
Debate: Daniel Chew (puritanreformed) versus Frank Turk (centuri0n)

[This is the debate transcript with spelling errors corrected]

Thesis: **It is necessary for Christians to separate from false churches that do not proclaim the Gospel and the essentials of the Faith.**

Affirmative: Daniel Chew; Negative: Frank Turk

1st Statement by Daniel Chew (Affirmative)

The thesis statement for this debate is “It is necessary for Christians to separate from false churches that do not proclaim the Gospel and the essentials of the Faith.” In my first statement, I would like to give a brief overview of the issue under debate, and address specifics and objections in my second statement. I would therefore briefly define my understanding of the thesis and then attempt to support my view with a brief look at both church history as well as the text of Scripture itself.

The understanding of the thesis statement that I will be working with is this: It is a biblical imperative that Christians, those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, should stop going to false churches and not to associate with them. False churches are to be defined as those who “do not proclaim the Gospel and the essentials of the Faith.” As a confessional Reformed Christian, I am using that phrase as shorthand for the classic Reformed doctrine of the true church as those possessing the three marks of the true church: the pure preaching of the Word of God, the right administration of the sacrament and the proper exercise of church discipline (Belgic Confession Article 29). False churches therefore are those that do not have one or more of these marks. It must be noted here that I am not arguing for perfect possession and practice of these marks, but that true churches must have these marks in varying degrees.

With this, let us do a brief overview of church history.

Throughout the history of the church, there have been conflicts and schisms. Probably the best known schismatic which threatened the unity of the early church was Novatius in the third century AD. The Donatists in the fourth and fifth centuries also split African Christianity into two. The call of Novatians and Donatists was for the purity of the church, although this is admittedly an oversimplification. Needless to say, the orthodox catholic response to the schismatics was to emphasize the unity of the catholic Church, best seen perhaps in the dictum by Cyprian of Alexandria: *Extra Ecclesium Nulla Salus Est*, or Outside the Church there is no salvation.

In the 16th century Reformation however, the Reformers split with the apostatizing Roman Catholic church over the issues of the Gospel and the authority of Scripture, a split which was sealed by the Roman Council of Trent. This separation from Rome forced the Reformers to dig deeper into Scripture and to re-evaluate the traditions of the Church. Out of this meditation upon the Word of God, the Reformers came up with a more mature doctrine of the Church as reflected in the Reformed Confessions. The magisterial Reformer John Calvin in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* deals with this issue especially with reflection upon the understanding of the early church, which we look at later.

After the Reformation, the Puritans were notable for their split from the Church of England. The Puritans refused to be bounded by fixed liturgies and the use of clerical vestments, seeing their uses as being contrary to Scripture. The Puritans therefore founded separate congregations where they can practice their faith in a way that is pleasing to God.

Closer to our times we have the modernist controversies of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In Britain, the most notable proponent for the Gospel, Charles H Spurgeon, separated from the Baptist Union over charges of apostasy within her ranks in what became known as the Downgrade Controversy. In America, the Presbyterian scholar and theologian Dr. John G Machen separated from the apostate PC(USA) and founded both the OPC and Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

All of these examples show us that separation from what all of these men would consider to be false churches is not a novel idea in Church history. Separation from false churches is taken by them to be a Gospel imperative, however painful it might be to them personally. What I am arguing for therefore is nothing more than the historic Protestant doctrine of the church and its corresponding doctrine of separation.

As previously stated, John Calvin addressed the doctrine of the church and its practical application for Christians in his *Institutes*. In Book IV Chapter 1 Section 9, Calvin mentioned that the true churches are to be discerned as having two marks: the pure preaching of the Word of God and the right administration of the sacraments. In section 11, Calvin leads us to the implication this has on how we treat any institution that calls itself a church:

... every congregation which claims the name [of a church] must be brought to that test [of the two marks] as to a Lydian stone. If it holds the order instituted by the Lord in word and sacraments there will be no deception; we may safely pay it the honour due to a church: on the other hand, if it exhibit itself without word and sacraments, we must in this case be no less careful to avoid the imposture than we were to shun pride and presumption in the other. (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, IV.1.11)

Later sections in this chapter of Calvin's *Institutes* reveal his interpretation of this doctrine of the church with regards to the Novatians of the early church. According to Calvin, the Novatians erred because they separated from the true church. The Reformers were right in separating from the false church which Rome had become, but separation from a true church is a grievous sin.

Historically speaking therefore, the Reformed consensus is that believers are to judge the true churches from the false according to these three marks (the Belgic Confession among others added the third). Where these three marks are missing, believers are duty bound to separate from these institutions.

With this short overview done, let us turn to the biblical texts.

It is in my opinion that the biblical witness to the doctrine of separation permeates the entire Scriptures, seen in the motif of holiness especially in the Old Testament theocracy of Israel. Nevertheless, for brevity sake and granting Dispensational bias just for the sake of argument, I will choose the New Testament passages of 2 Cor. 6:14-18 and Rev. 2:9 to prove my point.

2 Cor. 6:14-18 contains the famous imperative to "Come out from among them and be separate" (2 Cor. 6:17b – NIV2011). The imperative by God to separate from unbelievers is extremely clear here. The exegetical issue has therefore not been whether separation is commanded by God, but rather on what this separation is and what does it entail. Does it mean separation from unbelievers in the church, separation from unbelievers in society or perhaps separation from unbelievers outside the church in terms of spiritual matters?

When we read the passage in context, we can see that Paul is giving an explicit command of how the Corinthians ought to live holy lives. Such can be summarized in 2 Cor. 7:1 whereby the idea of cleansing from "defilement of body and spirit" is mentioned. Having commanded church discipline in his first letter on

the man with his father's wife (1 Cor. 5:1-2) which was effective in bringing about his repentance (2 Cor. 2:5-11), Paul continued on with this motif of holiness and called the Corinthians to holiness of life and conduct.

Scripture in 1 Cor. 5:9-10 makes it clear that the separation from unbelievers must be spiritual in nature not social. This means that the separation is always from those who are unbelievers. While marriage is definitely an application of the teaching, the "yoke" in verse 14 shows us that ministry is what Paul had in mind, as Calvin said in his commentary on this passage. Christians are therefore not to be involved in ministry with those who do not confess the faith, of which false churches are one such example.

The second passage we would be looking at is found in the book of Revelations 2:9, which deals with one of the opponents of the Church in Smyrna. The Apostle John spoke of this group of people as "those who say they are Jews but are not, but are a synagogue of Satan." Whichever way we think of the "Jews" in this passage, they are considered the people of God. This expression of John therefore is the closest we have to a biblical mention of a false church since these people claimed to be Jews. While John does not mention separation from the false church, that he does not consider that assembly a church at all but a synagogue of Satan means that believers are obviously not supposed to be in that false church.

In conclusion, I have shown briefly how both church history and Scripture prove the thesis that Christians are to separate from false churches. I commend these arguments for our consideration, for the glory of our Lord. Amen.

1st Statement by Frank Turk (Negative)

Well, I think it's quite amusing that this topic has come up for a few of reasons:

1. I don't deny that people should separate from what the LBCF calls churches "so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan." I don't actually know anyone who would deny that – except for the new wave of Mormon evangelists and apologists who are ironically, broadly, and self-ignorantly ecumenical.
2. I don't deny that, historically, this has happened over and over.
3. I don't deny that there are good reasons to do this today. If someone gets saved and finds himself in a Jehovah's Witness church, he should leave immediately for spiritual refuge in any Christian church.

But here is what I would actually affirm:

The purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan; nevertheless Christ always hath had, and ever shall have a kingdom in this world, to the end thereof, of such as believe in him, and make profession of his name.

In the execution of this power wherewith he is so entrusted, the Lord Jesus calleth out of the world unto himself, through the ministry of his word, by his Spirit, those that are given unto him by his Father, that they may walk before him in all the ways of obedience, which he prescribeth to them in his word. Those thus called, he commandeth to walk together in particular societies, or churches, for their mutual edification, and the due performance of that public worship, which he requireth of them in the world.

The members of these churches are saints by calling, visibly manifesting and evidencing (in and by their profession and walking) their obedience unto that call of Christ; and do willingly

consent to walk together, according to the appointment of Christ; giving up themselves to the Lord, and one to another, by the will of God, in professed subjection to the ordinances of the Gospel.

As all believers are bound to join themselves to particular churches, when and where they have opportunity so to do; so all that are admitted unto the privileges of a church, are also under the censures and government thereof, according to the rule of Christ.

No church members, upon any offence taken by them, having performed their duty required of them towards the person they are offended at, ought to disturb any church order, or absent themselves from the assemblies of the church, or administration of any ordinances, upon the account of such offence at any of their fellow members, but to wait upon Christ, in the further proceeding of the church.

I have omitted some parts of the LBCF Chapter XXVI which are not relevant to this discussion for the sake of word count, but there it is: I believe the over-arching principle of the Christian life when it comes to ecclesiology (which is what this question hinges on entirely) is unity entirely balanced on the truth that Christ saves sinners, and the church is full of people like that. That is: rather than have only the self-centered view that one is saved and therefore entitled to all sorts of benefits (including the benefit of the doubt when one is strident or imperious), I think that one who is saved is therefore called to be joined to the others who are also saved in a concrete and visible way, and one therefore has an obligation to give others the benefit of the doubt, to give them the benefits of Christ's work for them, and to work as if Christ is the one who makes other believers holy rather than to believe tacitly that some other person's sin is greater than my own and therefore forces me to separate from them because thank God, I am not like them.

