praying him to restore his poor church to its right estate? Not as long as he obstinately maintains his present errors. Those who have set up house churches in places where God is not worshipped purely are libeled by Mr. Bacon and said to be a member of no church at all.

Directly contradicting John Calvin, Mr. Bacon says, quote, Churching at home is a contradiction. The primary meaning of the word church is assembly. That's from the Visible Church in the Outer Darkness,

page 49.

Both Jim Dodson and Kevin Reed have felt the sting of Mr. Bacon's caustic pen. His abusive use of false principle and rhetoric are not confined to the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton. Sadly, Mr. Bacon reserves his most vicious denunciations for those who are most faithful to the biblical truths embodied in the godly standards of the First and Second Reformations, while leaving those who espouse his erroneous principles free to go about their business.

Those who profess the true religion together with their children are members of the Visible Church of Christ, whether they formally join a local congregation or not. It is their profession of faith that essentially makes them members and not their association with an institution calling itself a church. I certainly am not advocating that people start a house church if there is a faithful church with which to unite in the area.

Rather, I am saying that when there is not a faithful church in the area, they must not settle for an unfaithful one. That is to do evil that good may come. It is better to let our counsel come from Reformed divines who have scripturally guided the Church of Christ in times when godly ministers were few and far between.

We have already seen how John Calvin's teaching directly opposes that of Mr. Bacon, and now we must listen to the faithful counsel of the ministers of the Church of Scotland. We are not ignorant that the rarity of godly and learned men shall seem to some a just reason why that so straight and sharp examination should not be taken universally. For so it shall appear that the most part of the church shall have no minister at all.

But let these men understand that the lack of able men shall not excuse us before God if, by our consent, unable men be placed over the flock of Christ Jesus. As also that, amongst the Gentiles godly learned men were also rare as they are now amongst us, when the Apostle gave the same rule to try and examine ministers which we now follow. And last, let them understand that it is alike to have no minister at all and to have an idol in the place of a true or faithful minister.

Yea, in some cases it is worse. For those that are utterly at destitute of ministers will be diligent to search for them, but those that have a vain shadow do commonly without further care content themselves with the same, and so they remain continually deceived, thinking that they have a minister when in very deed they have none. That's from the first book of discipline, page 37.

Worse yet, we find Mr. Bacon elevating the authority of corrupt judicatories above the right of an individual believer to maintain a clear conscience. While he acknowledges that a congregation may lawfully depart from a corrupt denomination, he denies the right of an individual or head of household to make such a determination. This is grossly heretical and violates the doctrinal principle of the Lordship of Christ alone over the believer's conscience.

In Mr. Bacon's ignoble attack upon Mr. Kevin Reed, he says, 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, compared Joshua 6.26 and 1 Kings 16.34. A Christian may request dismissal from a less reformed church to a more reformed church, but he lacks authority as a private member to declare the church to be in extraordinary times and thus run without being sent, Jeremiah 23.21. Those who remove themselves from from true churches under such a pretext prophesy without God speaking to them. And that's from the visible church in the outer darkness, page 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, quote, lacks the authority to make the same choice. What Presbyterian would teach that Mr. Reed lacked the authority to use his judgment of discretion to maintain a clear conscience in subjection to the Word of God? George Gillespie comments, quote, the subordinate judgment, which I call private, is the judgment of discretion whereby every Christian, for the certain information of his own mind and the satisfaction of his own conscience, may and ought to try and examine as well the decrees of councils as the doctrine of particular pastors, and insofar to receive and believe the same as he understands them to agree with the scriptures. And that's from Gillespie's dispute against the English Popish ceremonies, pages 364 and 365.

Interestingly enough, republished by Mr. Bacon's publisher, Naphtali Press. And again, a quote from Gillespie, the prelates did not allow men to examine by the judgment of Christians and private discretion their decrees and canons so as to search the scriptures and look at the warrants. But would needs have men think it enough to know the things to be commanded by them that are in places of power? Presbyterianial government doth not lord it over men's consciences, but admitteth, yea, commendeth the searching of the scriptures, whether these things that it holds holds forth be not so, and doth not press men's consciences with sic volo, sic jubeo, that is, as I will, so I order, but desireth that they may do in faith what they do.

