

Debate: How the Solemn League & Covenant Binds the Usa, Canada, Australia, etc., Today (1/3)

by Greg Barrow

The Protestant remedy for disunity is covenanted uniformity, which seeks true unity based on Biblical doctrine, worship, and church government and discipline.

Duration: 1:25:44

Scripture: Exodus 20:7, Jeremiah 6:16, Ephesians 2:20

Topics: "Covenant Theology", "Church History"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses Mr. Bacon's accusations regarding the binding nature of the solemn covenant. The speaker follows a structured format to establish the original intent of both the national and solemn covenants as everlasting commitments. The purpose of these covenants is to glorify God and preserve the true church. The speaker also discusses the parties involved in these covenants, including Canada and the United States.

Transcript

Covenanted Uniformity, the Protestant Remedy for Disunity, being Chapter 3 of Greg Barrow's book, The Covenanted Reformation Defended Against Contemporary Schismatics. Hello, I'm Larry Berger. You're about to hear the most clear exposition of the Biblical Protestant doctrine of the ordinance of covenanting that I believe can be found anywhere today.

Regrettably, time and circumstantial restrictions have prevented me from giving a prefatory overview of this subject and its vital importance. However, as the title of these tapes indicates, the covenanted uniformity practiced by various reformers and faithful Protestants was truly the Protestant remedy for disunity. They sought for and vowed themselves to true unity, that is, unity that comes, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1.10, from being of the same mind and in the same judgment concerning Biblical doctrine, worship, and church government and discipline, in contrast to the false unity promoted today, which is but unity in name and utterly destructive of truth and godliness.

As you listen, please consider whether what you're currently being taught and what so-called Protestant churches today are practicing is actually the Biblical Protestantism of the Reformation. If not, why not, and

what then are we to do? As an introductory answer to these questions, I've decided to include here my narrator's preface for *Eschewing Ecclesiastical Tyranny, the Duty of Christ's Sheep*, which is Appendix G of the *Covenanted Reformation Defended*. Although this preface does not address the ordinance of covenanting directly, I believe it is nevertheless very relevant, and I trust it will prove a helpful forerunner to Barrow's treatment on covenanting, one that provokes us to love and good works and a greater appreciation of our Savior's mercy.

May God richly bless you as you hear expounded the Biblical old paths wherein is rest for our souls, Jeremiah 6.16. 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 at 780-450-3730 or by email at swrb@swrb.com. 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 Protestant 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 Independence.

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, 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 20.2, 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 13.10. 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 in 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 are forced to limit ourselves to just a few. In Deuteronomy 13 we are 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 causeth 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.

Covenanted uniformity, the Protestant remedy for disunity, being chapter 3 of Greg Barrow's book *The Covenanted Reformation Defended Against Contemporary Schismatics*. Misrepresentation number 3 The Puritan Reformed Church that is PRCE 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 the solemn league and covenant is necessary to exist as a truly constituted church.

Quote, 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. That's from *Defense Departed*. Again, 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.

Again, from *Defense Departed*. Second, Mr. Bacon argues that the solemn league and covenant is used by the Stealites in principally the same way as Rome uses its doctrine of tradition. Quote, 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 contents of the traditions differ between the Roman Catholic Church and the Stealites, 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.

From 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. Quote, 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. That's from 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 as to 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 is 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 shirlish 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, essa, or being.

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 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 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 legion covenant to be a truly constituted church as to well-being, that is, 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, Chapter 25, Section 3. Quote, 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 Schwartley's slanderous open letter, April 1997, and especially since Mr. Bacon's defense departed appeared on the FPCR website, August 1997, young and inexperienced, and some who should have known better, believers have come to the sad conclusion that the 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 caliber 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, 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, quote, The sole Church of Christ is that which our Savior, after his resurrection, entrusted to Peter's pastoral care, commissioning him and the other apostles to extend and rule it.

