

REPORTS OF STANDING COMMITTEES OF SYNOD

REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND MORALS COMMITTEE

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RELIGION

Islamic fundamentalism

Tuesday, 11th September, saw the world's worst terrorist attacks. Four planes were hijacked by Muslim extremists and turned into enormous flying bombs. Two were flown into the World Trade Centre, causing the collapse of the twin towers, a third was crashed into the Pentagon and a fourth came down in a field after a heroic attempt to overcome the hijackers by passengers and crew after the hijackers began knifing the stewardesses. Such fanatical barbarity is utterly repugnant.

A Saudi Muslim extremist, Osama bin Ladin and his al-Qa'eda organisation, were found to be behind the attacks in which thousands died. Earlier in the year, bin Ladin had urged his followers to "penetrate America and Israel and hit them where it hurts most". The same group was responsible for a bomb attack on American military barracks in Saudi Arabia, and the attacks on the American Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in 1998 when 301 people died and 5,000 were injured. It is also likely that bin Ladin's group was responsible for the attack on the *USS Cole* in Aden in October 2001 which caused the deaths of 17 sailors and the wounding of 39. The Muslim extremists were trained in Afghan camps and sheltered by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The 11th September attack was the second attack on the Trade Centre by Muslim terrorists. When false religion poses such a threat to life and property the civil powers must take action in defence of their people.

Atrocities are also being perpetrated against the people and State of Israel. Palestinian suicide bombers are indiscriminately attacking Israeli men, women

and children. A recent report stated that since Yasser Arafat launched the Intifada against Israel less than two years ago, 11,000 acts of terror have been committed against this tiny state. On average, these attacks have been at the rate of 30 a day, most of which have not been reported in the Press. Whatever disagreements any may have with US foreign policy or perceived injustices with respect to Palestinians, such murderous acts of aggression should never be tolerated by any state against its citizens.

These terrorists see their activities in terms of a religious war. The Islamic faith is not, as the politicians and moderate Islamists claim, a “peaceful religion”. Islamic states are brutal and repressive. One writer recently said that the “breeding ground for such killers lies in the Islamic doctrine which divides the world into ‘Dar-al-Islam’ (House of Islam) and the Western Judaeo-Christian ‘Dar-al-Harb’ (House of War). The conflict between the two, according to normal (not extremist) Islamic doctrine, is interrupted only by states of truce, and will never cease until the whole world is brought under the sway of the Dar-al-Islam.” There is an important distinction to be noted with respect to these conflicts. On the Muslim extremist side we see a religious war being conducted by indiscriminate, murderous attacks against civilians. America, Britain and the State of Israel, on the other hand, are not engaged in religious warfare. In this case we see civil powers lawfully seeking to defend their citizens by targeting the terrorists.

It is solemn to think that Sinn Fein/IRA, who pursued their own ends by terrorism, used to meet on the 106th floor of the north tower of the World Trade Centre.

Muslim extremists and British mosques

This worldwide terror campaign is being conducted in the name of “religion” and a significant number of persons deeply involved are British born Muslims or British citizens of the Islamic faith. British mosques have become recruiting fields for Muslim extremists and breeding grounds of religious hatred. Radical Muslim clerics have been freely inciting their followers to commit atrocious crimes whilst receiving the benefits and protection of the British state. It has been left to newspapers to expose Islamic leaders like Sheikh Abdullah el-Faisal who now stands accused of inciting British Muslims to kill “filthy Jews” and “infidels”. Even as we write, reports have appeared that Muslims have been training with AK47 rifles in London’s Finsbury Park mosque.

The UK authorities are more concerned to protect Islamists from a British backlash than to protect British people from Islamic fundamentalism. Thankfully there are now some signs that the authorities are beginning to wake up to reality. When blame was being laid on the failure of US intelligence, one American defence expert pointed out that none of their officers had been permitted to investigate British mosques since the early ’nineties. A *Times*’ editorial (5th February) accuses the Home Office of being “afraid to act against Muslim extremists”. This feeble approach sends out a completely wrong signal when Islamic extremism is being supported by so many young

British Muslims. In October a poll, conducted by an Asian radio station, showed that 98% of Moslems in London under the age of 45 would not fight for Britain whilst 48% said they would take up arms for Osama bin Ladin. A *Times*' poll revealed that 40% of British Muslims believed that Osama bin Ladin was "justified" in mounting a war against America and the same proportion felt that British citizens who joined the Taleban were justified in doing so. The despising and rejection of the Gospel of Christ will have serious consequences for all in time and for eternity.

Multiculturalism

This policy is not only bound up with the protection of other cultures but, more importantly, with the various forms of false religion that accompany them. It gives a false impression of being a just and fair means of promoting peace and harmony among men but it is in truth a divisive and irrational policy concocted by men and women who have abandoned the counsel of God revealed in the Bible. The summary of the divine law is love to God and our neighbour. It therefore follows that if we are to comply with God's will we cannot encourage men to continue in sin. The Christian response to people of other faiths is to seek by kindly Gospel persuasion (not force) to win them to Christ but definitely not to regard their various forms of false religion just as different ways of worshipping the same God.

