

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**REPORTS OF
STANDING
COMMITTEES
OF SYNOD**

Submitted to Synod in May 2008

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REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND MORALS COMMITTEE

Convener: Rev. W. Weale

INTRODUCTION

IN Ezekiel chapter 8 we are told of the vision the prophet was given of abominations being committed in Jerusalem and how after seeing several of these he was told, "Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations". So it is in our nation. We imagine things cannot get much worse but, alas, each year we see "greater abominations".

The following report is presented with a prayerful concern for sinners in the evil day in which we live, particularly for young people. Morally, as the report brings out, we are sinking deeper and deeper into sin, but behind this is the "uncertain sound" coming from the vast majority of so-called Reformed pulpits. It ought to be no surprise to us then that not only are we witnessing increasing moral decay but also the steady advance of such evils as Romanism and Atheistic and Islamic Fundamentalism.

What need we have to humble ourselves before God and cry out with Habakkuk: "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy."

RELIGION

Our intention is to provide information on the trends that affect the religious life of our nation and the witness of the visible church in Britain. We believe that this Report will be of interest to our own people, at home and abroad (that which affects the churches at home, will affect those abroad, more or less), to others who desire to "prove all things" and "hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21), and to those who love the Reformed testimony of the Church in Scotland. In presenting this Report we are mindful of our own low state and that "every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Corinthians 3:13).

ATHEISTIC FUNDAMENTALISM

Anthony Frew, for many decades an atheist philosopher, recently professed a belief in the existence of God. In spite of his example (or, because of it), books on atheism and evolution seem to have increased. Commenting on this, one writer said, "these books by intellectuals are highly emotional and often shrill", then asks, "Why are intelligent people so angry about Someone they don't believe exists?"

Professor R. Dawkins's book, *The God Delusion*, has sold many more copies than its little worth deserves. Professor A. McGrath has written a reply to Dawkin's book called *The Dawkins Delusion* and it is subtitled *Atheist*

fundamentalism and the denial of the divine. We cannot agree with everything that McGrath says in his book, yet, as a fellow professor at Oxford University, he is, academically, well positioned to expose the weaknesses in Dawkins's "Delusion". Dawkins has, in the words of McGrath, treated "the accurate rendition of religion as an inconvenient impediment to his chief agenda". Some of the points that emerge from reading McGrath's book are as follows. Dawkins is a scientist, not a theologian and theology is outwith the area of competency for scientific research. By his training, he is no more equipped to deal with theological questions than a theologian, by his training, is equipped to deal with scientific questions. Those familiar with both science and theology, as McGrath is, point out how *The God Delusion* is both poor science as well as poor theology. One of the most telling criticisms of Dawkins's book is from Michael Ruse, Professor of Philosophy, Florida State University, who says: "*The God Delusion* makes me embarrassed to be an atheist." The testimony of God is: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 14:1).

ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM

Islam is a false religion which denies fundamental doctrines in the biblical testimony regarding Christ. If we hold the Bible to be true then we must hold Islam to be false. It is also a cruel religion. Many Muslims will say that their laws are peaceable too and they might quote, "Let there be no compulsion in religion", from the Koran. Others, a small but dangerous minority, will justify violence against the adherents of other religions by citing, "Fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them", from the same source (translations are from Patrick Sookhdeo in his book *A Christian's Pocket Guide to Islam*). Patrick Sookhdeo reminds us of "tragic examples of large-scale forced conversions to Islam in recent history. In the early 20th century, 1.5 million Armenian and other eastern Christians were massacred by Turks. In the early 21st century many thousands of Indonesian Christians have been forced to convert to Islam by 'jihad warriors' of many nationalities. Any who refused were killed" (pages 57 and 58).

