

# REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND MORALS COMMITTEE

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## RELIGION

IN presenting the Religion and Morals Report to the Synod we do so conscious of the fact that there is little to encourage us in this dark and cloudy day of much false religion and abominations. Upon considering the state of religion at home and abroad, there are signs that the Lord's wrath is against Britain and other nations. His wrath is mainly manifested in the widespread despising of Christ offered in the Gospel, as well as horrible profanity of life, and ignorance of God and His word. Throughout the land the forces of evil abound, and Satan has many instruments striving to advance his wicked designs against Christ's kingdom.

### *Romanism*

Romanism makes the arrogant claim that she is the only true church of God, and that outside of her there is no salvation. She haughtily assumes the authority of Peter's Chair, as well as being the infallible church which cannot err, and is subject to none. She contends that as the only true church she must judge, but cannot herself be judged or found to be wrong. We reject all such claims as false. Romanism is an antichristian abomination, maliciously and unrelentingly set against Jesus Christ, His people and true religion. Popery perverts the Bible, promotes damnable heresies and destroys the soul.

At the Reformation our godly forefathers expelled from the land all that savoured of the Romish heresy, idolatry, blasphemy and superstition. However, over a period of years that satanic institution has noticeably increased its presence and influence throughout Scotland. The *British Church Newspaper* (13th June 2003) makes the following comment regarding the results of the 2002 Scottish Church Census, released on 15th May: "The two largest denominations, the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church, have many more churches and attendees than the smaller denominations, and so their decline offsets the gain by others . . . Roman Catholic attendance decreased by 19% in the same period, to just over 200,000. Between them these denominations account for three-quarters of all Scottish church goers, Church of Scotland 40% and Roman Catholics 35%." History shows that when Rome is in the minority she is like a lamb, when approaching equity as cunning as a fox, and when numerically superior, like a tiger. The devilish Popish mass is celebrated daily in many places in our land. Last October Cardinal O'Brien was foisted upon Scotland by Rome. He is the third such appointment since the Reformation, two having been appointed during the past decade. In taking up his new position he made, ". . . a joint profession of faith and a vow of loyalty to the Pope," and kneeling before him

kissed his ring. The Romish ecclesiastical dignitaries swear that they will persecute to the death all who will not believe the dogma of that institution, and that when it is possible they will perform that oath. There was a time during the Reformation in this land when things were markedly different, and only a few priests practised their religion in secret.

The Pope of Rome marked twenty-five years in that position on 16th October 2003, by appearing before a large gathering in Slovakia. The Pope has been very active during his years of domination over more than a billion followers worldwide. He has beatified 1,319 people, and has also declared 477 others to be saints, both of these numbers exceeding all his predecessors during the past four centuries combined. This is a lucrative way of replenishing Rome's coffers, something which every Popish party are most adept at. Some have linked this with the Vatican's present financial plight, and regard it as the modern equivalent of the sale of indulgences. Rome arrogates to herself the ability to identify and make a saint of her most zealous and useful subjects, who, in their lifetime performed at least two miracles. The Bible declares that any sinner who comes to Christ is a saint (Philippians 4:21). Popery makes saints of those who are no saints, that is, such as are devoid of spiritual life, and bereft of even one good work, and it maliciously slanders the true saints of Christ as wicked heretics, putting them to death when they are in power, and so becoming drunk with the blood of saints.

Popish priests and nuns in Ireland were again the subject of a most damaging report. The *Daily Telegraph* (2nd October 2003) states that: "Many thousands of children suffered at the hands of the religious orders, such as the Christian Brothers and Sisters of Mercy, at industrial schools and orphanages. . . . All forms of abuse – sexual, physical, emotional and neglect were rife, but only became widely acknowledged after civil actions. . . . In some instances it emerged that the Roman Catholic Church have moved abusive priests from parish to parish to avoid scandal." The Roman authorities in Ireland, which ran the institutions where the abuse was prevalent, grudgingly agreed an indemnity deal, capped at about £80,000,000. Romanism has been plagued with many such scandals in recent years, costing millions of pounds worldwide. Its schools and orphanages have often been a cloak for the cruel and perverted abuse of many young people.