The Church constituted and organized 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. That's from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, page 234. The 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 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 who should be fully incorporated, who belong in any way to the people of God. 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 contents of the traditions differ between the Roman Catholic Church and the Stealites, 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, from 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 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 honored with equal sentiments of devotion and reverence.

Catechism of the Catholic Church, page 31. Does the Puritan Reformed Church of Edmonton equate the covenants with Scripture as Mr. Bacon misrepresents? The PRCE's first term of communion requires, quote, an acknowledgment 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, quote, that public social covenanting is an ordinance of God obligatory on churches and nations under the New Testament, that the National Covenant and the Psalm-Ligon Covenant 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 Arkansas, 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 tradition and scripture 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 must now refer to an e-mail discussion held between Pastor PRCE and Mr. Bacon on December 18, 1996.

In this correspondence, Mr. Bacon objects to Pastor PRCE's position by writing, You have made the solemn legion 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 asked the reader to observe how closely Mr. Bacon's objection matches that of the Arminians. Mr. Bacon states, You have made the solemn legion covenant the rule of faith and practice, or at least a rule of faith and practice. Samuel Rutherford replies, Arminians argue a confession or covenant 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, and a rule insofar 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.

And that's from Rutherford's Free Disputation Against Pretended Liberty of Conscience, page 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 Israel in the fifteenth year of Asa, where whosoever would 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 felt 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.

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 insofar as it agrees with the word of God? Would they allow someone who obstinately and willfully teaches against it to come to the Lord's table? Why, then, does he object to the covenants being used as a subordinate standard in the same way? On December 18, 1996, Mr. Bacon writes, through e-mail, to Pastor Price regarding the necessity of covenants. Quote, Necessity implies some rule other than Scripture which binds the conscience.

If you wish to take the solemn legion covenant, which I assume you have done, no bother to me. However, the term necessity implies precisely the position that you all have now taken, which I believe to be directly contrary to the doctrine of sola scriptura. Close quote.

No, Mr. Bacon, necessity doesn't imply some other rule than Scripture which binds the conscience. Fallible human constitutions, such as confessions, covenants, and the 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. That's the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 1, Section 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 refuse 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. 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, verses 4 and 5. 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, verse 2. 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, Ephesians 2, verses 20-22, 2 Timothy 3.16, Luke 24, verse 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. 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.

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 subordinate non-pugnant.

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. Furthermore, Gillespie notes that those who argue like Mr. Bacon place themselves in very bad company. This is 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, etc., in matters of religion, under the color of taking the Scripture only for a rule.

Well we see the charge declined as nothing. There is no reasonable explanation for Mr. Bacon's objection other than the fact that he has not adequately understood these fundamental truths. I am 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, quote, an acknowledgment of the Old and New Testament to be the word of God and the alone infallible rule of faith and practice, close quote. 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 is 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 BRCE believes it is necessary to take the 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, quote, 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. 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, that is, 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. 2. That by this new subscription, which Charles I was proposing, our late covenant of 1638 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 nevermore be remembered, the one shall be cried up and the other drowned in the noise thereof. 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*, 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. And that's from *The Absurdity and Perfidy of All Authoritative Toleration*, page 161. 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.

That's from the Acts of General Assembly, page 205. This establishes beyond any shadow of doubt that those who originally swore the covenant 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 as to well-being, 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 the Church of Scotland, when in reality our position towards 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 PRCE, Are you seriously suggesting that not aligning ourselves with a seventeenth-century document is sinful? That seems to be what I have 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 is also defiled under the inhabitants thereof, because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant, 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. 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 honorable appellations bestowed upon them by the Spirit of God.

That's from Archibald Mason's Observations on the Public Covenants between God and the Church, page 45. 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. 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 societies 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 obligations, 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 a 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. And that's from David Scott's *Distinctive Principles of the Reformed Presbyterian Church*, pages 61 to 63. 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 organized 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. That's Thomas Houston's A Memorial of Covenanting, page 35.