It was reported in November 2007 that teenagers as young as 15 were being recruited by terrorist groups in Britain, swelling the number of people suspected of being involved in terrorism to 4,000 and that the number of terrorist suspects had more than doubled in 12 months. *The Times* reported that youngsters are being turned into extremists. "Terrorists are methodically and intentionally targeting young people and children in this country. . . . They are radicalising, indoctrinating and grooming young, vulnerable people to carry out acts of terrorism." An interpretation of the law of God that results in unjust or cruel conduct dishonours God. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:10).

Dr. Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, has recommended that parts of Islamic Shariah law should be accommodated in Britain. It is very strange that a man professing to be a teacher in the Church of Christ, argues,

as he is reported to have done, that because Christian churches have ecclesiastical courts to deal with spiritual things, Muslims in Britain should have Islamic courts to deal with civil things. The scope of the controversy was widened by a spokesman for the Prime Minister who is reported to have said that Mr. Brown believed that all religious law should be subject to civil law.

“They know not nor will understand;
In darkness they walk on:
All the foundations of the earth,
Out of their course are gone.”
(Psalm 82:5, metrical version).

THE PAPACY

The Pope (Joseph Ratzinger), and the Vatican Press rightly criticised a Harry Potter book (in this instance, the Vatican shows more discernment than the *Free Church Monthly Record*, which comments favourably on Harry Potter). It is described as “a subtle seduction, which has deeply unnoticed and direct effects in undermining the soul of Christianity”. While we don’t think the Harry Potter books are as “deeply” subtle as this criticism suggests, we would agree generally with these sentiments.

However, the stern fact is that nothing has undermined Christianity so much as the baneful influence of Popery, whether one thinks of its cruelty in the past – the blood it shed, attempting to quench the flame of the Reformation – or of the present proliferation of incidents of lurid sexual abuses by priests, upon many young people in its trust. The sad thing is that outsiders see the Roman church as a part of the true Church of Christ, not realising that churches once highly favoured (Romans 1:7) may become so degenerated as to be no churches of Christ, but synagogues of Satan (Revelation 2:9).

As Paul protested against the withered branch of Judaism, saying, “the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you” (Romans 2:24), so we protest against the withered branch of Romanism. We do so, not with the invented or human authority of the Pope, but with the ecclesiastical legitimacy and authority of a court of the Church of Christ, in the name of her one, only and divine Head, met, in accordance with the form and pattern of the Word of God.

It has been common in recent decades for the Roman Catholic church to call other churches “separated brethren”. In the eyes of the present Pope this is a statement which concedes too much. From the dizzy heights of that species of audacity known only to popery, Mr. Ratzinger released a decree on 10th July 2007 which spoke about Protestant churches being no real churches. In it he stated that, “Christian communities born out of the Reformation of the sixteenth century” which “do not enjoy apostolic succession in the sacrament of Orders, and are, therefore, deprived of a constitutive element of the Church”, cannot be called “Churches in the proper sense”. One is reminded of one of the first audacious demands made by the elevated presbyter in Rome

who excommunicated the Eastern Churches for not recognising his (dubious) authority to settle the day designated for Easter! According to Wylie, that was “the first peal of those thunders which were, in after times, to roll so often and so terribly from the Seven Hills (of Rome)”.

For a man perpetuating the office of the arch enemy of Christ, bearing those marks of the imperious Antichrist, presiding over a religious organisation whose huge mass is tottering on its foundation because of the public disgrace occasioned by the exposure of its unclean priesthood, this is gall unsurpassed. Is it really imagined by that dry and withered branch of Christianity that all the branches of the visible church should be grafted into a religious system which publicly, repeatedly and shamelessly breaks the law of God? Veneration of Mary, prayers to saints, its idolatrous worship, its blasphemous mass and Sabbath desecration, are only some of her habitual sins.

Undoubtedly, what we see in this document is the Pope positioning himself, or whoever will hold his office after him, to be the one, only and official, religious head of a Roman Catholic European Union. If this is permitted to succeed then the faithful Protestant Reformed Churches will, shortly thereafter, not be tolerated at all.