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

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

Therefore the examination which they are bound to make is not made for the purpose of correcting the meaning of the true church, and of finding out a better, as if they were wiser, but to investigate and follow it. Nor is the right of examination founded in this, that we ought to believe ourselves wiser and more sagacious than entire synods and the whole true church, but rather in this, that since the privilege of infallibility has been granted by God to no church or pastor, nor are we certain whether they who compose ecclesiastical assemblies are members of the true church and faithful servants of God, who are partakers of the Holy Spirit and follow His guidance. Nay, it can happen, and it is too often happened, that such assemblies have erred in their decisions.

Hence no other means is left for the believer to know the legitimate authority of these assemblies and the decisions made by them with the certainty of faith than a comparison and examination of them with the Word of God, which He not only permits as possible and lawful, but commands as just and necessary. That cannot, therefore, be considered rashness or pride which belongs to the execution of an indispensable office imposed upon all believers. Nor under the pretext of avoiding pride ought believers to blind themselves and to divest themselves of their right in order that their consciences by a blind

obedience may be reduced to bondage.

And that's from Francis Turretin's Institutes of Elenctic Theology, page 84. Notice the language of Turretin. We are to believe that individual believers, quote, can better find out the meaning of Scripture in things necessary to salvation than whole synods receding from the Word of God, and then a society which claims for itself but falsely the name of the true church.

Hence no other means is left for the believer to know the legitimate authority of these assemblies and the decisions made by them with the certainty of faith than a comparison and examination of them with the Word of God, close quote. It must not be considered, quote, rashness or pride which belongs to the execution of an indispensable office. Undeniably, Turretin is arguing that Protestants must appeal to a conscience that is submitted to the Scripture and enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

The last and highest court of the church is ultimately based upon the Spirit of God speaking through the Word of God and not the opinions of corrupt assemblies. Truth is ultimate and that should never be forgotten. Again, Turretin comments, quote, the obedience which he, that is Christ, wishes to be rendered to teachers must always be understood with the condition in as far as the teachers do not prescribe to us another thing than what Christ gave to us in his commands, which they do not do who arrogate to themselves the right of making new laws.

That's from the Institutes of Lencitic Theology, volume 3, page 288. 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, 17. 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, Hebrews 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, that is, as far as it promotes the glory of God and our safety and as far as it can consist with the fidelity and obedience due to Christ.

Again, that's Turretin's Institutes of Lencitic Theology, volume 3, page 244. From Hebrews 13, 17, nothing else can be gathered than that obedience is due to teachers as long as they hear Christ themselves and speak the words of God. Otherwise, if they lead us away from Christ, they ought to be anathema to us.

Again, Turretin from the Institutes, volume 3, page 289. 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. That's the Westminster Confession of Faith, chapter 1, section 10.

Writing against the Protestant doctrine of private judgment, Mr. Bacon states, quote, 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. That's from the Visible Church in the Outer Darkness, page 15. Francis Turretin counters Mr. Bacon's popish notions, quote, 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.

That's from the Institutes, volume 3, page 287. George Gillespie also responds, quote, how be it even in such cases when the consent of the church cannot be had to the execution of this discipline, that is excommunication, faithful pastors and professors, that is, professing Christians, must everyone for his own part take heed that he have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but even reprove them. Yea, they ought, in sensu negativo, that is, in a negative sense, excommunicate those who should be, but are not excommunicated positively, which negative excommunication is not an ecclesiastical censure, but either a bare punishment or a caution, and an adversion, that is, warning.

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

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

Alas, is this not the teaching of Rome? Individuals do not have the duty nor the right to use the judgment of discretion? What did 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 Corinthians 10.8, that does not alter the fact that the people of God must use their private judgment of discretion to scripturally determine whether or not those officers are faithful or qualified. While private individuals have no ordinary power to authoritatively judge or determine matters of faith on behalf of the church, they are duty-bound to examine whether the determinations and decisions of church courts are agreeable with Scripture. Even the apostles themselves came under such scrutiny.

And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea, who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so, Acts 17, 10 and 11. For Mr. Bacon to assert that, quote, it is neither the duty nor the right of private Christians to make determinations of who is ignorant or scandalous, is to leave that duty to the ministry alone.

If the private Christian does not have the right to make such a determination, what is to be done when the greater part of the ministry is corrupt, or when their determinations do not agree with the Word of God? Are private Christians to ignore the truth because, according to Mr. Bacon, they don't have the right to judge who is ignorant or scandalous? Mr. Bacon's teaching leads directly to the conclusion that the authority of the ministry is above the authority of the truth. Such a view is a popish heresy, and a denial that God alone is the Lord of the conscience. Mr. Bacon says, quote, independence invariably elevate the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer to a sort of papacy of the believer.