Multiculturalism has been at the core of Government thinking since the 'sixties and even some Muslim leaders have seen how divisive this policy has been. There is a serious problem within the Muslim community due in part to a policy that has allowed extremism to flourish. Furthermore a Commission for Racial Equality has been set up, whose existence depends on the false idea that Britain is a society awash with racism. The policy makers have become paranoid about human rights and charges of "racism" or so-called "Islamaphobia" and the Government seems afraid or incapable of acting appropriately.

All this is taking place against the background of a sharp decline in Christianity in Britain. At the same time it is a disturbing fact that, according to statistics, the largest absolute increase of all the religions in Britain between 1980 and 1995 was in the Muslim community! A new mosque is opening every week in Britain and there are fifty mosques in the city of Bradford alone. The Imams are accountable to no one, neither is there a proper system of government or discipline in the mosques. Over the last thirty years the Muslim community in Britain has doubled and within it a very extreme element has been permitted to develop. Enclaves of extremism and hatred have been created. Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists are afraid to change their false gods but we, like the Jews of Jeremiah's day, have changed our glory for that which doth not profit (Jeremiah 2:11). The lessons of the Bible have been forgotten.

The Protestant succession

The Roman Catholic party in the country has so far failed in its attempts to overthrow our Protestant constitution. Nevertheless, erosion of the status quo

continues apace. Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth, has served her people well in many respects over a long period of time. But as each year passes the reality is underlined that our Queen is not embracing biblical Christianity as represented in the constitution of our country but is under the influence of false teachers and blind leaders. Contrary to solemn coronation vows, our Queen has held communion with and demonstrated subservience to the "See of Rome" by her visits in black to the Vatican and the countenance given to the late Cardinal Hume and consequently all that he stood for.

In 1982 two persons, both unlawfully claiming headship of the Church in England, met when the Queen entertained the Pope in Buckingham Palace. (The title Supreme Governor of the Church of England is not in essence different from that of head.) In 1995 the Queen attended a full Roman Catholic service when she attended vespers in Westminster Cathedral. Such breaches of Coronation vows by British Monarchs have been made before. King Edward VII caused protests when he attended a Requiem Mass at St. James's RC Church, Spanish Place, London in 1908, and George V attended a Requiem Mass at the Benedictine Abbey of St. Michael in Farnborough.

A Roman Catholic army chaplain, the late Monsignor Kevin Vasey, was appointed a Queen's Honorary Chaplain in 1999. This was the first time that a Roman Catholic priest had been made a Queen's Honorary Chaplain. A further retrograde step was taken when Hume's successor, Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, the leader of Roman Catholics in England and Wales, was invited to preach in the Sandringham church on 13th January, at the Queen's personal invitation. It was reported that a spokesman for the Cardinal said: "The Cardinal is deeply honoured by the Queen's invitation. It is a clear sign of the Queen's willingness to promote ecumenism." A Buckingham Palace official said that the invitation was "in the spirit of co-operation, unity and friendship, that Her Majesty has always practised". We wonder whether Her Majesty is aware that the chief and only bond of ecclesiastical unity in Rome's view is "to adhere to the Roman See, and continue in subjection to it". As far as we know, the only Cardinal to preach to Her Majesty before this was Basil Hume, who preached at the opening of the new ecumenical church in Milton Keynes in 1992.

Giving place to the priests of Rome is dishonouring to our great High Priest, the Lord Jesus Christ. The priestly office came to an end among men with the coming of Christ. Christ is the anti-type of the Aaronic priesthood. It is blasphemous for the Pope and his fellow priests to assume the office of Christ and claim to be "continuing the priesthood of Christ". All this gives rise to grave concern for the succession and for Her Majesty's spiritual state in view of eternity. May the Lord open the eyes of our beloved Queen.

The Queen's sister, Princess Margaret, passed away in February and her remains were disposed of, not by Christian burial, but by the unscriptural practice of cremation. This is the first time that the remains of a member of the Royal family have been treated in this way. Furthermore, it seems that the Princess had a strong leaning to the Roman Catholic Church. In a recent

biography of Princess Margaret it is alleged that the only reason that she did not become a convert to Roman Catholicism was out of loyalty to her sister as Supreme Governor of the Church of England (*Times*, 25th February).

It is quite clear from the events of recent years that the Gospel of Christ, to which the British constitution bears witness, is not valued or prized but rather despised and rejected by the powers that be and many of our people.

The Pope and the Jews

Whatever cruelty and fury may in the future emanate from the Papacy it is evident that the reign of the Papal Antichrist will yet come to an end. In order that this may take place the real nature of the Papacy must be revealed and made known to the world at large. This is an age of unprecedented deception and the Papal propaganda machine is busy papering over the truth in order to justify the continued existence of this corrupt antichristian institution. Whatever we may say of Islam, the famous 18th century Scottish economist, Adam Smith, was clear that Rome stood at the head of the hierarchy of evil when he wrote in his *Wealth of Nations* that: "The constitution of the Church of Rome may be considered the most formidable combination that was ever formed against the authority and security of civil government as well as against the liberty, reason, and happiness of mankind." Such statements are not made without reason.