We read in the *Daily Mail* (7th March 2003) that, "The Pope believes Scotland is no longer a Christian country". Speaking to Catholic leaders at the Vatican this week, he declared that in Scotland, "There no longer exists the reality of a Christian society". He implored Archbishops O'Brien and Conti to lead a campaign for greater spiritual awareness. The Pope of Rome was right when he so described Scotland as predominantly a heathen land, and in need of Christian missionary endeavour. However, the remedy he commends is a toxic dose of baptised heathenism. The Pope and his two hirelings have merely a feigned care for the people of Scotland. Their aim is to extirpate the remaining pockets of true religion in Scotland, and to substitute their own falsehood. The religion of the Pope is refuted by the Bible. Before

the Reformation, when priestcraft held sway in Scotland, the state of religion was deplorable, and the weapons of persecution and suppression of free inquiry after the truth, were ruthlessly wielded. If the Pope and his satanic emissaries were to have their way, Scotland would, once again, be subject to the same tyranny. There is much need for an aggressive Protestantism in the land of John Knox, to counter the threat of that increasingly influential and dangerous sect.

### ***The Church of Scotland***

The Church of Scotland declined further during the past year. Its Moderator, Professor Iain Torrance, was reported by the *Daily Mail* (30th June 2003) to have said that he would be untroubled by the election of homosexual ministers, and that he “cannot understand why there should be any objection to ‘gay’ ministers”. In the same article the Rev. Ian Watson responded by saying, “The defining point is that you accept the Bible as the Word of God, which does not condone homosexuality.” Troublous times have enveloped Scotland when the Moderator can make such public comments. The Bible distinctly condemns sodomy as unclean, body-dishonouring, unnatural, vile and unseemly (Romans 1:24, 26-27). The Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, primarily, because of the sin of sodomy (Genesis 19:24-25). Sodomites are excluded from being ministers of Christ (1 Timothy 3:2,7; Titus 1:5-9). Professor Torrance made other controversial and erroneous comments. The *English Churchman* (30th May-6th June 2003) reported him as saying that the Book of Revelation contains the rantings of a jealous Apostle. Torrance feels that a lot of the fall in church attendance is simply due to people having their own spiritual journey outside the Church. He feels there is a danger that the Church might impose on people’s own individual beliefs with its “crushing rhetoric”. It is clear from above that Professor Torrance is engaged in much mischief.

There was further evidence of downgrade in the Established Church when two women were the only persons nominated to stand for the position of Moderator-Designate for 2004. Dr. Allison Elliott, an elder, and self-confessed progressive and liberal, was later elected to succeed Professor Torrance. She is the only woman to be so chosen in the 443-year history of the Church of Scotland. The *Daily Telegraph* (15th October 2003) reported: “Dr. Elliott said she hoped she was unlike any other previous Moderator, but would not be drawn on her views on controversial issues facing the Kirk, such as homosexuality in the ministry. That was a ‘Churchy Issue’ she said, and she had a lot of reading to do on the subject. Asked what John Knox, who condemned women as a ‘Monstrous Regiment’, would make of her appointment, she said: ‘Knox was a reformer of his time, interested in new ideas. I think it would be an interesting conversation.’” The prospective Moderator hopes to be different from her predecessors, and that she will be because she is a woman. John Knox undoubtedly would have strongly condemned Dr. Elliott’s election as unscriptural, and appealed to the Bible to prove that women are ineligible to hold office in the Church (1 Timothy

2:11-15; 3:1-8, Titus 1:5-8). We are reminded that at the Reformation, Mary argued with Knox about the extent of her lawful authority, and when her arguments were soundly rebutted by him she was left standing for some time as one amazed and shocked by his irresistible wisdom.