That's the Visible Church in the Outer Darkness, page 15. As seems to be his usual practice, Mr. Bacon accuses people of papacy and independency right before he presents his most serious errors. As we have seen, Turretin proves that examination of churches and synods by private individuals is an indispensable right afforded to Christians by God.

This right is designed to protect a believer from blindly and implicitly following the dictates of a corrupt majority. Mr. Bacon, in denying this fundamental right to Mr. Reid, is directly promoting the doctrine of implicit faith, which ironically he alleges against the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton. Noble martyr of God James Renick explains, quote, if this, the right of private judgment, belongs not to the people, they have nothing but blind implicit faith, and what better are they than papists, who must believe as the church believes? Yea, hath not every Christian a judgment of discretion, even in reference to actions of others, seeing there to do nothing doubting but to be fully persuaded in their own minds, Romans 14.23? But some I know say that withdrawing from a scandalous person is a censuring of a scandalous person, and to withdraw from a scandalous minister is to depose him and make him no minister.

But this I deny, for simple withdrawing is not the inflicting of a censure, but only the believers testifying their sense that a censure should be inflicted to wit by such as are competent, and this is warranted by Scripture, Romans 16.17, Ephesians 11.2, that's a mistaken reference, 2 Thessalonians 3.14, and many such like places. Also, Rutherford saith in his peaceable plea, chapter 4, page 25, quote, that the law of nature will warrant a popular and private subtraction and separation from the ministry of a known wolf and seducer, close quote, and alloweth what Parker saith from Seravia, it is lawful to use that blameless and just defense if the bad church guide cannot be deposed. Any private person may take that care for the safety of their souls that they may do for the safety of their bodies, for a son may defend himself by flying from his distracted father coming to kill him, and none will call this an act judicial of authority, but only an act natural.

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

Howbeit I distinguish betwixt a person scandalous really and a person scandalous judicially, and between a church in a settled state and a church in a broken state. So I say when a church is in a settled state, a person really scandalous cannot be withdrawn from until at least he be judicially by two or three witnesses convicted before the church. Rutherford's peaceable plea, chapter 9, page 171, seeing that the brethren offended have church judicatories to appeal unto for taking order with offenders, but when the church is in a broken state, and every man has the children of Israel when they wanted governors, doing that which is right in his own eyes, there may and should be withdrawing from a person scandalous really, though he be not scandalous judicially, because then ecclesiastic judicatories for censuring of him cannot be had.

Otherwise all must go into a mixed confusion together, the faithful must become partakers of other men's sins, private and popular means of reclaiming offending brethren shall be stopped, and the testimonies of the faithful shall fall to the ground. That's from the Life and Letters of James Rennick, The Last Scottish Martyr, page 139. Mr. Bacon's smokescreen is designed to protect covenant breakers whose chief qualification for ministry is perjury, and he has the audacity to accuse us of requiring implicit faith? Unbelievable.

According to Mr. Bacon, we as individual believers must not take our Bibles and prayerfully determine where we can worship with a clear conscience. Instead we are told to accept the fact that churches, such as the Presbyterian Church in America, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Reformed Presbyterian Church of

North America, the pretended Covenanters, and the Reformation Presbyterian Church, that's Mr. Bacon's church, where error in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government is established by ecclesiastical law, cannot be privately judged as unfit to join. We are told to keep our families in these institutions for years while we fight for reform with church courts who have already made up their mind and historically ruled contrary to Scripture.

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

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

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

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

Cease my son to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge. Proverbs 19 27. If these ministers of compromise can convince you to stay within the apostasy and fight for reform long after the issue has been decided, if you can be convinced that individuals don't have the right to judge false doctrine and superstitious practice, if they can train you to believe that separation from corrupt churches is wrong even in the broken state of the church, then you will never leave their church and you will become like them.

You will supply their error with the fuel it needs to burn up your posterity. Dear reader, do not be deceived. Their false teaching will become the substance of the thoughts which fill your children's minds and the sound of your grandchildren's voices.