The wickedness of the Papacy has been well documented since the Reformation of the 16th century but in recent times, in the context of vastly increased dissemination of information to the general public, some notable facts have been revealed.

The wider public is still to a large extent unaware of what kind of institution the Papacy really is or that the wartime Pope Pius XII was accused of complicity in the crimes of the Nazi regime against the Jews. One of the ways the Vatican sought to answer these charges was by claiming that the Papacy was neutral. It was on this ground that "for much of the war, Pius maintained a public front of indifference and remained silent while German atrocities were committed. He refused help on the ground of neutrality."

In 1962 the truth concerning the wartime activities of Pius XII was drawn to popular notice by a play called *The Deputy*, by Rolf Hochhuth. This play "triggered Roman Catholic outrage worldwide". The Vatican issued large numbers of documents in its defence and this has generated an extensive historical debate on the role of Pius. In the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* of October 2001 an article appeared entitled "The Vatican Archives". This article draws attention to the findings of historians that confirm the accusations against Pius XII (*Hitler's Pope*, by John Cornwell) despite the fact that the historians were only allowed to see some archive material. Since then other studies have been made public. *Unholy War*, by David Kertzer, is a shocking account of the Vatican's role in the rise of modern anti-Semitism.

In 1987 the Pope asked his "Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews" to "determine what responsibility, if any, the Church bore for the slaughter of millions of European Jews during World War II?". The

Commission's answer (*We Remember: A Reflection on the Shoah*), said Kertzer, was a resounding "no". Kertzer knew that the history presented by the Vatican was terribly wrong. It was not what actually happened. It was a cover up. Historians point out that any support that the Pope did give to the Jews came after 1942, once US officials had told the Pope that the allies wanted total victory, and it became likely that they would get it (see article by Shira Schoenberg, "Pope Pius XII and the Holocaust").

Roman Catholic Saints

The controversy over Pius is being kept on the agenda, at least in part, by the present Pope's insistence that Pius XII should be canonised. Another candidate for this unscriptural practice is Josemaria Escriva de Balague, a Spanish cleric and founder of the sinister Opus Dei society. This Roman Catholic cult, answerable only to the Pope, played a significant role in "bailing the Vatican out of the Ambrosiano Bank scandal" (*The Pope's Armada*, by G. Urquhart). A third choice for canonisation is Padre Pio, a supposedly miracle-working friar and mystic from southern Italy.

The present round of canonisations will bring the total number of saints created by the Pope since his election in 1978 to 470. He has also beatified 1,300 people. This is the first step to canonisation. Two miracles must be performed by the candidate in order to qualify for canonisation. Miracles performed by the bodily remains of the candidate are a special proof of his or her merits. The remains are then preserved as holy relics and the saint may be worshipped. It has been reported in the *Times* that an illiterate woman from West Bengal, called Monika Besra, was said to be suffering from stomach cancer. She apparently prayed to Mother Teresa's picture beside her bed. In September 1998, on the first anniversary of Mother Teresa's death, two nuns took a silver medallion which had been placed on Mother Teresa's body after her death and tied it to the sick woman's stomach. She fell asleep while the nuns prayed and on awaking she found that the tumour had gone! This event will no doubt be of real assistance to the Vatican "theologians" in helping them to decide on whether or not Mother Teresa should be added to the roll of saints.

Praying to dead saints was first authorised by Pope Gregory at the close of the 6th century but like all of Rome's false teachings the practice has no biblical warrant.

Roman Catholics in high places

All true Christians desire that poor people would be saved out of that system of superstition and error that is the Roman Catholic Church and that the true Gospel might be preserved from compromise. This will not happen unless a clear distinction is maintained between the teachings of Rome and the Gospel of Christ. This is one reason why it so important for Protestants to keep fast hold on the Bible and to resist the resurgence of Romanism.

The Monarch is forbidden to marry a Roman Catholic and before the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, Roman Catholics were not allowed to sit

in Parliament. Now things are changing. It is reported that Tony Blair usually worships in a Roman Catholic Church. Mrs. Blair is a Roman Catholic and a republican. Iain Duncan Smith, Charles Kennedy, Michael Ancram, Bill Cash, General Sir Charles Guthrie, Chris Patten, Anne Widdecombe, the present Northern Ireland secretary, and a large percentage of the Scottish Parliament are Roman Catholics. Mr. Michael Martin is the first Roman Catholic Speaker of the Commons to be elected for 442 years.

Roman Catholics find our Protestant Constitution offensive and discriminatory but it is not individuals who are being rejected by the Constitution but the doctrines, claims and superstitions of Rome. One would expect persons of intelligence and ability who occupy public positions to make informed and rational choices in life and distance themselves from Romish error. They should be men and women of principle and integrity. Who can have confidence in leaders who cannot or will not see through the falsehood of Roman Catholicism, who are supporters of the Papacy, who pray to the dead, who believe in relics, who worship images, and who defend a system that is not willing to administer appropriate discipline to its clergy for serious immorality?