This view does not abandon the warnings against false teaching in the NT: it regards them with an eye to God's intention that the church is where God is working out His plan for all things specifically and ordinarily and every day.

I wish Daniel good luck and God's blessing as we begin this discussion.

2nd Statement by Daniel Chew (Affirmative)

In this second statement, I would like to further develop my thesis, especially interacting with what Frank has contended for in his opening statement.

As we can see, Frank's main concern is that "the over-arching principle of the Christian life when it comes to ecclesiology is unity." He does not dispute that sometimes separation is necessary from non-Christian organizations like the Jehovah's Witnesses. Rather, Frank seems to be contending for something akin to "mere Christianity" and "mere Christian churches." In such a mere Christianity, all people in it are sinners and therefore we are to stay united in these churches and not separate from them.

The question to be asked of Frank is, "How do we define such a generic Christianity?" Jehovah's Witnesses deny the deity of Christ and as such are outside the pale of Chalcedonian orthodoxy. On the other hand, popular "Evangelical" Word-faith teacher T.D. Jakes as a Sabellian modalist denies the Trinity. Will Frank agree that we should also separate from T.D. Jakes and all non-Trinitarians? How about Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy, both of which deny the Gospel? What exactly is Frank's criteria for defining what can be considered Christian and therefore not to be separated from, and what is not Christian like the Jehovah's Witnesses and to be separated from? Or is anyone calling himself an "Evangelical" to be given a free pass?

The Confessional Reformed have recourse to the three marks of the true church as stated in our Confessions, which are amply supported with verses from the Scriptures. We are saying these marks are the

criteria for distinguishing a true from a false church. It must be noted here that these objective marks refer to the practice of the church, not the stated orthodoxy in a confession of faith. It is the **act** of proclamation of the Word of God, the **act** of administering the sacraments, and the **act** of church discipline that are the marks, not mere ink marks on paper or pixels on screens. This is thus probably the only instance whereby “deeds, not creeds” are proper in a Reformed setting.

Frank in his statement conflates the church with the people within her, but I will nevertheless address the point he raised.

The main appeal by Frank as I see it is that we should not be critical of others since all of us are sinners, and therefore we should not separate from fellow Christians. To be sure, all of us are indeed sinners, Christians included. But firstly, the main motive for the doctrine of separation has never been Pharisaic self-righteousness but holiness and submission to Christ’s commands. Just because everyone is a sinner does not mean that therefore we do not obey Christ. As an analogy, just because the judge and the accused are murderers does not mean that both are to be pardoned. Rather, they are both to be punished. So it is with Christ’s commands. The most that Frank’s argument can prove is that everyone is to be separated from including ourselves, not that separation is not to be done. We do not bring God’s Law down to our level just because we ourselves are lawbreakers, but we are to tremble before God’s Law and indict ourselves as we indict others!

Secondly, while we do not agree with the concepts of venial and mortal sin, not all sins are equal. Some sins are worse than others, like e.g. murder is worse than anger. Therefore, that all Christians are sinners does not mean that all sinners are equal and not to be punished. All sins are qualitatively equally wicked in God’s sight, but they are not quantitatively equal before God. Therefore, while the fact that we are all sinners means we cannot boast, that we are not equally sinful means that some sins are worthy of greater penalty even within the church.

One great weakness in Frank’s position is that it is incapable of dealing with wolves from within the church. Paul warns us that wolves will come out from within the churches (Acts 20:30) and Frank’s position of “You are a sinner, I am a sinner; we are all sinners” if consistently followed makes rebuke and church discipline all but impossible.

With this done, let us go back to our main thesis. I will further elucidate my argument for separation by looking at the practice of separation, which is where the rubber meets the road.

The Reformed Confessions’ standard of the three marks is to be applied to all churches regardless of outward profession. The impartial standard of God’s Word means that we are to be impartial, which means that it is wrong to judge “Evangelical” churches by closing one eye to her faults while scrutinizing the errors of Jehovah Witness kingdom halls with a magnifying glass. God does not play favorites! That a church is being called “Evangelical” or even “Reformed” is not supposed to function like a “Get out of Jail” card. If Rick Warren and Saddleback fails the test for example, it matters little even if Warren is “America’s pastor,” as if that meant anything to the Lord of heaven and earth! I am convinced and have written a paper on Warren’s distortion of the Gospel,¹ which implies that Saddleback and Warren fail to have the first mark. This test could be applied to many “Evangelical” churches which may fail the test and therefore qualify as being false churches too. We must remember here that the marks are based upon the **ACTS** of the church not her written confessions.

¹ Daniel H. Chew, *Evaluating the Purpose Driven Paradigm: Recapturing the Vision of the Centrality of the Gospel*, CREDO500 blog conference paper. Currently accessible at http://www.angelfire.com/falcon/ddd_chc82/CREDO500/Part1/23_PurposeDrivenParadigm.pdf

Such application of the marks of a true church may be judged to be too strict by some, which is why in my opening statement I gave the example of the Puritans. The Church of England had a Calvinistic creed (the 39 Articles), yet the Puritans still separated from the national church. What the Puritans knew is that an official creed means little when the clergy did not actually agree with what the creed itself teaches, plus the Anglican Reformation stopped short of reformation of her practice. As it has been said, Anglicanism with its doctrine of the *via media* is a Church with a Calvinistic creed, an Arminian clergy and Popish liturgy. Those who judge the application of the marks of a true church to be too strict when applied to people like Rick Warren should rightly reject the Puritans too.

In the remainder of this statement, I would like to elucidate for us the doctrine of secondary separation, a doctrine which is certainly more controversial. The main text we would look at is 2 John 10-11:

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house or give him any greeting, for whoever greets him takes part in his wicked works

The idea of “receiv[ing] into your house or giv[ing] him any greeting” in 2 John 10-11 is a way to indicate in that culture a welcoming of the person as a teacher and his message as being acceptable. What I would like to focus on here from the indicative in verse 11 is that welcoming a false teacher implicates the person as taking part in the same wicked works of the false teacher.

The implication of this verse gives rise to the doctrine of secondary separation. As I have argued elsewhere, secondary separation is not separating from every person who does not separate from someone who sins in that manner of compromise, and doing this *ad infinitum*.² Rather, it is separation from the person in refusing to join him in compromising the faith and rebuking him accordingly.

How this is translated in practice can be thought of in the case of Pastor John Piper, an otherwise excellent Bible teacher who compromised with Federal Vision heretic Douglas Wilson in the Desiring God conference 2009, and Purpose Driven heretic Rick Warren in the Desiring God conference 2010. Secondary separation means that we are to rebuke Pastor Piper of his sin and to treat him as an erring brother under censure, as he has according to 2 John 11 taken part in the wicked deeds of Douglas Wilson and Rick Warren. He is still at least a brother in Christ, but his compromise with heretics means that we are to censure him in hopes that he will repent one day, not to encourage him in his sin by continuing on writing open letters to praise him as if nothing has actually happened.

In conclusion, it is hoped that this statement has helped to elucidate the doctrine of separation in its practice and answer Frank’s objection to it.

2nd Statement by Frank Turk (Negative)

Well, we can see exactly where Daniel is going in this debate: because we *can* separate from the wicked, we *must* separate from the wicked. That is: it seems overwhelmingly-obvious (to him) that when we identify sin in someone, our duty is to move on.

But here's something to consider—when Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, he greeted them in this way:

² Daniel H. Chew, *The Doctrine of Separation*. Accessed online at http://www.angelfire.com/falcon/ddd_chc82/theology/separation.html

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ... [1Cor 1:2-4, ESV]

You know: Paul here conflates the church with the people in it—his greeting makes it clear that he thinks that "the church" and "those sanctified" and "[those] called to be saints" are all the same set of people.

But there's some radical audacity in Paul's perception of the matter here, and Calvin says it this way:

It may perhaps appear strange that [Paul] should give the name of a Church of God to a multitude of persons that were infested with so many distempers, that Satan might be said to reign among them rather than God. Certain it's, that he did not mean to flatter the Corinthians, for he speaks under the direction of the Spirit of God, who is not accustomed to flatter. But among so many pollutions, what appearance of a Church is any longer presented? I answer, the Lord having said to him, "Fear not: I have much people in this place" (Acts 18:9, 10:) keeping this promise in mind, he conferred upon a godly few so much honor as to recognize them as a Church amidst a vast multitude of ungodly persons. Farther, notwithstanding that many vices had crept in, and various corruptions both of doctrine and manners, there were, nevertheless, certain tokens still remaining of a true Church. This is a passage that ought to be carefully observed, that we may not require that the Church, while in this world, should be free from every wrinkle and stain, or forthwith pronounce unworthy of such a title every society in which everything is not as we would wish it. For it's a dangerous temptation to think that there is no Church at all where perfect purity is not to be seen. For the man that is prepossessed with this notion, must necessarily in the end withdraw from all others, and look upon himself as the only saint in the world, or set up a peculiar sect in company with a few hypocrites.