“He lion-like, lurks in his den;
He waits the poor to take;
And when he draws him in his net,
His prey he doth him make.
Himself he humbleth very low,
He croucheth down withal,
That so a multitude of poor
May by his strong ones fall.”

(Psalm 10:9-10, metrical version)

In a book called *Papal Rome and the European Union*, by R. Bennet and M. de Semlyen, we are informed that the EU flag, “with a design of twelve stars in a circle derives from the twelve stars that in [Roman] Catholic tradition are the halo around the head of the virgin Mary”. According to the EU publication, *Europe’s Star Choice*, “the flag has its roots in Romanism, takes its symbolism from Romanism, and represents the Roman Catholic ideal”.

The terrifying imagery of the enemy of Christ in Revelation 17, represented as a woman riding on a beast (verse 3), is very similar to one of the icons used by the EU. Outside the Strasburg EU Parliament, for example, is a sculpture of a woman riding on a beast. The same image appears on some Euro coins.

Whatever the ambitions of Romanism are, God is reigning. Whatever decrees are made in the courts of the Vatican concerning the Church of Christ, there is an authoritative divine decree made in the court of heaven concerning him “who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:4). And that solemn and irrevocable decree

is: "Then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

THE WANING WITNESS AGAINST THE PAPACY

In his witness against popery, Knox wrote: "All worshipping, honouring or service invented by the brain of man in the religion of God, without His own express commandment, is Idolatry. The Mass is invented by the brain of man, without any commandment of God. Therefore it is Idolatry." The National Covenant of 1581 is equally robust: "We detest and refuse the usurped authority of that Roman Antichrist upon the Scriptures of God, upon the Kirk, the Civil Magistrate and the consciences of men." The Solemn League and Covenant gave the same clear note in 1643, when those who subscribed to it solemnly resolved that they would, by the grace of God, "without respect of persons, endeavour the extirpation of Popery". The witness of the Protestant Churches in the UK against Roman Catholicism is, however, now become an "uncertain sound".

The Catholic Church, what is it?

It is now common to hear professing Protestants, even Presbyterians, speak of the Papacy as "the Catholic Church" and its members as "Catholics". The historic and consistent profession of the Reformers and their successors, regarding the catholicity of the Church is expressed in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 25, sections 1 and 2:

The catholick or universal church, which is invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. The visible church, which is also catholick or universal under the gospel, (not confined to one nation, as before under the law,) consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, together with their children; and is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

This statement clearly shows that we cannot, on the one hand, subscribe to the reformed doctrine of the Church and on the other, call the Roman Church "the Catholic Church". The only catholicity that the papacy has is a Roman catholicity, consisting of all those throughout the world that profess the Roman Catholic religion, which is the kingdom of antichrist, the house and family of the Pope, the head thereof, within which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation.

All One in Christ Jesus?

An event (which included the singing of Christmas carols!) which took place in Balivanich School, North Uist, reported in the *Stornoway Gazette*, is an

indication of the uncertain sound coming from the Church in Scotland today. It was led by the Free Church minister, a Roman Catholic priest and a Church of Scotland minister. The correspondent informs us that it was “a gracious gathering, all one in Christ Jesus”.

The uncertain sound of the same broken trumpet sounded again when a writer in the *Monthly Record* of the Free Church of Scotland, giving an account of a Presbyterian ordination, expressed sadness that the Roman Catholic priest attending the service had to listen to ordination vows wherein the tenets of the papacy are declared execrable. On account of the supposed offensiveness of the vows, he thought it better if they were taken in private meetings of Presbytery.

If this is representative of the present attitude of the Free Church to the Reformation principles, how pale and sickly is the Free Church become!

THE CHRISTIAN AND ENTERTAINMENT

“The Christian is *in* the world but not *of* the world.” This is a statement generally acceptable to all in the Church. The conclusions drawn from it, however, create two opposing camps.