Cardinal Murphy O'Connor sent a priest, who was a convicted paedophile, back to work, as a priest, at an airport chapel. In the past five years a significant number of priests in England and Wales have been convicted of sex offences against children. The incidence of paedophile crimes among priests has been far higher among Roman Catholic priests than in the population at large. As in other parts of the Roman system there is a culture of secrecy, a covering of sin, an unwillingness to face the truth, a blind belief in a church that will never ever reform.

The former Bishop of Aberdeen, Archbishop Mario Conti, succeeded Cardinal Thomas Winning and became the new leader of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Glasgow in February. As might be expected, Conti is a bitter enemy of Protestantism. The Church of Rome in Scotland includes 8 Dioceses with 51 parishes and an assortment of religious orders of Benedictines, Carmelites, Cistercians, Jesuits, Marists, Passionists, etc. Roman Catholic writers think they have got a scent of victory now that they see formerly Protestant Churches moving towards the Roman camp. An article in the *Times* of last December was entitled "The Quiet Rebirth of Catholic England". The writer quoted Cardinal John Henry Newman when he said that, "Protestantism is the intellectual and moral language of the body politic". The writer notes the changed situation in our day with the ascendancy of Roman Catholics into the most exalted positions and expresses astonishment that no one notices and no one cares. She finished her article with a thinly veiled call to rally round the Roman standard. Another writer thinks that, "we are indifferent mourners to the strange death of Protestant England". Nevertheless, despite the fact that in our day truth is fallen in the street, better days are on the wing when Rome shall fall and the true Gospel witness shall be revived and prevail (Revelation 11:11, 20:2).

British Churches

Figures show that 52% of British people now have no religious affiliation at all. The Church of England continues to depart from its biblical foundations, as we see from daily press reports. Over the last 45 years, numbers attending the Church of England have fallen by half. The choice of a new Archbishop of Canterbury is on the agenda this year and the contest once again draws attention to the errors of Erastianism and Episcopalianism that prevail in the Church of England.

The three candidates in the field are the Most Reverend Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Wales, who is a liberal, the Right Reverend Michael Nazir-Ali, who is said to be an evangelical, and the Right Reverend Richard Chartres, who is described as a conservative. If Nazir-Ali is an evangelical after the fashion of George Carey, as is likely, then that will not augur well for the Church of England. Truly evangelical prelates of the Church of England like Bishop Ryle, who adhered to the doctrine of the Reformers, appear to have become entirely extinct.

The biblical system of Church government has been rejected by the Church of England and as a consequence that Church has little say in the appointment of its chief officer. The Crown Appointments Commission have the responsibility of drawing up a shortlist but Mr. Blair, the Prime Minister, has the real say and even the General Synod has no veto over Mr. Blair's choice. One writer has said that the Archbishop of Canterbury "will owe his position entirely to Tony Blair". The Queen gives final approval but will not overrule Mr. Blair. One friend of the family has described Mr. Blair as half a Roman Catholic! Others have described him as an "an active evangelical Anglican" but he himself is reported as saying that he would not convert to Rome as long as he remains Prime Minister, which suggests that he is a Roman Catholic in all but name. Such "Canterbury Tales" have provoked some to renew calls for the disestablishment of the Church of England. Roman Catholics do not want disestablishment because their ambition is to swallow up the Church of England and take its place. May the Lord forbid this. These "theatricals", however, need to be abandoned and our National Churches should return to the biblical system set forth so clearly and logically in the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Presbyterian Form of Church Government.

The Church of Scotland continues to move further away from the scriptural position taken up at the Reformation. Last year the Panel on Doctrine continued the presentation of their findings on the ministry. The Working Party on Ordination co-operated with representatives from the United Free Church, the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Roman Catholic Church. The ecumenical trend at the expense of truth is accelerating the decline. The Church of Scotland is undermining and changing the peculiar and distinct position of the ministry and is moving away from the biblical position.

The Free Church continues to drift from the position of the 1843 Free Church in the general direction of the Church of Scotland. The Free Church Continuing and the Free Church are going to court over the property issue. The

constitutional position of each body will no doubt be examined in great detail, whatever the outcome may be. The Associated Presbyterian Church is gradually disappearing as the people are absorbed into other churches. The difference between the APC and the Free Presbyterian Church of 1893 becomes ever more apparent. We wonder whether the rank and file of the APC know that their claim to be the true Free Presbyterian Church is the basis of their claim to our property? Any person should be able to see that there are no grounds upon which the APC can justifiably sustain such a claim.

Overseas

It is sad to read of the President of the United States of America, George W. Bush, lauding the Man of Sin last year at the dedication of the Pope John Paul II Cultural Centre. "I'm grateful," said Mr. Bush, "that Pope John Paul II chose Washington as the site of this centre. It brings honour and it fills a need. We are thankful for the message. We are also thankful for the messenger, for his personal warmth and prophetic strength; for his good humour and his bracing honesty; for his spiritual and intellectual gifts; for his moral courage, tested against tyranny and against our own complacency. Always, the Pope points us to the things that last and the love that saves. We thank God for this rare man, a servant of God and a hero of history." Does Mr. Bush really believe that the Pope of Rome points us to the things that last and the love that saves?