He who teaches that individuals may not judge whether the church is in extraordinarily backslidden times is a man who is to be avoided and withdrawn from. Do not be fooled by Mr. Bacon or his quotes from George Gillespie and James Durham. He has taken their teaching entirely out of context, that is, the context being the settled state of a faithful church, and erroneously applied them to our contemporary context, which is the broken state of a corrupt church.

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their

own belly, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. Romans 16 verses 17 and 18.

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

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

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

And that's from George Gillespie's Aaron's Rod Blossoming, page 224. If, as Gillespie says, an individual minister may defy an eldership, classus, or synod when he is certain that their ruling is contrary to the word of God, then Mr. Bacon is clearly at odds with Gillespie's principles. Mr. Bacon maintains that such doctrine is the basis for a separatist policy that, quote, elevates the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer to a sort of papacy of the believer, close quote.

Does Mr. Bacon also call Mr. Gillespie a separatist? It appears so. The next time Mr. Bacon wishes to pretend that he believes the same thing as George Gillespie, perhaps he will remember to read his books first. Next, grossly abusing the argument of Kevin Reed, and this is from Reed's book Presbyterian Government in Extraordinary Times, and True Presbyterian Principle, Mr. Bacon writes that using the right of private judgment to determine who is ignorant and scandalous is, in effect, to usurp the office of the eldership.

Quote, but it is neither the duty nor the right of private Christians to make determinations of who is ignorant or scandalous. Christ has left this authority in his church, in the hands of the church officers. The Visible Church in the Outer Darkness, page 11.

John Brown of WAMFRE directly contradicts Mr. Bacon. Quote, it is true private Christians may not set themselves up into the chair and judge of the endowments and qualifications of ministers, and what nulleth their office and what not. Yet every private Christian hath the use of the judgment of discretion, and that way may judge whether such an one appears qualified according to the rule of the word or not.

And that's from Brown of WAMFRE's Apologetical Relation of the Particular Sufferings of the Faithful and Professors of the Church of Scotland, page 146. Robert McWard adds, quote, what way can the practice of private persons towards others in abstaining from some acts of church communion, hic and nunc, with them, because of scruple founded upon true Presbyterian principles, be said to be on the matter a drawing forth of one of the highest censures? For what hath a Christian's private censuring by judgment of discretion the practice of another, and carrying according to that other, to do with taking the government off of its hinges? That's from McWard's Earnest Contendings for the Faith, page 121. The sad irony of Mr. Bacon's position.

Mr. Bacon says, quote, it must be admitted, however, that there will be times when either sufficient evidence cannot be brought to convince a church court, or even times when the church court is itself corrupt. It is in times and circumstances such as those that a conscientious Christian is the most likely to become impatient and run to separation as the only alternative. It is also at such times that he is most susceptible to the arguments of separatists.

Yet it is at precisely such times that the conscientious Christian must be most diligent in the use of the God-ordained means of grace. It has often been the case that those Christians who are most insistent that discipline is a mark of a true church have been the least willing to make the effort of using it. The Visible Church in the Outer Darkness, page 26.

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

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

Is this what he means by gathering out as many as they can? Didn't he just say that was a mark of separatists? Is he not judging others by the same principles he has conspicuously violated? George Gillespie comments, quote, 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. As from Aaron's Rod Blossoming, page 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 in the Outer Darkness, and his subsequent practice are so obviously self-contradictory that I marvel he has not publicly retracted this book and repented to Mr. Reed for his own short-sightedness and sinful misrepresentation.

Not only is this book full of self-justifying heresy, but, as I said, the writer has refuted himself by his own actions. How can Mr. Bacon defend his separation practice and defend his book, *The Visible Church in the Outer Darkness*, at the same time? Truly this defies logic. His congregation should demand an answer to this unanswerable dilemma.

When Mr. Bacon fails to adequately defend the indefensible, he should be required to repent or resign. Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I, yea, thine own lips testify against thee. Job 15, verse 6. They, therefore, who give their will for a law, and their authority for a reason, and answer all the arguments of their opponents by bearing down with the force of public constitution and the judgment of superiors, to which theirs must be conformed, do rule the Lord's flock with force and with cruelty, Ezekiel 34.4, as lords over God's heritage, 1 Peter 5.3. Always, since men give us no leave to try their decrees and constitutions, that we may hold fast to no more than is good, God be thanked that we have a warrant to do it without their leave from His own word, 1 Thessalonians 5.21. Non numeranda suffragis sed aparendenda.