The Church of Scotland attendance and income have declined noticeably. The *Daily Mail* (18th April 2003) stated, "Last year the Church's Board of National Mission produced figures showing up to 19,000 people were dropping out each year. Falling attendance has forced the Kirk to consider closing up to 15 churches a year. The Board said the Kirk would effectively cease to exist by 2050 unless action was taken to halt the decline. It also admitted that the principal reason most often recorded in surveys is the lack of relevance of the Church in people's lives. Kirk membership peaked in 1942 at 27% of Scotland's population, but fell to 13% by 1966, and continues to tumble. The Church's capital has dropped from £31.2 million at the end of 1999 to £24.9 million at the end of 2002." These figures reveal a Church which has decayed, and languishes with many problems. To the Kirk's shame, another gospel has supplanted the pure Gospel. The World has crept in, and Christ has left. The decline has not only been numerical and financial, but also, more crucially, spiritual. "*Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed*" (1 Samuel 2:30).

The Church of Scotland has continued its dangerous ecumenical slide. The Kirk organised, and was a leading participant in, the Kirking of the Parliament, which was held in St. Giles's Cathedral, Edinburgh, on 6th May 2003. This event took the form of an ecumenical worship service and involved the following: the Church of Scotland, Islam, the Salvation Army, the Roman Catholic Church, some members of the Scottish Parliament and Prince Charles. The service included the singing of accompanied human compositions, a reading from the Koran, and other items contrary to the Regulative principle. This was but one example of the ecumenical bent of the Church of Scotland, and further evidence that she has swayed closer to Rome.

*The Herald* (6th January 2004) reported that, "Archbishop Conti's invitation to the Moderator, Professor Iain Torrance, to preach in St. Andrew's Cathedral, was a gracious ecumenical initiative. As the Archbishop said this was the first time a Moderator has been formally welcomed on behalf of the Archdiocese of Glasgow." The article also referred to two previous Moderators preaching in Popish Cathedrals during 1998 and 2000, and that in recent years both Archbishops had addressed the General Assembly. These developments were described by the Principal Clerk of the General Assembly as "gracious ecumenical initiatives, bridge building, the renewing of friendships, and a means for ending every manifestation of sectarianism". We regard them as a serious and dangerous departure from the doctrine, worship and practice of the original Church of Scotland. We are of the view that the Church of Scotland is no longer Reformed and Protestant. The Kirk's ecumenical endeavours show a contempt for the Scottish Reformers, and the ecclesiastical and civil privileges obtained through much tribulation.

### *The Church of England*

The Church of England has continued to decline, and has manifested a growing tension between the Evangelicals (often supported by the anglo-Catholics) and the Liberals. This was most evident in the bitter dispute over the nomination of Dr. Jeffrey John for a bishopric. In July 2003, Jeffrey John, a homosexual rights man who had lived with another man for twenty-seven years, but who claimed to be presently celibate, accepted the nomination as the suffragan Bishop of Reading. However, a short time later, and after considerable pressure had been applied to him by the Archbishop of Canterbury and some evangelical Bishops, he suddenly resigned. The *British Church Newspaper* (1st July 2003) reported that, "The appointment of Jeffrey John was simply to have been a try-on, to see how far Williams and Bishop Harries could push the homosexual agenda". The pro-sodomite liberals in the Church of England are pressing to have sodomites put into the ministry. This is a dark sign; the liberal element have departed from the Bible and are drawing judgements upon themselves and others.

*The Church of England, Anglican Communion further schism.* The worldwide Anglican Communion, comprising about seventy million people, was ruptured on Sabbath, 2nd November 2003, when Gene Robinson, a sodomite, was consecrated a Bishop of the American Episcopal Church in New Hampshire. Gene Robinson's consecration was opposed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and a majority of other Archbishops, because it was well known that, not only was he a sodomite, but that he also lived with his partner and is a divorced father of two. Despite such formidable opposition, the consecration went ahead. That produced an immediate reaction from the Archbishop of Canterbury, and most of the other primates, which has led to a "realignment" and "impaired communion", which is, in effect, schism. The offending part of the Communion has been largely isolated for the present. The main opposition to the abominable consecration has come from the "Global South", including provinces across Africa, South East Asia, the Middle East, the West Indies and the southern half of Latin America. These regions contain fifty million people, that is, more than 70% of the Anglican Communion. The Archbishop of Nigeria, Peter Akinola, was reported in the *Daily Mail* (4th November 2003) as saying: "We totally reject and denounce this abnoxious behaviour. It is devilish and satanic. It comes directly from the pit of hell. It is an idea sponsored by Satan himself, and being executed by his followers and adherents, who have infiltrated the Church. . . . A clear choice has been made for a church that exists primarily in allegiance to the unbiblical departures of our generation, a church that enthrones the will of man over and above the authority of God and His revealed and written Word. We cannot go on limping between two opinions." His decisive comments regarding the matter of the consecration reflected the views of his fellow evangelical Archbishops. A commission was established in October to undertake an urgent theological review concerning the future of the Anglican community. The commission are understood to be looking at ways of increasing the power of the Primates to