What ground, then, had Paul for recognizing a Church at Corinth? It was this: that he saw among them the doctrine of the gospel, baptism, the Lord's Supper — tokens by which a Church ought to be judged of. For although some had begun to have doubts as to the resurrection, the error not having spread over the entire body, the name of the Church and its reality are not thereby affected. Some faults had crept in among them in the administration of the Supper, discipline and propriety of conduct had very much declined: despising the simplicity of the gospel, they had given themselves up to show and pomp; and in consequence of the ambition of their ministers, they were split into various parties. Notwithstanding of this, however, inasmuch as they retained fundamental doctrine: as the one God was adored among them, and was invoked in the name of Christ: as they placed their dependence for salvation upon Christ, and, had a ministry not altogether corrupted: there was, on these accounts, a Church still existing among them. Accordingly, wherever the worship of God is preserved unimpaired, and that fundamental doctrine, of which I have spoken, remains, we must without hesitation conclude that in that case a Church exists. [John Calvin, Commentary on Corinthians Vol 1, Chapt 1.2] [emph. added]

Because I have let Calvin be wordy, I shall be brief. True: Calvin resorts to the 3 marks to make his case. True: he says some are corrupt. But unlike Daniel, Calvin makes it clear that someone who thinks he can just seal himself off from everyone who is not everything we think they ought to be is suffering from a "dangerous temptation" which will cause him simply to be an isolated hypocrite.

See: the key for Paul is not that some people are evil—it's true that in 1Cor he demands that the man in open sexual sin be cut off from the church in discipline. But what about the false teaches — the super saints? Does

Paul require them to be cut off? The answer is plainly "no", even though they are causing division in the church. His call is that all be reconciled in Christ, not divided! If Paul were using Daniel's view of what must be done, 1Cor would be full of the instructions we find in 1Cor 5 — or better (for Daniel), full of instructions for the excellent few to shuck off the rest and start their own church since they have Paul still to guide them via ~~blog~~ letter.

But that's not Paul's guidance at all: it's Paul's view that because Christ died for these people, they have a basis for continuous and radical reconciliation even when discipline is not being practiced, the sacraments are not being rightly practiced, and the Gospel has been obscured.

Just to be as clear as possible: of course there are some who must go. The unrepentant sinner who flaunts God's law must be disciplined (cf. 1 Cor 5) the unrepentant false teacher must be "handed over to Satan" (cf. 1 Tim 1; 2 Tim 2). If Daniel wants me to list everyone that is in that category, our word count is probably too short -- so listing people he thinks I don't object to doesn't make any case whatsoever. But in both those cases (and there may be other broad categories), the answer Scripture provides is not "flee the local church". The answer is, "the local church *must take action against them*". That is: the church must remove these sorts of people from their ranks, not leave them as if those people are immovable and Christ is not.

The difference, then, between Paul's view and Daniel's view is *how we wield the truth*. Do we use the truth only to identify those who are corrupt in order to drive them out, or do we use the truth in the best use of Law and Gospel so that we can convict ourselves—all of us together—of our failings and take up the gift of Christ to overcome those failings. Is the truth of Christ greater than sin? If it's, it doesn't just overcome sin *on paper* or *in the future*: it overcomes the problem of sin *for us* and *right now* so that reconciliation inside the local church is possible.

I am sure more can and will be said in the cross-ex. I look forward to making my point clearer in answering Daniel's questions.

Cross-Examination by Frank Turk

#1

Q1: Does someone have to separate from heretics in order to be saved?

A1: No, salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone, not by works.

One can be saved even if one is a member in a Roman Catholic church, a fact that the Reformers agreed with. The question of separation has never been about salvation, but about obedience to Christ's commands.

#2

Q2: I thank God for your answer as it is the only Biblical one. It demonstrates that you understand that the Bible has to rule our theology in all matters, and especially in salvation.

That said, what is the ultimate fate of those who, as you say, "disobey Christ" and do not exercise the discipline of separation as you have outlined it in your opening statements?

A2: Since salvation is based on God's grace not on our works of obedience, such people will still be saved and will be with Christ.

Nevertheless, such disobedience is contrary to God's will and therefore they may invite chastisement by God for their sins (Heb. 12:10-11). Also, the works of their service and/or ministry will run the risk of being burned up and their rewards lost (1 Cor. 3:15)

#3

Q3: That's fantastic — we are exactly on the same page.

Here's a citation from Scripture:

Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.[Gal 5:19-21, ESV]

That's quite a list from Paul to the Galatians, yes? Now, you and I agree that what Paul *does not* mean here is that people who do this undo Christ's work for them.

But if that's what Paul does not mean, what in fact does Paul mean by saying this? For the answer to this question, I give you an open word limit — you may use as much space as necessary to answer this question.

A3: These are the verses in the Greek, with the words underlined as you have done:

φανερὰ δὲ ἐστὶν τὰ ἔργα τῆς σαρκός, ἅτινά ἐστιν πορνεία, ἀκαθαρσία, ἀσέλγεια,²⁰ εἰδωλολατρία, φαρμακεία, ἔχθραι, ἔρις, ζῆλος, θυμοί, ἐριθείαι, διχοστασίαι, αἵρέσεις,²¹ φθόνοι, μέθαι, κῶμοι καὶ τὰ ὅμοια τούτοις, ἃ προλέγω ὑμῖν, καθὼς προεῖπον ὅτι οἱ τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντες βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν. (Gal 5:19-21 BGT)

The word translated “dissensions” is the word *eritheiai* (ἐριθείαι), which according to the abridged LSJ lexicon denotes “an attitude of self-seeking selfish ambition.” The word translated “divisions” in the same lexicon, *dichostasiai* (διχοστασίαι), denotes “a standing apart, dissension.” The other occurrences of this word are both in the genitive singular: in 1 Macc 3:29 (which refers to civil discord) and Rom. 16:17. It is in Rom. 16:17 that the word is used in association with the apostles' teaching, as it is written:

I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them. (Rom. 16:17 –ESV)

From this, the word *dichostasia* as used in the NT has a connotation of divisions caused by the introduction of false teachings into the church. Together with the next item on the list *haireseis* (αἵρέσεις), they both reflect on the divisions caused by introduction of false teachings into the church.

Paul by detailing the works of the flesh is therefore telling the believers in Galatians what are the actions and attitudes to avoid and not do. We must first of all realize that the Epistle to the Galatians was written to professing believers in the covenant community, not the Judaizers. These professed believers were in danger of falling away from the faith, and Paul wrote this letter with the intention that he would rebuke them and bring them back from their perilous state. Of course, we know from other Scriptures that true believers do not fall away (c.f. Jn. 6:37-39), and those who do were never saved in the first place (1 Jn. 2:19). However, in daily living and ministry we tend to those in the visible church not the invisible, and therefore Paul assumes that at least some of them are merely deluded and thus he sharply rebukes them for their error.

I disagree with you [Frank] that we can say that doing these things will not “undo Christ’s work for them.” The list is not meant to necessarily describe the Galatians believers. The list is to show what not to do and what to avoid in people. Paul’s slight in not even thinking the Judaizers worth writing to shows that those who indeed have these works of the flesh in the fullest degree, as the Judaizers have in the area of self-seeking ambition and causing dissension by spreading false teachings, are not to be considered Christians at all.

#4

Q4: Daniel, I have highlighted part of your last response for reference, to minimize my word count here. Yet Paul says in Galatians 5:

You were running well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth? This persuasion is not from him who calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump. I have confidence in the Lord that you will take no other view than mine, and the one who is troubling you will bear the penalty, whoever he is.

Paul plainly states that that someone who is “troubling” the Galatians is in the midst of the people he is writing to.

Can you reconcile this difference? Asked another way, how do you reconcile your view that Paul thinks those people are not even worth addressing when in fact he makes it clear that he is addressing them in this passage?

I again offer an unlimited word count for your response.

A4: Frank, the issue here is the difference between the visible and the invisible church. It is obviously the case that there is no way the letter to the Galatians can be read without the Judaizers being present hearing it read. Paul is addressing the Galatian church as a collective whole (the visible church), and the believers within that church as individuals (the invisible church). Therefore, Paul is addressing all of them (the visible church) with the intent of speaking to some of them (the invisible church). Within the Galatian congregation therefore, Paul is rebuking the believers who are following after the Judaizers who are currently within their midst. The last portion of verse 10 is Paul’s judgment on the Judaizers who are not addressed to but spoken of in an indirect manner.

It is analogous to speaking to person A about person B while both of them are present, and ignoring person B.

#5

Q5: I think your last point is defeated by Gal 1:2, and I leave it to the reader to decide for himself.

It’s interesting that you only focused on the two items I underscored in Gal 5:19-21, namely the “disputes” and “dissensions”.

I’d think one would want to make sure “enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, ... factions, [and] envying” [NASB this time] were also able to be covered by one’s theology of separation as well -- that somehow separation has to *not be* full of “enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, [and] envying.”

How would you disambiguate someone who would say that your view of Separation is actually best described by these 8 characteristics?

Again, I offer you an open word count to address the question.

A5: Frank, the reason for the initial focus on those two words in Gal. 5:19-21 was because you were focusing on them, even by underlining them.