In February, reports appeared in the press of the rape and torture of Christians in China. Death sentences have been passed on several leading Christians in recent months. The brave Chinese official who risked his life in leaking documentation of the barbaric treatment of Christians in China is to be commended. The brutal sectarian conflict in Gurjarat, Northern India, between Hindu and Muslim mobs, where hundreds of people have been killed, some by being burnt alive, stemmed from a conflict over so-called holy sites. This shows the danger of false teachings that make buildings and sites, holy places of worship.

Although darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people we have no reason to be discouraged. Jacob is small but the word of promise is: "Fear not little flock; for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). While the Free Presbyterian Church endeavours to maintain a faithful Gospel witness in various parts of the world, we and all who love the Truth long for the full answer to the prayer, "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen and Amen" (Psalm 72:19).

MORALS

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, is reported to have said recently, "Whatever our faults, Britain is a very moral nation with a strong sense of right and wrong, and that moral fibre will defeat the fanaticism of terrorists and their supporters". It is our conviction that this statement ignores Britain's desperate

weakness, and so fails to identify the solution. There is one word that characterises the state of our nation morally – confusion. There is a hue and cry against people hunting foxes with hounds and horses, and the Scottish Executive supports their cause with legislation. But those who lift up their voice to protect living but unborn human beings, full of wondrous potential, meet outraged and irrational opposition. Again, sexually transmitted diseases are bringing what seems to be continents of people to their graves, but the UK’s laws encourage further promiscuity. There is a will in the corridors of power to shield children within their families, but the same body of power exposes children to sexually explicit material in schools. Lawful marriage, and the rearing of children within the framework of a stable relationship, with their fathers and mothers around them, is spoken of as the bedrock of society, but teachers may yet be disciplined if they do not teach children that a homosexual relationship is as normal as marriage between one man and one woman.

We believe that a sovereign God rules over all the earth and that finally the nations of the world will willingly bow to Him. However, we also believe that the apostle Paul identifies the opposition with which a witnessing Christian Church has to engage in this world, until these days come. He says: “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12).

Sodomy

In the 1950s the UK Department of Health recorded 100,000 cases affected by sexually transmitted diseases. In the 1990s the figure (from the same source) was over 800,000 (*Britain in Sin: Christian Voice*).

“By 2003 it is feared that there will be 29,000 people in the country with HIV, compared with 20,800 at the beginning of this year. In Scotland, more than 3,000 people have been infected with HIV, of whom 1,150 have died, says the Scottish Centre for Infection and Environmental Health. It was estimated that throughout the world about three million people died from Aids in 2000. . . . The rapid and relentless spread of this fearful disease is a compelling witness to the dreadful consequences of the sin which is its main cause. There are other causes which do not involve any sin, but transgression of the Seventh Commandment continues to be the principal cause. The witness of Scripture is loud and clear: ‘Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap’ (Galatians 6:7)” (*Free Presbyterian Magazine*, January 2001).

The UK, in 1967, legalised homosexual acts between consenting adults. In 1994 the age of consent was lowered from 21 to 18. Now the Government has lowered the age of consent further from 18 to 16 by passing the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill, although the House of Lords rejected the proposal three times.

On the occasion of the last mentioned surrender of moral ground the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* commented: “Despite the fact that the Bill exposes

both boys and girls, at an age at which they are still children in law, to the predatory activities of older men . . . the Government . . . pressed ahead, in the face of the clearest medical and ethical evidence about the dangers of this vile perversion. . . . In its determination to overcome all opposition and suppress further debate, the Government used the Parliament Act (a rarely-used procedure that was originally adopted for major constitutional issues; it has always been reserved for such issues and not used in matters of conscience). . . . Baroness Young, who has led opposition to the Bill for the last two years, accused the Government of behaving in a ‘completely dictatorial manner’ towards Parliament” (Vol. 106 No. 1).

The General Teaching Council for England (GTC), the new regulator for the teaching profession, produced a draft code for teachers in 2001. This code would have required all teachers to fully respect differences of sexual orientation. Though it was intended that the Code would have had legal status and employers taking disciplinary action against teachers would have inevitably used it, it has now been stripped of its formal legal status, and substantial changes for the better have been made to it. We have reason to be thankful that there was sufficient pressure put upon the GTC on this occasion to change their direction, but it is alarming to see the length to which such influential bodies as these are prepared to go in order to normalise homosexual practices.