act, when a province or diocese rebels, and even at the possibility of implementing a Papal-style authority in the Church. The endeavours to heal the schism within the Anglican Church are largely centred upon the intellect, knowledge and diplomatic skills of Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, rather than Christ and the power of the Holy Ghost.

*The Times* (9th January 2004) has a large coloured photograph of Rowan Williams kneeling before an enthroned Pope and kissing his ring. Actions speak louder than words. It is well known that the Archbishop is a liberal who denies the verbal inspiration of Scripture and who has expressed support for sodomites in the ministry. The photograph captures the high esteem, even adoration, he harbours towards the Pope. He clearly has a heart for Rome, and is headed for it. The issues of women priests, sodomites in the ministry and Papal authority are, supposedly, an obstacle to union with Rome. The Church of England has departed from the Thirty Nine Articles, and the reformed doctrines of the Puritans of old, and is ripe for ensnarement by Rome.

### ***The Suffering Church***

*Death in Mexico* – In many parts of the world abroad, men and women professing to be Christians are being persecuted, oppressed and subjected to sharp trials. A report in the *English Churchman* (14th/21st November 2003) gives the following solemn account from Mexico: “As the second pastor in two weeks is murdered, death threats against the evangelical leaders in Chiapas, South East Mexico, are revealed. . . . The latest death is Pastor Mariano Diaz Mendez, 38, who was on his way to a prayer service . . . when heavily armed men stopped his car and shot him to death.”

*Imprisonment in China* – The *British Church Newspaper* (25th July 2003) gives a report of persecutions in China, which occurred in June, and involved the arrest of fifty-three members of various house churches. The paper comments that among them were “twelve members of a house church movement . . . the movement had applied for government permission to hold their meetings, and was delighted when police promised to grant official status. The twelve agreed to meet with officials on 6th June, to sign the relevant documents. However, on their arrival at the Funing County Public Service Bureau the authorities indicted four leaders, and held them for trial. The remaining eight believers were sentenced to three years of education through labour.

*Eritrea, more deaths* – The *British Church Newspaper* (27th June 2003) informs us, “that several young Christian soldiers were shot after being discovered reading the Bible. Other reports show Christian soldiers as having been arrested, tortured, assaulted or sexually abused.” These reports do not give details of the teaching and ways of these sufferers. Nevertheless, in these reports, we are told that they professed to be followers of Christ, read their Bible, and were prepared to suffer, even death, in following Him, and “*that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*” (Acts 14:22).

The days are evil. The twin pillars of Satan and Error abound, the love of many waxes cold, the visible Church is depleted and weak, and professing Christians manifesting a heart ablaze towards Christ, and who are effectual, fruitful and vigorous in His service, are a rarity. Yet better days are promised in the Bible, when *“the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it”*. Until then, wherever the Word is proclaimed in power there shall be drawn out of these nations such as should be saved in every generation, and Jesus Christ shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.

## MORALS

To do a study of our nation’s morals is a depressing exercise and one that brings to mind the state of the world at the time of the Flood: *“The wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually”* (Genesis 6:5). That this wickedness involved both men’s relationship with one another, and with God, is clear also for we are told, *“The earth also was corrupt before God and the earth was filled with violence”* (Genesis 6:11). Significant in this are the words of the Saviour: *“As it was in the days of Noe, so shall be also in the days of the Son of Man. They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.”* As has often been pointed out, there is nothing wrong in any of those things but simply there is no mention in any of this of God. God, clearly, was not in all their thoughts. So it is with the vast majority in our nation today. Truly we are *“an evil and adulterous generation”*.

In attempting to bring out the state of our nation we may focus on five things that especially stand out at this time.