One camp says “We have nothing to do with the world in respect of its entertainments for we are not *of* the world”. Those who hold this view believe that going to the theatre, the cinema, recreational drinking of alcohol, listening to worldly music, reading worthless novels or going to the football terraces, and such like, are inconsistent with the prohibitions of Scripture, such as: “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:15-16). We believe it is true to say that the more the Holy Spirit has been working in the churches, the more their members have held this view. It would be wrong to conclude that a person who holds this view of entertainment does not appreciate artistic qualities. It would be difficult to argue that they who can sing so beautifully in public and private worship, do not recognise and value that which has aesthetic merit.

The other camp says that entertainment is theirs to enjoy, for though they be not *of* the world they are *in* the world. They celebrate the idea that they have so much in common with the lost world, in that they have a mutual delight in cultural things. They will base their arguments, such as they are, on portions like 1 Corinthians 3:21: “For all things are yours.”

At some point in the spectrum between the extremes of these two views we all lie. In the present low state of religion in our land, we are afraid that the unambiguous position held by our spiritual fathers, in regard to worldly entertainment, is now viewed by some as old fashioned and extreme and that there is a love of the world in our midst, which they would not have recognised as consistent with the true profession of religion.

This is nowhere more tragically glaring than in the new position in the Free Church. Having spent (for the most part) the years of its existence in the camp

of those who feared the baleful influence of “the world”, the *Free Church Record* indicates that she has now passed from the one camp into the other. By a truly bewildering metamorphosis, before the astonished public gaze, the Free Church is encouraged, as it were, to fly upon the prey and divide the spoil of worldly entertainments, under the notion of God “giving us all things richly to enjoy”. Expounding his views, the Editor recommends, under the notion of things “pronounced clean by God”, drinking with friends, watching films and joining the godless hoards at football matches, regardless of the swearing and blaspheming that often takes place there. Censuring a consistent, holy and wise view of this controversy, the Editor rebukes those within his own church, and beyond, who disagree with his view of Christian liberty.

THE REGULATIVE PRINCIPLE OF WORSHIP

The Regulative Principle of Worship requires that our worship should be regulated by the Word of God. With regard to any element of God’s worship, this principle asks the question, “Do the Scriptures require this in the worship of God?”. Confusion arises in this discussion when people apply rules which belonged to the temple worship to the New Testament worship, with the result that they allow instrumental music. The New Testament Church was based on the synagogue worship, not the temple worship.

The Normative Principle, on the other hand asks, “Where do the Scriptures forbid this element in the worship of God?”.

If God showed His displeasure against those who carried the ark from the house of Abinadab, in a way contrary to that required in Scripture, then we should take this question seriously. Ask David, mourning at Perezuzzah, if the things belonging to God’s worship should be “regulated” by the Word of God, or can men do as they please? See again the sin of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin. He devised the worship of God “according to His own heart”. “So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense” (1 Kings 12:33). Adopting the Normative Principle has opened the door not only for instrumental music, hymns of human composition, mime, drama, etc., in the worship of God’s house, but the observance of Pagan/Popish holy days such as Christmas.

Though, sadly, there are many examples in the Christian Church in Scotland today of ignoring, forgetting or departing from the Regulative Principle, we will mention only a few which indicate the present trend.

For some time now, the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster has made up a part of the ecclesiastical scene, not only in the Province but in Scotland, the rest of the United Kingdom and abroad. Contrary to the Regulative Principle of worship, this branch of the Church will use instrumental accompaniment in public worship. It uses hymns of human composition in its public praise and it is said, by those who are familiar with it, to be generally hostile to exclusive psalmody. The FPC of Ulster has had soloists and groups playing and singing

during the worship services. While its office bearers subscribe to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, they also have their own, qualifying, statements. It encourages women to pray in public services as well as “give their testimonies”. Many of their ministers make use of the appeal system or “altar call” to produce conversions.