As I have previously mentioned, the list of the works of the flesh in Gal. 5:19-21 is not a list meant to necessarily describe the Galatian Christians or the Judaizers. It is a list to show what attitudes and works are the fruits that originate from the flesh. Similarly, the list of the fruit of the Spirit is not meant to be describing any of the Galatian Christians, as if any Christian ever is perfect in this world.

The principle of separation has nothing formally to do with either of these two lists. Separation has to do with the Gospel and the proclamation of the Truth, not (individual) personal holiness or the lack thereof.

#6

Q6: While I would like to see more detail from you in your answers as I am enjoying them, I appreciate your candor. So far we have clarified expressly that separation is not about salvation, and it's not about personal holiness. Those are spectacular insights regarding your objectives in promulgating this doctrine.

In your opener, you explicitly said, "the doctrine of separation permeates the entire Scriptures, seen in the motif of holiness especially in the Old Testament theocracy of Israel," and you reference 2 Cor. 6 as your proof text.

I think you can't have it both ways. Using the proof text you have already referenced, how is it possible that "Separation has to do with the Gospel and the proclamation of the Truth, not (individual) personal holiness or the lack thereof?"

Again, I offer you an open word count to make your case.

A6:

Maybe I should have been clearer in my previous answer. The doctrine of separation has to do with public (or ecclesiastical) piety seen especially in the witness of the Gospel and the proclamation of the Truth. It does not pertain to individual private piety. Therefore, by "(individual) personal holiness", I am referring to attending to the means of grace and growing in holiness of character as such is the default definition that Evangelicalism tends to have when it talks about holiness.

However, Christians while saved individually are not saved and left as individuals. Christ brings believers together to form the Church. As members in the Church therefore, God calls us to exercise public piety in relation to other Christians. This public piety is external as opposed to internal, and pertains to the obligations we have to others which God obligates us to. It is called "public" because such obligations do not exist if one stays in an island alone, whereas private piety such as holiness and reading the Scriptures are necessary even if one is alone on an island.

Included in this category of public piety are contending for the faith, evangelism, discipleship, rebuke, correction, the diaconal ministry of compassion and others like them.

In this light, the lists in Gal. 5 which we have been looking at are lists of private piety or vices. This is not to deny that any of those on the lists have a corporate dimension, but that they are primarily personal not ecclesiastical.

I do not know where you are trying to go so my answers would generally "lack detail". Regardless, I will put it forward that there is a difference in kind between private and public piety. Failure in the former generally is a sin of commission whereas failure in the latter generally is a sin of omission.

Separation as an act of public piety therefore is external, just as the Gospel is an external fact outside of us, and as the Marks of a true Church is an external fact outside of us. The link with holiness, as I have mentioned in the Old Testament and 2 Cor. 6, is due to its corporate public dimension. Just as Israel had to be separate from the nations, and Christ from Belial, so the Church is to be separate from false religion and Christians from false churches and false believers. Such separateness is one of witness and not to be done for any other reason; for the witness of the Gospel so that the Gospel message will not be compromised.

#7

Q7: Because I am running out of allotted questions, let's switch gears.

You make what I would call the essential case historically for separation – using the councils all the way up to Trent to show what the doctrine can yield. As I see it, it is right, for example, for Nicea to create a creed and therefore separate the faith from the falsehoods which have sprung up around it. That's the activity of the church: express the affirmative Gospel, and use that to exclude what is not true. It is the affirmative use of truth for unity.

There is something different about Trent, though, contra Nicea or other truly-ecumenical councils. What's the key difference between Trent and (for example) Nicea?

Again, I offer you an open word limit to answer the question

A7: This question is ambiguous. Certainly there are a lot of major differences between Nicea and Trent; it is almost like comparing apples and oranges, or maybe mangoes.

This question can be interpreted as enquiring into the key difference between Trent and Nicea in each council's activity of demarcating truth from error, which is a historical question. Alternatively, we can interpret the question as to the key difference between Trent and Nicea in the implications the rulings of each council has on the Church's method for determining truth from error, which is a hermeneutical question. Or maybe it is the key difference in the implications each has for how one determines the content of the Gospel. Perhaps what the question is driving at is what is the key difference each has on how a biblical Christian practice the doctrine of separation?

Seeing that our debate thesis is on the doctrine of separation, I will interpret the question as to the key difference in how the pronouncements of each council impact how a Christian practices the doctrine of separation. If Frank has something else in mind, he should be clearer in his questions.

The proceedings of Nicea in 325AD, especially when its doctrine is codified into the Nicene Creed (later modified at the Council of Constantinople in 381AD), proclaims the one holy catholic apostolic faith which is necessary for salvation. The council met in an attempt to resolve the Arian controversy as Arius denied the Son's eternity and consubstantiality with the Father. While unsuccessful at halting the Arian plague, the witness at Nicea provided the creedal backbone of the faith during Athanasius' time when it faced onslaught by the Arians and the Semi-Arians. The Council of Constantinople of 381AD finally put Arianism and her children down as a viable threat to the Church.

The initial Nicene Creed ended the creed with an anathema aimed against the Arians, which was removed at Constantinople probably because creeds aren't meant to contain anathemas. The original anathema reads as follows:

[But those who say: 'There was a time when he was not;' and 'He was not before he was made;' and 'He was made out of nothing,' or 'He is of another substance' or 'essence,' or 'The Son of God is

created,' or 'changeable,' or 'alterable'—they are condemned by the holy catholic and apostolic Church.]

In light of the decree of the Council of Nicea, the implication it has on the doctrine of separation is that we are to separate and heed the anathema the Church has hurled against the [Arian] heretics. The Council ruled that the Christian message is to be found in the Nicene Creed over and against the teachings of Arius and others like him. A biblical Christian in light of Nicea therefore merely has to follow the Church as she fought and condemned those who would destroy the faith, and separate from those the Church has already condemned to hellfire.

Trent was the official answer of the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation to the Protestant Reformation. At Trent, a handful of Roman Catholic clergy came together and pronounced the proceedings of that council to be authoritative on the Church. Seeing themselves as the successors of Peter and Paul, all the Apostles and all the Church Fathers (as Roman Catholicism has continued to perceive herself today), they made their decrees binding *de jure* on all who would call themselves Christians. In the sixth session of the Council of Trent, Trent pronounced these words against the Protestants and their message:

If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema (On Justification, Canon IX)

If any one saith, that men are justified, either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, and is inherent in them; or even that the grace, whereby we are justified, is only the favour of God; let him be anathema. (On Justification, Canon XI)

If any one saith, that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake; or, that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified; let him be anathema (On Justification, Canon XII)

In light of these pronouncements at the Council of Trent, the biblical Christian could not in good conscience agree with the denunciation of the Gospel by the Roman Church. Since the Christian's fidelity is first and foremost to Christ and the true Gospel message, he cannot agree with Trent's attack on the Gospel in anathemizing those who believe in the Gospel.

Practicing the doctrine of separation therefore becomes more difficult. The Christian has to discern the error of Rome, reject the Roman Church and her councils, and turn to churches which continue to confess the true Gospel. The anathema against the Gospel hurled by the Roman Church means that there is no way the gap can begin to be bridged short of Rome repudiating the many articles pronounced at Trent.

The key difference between Nicea and Trent therefore on how a biblical Christian practices the doctrine of separation is this: In the former, the institutional visible Church follows Christ and we follow the Church in her actions of separation from heretics. In the latter, a significant portion of the institutional visible Church turned against the faith and therefore we follow the congregations that remained faithful by separating from that false church. In short, at Nicea we follow the Church as she is faithful, while at Trent we follow Christ and the true Church when large portions of the visible Church apostatize.

Q8: The key issue, as you have identified, between Nicea and Trent is that one council was declaring truth and the other error. I like it that you are centered on the issue of justification as the matter at which Trent makes a fatal error. But there's something you have missed rather broadly in Trent: it anathematizes people for excluding certain books as inspired Scripture.

Here's my question: if Trent had not delivered the anathemas against the doctrine of justification but only the anathemas against the Protestant canon of Scripture, would "the Biblical Christian" still be bound to separate from Rome? Asked another way, do the anathemas against the Protestant canon present a doctrinal crisis that can only be resolved by separation?

A8: Yes.

The issue here presented gets at the type and amount of error required for separation — an enquiry which is related to the first mark as we need to consider the content of the truth of the Word of God. They are two different positions on this issue: the confessional maximalist (Reformed) or the confessional minimalist (Evangelical). Historically speaking, both positions will present the same answer to Frank's question, since one of the proof texts used to support Purgatory (2 Macc. 12:42-45) is in the Apocrypha.

However, if we remove Trent from its historical context and merely ask whether an insistence to add uninspired books to Scripture is reason to separate from a church, then I will not presume to speak for the Confessional Minimalist. As a Confessional Maximalist, I would still say that such necessitate separation because a good and necessary consequence (WCF Chapter 1, Section 6) of the Gospel message means that the grounds of its authority (the Scriptures) is just as important for the Church as the Gospel.

#9

Q9: Well, I think you have rephrased my last question in order to answer it in a way that sounds like your way is the way Protestants were thinking, and it was not. It was the way *Trent* was thinking. See: the fellows at *Trent* believed that the only way to rectify the error of Protestantism was to *anathematize* it and *stand separate* from it. Plainly: they called those who were Christians "not Christians" and demanded they be run off.