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 Parius. If we rightly feel we are deprived of the faculty of questioning, it must be indicated by that same Spirit who speaks through His prophets, says Calvin. We will not then call any man rabbi, nor gerari in verba magistri, to echo the sentiments of a teacher, nor yet to be Pythagorean disciples to the church herself, but we will believe her and obey her insofar only as she is the pillar and ground of the truth.

George Gillespie, *A Dispute Against the English Popish Ceremonies*, pages 29 and 30. As mentioned at the beginning of the tape, I'll now be reading my foreword to the *Covenanted Reformation* defended against contemporary schismatics. It has often been the case that the best writing and the most precise and orthodox theology have arisen from controversy.

Examples are numerous. Paul's epistles to the Galatians, Colossians, Thessalonians, Hebrews, and the young pastor Timothy, the epistles of Peter, John, Jude, and James, faithful Athanasius standing against the Arian majority, Luther's immortal refutation of Erasmus in *The Bondage of the Will*, Calvin's *Institutes*, John Knox's *Appellation to the Nobility of Scotland*, the productions of the Westminster Assembly, Samuel Rutherford, George Gillespie, Thomas Edwards, Daniel Cawdry, and the Presbyterian London ministers at the time of the Westminster Assembly concerning church government, John Brown of Wemphrey, Robert McWard, and others regarding the protester-resolutioner controversy and its fruits, see especially an outstanding book entitled *The Protesters Vindicated*, Alexander Shields' classic *Hein Let Loose*, James Rennick's *Informatory Vindication*, Andrew Clarkson's *Plain Reasons for Presbyterians Dissenting from the Revolution Church in Scotland*, the *Reformed Presbyteries Act Declaration and Testimony for the Whole of Our Covenanted Reformation*, and indeed the list could easily fill this forward. The reader is strongly encouraged to consult the ever-growing publication list of Stillwater's revival books for these and other outstanding works.

Neither should we expect things to be different today. Our beloved Apostle has forewarned us, there must be also heresies among you that they which are approved may be made manifest among you, 1 Corinthians 11 19. Thus, although we are not to be contentious, contention for the sake of truth cannot and must not be avoided.

Paul says, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention, 1 Thessalonians 2 2, and in Jude we are exhorted that we should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints, Jude 3. The book you now hold, penned by ruling elder and ministerial student Greg Barrow, is a modern example of such faithful contending and orthodox doctrinal precision. Since Barrow's work was born of controversy, it is necessary to give an historical overview of this conflict that the reader may read most profitably and intelligibly. Richard Bacon published A Defense Departed, his alleged refutation of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton's, PRCE, a brief defense of dissociation in the present circumstances, in early August of last year, 1997, on the web page of the First Presbyterian Church of Rowlett, Texas.

However, we do not begin here in our historical survey. Neither would do we proceed from the point of an earlier and similar slander from the pen of Brian Schwertle, minister in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, RPCNA. Schwertle's open letter to Reformed pastors, elders, and all brethren in Christ was circulated via the Internet in April of last year, that would be 1997.

The scandalous lies of these modern malignants who pervert the righteous ways of the Covenanted Reformation are certainly germane. Indeed, Barrow's book is directed primarily at Richard Bacon. Nevertheless, to understand truly the nature and importance of our current conflict, and therefore the paramount importance of Barrow's book, we must first turn our gaze backward three and a half centuries.

Some 350 years ago, our faithful Reformed forefathers in Scotland took hold of the Covenant of Grace in their National Covenant, by this means fulfilling their duty and privilege as Christ's witnessing church in the British Isles. Thus was born the second or Covenanted Reformation of Religion in those Isles, sustained and greatly furthered by the swearing of the Solemn Ligon Covenant five years later. The latter Covenanted Uniformity of Religion undergirded the work of the famous Westminster Assembly, and bound the Covenanting churches and nations to the adoption and implementation of that Assembly's work, that is, the Confession of Faith, the larger and shorter catechisms, directory for public worship, and form of church government.

Sadly, of these churches and nations, Scotland was most faithful to pay her vows, and only for a brief time. In 1650, a deadly church-dividing blow was dealt by the majority of backsliding civil and ecclesiastical leaders in their support of the Public Resolutions, as they were called. England and Ireland had already broken their sacred bond.