The *Daily Mail* reported (5th March 2002) that “Homosexual couples and unmarried partners have been granted a raft of new rights in a stealth operation by the Scottish Executive”. The paper says that next of kin status has been given to those who have been living together for six months. “Bills have been quietly amended to ensure that cohabittees and [homosexual] partners are treated in the same way as spouses.” The paper says that the Scottish Executive has “effectively declared war on the one institution it should be shoring up urgently as the best antidote to social disintegration”, and “The Scottish Parliament has a vendetta against marriage: that became obvious during the Section 28 controversy, when it stubbornly resisted public pressure to acknowledge its status, even in the mildest terms. MSPs are recklessly undermining the most effective instrument of social stability.” The Scottish Executive expect to publish plans for changes to Family law in Scotland, the *Mail* says.

In Westminster, MPs are drawing up plans to give homosexuals the same rights as married couples. According to the Christian Institute, these changes involve “what would surely be the most radical change to family law in English legal history”. Homosexual partners make up a small percentage of all households, “Yet under the [proposed] Bill virtually all the legal rights and privileges of married couples are handed to homosexual couples who have lived together for six months and register their partnership”. The Institute says that such a proposal, “completely dismantles the Western legal tradition whereby marriage is accorded special respect and protection. . . . It equates [homosexual] liaisons and temporary relationships with marriage. . . . It gives the legal privileges of married couples to the 50,000 [homosexual] households but

the law continues to withhold them from the 3.4 million people who share a home . . . [for example] two spinsters who lived together for 40 years gain nothing from the Bill unless they pretend to be in a lesbian partnership.”

The Word of God speaks of homosexuality as an evidence of a reprobate mind, the degrading practice of those who have been given over to vile affections, by God. “Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves. . . . For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet And even as they did not like to retain God in [their] knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (Romans 1:24, 26-28). In spite of the clear biblical teaching regarding the sinfulness of homosexual behaviour, and the medical evidence of its dangers, we see Westminster and Holyrood bow to the pressure of those who demand the protection of the law, while they seduce our children, and the rights and privileges of married couples while they undermine marriage. Those who read their Bibles, believing that God speaks there authoritatively, view the strong influence of this reprobate mind in our land with great alarm.

Drug abuse

“Mr. Keith Hellawell, who was formerly in charge of implementing the Government’s policy on drugs, recently stated that all heroin addicts he had met said their substance abuse began with cannabis. . . . The country’s leading drugs expert, Professor John Henry, . . . warned: ‘Scientific studies show overwhelmingly that cannabis use causes physical and mental harm.’ Baroness Susan Greenfield, Professor of Pharmacology at Oxford University, agrees: ‘A fundamental fallacy lies at the heart of the calls to decriminalise cannabis. This is the belief that the drug is essentially harmless. As a neuroscientist, I have been convinced by in-depth research that this is untrue. In fact, there is a wealth of evidence to show that cannabis may be dangerous, causing permanent long-term damage to the brain and undermining the mental health of users’” (*Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 106 No. 12).

Despite the opinion of the experts quoted above, the Home Secretary, Mr. David Blunkett, announced that cannabis is to be reclassified from Class B to Class C; it has been effectively decriminalised, resulting, no doubt in its increased use and a legalised gateway to harder drugs.

Cocaine use has increased fivefold among young people over the past two years.

Yet in drugs education resources, recommended by the Scottish Executive for use by teachers, it is recommended that children are to be told that crack cocaine is not necessarily addictive, and that most drug users come to little harm. One teaching pack says: “Teachers sometimes feel under a lot

of pressure to teach from an anti-drug perspective.” They are advised to “resist this pressure”. This “liberal” approach exacerbates what is already a grave problem.

Sex education in schools

Some of the Scottish Executive’s recommended material for sex education in schools has been described as “the lurid index of a pornographic magazine”. Children from the youngest age would be exposed to vile and degrading suggestions, if some of the recommended material were to be used in schools. And the astonishing fact is, that in some regions it is reported that this degrading material is being used. It is gratifying to know that four councils in Scotland have banned the Executive’s sex education guidelines within their borders.

Closely associated with this topic is the government policy to provide contraception for youngsters to avoid unwanted pregnancies, especially among those who are under 18 years of age. An article in the *Times* (5th March 2002) states that “Access to contraception does not reduce teenage pregnancies according to new research”. The paper goes on to say that there is some evidence that “greater access to family planning services was associated with an increase in under age pregnancy”. Britain has one of the highest rates of teenage pregnancies in Europe. The heedless insensibility with which the Government ignores the moral degeneracy of our nation might be gauged by reports in the press of the shocking indecency of our Prime Minister wearing an image of a naked woman on his shirt cuff while representing Great Britain in Australia this Spring.

Discipline in the home

While the Scottish Executive is recommending material that would degrade our children, should teachers expose them to it, they also seek to defend children from violence in the home. They will not, however, simply legislate against cruelty in the home, they also intend to interfere with the parent’s right to exercise loving discipline. The Word of God forbids using violence against our children, but it does not forbid using physical chastisement. “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15). “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Proverbs 13:24). The present state of morals in society is a fruit of our policy regarding the punishment of offenders, whether in schools, in the home or in society at large. How perfectly apt the words of King Solomon: “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame” (Proverbs 29:15). We believe that our present moral degeneracy is a rod for the back of a foolish nation that has been too wise in its own eyes to show respect to the law of God. Solomon said: “A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool’s back” (Proverbs 26:3).

THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

Abortion

Those who pity foxes succeeded in having fox hunting banned in Scotland (though at the time of writing it is understood that there is to be an appeal against the ruling), while on the other hand, those who pity the unborn child cannot get their voice of concern heard.

The Bourne Judgement in 1937 in effect allowed abortion on the grounds of mental health on a girl who had been raped. At that time, the practice of abortion was completely governed by the Offences Against the Person Act of 1861 which allowed a pregnancy to be terminated only to save the life of the mother. “When the judgement was first made nobody dreamed that it would lead ultimately to abortion on demand and it took decades for it to affect the medical profession. By the 1950s, however, if women knew ‘where to go’, had enough money and were prepared to tell a psychiatrist that they would commit suicide unless the pregnancy was ended, it was pretty easy to get an abortion” (*The Right to Life*).

There are about 600 abortions carried out every working day in this country, and the number is increasing every year. As a nation, we have stood by while the most fundamental human obligation to its own offspring has been violated. The light of 6,000,000 potentially useful lives have been put out in the last half of the 20th century. How many men and women of vision might this nation have produced had we not begun and supported this incomprehensible slaughter?

We must not forget that a proportion, however small, of these abortions were carried out to save the mother’s life. With such we feel the deepest sympathy. It is with the reckless and selfish extinguishing of the unborn that right-minded people are appalled.

Euthanasia

Voluntary Euthanasia societies say that we ought to have a choice in the matter of death, whether people die “in a way that reflects their living, perhaps retaining some control over the dying process and maybe the time and circumstances of death and, even if it is never used, holding the key to the door marked ‘Exit’” (Scottish Voluntary Euthanasia Society).

The recent history of the pressure to legalise euthanasia shows who is gaining ground in the argument.

In 1984 the Supreme Court of the Netherlands declared that voluntary euthanasia is acceptable subject to ten clearly defined conditions. Since then, doctors in the Netherlands have been free from fear of prosecution for taking away the life of a patient within the parameters of that law. Each year some 2000 people have their life taken away there. That figure is bound to rise now that the lower house of the Dutch Parliament has made euthanasia legal.

There is a worldwide trend in the same direction as the following information shows.

In 1985 Lord Jenkins presented a Bill to the Lords to repeal a relevant clause of the English Suicide Act, but was defeated. In 1990 Roland Boyes MP presented a Bill to Parliament in favour of euthanasia. He too was defeated. In 1991 the United States Congress passed the “Patient Self-Determination Act”, compelling hospitals to respect Living Wills. The British Medical Association then declared its support for Living Wills.

In 1995 the British Medical Association produced a Code of Practice on Living Wills. In 1996 Northern Territory, Australia, passed the first law in the world to allow active voluntary euthanasia. This allowed doctors to administer a lethal injection. The law was overturned six months later, by the Australian Federal Government. In the same year Paul Brady was admonished and set free by the Scottish Courts for assisting in the suicide of his brother.

Human cloning

The Government is proposing to amend the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990 to legalise “therapeutic” cloning. Cloning, whether “therapeutic”, for research purposes, or “reproductive”, involves generating human life. Allowing therapeutic cloning would result in an indefinite number of embryos being cloned and then destroyed in the course of research.

Intolerance of Christian principles

One of the functions of the minister of Christ is to act as a watchman. His duty as such, is to identify and expose the movements of the enemies of Jesus Christ, and of true religion, such as the papal antichrist, and the followers of the false prophet Mohammed.

The period covered by this report saw both the Westminster and the Holyrood Parliaments produce documents for legislation which many believed encroached on the Protestant Church’s liberty to serve her Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

Legislation was pushed through the House of Commons, ostensibly to counter terrorism but containing far-reaching measures which could criminalise the minister’s duty to be a watchman. In the providence of God, the House of Lords proved to be an effective check, and that freedom of speech, purchased by the blood of our reforming and covenanting forefathers, is with us still.

In Scotland, where there is no upper chamber to check a wilful and reckless Executive, the same fears, concerning the loss of freedom of speech in our pulpits, were raised with regard to Mr. Donald Gorrie’s consultation document, *Protection from Sectarianism and Religious Hatred*.

Mr. Gorrie’s concern it seems was sparked off mainly by sectarian violence at football matches. This problem was effectively addressed in Ulster by the disbanding of those football clubs which fostered sectarianism. The threat of disbanding clubs might be an effective deterrent for football sectarianism in Scotland. But Mr. Gorrie has cast his net further afield.

The proposed Bill's main proposition is that a code of conduct should be drawn up by those organisations deemed to have the potential for sectarian violence, among which are not only football clubs but churches (Mr. Gorrie was anxious to point out that denominational schools would not be affected by his proposals).