Consider in juxtaposition the WCF on the canon of Scripture, which anathematizes no one, yet makes a vigorous affirmation that their view of the limits of the canon is the one by which believers ought to abide.

In your view, why does the WCF (as one example) fail to demand separation from those who affirm the wrong canon of Scripture? Asked another way, how can one abide that the WCF does not demand separation from those who would call those who receive only the shorter canon "not Christian"?

A9: The problem with Frank's understanding of the Reformation and the Reformed Confessions comes from reading them apart from their historical context. We must remember that the late medieval and late Renaissance period was a time when creeds and churches go together. Not only that, there was no such thing as the separation between Church and State. What one believes limits one to a particular ecclesiastical gathering and has implications whether one's religion is approved or persecuted by the governing authorities.

In England in the time around the English Civil War, three religious factions were vying for supremacy: the Anglicans, the Presbyterians, and the Congregationalists. Whoever came to power would suppress the other groups. The Anglicans did that before Cromwell and after the Restoration, the Congregationalists did that under Cromwell, and the Presbyterians only did so sporadically in Scotland. The Reformers and Puritans did not have to place an anathema in their confessions; it was *de facto* practiced. The very idea of a national church, which symbolized the visible (not invisible) church in that country, had at its very heart the idea that

all believers are to join the national church and those who do not are considered by the pastors in that national church to be not in the visible Church (at least the visible Body of Christ as present in the country).

Each faction in the Reformation used their confession as simultaneously the thing which binds believers and that which excludes those outside the Church. The multiplicity of confessions in the Reformation era led to the Reformed leaders comparing confessions and accepting in spirit (with minor disagreements to be sure) each other's confessions to show that those believers in another place were not to be considered unbelievers. (In fact, the Westminster Confession was to function as a Confession of unity between the Scots and the British, should the Presbyterians prove victorious in England.) The Reformed Confessions therefore united true believers while excluding those to be considered outside the visible Church.

There is thus no need to commend separation since all the Reformers and their descendants have separated from the Roman Church. Moreover, they kicked out the radical Anabaptists and in that sense separated from them. The Puritans later separated from the Church of England because she refused to continue reformation. Lastly, the idea of Confessionalism subsumes the doctrine of separation into a more holistic doctrine where we are not merely told what to separate from but what to separate to.

As an aside, Trent in its format is merely following the practice of the Church through the ages like for example in Nicea or Second Orange. There is nothing problematic or ahistorical in her pronouncement of anathemas; the problem rather was that Trent condemned the Gospel.

#10

Q10: As an aside on the aside, note that doling out anathemas for nonessential matters is not the same as affirming central truths and anathematizing the deniers of those truths. That Daniel does not make this distinction is telling.

So for my last question to you, Daniel: What is the most significant difference between what happened, for example, at Nicea and the common claim easily found all kinds of places today that John Piper, for failing to practice separation from Rick Warren, must himself be the object of separation for anyone who is truly a Christian? Is there one?

A10: As I have mentioned, Frank, I am a Reformed Confessionalist, not an Evangelical minimalist.

I have addressed the issue of John Piper briefly in my second statement. As I have said:

Secondary separation means that we are to rebuke Pastor Piper of his sin and to treat him as an erring brother under censure, as he has according to 2 John 11 taken part in the wicked deeds of Douglas Wilson and Rick Warren. He is still at least a brother in Christ, but his compromise with heretics means that we are to censure him in hopes that he will repent one day, not to encourage him in his sin by continuing on writing open letters to praise him as if nothing has actually happened.

Secondary separation is different from primary separation, although both are done for the Gospel. Secondary separation (applicable to compromisers like John Piper) is done as a measure of reprove and censure towards Christians for their compromise, while primary separation (an application of Nicea) is an act of judgment against heretics, schismatics and true apostates.

To finish off this answer, I would say that efforts to limit such acts of public piety to the local church sound suspiciously like Cain's answer to God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (Gen. 4:9ff). After all, we confess "one catholic and apostolic faith", not many branches of disconnected faith communities.

Cross-Examination by Daniel Chew

#1

Q1: Frank, let's start with a case study. A member of a local parish of the Roman Catholic Church was witnessed to on the street. As a result, he repented of his sin and turned to Christ. Suppose that you were his friend and he sought your counsel as to whether he should leave his church. What would be your advice? Would your advice be any different if he was an Italian living in Italy?

I offer an unlimited word count for the answer.

A1: Unequivocally, this person you describe in your Q#1 is under the anathema of Rome. He should leave that church and seek one which does not make the mistakes Rome has made confessionally, ecclesiastically, and ecumenically.

I would invite him to my local church in spite of the fact that, since they have not separated from me, in Daniel's view they "have according to 2 John 11 taken part in the wicked deeds" of a person like me

#2

Q2: Do you see any practical uses of the visible/ invisible church distinction in the context of the local church, besides the knowledge that people are saved by grace alone through faith alone and not by church membership, attendance or the lack thereof? If so, what do you think they are?

I again offer an unlimited word count for the answer.

A2:

I have listed all the uses of the local church in my two opening statements, but I am grateful for the opportunity to restate them:

The purest churches under heaven are subject to mixture and error; and some have so degenerated as to become no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan; nevertheless Christ always hath had, and ever shall have a kingdom in this world, to the end thereof, of such as believe in him, and make profession of his name.

In the execution of this power wherewith he is so entrusted, the Lord Jesus calleth out of the world unto himself, through the ministry of his word, by his Spirit, those that are given unto him by his Father, that they may walk before him in all the ways of obedience, which he prescribeth to them in his word. Those thus called, he commandeth to walk together in particular societies, or churches, for their mutual edification, and the due performance of that public worship, which he requireth of them in the world.

The members of these churches are saints by calling, visibly manifesting and evidencing (in and by their profession and walking) their obedience unto that call of Christ; and do willingly consent to walk together, according to the appointment of Christ; giving up themselves to the Lord, and one to another, by the will of God, in professed subjection to the ordinances of the Gospel.

As all believers are bound to join themselves to particular churches, when and where they have opportunity so to do; so all that are admitted unto the privileges of a church, are also under the censures and government thereof, according to the rule of Christ.

No church members, upon any offence taken by them, having performed their duty required of them towards the person they are offended at, ought to disturb any church order, or absent themselves from the assemblies of the church, or administration of any ordinances, upon the account of such offence at any of their fellow members, but to wait upon Christ, in the further proceeding of the church.

To be as specific as possible, I believe the local church is the visible church — and if all of the work of the church is not evident there, it needs reforming. So for example, Daniel would appeal to the three marks of the church (Biblical preaching [both Law and Gospel, one hopes], Use of Sacraments, exercise of Discipline) and call it quits. But thankful, the Protestant confessions call for *much more than that* for the church to be true to the call to be saints joined together.

For example, as said in my second opening statement, Calvin himself found the idea that the church should be completely perfect in this world a "**dangerous temptation**", and that "**the man that is prepossessed with this notion, must necessarily in the end withdraw from all others, and look upon himself as the only saint in the world, or set up a peculiar sect in company with a few hypocrites.**" Those are Calvin's words of *caution* to those who are so urgent to be separated from other Christians who are imperfect — given in context of describing how it is possible that Paul can call what is at Corinth a "church" where discipline is almost unfound, the sacraments are misused grossly, and the Gospel itself is being corrupted by factions, by a waywardness toward idolatry, and by a false view of the resurrection.

From that perspective, one very serious and sobering use of the visible church distinction is *how the church models reconciliation*. It's interesting to see that Paul demands that the man in dire sin in Corinth be cast out in his first letter, but then in his second letter tells the Corinthians to forgive him because he is now repentant — an act that Daniel and I would both say is the right working of discipline. But at the same time, does Paul require of the Corinthians that they separate from the super-saints who are slandering him in Corinth and causing divisions and all manner of other failings? Not once does he say this! He instead pleads *Christ's sacrifice for all believers* so that the factionalism will be overcome. Paul doesn't require that the "good ones" maintain their distance from the "bad ones" when it comes to the abuses of the Lord's Supper: he requires instead that the Lord's Supper *be the sign of unity among them*, because the body of Christ is discerned there — not just a feast for our favorite friends. And think of this: in Paul's discourse to the Corinthians about right worship, he makes it clear that worship *does not exclude unbelievers* but in fact must be intelligible to them so that when they are present among the believers in worship, the act of worship will convict them and call them to account. Most critically, in 1 Cor 7, Paul requires of believers married to unbelievers *to stay in the marriage* if the unbeliever is willing to stay married to them. This is magnified ten-fold when laid up against the definition of marriage Paul lists elsewhere in Eph 5.

So what of discipline then? And of the doctrine of separation? What are these and what are they used for?

The first is simply answered: the local church categorically has the responsibility to pastor the flock through elders so that the spiritual welfare and maturity of each member and the church as a whole is cared for. That is: the local church is responsible for seeing to it that there is unity through truth. From a positive standpoint, this is done through the exhortation of truth from the pulpit and from the fellowship hall. From a negative standpoint, it is also upheld by expressing the truth in love to those who are not doing it right. As I have said elsewhere,³ "churches ought to exercise some kind of process which recognizes that they do not exist as a body which stands for nothing, and which gives them a clear process for working that out in real life."