The next four decades were times of bitter and often unrelenting trial for the faithful protesting remnant, which included such men as Samuel Rutherford, Archibald Johnston of Worreston, James Guthrie, Patrick Gillespie, John Brown of Wemfre, Robert McWard, William Guthrie, Donald Cargill, Richard Cameron, and James Rennick, who themselves, by God's grace, were unrelenting in their testimony against the Covenant-breaking Resolutioners and the defections in church and state. Though the merciless persecution by the civil and ecclesiastical tyrants ended with the Reformation denying Revolution settlement of 1688, the blessed but short-lived Covenanted Reformation has been, and continues to be, opposed by many, ignored by or unknown to others, and embraced and loved by only a faithful few who,

like their fathers, and unlike the RPCNA today, truly wear the name Covenanter. There have been many in the last three centuries who have gloriously praised the work of the Westminster Assembly, yet there has been at best only an incomplete adherence to the Assembly's doctrine and practice.

Many factors have contributed to this, of which the foremost must certainly be our wretched failure to receive the love of the truth. Consequently, our righteous God has given the people and nations professing His name over to a profound blindness in keeping with His fearful threatenings in Scripture, 2 Thessalonians 2, 10-12, Romans 1, 28, and so forth. This judicial blindness has led to an increased preaching, publishing, and practicing of numerous errors condemned by our forefathers as popish on the one hand and schismatic and independent on the other in so-called Protestant, Reformed, and Presbyterian churches.

Richard Bacon exemplifies this dreadful dynamic in our day. As we see then, our quarrel goes back over 300 years, and really back to the dawn of the human race. Our contending is for nothing less than the crown rights, the comprehensive crown rights, of the blessed promised seed, the Lord Jesus Christ, which are denied, trampled, and usurped on all sides.

The serpent and his seed throughout the millennia have unceasingly sought and fought to strip the Lamb of God of His due honor and glory in church and state. The Lamb and His followers have continually met them in battle, being made strong through His Spirit and Word, and through His might casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, 2 Corinthians 10.5. By such faithful contendings God has graciously granted two major reformations in days past. We stand desperately in need of a third.

There is great cause for rejoicing in Zion, however, for an increasing number of God's people are beginning to be awakened and to return to the blessed biblical attainments of the covenanted reformation. We are hopeful that the prayers of the faithful covenanters of old are being answered, that the rediscovery of their precious principles and practices are nothing less than a prologue to the third reformation and the worldwide overthrow of Antichrist. Lamentably, the defection and backsliding we've inherited place us at a great disadvantage.

We know we must return to the old paths, Jeremiah 6.16, and we earnestly desire to walk in the footsteps of the flock, Song of Solomon 1.8. Yet a substantial gap separates us in our current condition from our forefathers. Christ's beloved church today is ignorant of many fundamentals of Protestantism, unable to derive the benefit we ought from faithful teachers of old. To make matters worse, men like Richard Bacon and Brian Schwertle are further confusing Christ's already confused and scattered sheep with their shoddy scholarship and lying publications.

A bridge traversing this chasm of ignorance and confusion and an antidote to the popish and independent heresies of blind guides is desperately needed, that we may sit at the feet of our faithful reformed forebears and fully partake of the scripture truths which will make us free and effective in our service to the Lord, to each other, and to our countries. In light of this need and believing that the old Covenanter truths are indeed a testimony against modern backsliders and hopefully the prologue to a glorious Third Reformation, I earnestly commend to you the following volume. Barrow has faithfully and skillfully produced the clearest and best Covenanter primer that has yet appeared in the recent resurgence of the full-orb teachings of the Protestant Reformation.

In the Covenanted Reformation defended against contemporary schismatics, Barrow accomplishes at least three important tasks. As the full title indicates, Richard Bacon has manufactured a controversy involving faithful Covenanters whom he disparagingly designates Stelites. The first objective then is to vanquish without hope of resurrection the slanderous caricature Bacon has made of the Covenanter position and the PRCE and other modern Covenanters.

In the second installment of Bacon Bits, the preliminary response to Bacon's essay, I anticipated that Barrow's refutation of Bacon would be nothing less than an annihilation. My expectations were completely justified. If Bacon has any integrity and humility, he will with profound shame beg the PRCE, the Church at large, and most importantly the living God to forgive him for ever emitting his literary refuse.