### ***The Rising Crime Rate***

One of the best indicators of the crime rate is the prison population and it is a fact that never in the history of our nation has this been so high. In the *May Evangelical Times* it was reported that, “The number of people in prison in England and Wales has reached a new high of 73,091. Home Office officials estimate that the prison population will rise to 91,000 by 2006 but says there is only space for 77,500.” Such statistics – and the trend in Scotland is quite similar, especially in a nation notoriously soft on crime – ought to immediately alert us to the fact that something is far wrong and to what that something is.

When one enquires what type of crime is on the increase, the answer is crime of all sorts: murders, muggings, crimes of a sexual nature, break-ins to property – all are on the increase. What is particularly disturbing in this connection, and what we would like to highlight in this Report, is that the beginnings of criminal behaviour is now very visible in school children. In an article in the *Daily Mail*, on 18th May, Katie Grant writes: “Verbal and physical assaults have reached epidemic proportions in Scotland’s schools.”

“There are,” she continues, “now seven times more attacks on teachers than in 1997. In Scotland, a teacher is assaulted by a parent on average every day and by a pupil every 15 minutes.” Then in an article on 25th March 2003 in the same paper, about behaviour out of the classroom, Scottish Political Editor, Eddie Barnes, informs us that “badly behaved children, as young as eight, could be fitted with electronic tags to prevent them from going out at night”. “Ministers,” he writes, “will unveil plans to crack down on youngsters who have vandalised or disrupted local communities.”

With such behaviour, both in and out of the classrooms, and with such pressure now to introduce an anti-smacking ban, we shudder to think what the future holds for the generation to come. Certainly the crime rate can only continue to rise as we as a nation insist on permitting children to do “*what is right in their own eyes*”. One of the great evils of our day, and surely a big factor in crime, especially of a violent nature, is the television which, it appears, has sunk to new depths with record complaints about violence and swearing. In the “Notes and Comments” of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 108, Number 1, on the subject of the Communications Bill, the director of a notoriously violent film was quoted in a BBC interview as saying: “Film is a very powerful medium, film is a drug, film is a potential hallucinogen . . . it goes into your brain, it stimulates and it’s a very dangerous thing . . . it can be a very subversive thing.”

In light of this, and in light of its connection with trouble on our streets and in our classrooms, surely it is time to curtail drastically what is of the “*prince of the power of the air*” and to enquire once again as a nation, “*What saith the Lord?*”.

### ***Drink and Drugs***

Mention has been made of the influence of television, on the young especially, and of how this can lead to crime. Other factors in the rising crime rate are drink and drugs. As these are separate problems and not always related to crime, and as they figured much in the news this year, we now consider them separately, looking first at drink.

In the April *Evangelical Times*, in a quotation from the charity Alcohol Concern, we are informed that, “three million people in Britain cannot get through the day without an alcoholic drink. Researchers said at a recent conference that one in thirteen adults was alcohol dependent – twice the number of people addicted to legal or illegal drugs. They estimate, continued the report, that 65% of suicide attempts were related to alcohol and up to 50% of homeless people were alcoholics.” It is ironic that while the Scottish Executive recognises the problem as well as the health risk of excessive drinking, including binge drinking, and the time lost to employers, they are doing nothing to curb this. Indeed it could be argued that they are encouraging the sale of alcohol by their proposal to liberalise the nation’s licensing laws, which could mean pubs, off-licences and supermarkets selling drink 24 hours a day, seven days a week! In an article in the *Daily Mail*, on 25th August, Kate

Foster, writing of this, tells us that, “The World Health Organisation experts have warned that (those) plans fly in the face of internationally recognised advice and would lead to higher levels of public drunkenness, brawls, accidents and injuries”. This article, entitled “A Licence for Binge Drinkers”, concludes: “The proposals come as a new survey by soft drink manufacturer Lucozade shows that holiday makers who take days off sick to recover from the effects of a week or two spent drinking excessively, cost Scottish businessmen up to £28 million a year!”