The Website for St. Vincent Free Church of Scotland in Glasgow has a link to what is called a “sister-church” in the States. The website of that sister-church shows pictures of its premises with Christmas decorations. Oddly, it claims, at the same time, to hold the Regulative Principle.

The Editor of the *Monthly Record* of the Free Church of Scotland says nothing to discourage the observance of Christmas. He greets his readers with a “Happy Christmas” and adds, “The fact is that the vast majority of us do celebrate the midwinter Festival”. He makes further comment to the effect that it is an opportunity to preach the Gospel.

This was not the view of our Reformers. The *First Book of Discipline* states that Christmas should not be observed. George Gillespie, one of the Scottish commissioners at the Westminster Assembly, wrote: “The festivities of Christmas hath hitherto served more to . . . lasciviousness than to the remembrance of the birth of Christ.” Again: “The controverted ceremonies pertain not to the conservation of religion but contrariwise to the hurt and prejudice of the same. O what a doleful decay have they drawn with them in this land.” Furthermore, one of the critical points in the history of the Church in Scotland (whose witness the Free Church professes to maintain) was in 1617, when James VI tried to impose the *Five Articles of Perth* on the Church of Scotland. These articles required the Church, with other things, to observe Christmas. This was opposed by true hearted ministers of Christ because, as Thomas McCrie explains, the “institution of Christmas was an imitation of the idolatrous Saturnalia of the Romans, to coincide with which [the speculative date of the nativity] was changed by the Roman Church to the 25th of December”.

The departure of the Free Church of Scotland from the Reformed Standards of religion is now quite marked. Perhaps there is no clearer indication of this than the discussions taking place with respect to the relations of the Free Church with the Church of Scotland, or some section of it.

CONCLUSION

Though repentance is the speedy way to turn away God’s wrath on Britain, we do not hear our present leaders resort to it, nor the people cry out for it. In 1643 the ministers of the Church and State, noblemen and others, made the following grave confession of sins:

Because these kingdoms are guilty of many sins and provocations against God, and His Son Jesus Christ, as is too manifest by our present distresses and dangers, the fruit thereof; we profess and declare, before God and the world, our unfeigned desire to be humbled

for our sins and for the sins of these kingdoms: especially, that we have not as we ought valued the inestimable benefit of the gospel; that we have not laboured for the purity and power; and that we have not endeavoured to receive Christ in our hearts, nor to walk worthy of Him in our lives; which are the causes of other sins and transgressions so much abounding amongst us: and our true and unfeigned purpose, desire, and endeavour for ourselves, and all other under our power and charge, both in public and private, in all duties we owe to God and man, to amend our lives and each one to go before another in the example of a real reformation; that the Lord may turn away His wrath and heavy indignation, and establish these churches and kingdoms in truth and peace (Solemn League and Covenant, paragraph 8).

The time is ripe that we, their unworthy successors, should humbly and heartily acknowledge our many sins, confessing that we have not served the Lord as we ought, with a full purpose of and endeavour after new obedience, beseeching the Lord to turn to us again, for the sake of Him whose Name He delights to honour.

“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee” (Revelation 3:3).

MORALS

ABORTION

“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34). Nationally this once great Christian country respected all God’s commandments and the legislation of the land was in accordance with the divinely-inspired Word of God. In recent years laws have been passed which are totally contrary to revealed truth, and nowhere is this more evident than in the passing of the Abortion Act on 27th October 1967 – this past year having seen the 40th anniversary of this piece of legislation which came into force on 27th April 1968.

Since its inception this legislation has sanctioned the death of some 7,000,000 unborn children and in the past year the figure passed 200,000 for the first time in England and Wales, with 193,737 resident women and 7,436 non-residents. Britain has the most liberal Abortion Act in Europe, allowing pregnancies to be terminated up to 24 weeks, well past the halfway stage of a normal pregnancy. There is a degree of unease among politicians about the UK Government’s barbaric approach to human life. The recent survival of baby Amilla Sonja Taylor, born after 22 weeks, underlined the barbarianism of terminating pregnancies up to 24 weeks.

