

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**REPORTS OF
STANDING
COMMITTEES
OF SYNOD**

Submitted to Synod in May 2012

BLANK

INDEX

Report of the Religion and Morals Committee.....	page 5
Sabbath Observance Committee's Report	43
Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee's Report.....	47
Ingwenya Mission Report	50
John Tallach High School Report	51
Zenka Mission Report.....	54
Nkayi Mission Report	55
Zvishavane Mission Report	56
Mbumba Mission Report	58
Mbumba Mission Hospital Report.....	59
Bulawayo Mission Report.....	69
Gweru Mission Report.....	70
Zimbabwe Presbytery Translation Committee's Report	71
Thembeiso Children's Home Report.....	72
Zimbabwe Mission Administrator's Report.....	73
Transport and Building Projects Report.....	77
Kenya Mission Report	78
Dominions and Overseas Committee's Report.....	81
Australian and Singapore Report	84
New Zealand Report	86
Eastern Europe Mission Report	88
Report of Deputy to North America	91
Report of Deputy to Zimbabwe Mission	92
Training of the Ministry Committee's Report	93
Theological Tutor's Report	94
Welfare of Youth Committee's Report.....	96
Ballifeary Residential Care Home Committee's Report.....	98
Leverburgh Residential Care Home Committee's Report	99
Outreach Committee's Report.....	100
Publications and Bookroom Committee's Report	102
Church Archives Committee's Report	103

BLANK

**REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND
MORALS COMMITTEE
Convener: Rev. D. Campbell**

INTRODUCTION

AS in previous years, the report has two main sections, the first dealing with the work of the Committee during the year and the second the state of religion and morals.

1. REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

Meetings

The Religion and Morals Committee met for the usual two meetings in October and March and carried out its business according to the usual expectations of the Synod. While the Committee continues to operate without a written remit or constitution, an attempt has been made to regulate our affairs with a draft constitution in line with what has become standard practice. At the last meeting of Synod there was not sufficient time in the fourth Sederunt to discuss the draft constitution and one or two suggestions were raised in connection with it. The Committee had another look at the draft constitution and agreed that an amended version which simply reflected the accepted and current practice would be sufficient in the meantime for its obligations to the Synod. While the Synod may not wish to formally debate it in its amended form, the Committee wishes to act on the assumption that it will be the basis of the relationship and accountability between the Committee and the Synod.

Report at Synod 2011

The Committee wishes to stress the need that when the Church Interests Committee sets the draft Synod agenda, sufficient time be allowed for the matters raised in the report and other documents to be discussed fully. The usual practice of the Committee's business being dealt with on Wednesday evening has been suitable in the past, but with the additional business inserted into this Sederunt at the last meeting of Synod, very little time was given for the remaining agenda items affecting the Committee. Considerable work is required to present the report to the Synod and it is disappointing when the business is rushed on account of an overloaded agenda. The fact that the public are also usually present suggests that this matter be attended to as a matter of some importance. For the sake of the attending public, draft copies of the report might be made available at the time of the Synod meeting to those who attend so that they can easily follow what is being said. An alternative arrangement would be to provide a draft copy of the report on the Church website before the meeting so that the public will have access to it before it

is discussed. The Committee is of the understanding that, as with other Standing Committees, its ordinary meetings are public and that its report and its minutes may be made available to the public unless instructed to do otherwise by the Synod.

Catechism of Church Principles

The Committee made progress with editing the Catechism of Church Principles in accordance with the decision of the Synod. Presbyteries were notified that the March meeting of the Committee would implement any necessary final changes or alterations offered. At the time of writing the Catechism remains in draft form but a verbal report will be given to the Synod on the progress made. It is expected that the Catechism will be completed in time for the Synod and that funding will be made available for having it published and distributed among the congregations of the Church. The Committee appreciates the time given by Presbyteries to the review of the Catechism and hopes that its circulation will inform and confirm the rising generation in the principles of the Church. We ought to consider it a high honour and privilege to assert as well as to maintain and defend these principles because they are biblical and Reformation principles. The Committee believes that there is a need for this catechism in the Church and that there would be an appreciation of it among our people. It will also be of use in expressing to those outwith our borders what our principles are.

Scottish Government Consultation

The Committee responded to the “Scottish Government’s Consultation on the Registration of Civil Partnerships and on Same Sex Marriage”. There was some discussion at the committee over whether such a document was entitled to the legitimacy of a response, but it was agreed that an accompanying letter be written in protest against the consultation process and qualifying the answers offered. This letter was made available to the national press and also appeared on the website of the Christian Institute. The Committee contended that the Scottish Government had no right or warrant to consult or to legislate in this area and repudiated both civil partnerships and what is called “same sex marriage”. The protest pointed to the Scripture portions which condemn sodomy and affirmed the determination of the Church to preach against the sin and against any laws that may be passed promoting it or giving it protection. At the time of writing the Scottish Government has not yet produced any concrete proposals for legislation. If and when this is done, a further consultation would be required.