³ Frank Turk, *Banned from Church*, Blog post dated January 27, 2008. Accessed at <http://centuri0n.blogspot.com/2008/01/banned-from-church.html>

But what of this "doctrine of separation" which is at the center of your complaint against me? You have made quite a lot of noise against my alleged ignorance or apathy to the historical contexts of the Protestant confessions, but one thing *radically absent* from all of them is the severe definitions of separation which you are nevertheless demanding. You have equated your view with the work of the councils, but ironically no councils exist to hand down the judgments you are extolling, and you are then requiring the individual to make the particular judgments completely apart from *visible church* structures and authority.

So for example, if Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* is read in a church (probably in the 40-day structure), I perceive that your view is that it's not a church anymore: they have "taken part in the wicked deeds of Rick Warren". Those who count themselves as very on about holiness have to run away — be separate immediately, or be subjects of separation themselves.

Yet where is this found in the theology of the reformation? Indeed: the best possible place to attempt to find it is Robert Shaw's exposition of the Westminster Catechism when he says this about Sanctification:

In Scripture, the word sanctification bears a variety of senses. It signifies separation from a common to a sacred use, or dedication to the service of God. Thus the altar, temple, priests, and all the sacred utensils, were sanctified. It also signifies purification from ceremonial defilement.—Heb. ix. 13. But the sanctification of believers, of which this chapter treats, consists in their purification from the pollution of sin, and the renovation of their nature after the image of God.

... Sanctification is imperfect in this life. There have been men, and there still are, who maintain, that sinless perfection is attainable in this life. This is held by Antinomians, who profess that the perfect holiness of Christ is imputed to believers. It is held likewise by Romanists, Socinians, and others, who affirm that believers have, or may attain, a perfect inherent holiness. The doctrine of sinless perfection was also held by the founder of the Methodists; and the same opinion is still held by his followers. In opposition to such views, our Confession decidedly affirms, that sanctification is "imperfect in this life." Though it extends to the whole man, yet "there abideth still some remnants of corruption in every part." The Scriptures abound with the most explicit testimonies against the doctrine of sinless perfection.—Eccl. vii 20; James iii. 2; Prov. xx. 9, 1 John i. 8. The epithet perfect, is indeed applied to several saints, but it must be understood either comparatively, in which sense "Noah was perfect in his generation;" or, as synonymous with sincerity or uprightness, in which sense God said to Abraham, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." That the most eminent saints mentioned in Scripture were not free from sin, is evident from the defects and blemishes which are discovered in their conduct. They were far from imagining that they had attained to sinless perfection. - Job ix. 20; Ps. xix. 12; Phil. iii. 12. Every real Christian will certainly aspire after perfection; but none can attain to absolute perfection in this life.

As there is both grace and the remainders of corruption in every saint, it follows, that there will be "a continual and irreconcilable war" between these two opposite principles. This conflict is described in a very striking manner.—Rom. vii.; Gal. v. 17 Sometimes the one principle prevails, and sometimes the other; but grace will finally overcome.

But sadly, that cannot be twisted into a doctrine which demands that Christians, themselves imperfect, must exact through a tribunal of their own reason, either repentance or banishment from every creature confessing faith in Christ. Instead, Shaw rightly points out that the doctrine of sanctification is about *my war* with *my sin* as it is conducted by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of God's grace overcoming that sin — not to drive me

away from others over matters of opinion, or worse: my own execution of some confession against those who disagree with me.

Finally, the spectacular fact of the visible church is that it is the place where sinners are made right with God. That is: not only are we reconciled by the blood of Christ to God over and against our sins, but we are also made right *toward each other* so that our objections to each other's' flaws and shortcomings can be laid to rest through Christ's work.

By no means should that be construed as a license to be lawless, or to allow for utter lawlessness and blasphemy. But it does make for the basis to be reconcilers *first*, and to seek to forgive *first*, and to call to repentance with a loving and hopeful heart *first*. The Gospel is not the Law, and it does not demand of us that we seek the condemnation of others through the Law. It makes us into something better than the Law could have made of us, and with that comes something greater than the mere requirements of fundamentalist separation.

#3

Q3: Frank, an interesting albeit long answer, with various false assumptions however.

In your second answer, you mentioned that the "local church is the visible church," and then continued with a long excursive on the local church. I note that your answer differs from the traditional understanding of the visible church being the universal church, not the local church. Regardless, the invisible church was not mentioned again in your answer. So to restate the question, is there any use of the concept of the invisible church in Church practice besides the belief that souls are saved not by church attendance but by grace?

A3:

1. My understanding of visible/invisible doesn't vary from the traditional understanding in any meaningful way. For Daniel to do more than merely make that accusation, he'll have to pony up some evidence of the "visible church" which isn't actually a local church (3 marks, after all), and how it is that the "invisible" church is discerned apart from God's final judgment and the ultimate glorification of the saints.
2. The visible/invisible distinction Daniel ought to hold to is in WCF XXV. It requires (which his demand for separation completely ignores) that only inside the visible church is where the 3 marks he thinks are necessary for "the church" can be demonstrated (specifically WCF XXV.3). These things don't exist apart from local bodies who are actually doing them.
3. I like it that Q3 intimates that only those with an active theology of the "invisible church" (meaning: you have to account for them all, therefore accounting for those in the visible but not in the invisible) have a decent ecclesiology, and therefore a decent theology. The only mention of the "invisible church" in the WCF is in XXV.1, and my use of that term is in-line with the WCF's use and weight of the term.
4. What is utterly evident in the Larger Catechism is that *men aren't required to discern the invisible church inside the visible church*. Q61 makes the distinction that church membership doesn't equate to salvation, but Q90 makes it transparently clear that *only at the final judgment* will God make the final sorting of goats and sheep. In reformed baptist circles, (a people I would love to hear Daniel's opinion of, unless he parrots R. Scott Clark) that means we don't baptize infants in order that we don't admit unbelievers to the visible church. In more paleo-reformed circles, the baptism of infants is taken to be the expression of the broad offer of the Gospel to believers and their children. Because we cannot discern the elect from the non-elect, says the paedobaptist, we must assume the sovereignty of the God and therefore the inviolability of His promises. If the promises are "to the

children”, then we must assume they are in the church without regard to the status of their own faith or confession. For those at home, this is why Paedos practice confirmation and credos don't.

But the point for this discussion is clear: how the paedobaptist then won't extend the *full benefits of those promises to visible members he sees as still needing grace* is utterly beyond explanation. You cannot hold a confessional view and then demand a doctrine of separation which has actual church discipline absent from the process. Separation cannot be a matter of private judgment but a matter of ecclesiastical practice for the sake of pastoral ends.

#4

Q4: What exactly do you think is the major difference between the Galatian and the Corinthian churches that caused Paul to write to them differently?

A4: I think the standard answer is — the one you may have heard on the White Horse Inn, for example — is that the Galatians were practically not a church and the Corinthians were a church. That is: the Galatians were practically denying the Gospel, and the Corinthians were only ignoring it.

For the sake of this exchange, I'm willing to utterly accept that interpretation of Paul's approach and intent in the two different letters.

What we cannot do with that distinction is then say, “and what Paul meant for the Galatians is that the good ones (if there were any) had to leave the bad ones for the sake of their own personal/ecclesiastical holiness.” You cannot find anything in that letter which says that, implies that, or can be twisted to say such a thing. What is *utterly vacant* from the letter to the Galatians is the command to leave, or any instructions on how to leave.

See: some will say that Paul offers the Galatians a terse and cold salutation. But those people simply don't bother to compare Gal 1:1-5 to 1 Cor 1:1-2, or Col 1:1-2. The salutation of Gal 1 is actually longer and more robust theologically than it is in Col 1 — and yet it still extends the same qualifiers for those to whom it is written: the saints. He calls them “the saints and the faithful (ones)” in writing to the Colossians; he says to the Galatians that Christ died for “us” (meaning: you and me; all of us).

That said, the tone of Galatians is plainly one of *discipline*, as is the tone of 1 Cor. Paul is exhorting them against their failings because they are serious. And his fear is that they are turning away from the Gospel.

But the first obvious item is that *Paul doesn't write them a letter to tell them he's finished with them*. That is: *Paul doesn't separate from the foolish Galatians!* Unlike your interpretation which says Paul isn't writing to the bad ones, plainly Paul *addresses the foolish Galatians* (Gal 3:1) with his rebuke.

The last obvious item (because of the limits of the word count) is Gal 6:1-5, where Paul says *exactly* what to do with a person in the church who is in grave error. Your method and definition of separation utterly ignores that. I pray for your own sake you can be rid of your mistake and find a place for Paul's full teaching to the Galatians in your theology.

#5

Q5: You accused me that I “equate [my] views with the work of the councils.” In your view, are the Confessions (by the non-Baptist magisterial Reformers and their descendants, i.e Baptist Confessions are not to be considered) intended to function to exclude unbelievers?

A5: The Augsburg Confession says that it was written “that in this matter of religion the opinions and judgments of the parties might be heard in each other's presence; and considered and weighed among ourselves in mutual charity, leniency, and kindness, in order that, after the removal and correction of such things as have been treated and understood in a different manner in the writings on either side, these matters may be settled and brought back to one simple truth and Christian concord.”