As if things were not bad enough as they now are, the report of the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, published on 31st October 2007, concludes: (1) there is no scientific basis to reduce the 24 upper limit for

abortion; (2) the requirement for two doctors' signatures, before an abortion can be carried out, should be removed; (3) nurses and midwives should be allowed to carry out early abortions; (4) foetal pain is not relevant to the question of abortion law.

When the Committee was set up, its terms of reference were flawed from day one (they excluded ethical and moral considerations), so that its findings were always vulnerable to flawed and inhumane conclusions. The UK's organisation of Christian doctors expressed concern that the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG) failed to give full information to the above Committee on current scientific evidence for lowering the upper limit of 24 weeks. The RCOG have constantly denied that foetuses can feel pain earlier than 24 weeks. This view was challenged by Channel 4's *Dispatches* programme which highlighted opposing views, including that of a leading academic and clinician, K. J. Anand, Professor of Paediatrics, Anaesthesiology, Pharmacology and Neurobiology at the University of Arkansas, USA, who is a world authority on neonatal pain and published a major review paper on foetal pain in November 2007.

Also Dr. Vincent Argent, "one of Britain's most respected obstetricians", in a submission to the Committee, argues that the limit should be reduced by eight weeks to 16 weeks, although he himself favours abortion. While reduction would be a step in the right direction, what is required is that the killing of unborn babies for so-called social reasons would be totally abandoned. Politicians and others point out that the UK is rapidly developing an ageing population with a great decrease in those of working age. This problem would not have occurred if the Abortion Act had not come into force, as half of the 7,000,000 aborted foetuses would now have obtained working age.

MURDER

This sin is now so common that many hardly rate a few lines in the newspaper, only those who engage in a killing spree getting the headlines. There were two serial murderers sentenced to life imprisonment at the end of February 2008 – (1) Steve Wright who murdered five prostitutes in Ipswich in a six-week period at the end of 2006 – the killings only ceasing when he was arrested. He was convicted by a jury at Ipswich Crown Court, the Judge saying he should never be eligible for parole. (There are now 36 murderers in that category in prison in England and Wales.) (2) Simon Bellfield, who was found guilty of murdering two young women, and the attempted murder of a third, in London. The Judge told him that he would not be considered for parole and must serve his whole life in prison. He is suspected of having committed a further twenty attacks, including the murder of a schoolgirl, Millie Dowler.

Relatives of those bereaved demanded the return of the death penalty but that call is unlikely to be heeded in the present political climate. God's law declares, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man" (Genesis 9:6).

In the first few weeks of the New Year, twelve young men were stabbed to death in separate incidents in London. Most of these were linked to the over-consumption of alcohol or being high on drugs.

The past year has seen a rising level of street violence, especially in Scotland, on Friday and Saturday nights. This is six times higher than the officially recorded number by the police.

The Chief Medical Officer for Scotland, Dr. Harry Burns, said hospitals dealt with up to 40,000 stabbings, shootings and serious assaults a year. He said tens of thousands of drunken attacks are not being reported because victims fear reprisals, are criminals themselves, or planned to take revenge.

Self-murder or suicide is also very common throughout the whole of the UK. In the Bridgend area of South Wales, 17 young people have killed themselves in the past 12 months. To date no common factor has been found to link them to one another.

It is reported by the police that there are 167 gangs in the Strathclyde area, with many young people being involved in inter-gang warfare, leading to severe injuries and even death.