It was heartening to see that there was significant opposition to the proposals in the consultation and that many groups and Churches responded. It is, however, alarming that any law which affects morals and religion in the nation would be passed on the basis of a democratic majority. Even if such a majority were to be obtained in this instance, we contend that morality is not a matter of numbers but of principle and truth. It is, therefore, disturbing to see

that various bodies and individuals have called for a referendum on this subject. "Solas", a Dundee-based Christian organisation, has made such a request in their response and this has been endorsed and applauded by ministers, including the editor of the Free Church (Continuing) magazine. However well intentioned this call may be, we utterly reject the legitimacy of a referendum or the wisdom of such a request and hope that a referendum will not take place. The law of God is never open to democratic whim and this gross sin can never be legitimised by such a process.

The Christian Institute

In a circular that encouraged supporters to respond to the consultation questions on same-sex "marriage", the Christian Institute made available their "recommended answers". Sadly, these suggested at best an ambiguous position. Various questions in the consultation clearly imply that the Scottish Government believes it has, in theory, a right to legislate in a way that forces a position on religious bodies, such as the Christian Church in Scotland. For example, question 6 asks, "Do you consider that religious celebrants should not be allowed to register civil partnerships if their religious body has decided against registering civil partnerships?". To this the answer ought to be a most decided rejection of the question's legitimacy. The question implies an assumption of authority which no Government or Parliament has been given or should be given. The Christian Institute, however, recommended that the answer should be "yes". However politically expedient this may be, it is playing into the hands of unscrupulous politicians who arrogate to themselves rights and privileges which do not belong to them. It is perfectly possible that the Scottish Government could use this new proposed power to disallow individual ministers acting according to their conscience, in any kind of legislation that it favours.

More astonishing still was the Christian Institute's answers to questions 8 and 17 which recommend what was defined as "option 2". This option, together with option 1, was not spelt out in the Christian Institute literature and to find what was being recommended, one would require to read the accompanying document in the consultation itself. The option 2 which was recommended by the Christian Institute is as follows:

Option 2 would be to set up a new procedure, separate to that for the solemnisation of opposite sex marriage, under which all religious bodies who wished to register civil partnerships (Q.8) [or same sex marriage (Q.17)] could advise the Registrar General which celebrants they would like to be authorised to register civil partnerships [or same sex marriages Q.17]. It would be made clear that it would not be discriminatory to decide against seeking approval to register civil partnerships [or same sex marriages Q.17].

This is an appalling suggestion and completely sells out on any principled opposition to both civil partnerships and same sex marriage. It would in effect

endorse both practices as legitimate in the civil sphere and provide for religious bodies to perform these unions on behalf of the State, as at present with marriage. There is very little doubt that this is precisely what the homosexual lobbyists have been looking for as a break-through. It is equally likely that the present Church of Scotland will indeed make use of any such legislation and “new procedure”. It is sad to think that this would have been positively encouraged by the Christian Institute. The option of answering this question with “neither” was given, as was the option of disregarding the question entirely. Yet the Christian Institute has circulated possibly thousands of Christians in Scotland to encourage them to respond by selecting “option 2” with all its implications.

In total, the responses recommended by the Christian Institute differed in 8 instances out of 19 from the responses given by the Committee and indeed by others such as the Free Church (Continuing). The Convener wrote to the Christian Institute over this matter because its recommended responses were being circulated among the congregations of the Church in the last week of the consultation. No response was forthcoming.

The Christian Institute and Romanism

A further concern over the Christian Institute arose in connection with this matter when they agreed to join the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Scotland to campaign for the preservation of marriage in Scotland. Setting up a new campaign – “Scotland for Marriage” – in which they shared platforms with atheists and Romanists, the Christian Institute has further undermined its witness in Scotland. The Romanist doctrine of marriage and its known practical tolerance of sodomy within the priesthood world-wide should be sufficient to ensure that Protestants take nothing to do with Roman Catholics in their hypocritical pronouncements on moral issues. Sadly the Christian Institute seems to be taken in by, or has become immune to, Romanist propaganda on this issue. Together with giving its hierarchy a voice, the Institute now establishes closer links with it in the name of defending the ordinance of marriage. In an attempt to conciliate its Protestant supporters the Christian Institute wrote to the Convener of the Committee prior to the campaign launch. The letter may be considered in the light of previous correspondence on the issue of Protestantism and the Synod’s decision to restrict our funding to the promotion of Protestant principles. The Synod may now wish to review again the decision to support this organisation financially.

Anti-sectarianism and freedom of speech

The Committee took very little to do with the Scottish Government’s legislation designed to curtail religiously motivated hate crimes in connection with football matches in Scotland. Comment on this in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* largely explains the position adopted by the Committee. A letter was written to the Scottish Government requesting further information on the

proposed legislation. The Convener and Rev. Allan MacColl took the opportunity, when meeting with the Western Isles MSP, Dr. Alasdair Allan, over the “same-sex marriage” consultation, to also raise with him concerns over the then proposed bill on religious hatred. After an exchange of opinions and of various letters it was ascertained that a clause has been introduced into the new bill which purports to preserve freedom to religious bodies to criticise other religions. It is a sad day indeed when the Scottish Government thinks that the Church of Christ requires its say-so in order to expose and condemn error, but this is what the new clause in the bill amounts to.