Regarding drugs, this evil continues to grow. In the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 108, Number 1, we were reminded that the Scottish Executive has published the “Clubbers Guide” which advises young people on the safest way to take illegal drugs and how to cope with the bad effects of using them. This article rightly points out that the answer to the drug problem is “not to give advice about the safe use of drugs, or decriminalise cannabis, or attempt to cure addiction by administering methadone but to express loudly and clearly the principle of the Apostle’s urgent cry to the Philippian jailor ‘*Do thyself no harm!*’” That there seems to be no sign of this happening is evident from the present demoting of cannabis from a Class A to a Class B drug.

### ***Attacks on the vulnerable (young and old)***

In the 2002 Report it was pointed out that about 600 abortions are carried out every working day in the United Kingdom. While there was a very slight decrease during 2002 (0.5% in England and Wales and slightly more in Scotland, according to provisional figures), yet we are still as a nation viewed, according to the *Daily Mail* of 13th March, as “the abortion capital of Europe”. What is particularly sad is that, to further quote the above report, “a thousand abortions were undertaken on girls under 15 in 2001, and 2,777 were done at a gestation period of 20 weeks or over”. The response of the Government to this is to have school children lectured on “safe sex” and to advocate the handing out of free condoms to any pupil over 16 years who asks for them. This proposal, despite First Minister Jack McConnell’s resistance to it, has in effect gone ahead, as pupils are now referred to teenage sex clinics!

On the subject of abortion, the one encouraging development is that in America a powerful anti-abortion lobby is growing and President Bush has promised to approve the banning of “partial birth abortion”, i.e. the aborting of a baby after 24 weeks in the womb, if this be passed by Congress.

For those who survive to birth, the danger is not over. As implied already, peer pressure is extended on children to experiment with sex and drugs. It was reported in the *Daily Mail*, of 28th March, that the charity Marie Stopes International, an organisation which among other things provides NHS abortions under contract, was now offering free condoms to children as young as 11 years! The most recent development in our schools is the proposal of guidelines being given to teachers (as reported by the *Daily Mail* on 31st December) designed to encourage children to “address the issue of homosexuality” by way of drama, video and musical productions. These

guidelines have been penned by a “gay rights group” and we deeply regret that they have the full support of the Scottish Executive.

Mention has already been made of the evils portrayed on television and how Christian parents, if they must have a television, should at the very least ensure that their children do not have unsupervised access to it. Another great problem today is the Internet, and there have been several cases of “grooming” in children’s chat rooms which led to sexual assault. Assaults on young children have, of course, been highlighted recently by the conviction of Ian Huntley for the horrific murders of the two girls, Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman.

At the other end of the scale the vulnerability of the sick and elderly is becoming ever more a reality with increased pressure on the Government to legalise euthanasia. Plans are afoot, as was reported in the September *Evangelical Times*, to legislate for this on the Isle of Man. Two island politicians were given leave to introduce a bill on euthanasia and a select committee of the House of Keys was set up to investigate the issue and take submissions from the public and concerned groups. It is, however, an encouragement, in connection with this subject, that the secular press was disturbed about British citizens committing suicide at a clinic in Switzerland. Also the Head of Science and Ethics at the BMA, Dr. Vivienne Natheson, expressed concern (as was reported in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, Vol. 108, Number 7), “that a couple could die with such ease while suffering with such illnesses that did not need to make their lives unbearable”. It is also encouraging that a recent survey has revealed that about three-quarters of doctors in our country would refused to perform assisted suicide if it became legal.

In such as day as this, it ought to be our prayer, when so little value is placed on life, that there would be a return to the Bible which makes it very clear how precious life is, and that none but God Himself has the right to take it.

### ***Breakdown of family life***

When looking at the subject of family life, we do well to remember that in the vast majority of cases today, families begin outwith wedlock. It is a fact that since 1999 more than 85% of civil marriages have started with co-habitation. Many couples, of course, never marry so we can imagine how few children are brought up today in a normal situation of loving married parents. A report in the *Daily Mail*, of 12th March, informs us that the number of single parent families in Scotland has risen in 10 years from 19,937 in 1991 to 151,484 in 2001, an increase of 66.6% per annum. Such figures give us some idea of the state of things.