ALCOHOL MISUSE

Nearly half of all young people now admit drinking alcohol before they are 13, many with the sole intention of getting drunk. The Justice Secretary, Mr. Kenneth MacAskill, said recently that getting drunk had almost become “a national sport”. In a national survey, half of 10- to 19-years-olds admitted they had been involved in fighting or aggressive behaviour as a result of drunkenness, and a quarter had been in trouble with the police. Girls confessed to greater sexual irresponsibility, and young males said they were involved in higher levels of vandalism when drunk.

Grampian Police showed, on TV news, a film that they had compiled from closed circuit cameras, showing street violence in Aberdeen on Friday and Saturday nights. The film showed extreme violence between young men, kicking each other, and even endangering life by jumping on fallen individuals or kicking their heads. It also showed young drunken girls exhibiting violent behaviour, including hair pulling and kicking. The purpose of the film was to discourage licensing authorities from issuing any more licences as it was said there were already too many licensed premises in the city.

ADULTERY

This is another sin now so common that breaches of the seventh commandment are regarded as normal practice, and God’s ordinance of marriage is being ignored, with almost 50% of couples living together in the unmarried state. A booklet issued by Aberdeen City Council, called *Behind the Granite (Aberdeen City Facts 2007/2008)*, shows that 47% of live births were to unmarried parents, with 53% to married parents.

In a press article, on 8th February 2008, it was reported that more than 1,000 sex offences were committed each year in the north-east of Scotland as police

endeavour to battle soaring levels of prostitution, rape and underage sex. Grampian Police's sexual offences dossier features every indecent crime committed in the north-east in the five years 2003-2007. Some 297 sex offences have been committed, with 295 people on the area's Sex Offenders Register. In Aberdeenshire there have been 127 rapes, figures described as disturbing by a local MSP who has raised concerns about the role alcohol abuse may play in these offences.

Prostitution offences are causing concern in Aberdeen with 30 brothels being uncovered since 2002. There have been 21 cases of human trafficking for sexual purposes. This usually involves evil men promising young girls from Eastern Europe jobs in the UK, smuggling them in illegally and, when they do arrive, forcing them into prostitution. This is particularly sad in a year when the two hundredth anniversary of the abolition of slavery is being celebrated, having been piloted through parliament by William Wilberforce in 1807. It is estimated that some 5,000 women and girls were smuggled or trafficked into the UK each year on the promise of a job, and then compelled to work in the sex "industry" as prostitutes.

The inevitable outcome of these breaches of the law of God is that there has been a marked increase in sexually transmitted infections (STI) among young UK adults, despite public health efforts. Recently released statistics for 2006 show a total of 376,508 new infections diagnosed, an increase of 2% on 2005. The Health Protection Agency found that young people aged 16-24 are disproportionately affected, despite healthcare warnings. It is estimated that 73,000 UK adults are now living with HIV, and that a third of these are unaware they have the virus. "Good understanding giveth favour: but the way of transgressors is hard" (Proverbs 13:15).

DIVORCE

The divorce rate for England and Wales is lower than for 22 years, and currently stands at just over 12 per 1,000 marriages. Divorce is higher for people in their late twenties, but there are a growing number divorcing who are over 60. The drop in the number of divorces is a reflection of a long-term decline in the number of marriages. Last year there were 132,562 married couples divorced. However, the lower divorce rate is probably disguising the true picture of family breakdown, because the statistics do not show the high number of cohabiters who split up. Last year 125,000 children under 16 experienced their parents divorcing. A similar number of children experienced their cohabitating parents going their separate ways. In Scotland there was a near 20% surge in the number of divorce cases. This increase could be the result of a sharp cut in the required separation period that came into effect in May 2007.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION REGULATIONS

In June 2007 the Christian Institute, and several evangelical churches, went to Belfast High Court to challenge the Sexual Orientation Regulations. A judicial

review was held, lasting 6 days, and on the 11th September Mr. Justice Wetherup gave his judgment. It was not as good as we would have liked but much better than it might have been.