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 Ligon 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 seventeenth-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 that it is 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 scar would have to be wrong for you to be right. Join with 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 the 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, Jeremiah 15, 19. We cannot join you in the deep pit of covenant breaking, but rather you must come and 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 father's 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 anymore. 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 you why you did not climb out of the pit. Why did you not listen to the truth? Why are you 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 anti-Christian and never practiced 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 covenants 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 as not only national, but also personal, every one 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 hath hitherto been abhorred as anti-Christian, and never practised and avowed by any but 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.

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 pursue with you. And if ye will not yet for all this hearken unto me, then I will punish you seven more times 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 highways shall be desolate. And if ye will not be reformed 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 unto the hand of the enemy. Leviticus 26 verses 15-25. Now I will endeavor to prove that the covenants are intended for the well-being of the church, and not for the being of the church.

This I will do by demonstrating that the covenanters clearly purpose 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 legal covenant are intended to maintain and preserve the truly constituted church, well-being, and are not intended to create a truly constituted church, being. b. 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, 2. 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.

2. Later in the same document there is again a direct statement of purpose, 3. In obedience to the command of God, conformed to the practice of the godly in former times, sounds like attainments, and according to the laudable example of our worthy and religious progenitors, sounds like more attainments, and of many yet living amongst us, which was warranted also by act of council, commanding a general ban to be made and to subscribe by His Majesty's subjects of all ranks, for two causes. One was for defending the true religion, as it was then reformed, and as 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 then 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. 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, that is, 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 Fourteen, states, 2. The Assembly, all with one voice, approve and embrace the same, that is, the Solemn League and Covenant, 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, that is, 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. These quotations establish the Covenanters' original intent and purpose in swearing the covenants.

To use their own words, let us enter into 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 those 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 e-mail 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, Georgia? It is not necessary to take the covenant of the three kingdoms. Mr. Bacon replied, I agree with a hundred percent of what you are saying in the doctrinal and theoretical level.

I also agree ninety-nine and forty-four one-hundredths of a percent of what you are saying in the practical level. Also, not only I, but you and Greg Barrow 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 he agrees with us a hundred percent on a doctrinal and theoretical level and ninety-nine and forty-four one-hundredths of a percent 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 in 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 solemn legion covenant, but I'd 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 the time.

It is true that this question did come up at our first meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, 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 RPC have repented of doing so, and until they do, we believe them to be guilty both of obstinate covenant breaking and willful 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 into 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 covenant's 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 in 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 in covenant, that is, in the national covenant, 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 Honorable Privy Council, to enjoin, by act of counsel, all the legis in time coming to subscribe the said confession of faith in covenant, which, as a testimony of our fidelity to God and loyalty to our King, we have subscribed, the national covenant.

And again, from the national covenant, we all and every one of us underwritten 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. And finally, 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 that what we do is so well warranted and ariseth from an unfeigned desire to maintain the true worship of God, the majesty of the King, and the peace of the kingdom, for the common happiness of ourselves and our posterity. 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, and 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 honor 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 in the year 1643, and thereafter by the said authority taken and subscribed by all ranks in Scotland and England in the same year, and ratified by act of the Parliament of Scotland in the year 1644, and again renewed in Scotland with an acknowledgment of sins and engagement to duties by all ranks in the year 1648, and by Parliament in 1649, and taken and subscribed by King Charles II at Spey, June 23, 1650, and at Schoon, January 1, 1651. And again, 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, and that again from the solemn league and covenant, finally, 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 endeavor 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 catechizing, 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. John Cunningham explains the nature of these covenants and their relation to the covenant of redemption and the covenant of grace as follows, quote, 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 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 three cases, the God of grace is one of the contracting parties. That's from Cunningham's *The Ordinance of Covenanting*, pages 8 and 9. This is the end of tape 1 of *Covenanted Uniformity*, the Protestant Remedy for Disunity, being chapter 3 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.

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