Luther said of the Smalcald articles that they were written “to compile and collect the articles of our doctrine [in order that it might be plain] in case of deliberation as to what and how far we would be both willing and able to yield to the Papists, and in what points we intended to persevere and abide to the end.”

Reformed.org says that Guido de Bres wrote the Belgic confession “to protest against [Roman Catholic] oppression, and to prove to the persecutors that the adherents of the Reformed faith were not rebels, as was laid to their charge, but law-abiding citizens who professed the true Christian doctrine according to the Holy Scriptures.”

The additional documents for the WCF say that the primary concern of the document is to have our eyes opened, and to turn us away from ignorance and error; the specific application noted to that end is for *parents* and *heads of household* so that they may “labor in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” as they lead their families.

I trust the authors of these documents to have said what they mean — which clearly, is not what you mean. The confessions plainly say that they are intended for use among believers for the sake of eliminated misunderstandings, offer an open hand in order to find the places where agreement can still be made, and to teach the leaders of households how to be wise and mature in the faith. They are not issued to exclude anyone but to give exposition to the necessary truths of the faith for the sake of edifying believers and growing unity in the midst of disagreements.

#6

Q6: Frank, I must thank you for giving revealing answer to the questions. Let's clarify a few things here.

What would be your advice to a member of Christ Church in Moscow, Idaho, if he confides in you that he thinks that the church and Pastor Douglas Wilson is not teaching the Gospel?

A6: If someone told me, "As a member of Christ Church in Moscow, ID, I think Doug Wilson does not preach the Gospel," after I stopped laughing I would ask him if he had spoken to Doug about it.

That is the consistent model of the NT: talk to someone whom you think is going the wrong way.

#7

Q7: You said that “Separation cannot be a matter of private judgment but a matter of ecclesiastical practice for the sake of pastoral ends.” May I know how do you reconcile this statement with your advice in your first answer: that a Christian ought to separate from Roman Catholicism? Isn't that a matter of private judgment?

A7: You have misquoted me, and excluded my actual opinion from the statement.

I said:

Unequivocally, this person you describe in your Q#1 is under the anathema of Rome. He should leave that church and seek one which does not make the mistakes Rome has made confessionally, ecclesiastically, and ecumenically.

That is: because he has been anathematized by people who are abusing their ecclesiastical power, he ought to leave. They have told him everything he needs to know, and have given him their verdict on his faith. Because they admit they do not share his, he is free to go.

#8

Q8: In the course of your cross-examination, you seem to indicate that only justification by faith alone defines true Christianity. Is your position therefore that believers should not separate from other professing believers who hold to an open canon, the Roman Catholic canon, and/or the doctrine of "partial inerrancy"? What about if churches and entire denominations hold to these views?

A8: I think it's funny that you think holding to the Roman Canon is some sort of self-contained error. Doesn't holding to the Roman Canon lead one to believe in Purgatory? I would suggest that the problem is not so much what one would hold to as additional books in the canon as *what one does with those books*.

It's a serious thing to say something is Scripture. But, for example, if one holds to a canon which includes Bel and the Dragon, and reads it as a metaphor for the final triumph of Christ without any contradiction of John's *Revelation*, in the worst case he has taken devotional literature too far and used it to reiterate what other Scripture actually says. He's calling Bel "scripture", but he's not really changing the message of Scripture.

The problem, of course, is that no one ever does this: those who add to or take away from Scripture always do it for the sake of doctrines either in the 66 books which they want to contest or which are not in the 66 books which they must add — usually to the detriment of the Gospel.

So I would say that if someone wants to hold even to an open canon, the proof of their faith is not in what books they would add but in what doctrines they would add or undo.

I would close, briefly, by also saying that the Trent view of Scripture simply flies in the face in the history of the acceptance of the texts. The majority view of the day was the shorter canon with the other books as sound devotional literature. Trent's condemnation of the shorter canon was purely political, purely a swipe at those it was seeking to drive out.

#9

Q9: Indeed. Frank, do you personally see any use for the teaching of the marks of the true church?

A9: I think it's somewhat amusing that in a debate about separation — that is, the demand that an individual must cut himself off from anyone with sufficient theological flaws -- Daniel is making much of *ecclesiastical* uses of doctrine. He can't really decide what he's demanding or when the demand became evident in the practice of the church, so he treads back to one set of doctrines which, he hopes, look enough like his demand to make some case for cutting off pastors with a lifetime of valuable and faithful ministry because of their associations with questionable characters.

That said, here are three uses of the 3 marks:

1. Didactic: that is, to systematize the teaching of Scripture for the sake of teaching the faithful about the purpose of the church. It creates categories for what Scripture teaches in a more-organic way.
2. Ecclesiological: that is, it defines what a church is and therefore what it is not. It sets the boundaries for mission and practice.

3. Missiological: that is, it creates priorities for the practical work of the church. Items not inside the three marks are secondary at best and therefore are not priorities for those who are seeking to do what the church ought to do.

Thanks for asking.

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3rd Statement by Daniel Chew (Affirmative)

I must say that the answers by Frank in the cross-examination have been very informative and revealing. First of all, I need to briefly correct some misrepresentations of my position.

It is simply wrong that I necessarily advocate cutting off from anyone who has sufficient theological flaws. It is also wrong that I would necessarily deem any church a false church by merely taking part in one 40 Days of Purpose campaign. Such errors on Frank's part suggest that Frank not only did not truly bother to understand my position, but he simply reads his stereotype of what the doctrine of separation looks like into this debate. More specifically, he reads the Fundamentalist idea of separation into the debate, whereas my view is the Reformed view not the Fundamentalist one. Seeing that I made that clear early in the debate, Frank is without excuse in bashing a straw man.

We must remember that the debate thesis is the necessity of separation from false *churches*. The debate is not about all the nuances of how the doctrine of separation is to be applied to individuals qua persons, and I thus only address individuals in their ecclesiastical positions.

To digress briefly, Frank totally misunderstands infant baptism in his answer to my second question, and since I wasn't asking about infant baptism in that question, his attack there was a cheap shot! We baptize infants not upon some "Gospel offer" but because infants are in the external aspect of the covenant of grace (i.e. the visible church). Seeing however that Frank does not get the visible/ invisible church distinction, I guess I should not expect Frank to understand this, but interested parties may want to check out Robert Reymond's *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*⁴ and John Fesko's recent book *Word, Water, and Spirit*.⁵

As I see it, the main difference between us is ecclesiology. Frank Turk holds to the Federal Vision ecclesiology, while I hold to Reformed ecclesiology. Let me unpack this so we can see the difference between the two.

First of all, we can see that Frank has no real use for the visible/ invisible church distinction. Instead, when pressed, Frank mocks the concept of the invisible church as requiring men to "discern the invisible inside the visible church."

The Reformed understanding of the Visible/ Invisible Church distinction is succinctly described in Pastor Wes White's blog article on the Federal Vision:⁶

⁴ Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 2nd Ed. (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 935-950

⁵ John V. Fesko, *Word, Water, and Spirit: A Reformed Perspective on Baptism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage, 2010)

⁶ Wes White, "Reply to the Joint FV Profession, Part 5 — The Denial of the Visible/Invisible Church Distinction", *Johannes Wesleyanus*. Accessed online at <http://www.weswhite.net/2010/03/reply-to-joint-fv-profession-part-5/> (Mar 01, 2011).

Classic Protestant theology defined the Church as true believers in Christ. ... However, these theologians also recognized that God had commanded that believers come together for joint profession, worship, and discipline. The problem is that in this external communion many gather who are not actual believers and do not possess forgiveness of sins, union with Christ, new life, and adoption. As a result, they [these theologians] followed the Bible in distinguishing the Church as it appears from the Church as it really is (see Mt. 13). This is often called the visible/invisible Church distinction.

The importance of the visible/invisible church distinction in the Church is in informing us that not everyone who is in the church is saved, and we should not presume their salvation. Rather, we judge according to their confession. With regards to churches, we are not to presume any entity that calls itself a church to be a true church, but rather to check for the biblical marks of the true church and evaluate accordingly.

The Federal Vision objectivized salvation within the church and collapsed the visible/invisible church distinction such that almost everyone in the church and every church must be taken as a church of Christ, to which all the commands for fellowshiping and giving believers the benefit of the doubt are to be applied. We can see the Federal Vision error in Frank's position as he applies all the biblical imperatives on Christian interaction to everyone and every church where possible. The traditional Reformed position is that all these are to be applied within **believers**. In other words, in the Reformed position, orthodoxy precedes church body life. The problem with Frank and the Federal Vision is that church body life trumps everything including orthodoxy.

Frank's identification with Federal Vision can be even more clearly seen when he thinks there are no problems with Douglas Wilson. This is serious as Reformed and Presbyterian denominations have denounced Federal Vision as heresy,⁷ although it is admitted they focused more on the implications its ecclesiology has on the doctrine of justification. A good book specifically on Federal Vision proponent Doug Wilson is the one by John Robbins and Sean Gerety entitled *Not Reformed At All*.⁸

The doctrine of separation according to Frank can only be applied when one is kicked out of the church, as in Roman Catholicism. Other than that, the marks of the church are merely characteristics that churches have to work towards and to work from. Such positions taken by Frank are more evidences for his Federal Vision objectivization of the covenant whereby churches and all who are in churches are to be considered Christian not because of their true confession but because they are churches and people in the churches, a position which we can be tirelessly promoted throughout this debate.