It is with justified resentment, that we find sectarian football clubs and the Visible Church banded together as organisations, whose activities are held to be of such a character, as to require the passing of new laws to restrain them. That Mr. Gorrie failed to draw a line between religious hooligans and the historic biblical Christianity which we as a Church seek to uphold is, quite frankly, sinister. We fear that there is such ignorance of true religion in Scotland that strongly held biblical views, and the behaviour of drunkards and others who perpetrate violence in the name of the Christian religion, are viewed as different manifestations of the same principles. No cognisance is taken of the fact that those who have deeply held beliefs, adhering firmly to the biblical principles, regarding Truth and error, as expressed in the Word of God, and summarised in the Westminster Confession of Faith, are among the most law-abiding, friendly and public-spirited people in the nation.

As to a code of conduct required by the State, any person with a knowledge of Scottish Church history knows that the Presbyterian Church is, as a matter of principle, totally opposed to the imposition of a code of conduct upon the Church of Christ by the State.

Over the centuries, the Scottish people have contended for the non-interference of Church and State in one another's province. This has contributed significantly to the freedoms enjoyed by our people. The Church, like any other body, is subject to the censures of the magistrate if guilty of a crime that comes within his province, but to impose a code upon the Church and introduce a mechanism which makes appeal to a body outside of the Church part of the Church's formal procedures is a reversal of the freedoms secured at great cost in the past.

How would the imposition of a code of conduct upon the members of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland change the attitudes of hooligans on the terraces, or drunkards in a public house? That we would be required by law to promise that we do not commit crimes we never intended to commit is objectionable. It is an unwarranted intrusion on the liberty of any legitimate corporation of subjects to require them, in effect, to bind themselves, to take steps to promise not to commit a crime themselves, or, to prevent members of the corporation from committing an act of violence, or other breach of the law, which neither they nor those associated with them, have the least inclination to commit. The law should take to do with those accused of crimes, not to try to get law-abiding citizens to repudiate actions which they have no intention of committing or to repudiate views either which they do not hold, or which they are entitled to hold and to propagate.

Whether this Bill will make it to the statute books is not yet clear, but the wheels of change have been set in motion. Unless the Most High intervene, the

momentum that changed attitudes and laws regarding the sanctity of human life, and the importance of legitimate marriage to society, will bring about the silencing of all who wish to oppose the enemies of Jesus Christ.

The Synod of this Church strongly opposed such a Bill in May last year. They “envisaged legislation of the kind proposed easily becoming a tool for those seeking to suppress legitimate views and criticism and biblical evangelism”.

Pressure to change the Act of Settlement

It was argued by Kevin MacNamara MP in his Private members’ Bill recently supported in the House of Commons, that there is unfairness in the constitution of the throne of Great Britain, which allows the British Monarch to be, or be married to, a person of almost any persuasion whatever, except a Roman Catholic. It is usually the case that Private members’ Bills run out of Parliamentary time and do not become law; we trust that that will be the case in this instance.

However, this is but the latest attempt to charge the Act of Settlement with bias against Roman Catholicism. The fact that a Roman Catholic association with the throne is forbidden was called by one member of the Upper House, Britain’s “murky little secret”.

The reason for this exclusion, let us remind ourselves, is, that, no organisation ever so embittered the British people as the Papacy did. We firmly believe that Romanism poses the same danger to our religious and civil liberties, today, as it did when a chastened British people enshrined, in the Act of Settlement, as a warning, to all future generations, their grievous experience of popery. There they state that “it hath been found by experience that it is inconsistent with the safety and welfare of this Protestant Kingdom to be governed by a Popish Prince, or any king or queen married to a Papist”. The *Times* article, “Paedophile priests to be ‘tried’ without police” (9th January 2002), which speaks of a desire within the papacy to deal with the criminal offences of its priests internally, confirms our fear of popery. Was not a powerful, corrupt and unaccountable papacy, the grief which our forefathers bitterly regretted, and warned succeeding generations against in the Act of Settlement?

CONCLUSION

We have scratched the surface of Britain’s moral degeneracy.

The two great spheres of our national life, the Church and the State, flounder, bow and submit to the clamorous voice of immorality. Is Mr. Blair’s Britain “a very moral nation with a strong sense of right and wrong”? We fear that, having abandoned the Word of God, there is strong evidence that we have little idea of what morality is. While we wish to respect the office of our Prime Minister, we profoundly regret his immoral example and double standards: speaking on one occasion of being the leader of a nation of moral strength, and on another embellishes the cuff of his shirt with the image of a naked woman.

To a degenerate Israel God spoke by his prophet: “I will go [and] return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early” (Hosea 5:15). This nation must repent of its sins. As it is prophetically said of Israel may it soon be true of Britain: “A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping [and] supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, [and] they have forgotten the Lord their God” (Jeremiah 3:21).

To those who love the peace and prosperity of our land we commend the Word of God as our infallible guide in all matters, the throne of grace as the place to seek mercy with weeping unto the Lord for our sins as a nation, so that we and our children might enjoy the promise made to Israel of old: “And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying” (Isaiah 65:19).

When we return wholeheartedly to the faith of the Word of God then we will have the moral fibre, the strength of character and that quietness of conscience that will make our nation great again.