Second, in keeping with the Ninth Commandment, Barrow vindicates the good names of modern and historical brethren. Bacon has, in *Defense Departed* and elsewhere, blackened the names and doctrines of quite a number of godly men and even General Assemblies. See, for example, number three 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 resting place. My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Let them alone, they be blind leaders of the blind, and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

Jesus answered and said unto Nicodemus, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? Jeremiah 50 verse 6, Hosea 4.6, Matthew 15.14, and John 3.10. That 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 fullness of Christ, that we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine. Romans 5.20 and Ephesians 4.11-14. The format of this book has been necessitated by the essay it refutes.

Bacon has uttered numerous falsehoods and smears in his scurrilous attack, and in the body of his work, 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 Contendings for Private Judgment*, concerning church leaders and their teaching and governing, are vindicated.

After briefly and graciously stating the disposition of the PRCE toward Bacon, and their desire for his reclamation, Defense Departed's two opening sentences are first dealt with. These state, I believe it is fairly certain, even as we prepare to place these words in history before the view of the world, that many will regard this dispute to be little else than a tempest in a teapot. In large measure I find I must agree.

Thus the man frequently contributing to the newsletter presumptuously named after the Covenanter emblem, the blue banner, at once falsifies it and despises the faithful labors and shed blood of our covenanted ancestors. Among others, Barrow incisively quotes J.C. McPheeter's in reply. The blood of the martyrs imposes obligations upon posterity from generation to generation.

The martyrs deeply felt their responsibility for the church, her purity, doctrines, discipline, membership, for her loyalty to Christ, her separation from the world, and her administration in the Holy Spirit. Their zeal for the house of God brought them to the front. Their passionate love for Jesus Christ placed them on the firing line.

There they met every attack made upon Christ in His house. There they stood for the royal rights of Jesus and the honor of His kingdom. There they fell under the murderous fire giving place to their successors.

These soldiers of Jesus knew how to die, but not how to retreat. They did their work well, yet necessarily left it unfinished. The victory was assured, though not in sight.

The death-stricken hands reached the blood-stained banner out to another to be carried forward. This war still rages. The supremacy of Jesus Christ is yet disputed.

His royal rights are yet usurped by mortals. His bride, the church, still halts amid many opinions. The ordinances of grace are unblushingly corrupted.

The teachings of the gospel are adroitly doctored. The attacking forces are active, determined, and numerous, as in the days of the martyrs. The tactics differ, but the fight goes on.

Heavy, heavy are the moral obligations that fall to the successors of those who gave their lives for the truth. To recede would be cowardice, desertion from the ranks, perjury within the covenant, treason against Jesus Christ. Is this too strong? Listen.

If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. Surely the times call for Christian soldiers, yea, heroes, possibly martyrs. Do covenanters feel their obligation to the Lord? That's from Sketches of the Covenanters, pages 401 to 403.

The second misrepresentation of which Barrow skillfully disposes is Bacon's allegation that the PRCE claims they are the only duly constituted church on the face of the earth. Bacon exhorts, the error into which you have fallen is serious, and until you come out of the little group which claims that they alone, of all the inhabitants of the earth, have a true constitutional church, you will continue attached to the dead body of human tradition. This emotive smokescreen is dispelled quickly and readily, first by noting that Bacon has therein made such an unqualified charge as to be useful only in misleading the ignorant or unwary reader.

Barrow thus asks, what does he mean by true constitutional court or true constitutional church? Does he mean constitutionally true as to the being of the church, or constitutionally true as to the well-being of the church? Shouldn't he define what he means before publicly making such a serious accusation? Instead,

he begins and ends his defense departed without ever qualifying these terms. He leaves it to the imagination and emotion of the reader to wonder whether the PRCE thinks they are the only Christian church on earth. Barrow leaves nothing to the imagination of the reader, though, as he proceeds to lay forth in unmistakably clear terms the classic reformed distinction between the being and the well-being of the visible church.

This chapter alone is worth 100 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 that is the profession of the true religion. See the Westminster Confession of Faith 25 section 2 and Larger Catechism question 62.

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

In his skillful and easy-to-follow discussion, he treats the reader to a delightful feast of citations from Samuel Rutherford, the Scottish Confession of Faith, the Westminster Confession of Faith, Francis Turretin, John Calvin, the Presbyterian London ministers at the time of the Westminster Assembly, John Anderson, James Bannerman, James Rennick, Thomas McCree, and the Reformed Presbytery, all clearly supporting the classical Protestant position of the PRCE and all revealing the embarrassingly impoverished and confused state of Bacon's scholarship on this fundamental point of Protestantism. The third misrepresentation Barrow takes up is Bacon's malicious and misleading charge that, quote, essentially the difference between the Reformation Presbyterian Church, that's Bacon's 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 legion covenant, and the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton claims that a church is not a properly, truly, biblically constituted church if it is not formally adopted the solemn legion covenant, again from 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 legion 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 covenantal 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 covenant were intended not to define the visible church as to her being, but to promote, preserve, and protect her as to her well-being.