On the Reformed confessions, Frank did not answer the question put to him. The confessions were composed for many purposes, and listing down some of them does not mean that they were not meant to exclude unbelievers. It must be remembered that the confessions were written to show that the Reformers were not part of the radical Anabaptist movement, and therefore one of the purpose was to exclude these unbelievers. The ecclesiastical canon which is most explicit in being used to exclude unbelievers is of course the Canons of Dordt, which rejected the heretical opinions of the Classical Arminians and was the basis for excommunicating them from the churches.

⁷ See for example the 2006 OPC report on Justification (accessible at <http://www.opc.org/GA/justification.pdf>) and The Nine Points of URCNA Synod Schereville 2007 (accessible at <http://clark.wscal.edu/9points.php>).

⁸ John W. Robbins and Sean Gerety, *Not Reformed At All: Medievalism in "Reformed" Churches* (Unicoi, Tennessee: Trinity Foundation), 101-128

While not all doctrines are major, the whole faith is essential, as Dr. Mike Horton puts it.⁹ The Confessional Maximalist view therefore regards the Confession as regulating the faith, and thus impacting the way the marks are evaluated. It is in this light that Frank's trivializing of the Canon of Scripture is disturbing. While materially true, such a cavalier approach to the canon of Scripture (the formal principle of the Reformation) is a formal attack on the authority of Scripture. It is one thing to be honestly struggling with which books are in the Canon; it is another thing to think that changing the Canon by itself (even if no doctrines are changed) is of little importance. Such is the difference between honest enquiry and disregard for God's Word and its authority.

Going back to the biblical data on the Galatian and Corinthian churches, we can clearly see from the beginning of the epistle that Paul wrote Galatians harshly because the essential **doctrine** of the Gospel was at stake, whereas in Corinth the believers were misbehaving but the church was not in danger of losing the Gospel. Frank's argument on this fails to properly interpret the epistles. Corinth was not in any danger of degenerating into a false church whereas the ones at Galatia were. What this means for us is that doctrine is more important than practice for Paul as it should be for us. The terrible state of the Corinthian church is therefore not an apologetic for not emphasizing the importance of having a true church. Separation after all is for a true church, not a pure church.

Putting all this together, we can see the main contention arise because of Frank's Federal Vision ecclesiology. This colors his understanding of the text and results in bizarre understanding of Galatians and Corinthians.

The position I am advocating rejects Frank's Federal Vision ecclesiology. Rather, we are to apply the marks of a true church to discern true from false churches and separate from false churches. The Reformed Confessions aid us in this aspect as one of their intentions was to exclude unbelievers like the Arminians, the Socinians, the Arians and others like them.

3rd and Final Statement by Frank Turk (Negative)

Well, sadly, this is my closing statement for this exchange – Daniel, as is the custom here, gets the final word and I am pleased to give it to him. My closing thoughts, in no particular order:

- The really exciting parts of this exchange were that I am an adherent to the Federal Vision – when in fact all of the confessional documents I have referred to and endorsed were the confessions of the reformation (in spite of the fact that Daniel disqualified the LBCF as truly confessional and reformational – because they are filthy Baptists, of course); that the Reformed position (in spite of the statements in the actual confessions) is that men can see and must discern the invisible church (even though it is invisible, you see); the somehow it's my view that church body life trumps orthodoxy *even though* I explicitly said someone anathematized should leave, and that it is a proper mark of the church to exercise church discipline. It's exciting to see people who have such a damaged view of proper theology that they will read bankrupt defectiveness in anyone who points them to their own confessions and says, "well, it's clear that this is not what your confession says – maybe you should repent of that and rethink your problem."
- Daniel thinks that the reformed placed the full force of their confessions on making the church a place for *believers only*. The problem, for anyone with one good eye, is that it is the *reformed*

⁹ Michael S. Horton, "The Whole Faith is Essential: Part 1", *Valiant for Truth blog* (<http://wscal.edu/blog/entry/the-whole-faith-is-essential-part-1>). Michael S. Horton, "The Whole Faith is Essential: Part 2", *Valiant for Truth blog* (<http://wscal.edu/blog/entry/the-whole-faith-is-essential-part-2>).

confessions which demand that the sign and seal of Christ's covenant with his people – baptism – is for all believers *and their children!* It is in fact the *credobaptist* demand that the church be full of only believers. And I assume that Daniel is not one of those – he's a reformed guy after all.

- I like it that Daniel is certain he has been arguing for separation from *churches* which teach false doctrine, but that his one and only example of post-reformation heretical churches to be separated from is Doug Wilson – a man never anathematized and never even tried by any Presbytery session. But because John Robbins has written a book about Doug, well, who are we to argue? That's as good as the Council of Orange in Daniel's book.
- With regard to the confessions, I did explicitly *from the documents themselves* indicate the *explicit intent* of the authors who write them. That Daniel rejects these statements in favor of his own opinion again speaks volumes – this time, in reference to whether he is really all about how “churches” use the doctrine of separation and how he think people using their own judgment should use it.
- I also like that because my list of three uses for the 3 marks of the church didn't include, for example, disfellowshipping the adulterer or shunning the liar, Daniel thinks that I'm in favor of unity at all costs. Even the most remotely-fair reading on my answer to his question would find that I think the three marks govern *almost all* of what a church should do or seek to achieve. That he cannot see that ought to inform the reader of his agenda.
- One of the two participants here strictly cited and referred to the confession and made his points based on them; the other didn't. The reader can decide for himself which of those two actually holds the confessions in high regard and which is simply a parrot of one view of confessional life.
- Last, I enjoy it that I actually cited Scripture and pointed to the problems of Daniel's view *from the Scripture*, while he has merely declared me false with no textual evidence.

No sense in belaboring this: Daniel has an open word count to issue his final statement. I thank the readers of this exchange for their time and patience.

Concluding Statement by Daniel Chew (Affirmative)

First of all, I once again thank Frank for this debate which has indeed been very stimulating and revealing to me, as I hope it is likewise true for all our readers.

I read with astonishment Frank's final statement. The amount of misrepresentations abounds in what he says, with the most audacious being that he has cited Scripture to prove his case, as if mere quantity of Scripture citations equals orthodoxy! If quantity of citations alone equals being right in one's view, then not only is Rick Warren very orthodox, but likewise the German higher critics, whom I am sure quoted liberally from the Pentateuch as they promote the Documentary Hypothesis, were the most orthodox.

On the Confessions, there is a reason why I focus on non-Baptists. The Particular Baptists were more interested in being allowed to practice their religion instead of thinking of uniting Christians under one visible Church. Therefore, it is clear that their confession did not have such intent, so why should I belabor the obvious just so that I can give a cursory nod to my Baptist brethren?

It is pointless to show how Frank has virtually misrepresented almost all of my points as they so blatantly contradict what I have written in my statement. I will just focus on two examples. The first one deals with my proposition that local church life is to be practiced between believers. The only reason why Frank does not get it is because he like his hero Douglas Wilson collapses the internal and external aspects of the covenant into one. For Frank, children cannot be baptized because they prior to confession are not in the covenant. There is no category of being in the external aspect of the covenant of grace in Frank's view. Conversely, the

flattening out of the covenantal aspects mean that all who are “externally” in the church are also to be considered “internally” in the church (for there is no external/internal distinction) and therefore sly unbelievers who have not been disciplined as a member in any “church” (however that is defined) are to be considered true Christians. In the former case of infants, Frank’s errant ecclesiology refuses **covenant inclusion** because he has no category of being in the external aspect of the covenant, while in the latter, Frank’s view refuses **covenant exclusion** because he has no category for believers being in the internal aspect of the covenant of grace.

In the second example, Frank missed the fact that the OPC, the PCA and the URCNA have approved **ecclesiastical** statements denouncing the Federal Vision, of which I have given links to the OPC 2006 Justification Report and the URCNA Nine Points of Synod Schereville 2007. Robbins and Gerety’s book is probably the only one targeting Doug Wilson **specifically** so I gave that as a reference. There are other books denouncing the Federal Vision however like the one by Guy Prentiss Waters entitled *The Federal Vision and Covenant Theology: A Comparative Analysis*¹⁰ and the book edited by R. Scott Clark, *Covenant, Justification and Pastoral Ministry*.¹¹

Frank may continue to stick his head in the sand and ignore the multitude of pastors, professors and denominations denouncing Federal Vision as heresy, but he is in denial. I hereby call upon Frank to repent of his heretical leanings and turn to the truth. I likewise would like to take the opportunity to call upon all and sundry to reject Frank’s semi-heretical ecclesiology and the Federal Vision *in toto*. Avoid the Federal Vision and men like Douglas Wilson, Steve Wilkins, James Jordon, Peter Leithart, Jeffrey Meyers and all who are in the CREC “denomination”. These people are wolves in sheep clothing and following them would lead in the same direction as Rome, towards perdition.

Amen.

¹⁰ Guy Prentiss Water, *The Federal Vision and Covenant Theology: A Comparative Analysis* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R, 2006)

¹¹ R. Scott Clark (ed.), *Covenant, Justification and Pastoral Ministry: Essays by the Faculty of Westminster Seminary California* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R, 2007)