Thankfully the “harassment” provisions, which would have seriously restricted freedom of speech and conscience, have been struck down. The judge said that, as framed, the provisions could involve infringements of both freedom of speech and the right to manifest a religious belief. As a result of his ruling, a Christian cannot now be prosecuted for expressing opposition to homosexual practice, and we welcome this protection of our right to write, preach and speak on this issue. Regrettably, however, the provisions which ban businesses from denying goods or services to persons on grounds of their sexual orientation will remain in operation. This means, for example, that although a Christian guest house owner can express opposition to the practice of homosexuality, he/she cannot turn away a couple because of their sexual orientation.

GAMBLING

More than 200,000 people in the UK are classed as problem gamblers, and it could be as high as 378,000, with 6% of the population now using online gambling, which was non-existent eight years ago.

A newspaper report of 20th September 2007 revealed that a Head Teacher hanged himself after running up thousands of pounds of debt gambling on the internet; the mother of two of his children only discovered the extent of his debts when bailiffs came to seize the family home.

YOUTH INDISCIPLINE

This is clearly seen in the numbers of exclusions from schools. Latest figures show that the number of pupils in Scotland being excluded for bad behaviour has risen by more than 6,000 since 2002 to 44,794. One editor writes: “It is clearly not the fault of teachers. They are faced with having to deal with the children of parents who cannot, or will not, instil any self-discipline in their offspring. These are the children who are allowed to behave in any way they wish at home and in public. Once they reach the classroom it is futile expecting them suddenly to become model pupils.”

Outside of school these children are set on a life of crime. In one police area a four-year-old child was detained for house breaking, a five-year-old for shoplifting, and six-year-olds detained for breaches of the peace. Police recorded 10,943 crimes committed by 3,780 youngsters in one police force area last year. The news comes from a Freedom of Information request, revealing that in 2006, 132 children (including one just two years old) were involved in cases ranging from fire-raising and theft to possession of drugs, vandalism and breach of peace. The youngest offender, aged just two, was caught in Strathclyde for an unspecified offence.

Paul Martin MSP, Labour’s Shadow Minister for Community Safety, was quoted as saying, “These figures are astonishing and represent parental neglect on a truly shocking scale”.

This is a fruit of doing away with any form of corporal punishment over the past thirty years. What a need to go back to “Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

As mentioned in last year’s report, Exeter University Christian Union (CU) were suspended from the official list of student societies, had its student union bank account frozen, and were banned from use of Student Guild premises, or advertising events within Guild facilities, because the Student Guild claimed the CU constitution and activities did not conform to its recently introduced Equal Opportunities Policies.

The CU having threatened legal action, there followed detailed negotiations between the CU, the Guild and the University, and also between the National Union of Students, the Universities and College Christian Unions (UCCU). The CU has now secured an active Student Bank Account, re-listing in the Guild’s official list of societies, permission to use and advertise CU events on Guild/Campus premises, and the right to restrict membership of the CU and its leadership to those able to sign up to a statement of faith (although as always has been the case, all events will be open to any student to attend).

BANNING OF CHASTITY RING IN SCHOOL

Lydia Playfoot (16), a pupil at Millais School in Horsham, West Sussex, was banned from wearing a chastity ring in school. She took her case to the High Court, claiming discrimination against her because Muslim girls were allowed to wear head scarves and Sikh students to wear bangles. The school claims that the ring contravenes its uniform policy, and denies discrimination on the grounds that the ring is not an integral part of the Christian faith. Her action was unsuccessful.

CONCLUSION

Much more could be included in this report, but sufficient is listed to show the continuing downward path of the morals of the nation. What Britain needs is a return to God in faith and penitence. “Return unto me and I will return unto you,” God said to His backsliding people in the days of the prophet Malachi, and that is what we as a nation should do. May the Lord in His infinite mercy pour forth His spirit upon us as a people, that all over the nation there may be a revival of His cause, and many witnesses raised up to serve Him in this dark and cloudy day.