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

A more informed opponent would understand that the question truly revolves around whether or not it'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. Finally, Barrow tackles what has become perhaps the most oft-repeated falsehood against the PRCE and covenanters in general, that we tyrannically impose the traditions of men upon the consciences of Christ's sheep by requiring unscriptural terms of communion. In an amazing display of moral baseness too foul and too obvious to be dismissed as simply scholastic incompetence, Bacon constructs the grossest caricature of our terms of communion.

He says, "...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." From 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 Church's popish notions and triple standards for communion, the danger of modern latitudinarian schemes of church union, a description of how one becomes a member of the PRCE, how subscribing confessions, catechisms, directories for worship and church government, covenants, and uninspired historical testimony are all required by Scripture as terms of communion, and more. Particularly instructive and devastating for those

modern churches like the OPC, PCA, and RPCNA claiming to uphold the Westminster Confession of Faith, is the discussion of the teaching of the Westminster standards and various Reformed divines concerning church membership and communion privileges.

Especially careful attention should be given to this section. Immediately before his brief but powerful conclusion, Barrow wipes out perhaps Bacon's most ridiculous claim that by our sixth term of communion, which is practically adorning the doctrine of God our Savior by walking in all his commandments and ordinances blamelessly, we have hereby become guilty of teaching works righteousness. Whatever crumbs of credibility Bacon had after all that preceded, they are here forever swept away.

The appendices of this work largely cover matters related to the dissociation of the PRCE from the pretended Reformation Presbyterian Church presbytery. Whereas Bacon alleges vociferously that vows were broken in dissociating, Barrow proves first that no vows were ever taken, and second, that if they had been taken, a vow to something sinful, that is, unlawful associations with covenant-breaking denominations, is no lawfully binding vow but must be repented of. This is further corroborated by letters from former Reformation Presbyterian Church ministers Bruce Robinson and Jerry Crick, who both denied that any vows constituting a presbytery were sworn.

Both men also considered their involvement in this group to be sinful independency, penning words of heartfelt sorrow over such Christ-dishonoring activity as they too separated from their unlawful association, leaving only the section of Bacon's church maintaining that vows constituting a presbytery were 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 not an effectual means of grace to them. Finally, as noted in the seventh appendix, Bacon's popish heresy, which denies to individual believers the right of private scriptural judgment of the doctrines, officers, ordinances, government and discipline of the church, is succinctly destroyed.

The net result of Greg Barrow's obliteration of Richard Bacon's strident slander is the clear exposition of the classical Protestant doctrines and practices of the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton and modern and historical covenanters. Dear reader, you hold in your hands a treasure of inestimable value. In the love of Christ, I earnestly plead with you to read it.

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

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

And this covenant we make in the presence of Almighty God, the searcher of all hearts, most humbly beseeching the Lord to strengthen us by His Holy Spirit for this end, and to bless our desires and proceedings with such success as may be deliverance and safety to His people, and encouragement to other Christian churches, groaning under or in danger of the yoke of anti-Christian tyranny, to join in the same or like association and covenant to the glory of God, the enlargement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and the peace and tranquility of Christian kingdoms and commonwealths. That's from the solemn legion covenant, the 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 thitherwards, 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. Jeremiah 6.16 and 50 verses 4 and 5, Isaiah 44.5, Zechariah 2.11. Thank you for listening to Eschewing Ecclesiastical Tyranny, the Duty of Christ's Sheep, being appendix G of Greg Barrow's book, The Covenanted Reformation Defended Against Contemporary Schismatics.

Again, please note that the entire book is free on Stillwaters Revival Books website, www.swrv.com, and it's also available in hardcover from Stillwaters, along with a treasure trove of the finest Protestant and Reform literature available anywhere in the world today. Stillwaters can be reached at area code 780-450-3730 or by email at swrb@swrb.com. This tape is not copyrighted and we therefore encourage you to copy and distribute it to any and all you believe would be benefited.

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