What is the cause of this breakdown in moral standards leading to such statistics? Undoubtedly, the main factor is departure from the Word of God. It is no coincidence that as we witness a decline in church attendance and of the whole counsel of God being preached where there is attendance, we witness a breakdown of family life. The old saying, “those who pray together

stay together”, has proved true over and over again, whereas, when family worship in the home and the worship of families in public, is neglected, all kinds of evil follow. Three factors in the breakdown of family life need to be highlighted.

*First there is the increasing trend towards covetousness.* In an article in the April *Evangelical Times*, reference is made to an interesting report from the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics, which show that people are no happier than 50 years ago, in spite of being much better off in terms of living standards and health. The report states: “Income is a source of happiness because happiness depends on what you have relative to a norm, but the norm is profoundly affected by what others have . . . we should not sacrifice too much in order to increase income, otherwise we risk being less happy than before. Happiness is about feeling good and seeing life as worth living. . . . It is important to have goals but materialist targets become self-defeating if they can be reached only at the expense of family, friends and camaraderie at work.” “14% of people aged 35,” the report continues, “indicate that they have suffered a major depression, yet only 2% of those over 65 recalling having done so at that stage of life.” “Such statistics,” the editorial concludes, “demonstrate that material possessions do not bring either the peace or the satisfaction people say they are searching for.” It is perhaps worth adding, as a footnote to the above, that while in a high percentage of cases today both the husband and wife (or partners) work, yet the Government’s Office for National Statistics reveal that 6 out of 7 women would rather be at home than out working, and that 22% of wives under 40 see their husbands as the bread winner. Surely the conclusion, therefore, must be that many wives work reluctantly in order to maintain a standard.

*The second factor in the breakdown of family life is that of the bias of politicians towards unmarried, as against married, couples.* Writing in the *Daily Mail*, on 14th May, Katie Grant rightly takes issue with the Scottish Green Party’s proposal to give unmarried couples the same right as married couples in the “Civil Partnership Bill”. The writer correctly points out that “marriage is not a lifestyle option. It is a serious and deep-seated commitment, not just to the marriage partner, but to the wider community. We marry in public, before witnesses, to acknowledge the role that marriage plays in forming those famous ‘building blocks’ of society.” The article goes on to ask the question, Where do children fit into all of this? and to point out that the Scottish courts are crammed with unhappy and disenchanted young people, brought up in “anything goes” households that offer no kind of role model for future relationships of their own. “And now,” she concludes, “politicians wish to undermine marriage even further.” Of course, the Scottish Executive is at present pressing for homosexuals to be given the same rights as married heterosexual couples. There would be joint pension rights, freedom from inheritance tax and a taxpayers’ subsidised “gay divorce system”. We are indebted not only to newspapers but to the Christian Institute for keeping us abreast with all these things. The most recent development, we are told in the

November newsletter, includes the proposal to – (1) Scrap the wording of the marriage ceremony, (2) Phase out marriage certificates (along with birth and death certificates), and (3) Legalise novelty weddings such as skydiving marriage ceremonies, etc. There can be no doubt that behind such schemes are the numerous sodomites in high places, even within the cabinet at Westminster. The Scottish Parliament is fast in pursuit of those proposals also and with such militant members as the lesbian Margaret Smith in the Liberal Democrat Party, and sodomite Patrick Harvey in the Green Party, there is every likelihood that Scotland will continue to go in the same direction as England and Wales. Of this, more is written below, but what is said highlights the determination of many politicians to destroy the God-given institution of marriage. On the contribution of politicians to the breakdown of family life, one could add the pressure to ban the smacking of children which also is a proposal in clear opposition to the teaching of Scripture to chastise – albeit in a loving and restrained manner – disobedient children.

*The third factor in the breakdown of family life is the condoning of immorality by the Church.* In the May *Evangelical Times* an article entitled “Marriage under Attack”, by Jonathan Skinner, draws attention to a new Church of England report, “Co-habitation: a Christian Reflection”, which questions whether young people should be “burdened with the Church’s traditional teaching on sex before marriage”. The argument put forward in the report is that society has changed and so the Church should consider changing its teaching. It says: “All the media now presents co-habitation uncritically as the practical equivalent of marriage, and in this context it is difficult for the Church, perhaps especially at the local level, to present Christian teaching in a positive and attractive light.” “The report,” the article goes on to inform us, “rejects co-habitation with no intention to marry as unacceptable for believers, yet claims that traditional teaching is creating a sense of guilt in many people. Indeed it notes that some have left the Church over the issue.” The article rightly proceeds to attack the report in the strongest of terms stating that “a Church that conceals a godless ethic with a religious veneer offers nothing and has no reason to exist”. Sadly, while every Church would not go so far as the above, many of today’s Churches are so woolly on the doctrines of truth, such as the holiness of God, sin, judgement and hell, that multitudes see little or nothing wrong with an immoral lifestyle. Since then, of course, things have moved on with the sin of Sodom now being openly condoned in the priesthood of the Church of England.

### ***Sexual Perversion***

At the beginning of this report it was observed that as a nation we are guilty both in our relationship with God and with one another, and no doubt there is a connection between the two, for where there is a departure from God, there is inevitably a “giving over” in judgement which in turn leads to a conflict in human relationships. We noticed this already in the breakdown of family life. We see it also in the increase of sexual perversion.

In Romans chapter 1, Paul indeed traces the perversion of that time to departure from God to idols. “*Because they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator who is blessed forever. Amen*” (Romans 1:23-25). All this can be seen most clearly in our day both in the alarming increase of paedophilia and sodomy.

*Paedophilia*: Reference has already been made to the danger of the Internet and chat rooms. We would just add here that over the past number of months there have been numerous cases of individuals being charged with downloading pornographic material involving children. Much of this was a result of names being discovered on US databases during the worldwide child porn crackdown, “Operation Ore”. One of the alarming features of this exposure was that many of the offenders were professional men who, to all appearances, enjoyed a happy family life. However, some of the biggest offenders have been the monks and priests of the Church of Rome but, as much of this has been brought out in last year’s Religious Report, no more need be said here except that cases still come to light and large sums of compensation continue to be poured out of the coffers of the Vatican.

*Sodomy*: Things have come to such a sad pass in our land now that many in State, and even Church, are doing their utmost to promote the sin of sodomy. Over the past few months two developments have made the headlines. The first of these has been dealt with already – the promotion of sodomy by the Politicians themselves. The second is the condoning of the appointment of sodomite priests by a sizeable section of the Church of England.

For a long time it seems to have been the case that in the Church of England a blind eye was turned to sodomy but over recent months the floodgates have indeed been opened. In the July *Evangelical Times* it was reported that a homosexual couple in New Westminster, Canada, had been blessed by an Anglican Bishop, an action that resulted in the severing of communion with that diocese by Nigerian Anglicans. Even worse was soon to follow. In the USA, Canon Gene Robinson, who lived with a gay partner, was elected Bishop of New Hampshire, while in the UK the homosexual theologian Canon Jeffrey John was chosen as the next Bishop of Reading. As events turned out, Canon John, much to the annoyance of the sodomite lobby, declined the appointment, thus affording a temporary truce, at least, between the two sides.

No more need be said here except to refer to a recent publication by a Dominican Priest, Gareth Moore, entitled *Search for the Truth*. This publication, which perhaps captures the spirit of our day as good as any, was the subject of a review in *The Times* on 17th June. In it Moore rewrites the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in an attempt to prove that homosexuality was not the sin of Sodom but rather the attempted rape of the two men (angels) in Lots’ house. How far fallen man will go in his attempt to justify himself!

The truth of God, however, will stand and every refuge of lies will at length be swept away.

### ***Conclusion***

One is very conscious, with regard to the points on which we have focussed, that a great deal more could be said. We have, however, tried to highlight the issues that have been in the forefront of the media during 2003 and we believe that sufficient has been said about these to show the sad state of our land, and the fact that we are a people with whom God has a controversy.

What response is required of us to all this? Surely the same as was required of Judah and Israel in Hosea's day and Isaiah's day – to recognise God's hand upon us and to return in penitence to the One against whom we have sinned so grievously. There is no other hope for us as individuals, as a Church, or as a nation. This is what those prophets called to: *“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they should be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured by the sword: for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it”* (Isaiah 1:16-20).