The Christian Institute is to be credited with ensuring that the legislation was not hurried through the Parliament and that it was given full scrutiny. It also campaigned successfully for the introduction of a clause purporting to protect religious freedom, encouraging its supporters to similarly campaign for this. The Committee did not seek to encourage the inclusion of this so-called “freedom of speech” clause and rejects the need for any such legislation at all. It is the opinion of legal professionals and politicians of various parties that the law as it stands is perfectly adequate to protect the lives and property of citizens from mindless violence and from threatening language or behaviour.

What is disturbing about the new legislation, and the freedom of speech clause in particular, is that for the first time in our national history express legal protection is given to blasphemy and to the spread of pernicious and heretical religion. This is a backward step and sadly it was actively promoted by the Christian Institute which seems to pay scant regard to the historic Establishment Principle so intimately connected with our Protestant and Presbyterian heritage. The Protestant Church does not need the securities of a government bill to afford it a right to preach the truth in Christ’s name. This right and liberty comes from the Head of the Church alone and has been recognised already in our land at the time of the Reformation. However much the state will treat the Church of Christ as a mere voluntary body, our vows forbid us to concede the point or to submit to the degrading and insulting yoke of the state controlling or policing our preaching.

Religious Observance in Schools

In the meeting with Dr. Alasdair Allan, MSP, the Convener and Rev. Allan MacColl also raised the subject of government guidelines for religious observance in Schools. It was heartening to receive a letter from Dr. Allan stating that his opinion was that an act of worship was an integral part of Religious Observance. This position is worthy of note because it is at variance with the most recent guidance to Schools. It is the only feasible position on the subject and represents the previous position adopted by the Scottish Executive and, prior to that, by the Westminster Parliament’s Scottish Office. The legislation from 1872 protecting religious observance in Schools was last reviewed in 1980 and forbids the discontinuance of religious observance in any Scottish school. It is now the case that the Scottish Government has accepted a definition of religious observance which virtually excludes acts of

worship. The new definition makes little sense, but it does come with guidance which requires head-teachers to arrange with local ministers of religion about the content of religious observance. This issue ought to be a national concern to the Presbyteries of the Church and efforts should be made by ministers of the Church to hold schools and local authorities to account for any non-compliance with legal requirements.

It is often assumed that state schools in Scotland are secular. Legally this is not the case. All schools are required by law to provide religious observance and religious education. In the new *Curriculum for Excellence*, religious education is to consist of instruction in Christianity and a maximum of two other world religions and learning outcomes should include proof of Bible knowledge. The Committee will continue to pursue this issue in whatever way it can and will seek to watch against any erosion of the present legislation.

Divorce

At the March meeting of the Committee it was agreed that the Convener circulate an updated version of a previous Committee discussion document on the subject of divorce. Since the passing of the Family Law (Scotland) Act in 2006, the legal situation regarding divorce in Scotland has been seriously eroded and this has very significant implications for Church courts and ministers. It is becoming increasingly clear that for the purposes of Church courts and to preserve uniformity in doctrine and practice within the Church, serious attention needs to be given to this subject. We are committed to assert, maintain and defend the position on divorce and desertion enshrined in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. At the very least further consideration needs to be given to a definition of desertion and also to the rights of parties wrongly divorced against their will. The implications for re-marriage and the duties of ministers are very serious indeed. The discussion paper only raises the matter and further study seems to be required.

The Committee feels bound to stress that the Synod is in a new position in relation to the civil magistrate since the passing of the 2006 legislation and that desertion is no longer defined by the courts of the land. What is described in the *Westminster Confession* as “desertion which can in no way be remedied by the church or the civil magistrate”, must now be the business of Church courts alone to adjudicate on. Very careful consideration would need to be given to this if uniformity is to be maintained. The Committee will continue to pursue the matter and may report in future in the form of a discussion paper with a view to making more concrete proposals to the Synod. In considering the subject of divorce, the Committee also reviewed the discussion presently taking place in the Free Church of Scotland on this issue. In a move away from its previous 1988 guidance to ministers on the subject, a Study panel of the Free Church has contributed a document which erodes the Confessional restrictions on lawful divorce. Attention is drawn to this in the body of the Committee’s report.

Statement of Differences

At the October 2011 meeting of the Committee it was agreed to set up a sub-committee to pursue the revision of the Synod Statement of Differences which was last reviewed in 1962 – 50 years ago. The need for this is increasingly apparent and we believe was formerly considered as an obligation placed on the Church towards other Presbyterian denominations. The sin of schism is flagrant in Scotland with the setting up of new and competing denominations, most of whom, in practical terms, are willing to act as if no differences existed. We would be liable to the same charge of schism if we did not plainly state our testimony and the reason for our continued separation. This is best done in a Statement of Differences which we hope will eventually recommend itself to the Synod for adoption and circulation.

In connection with the decision of the Synod of 2011 to send the Religion and Morals Report to the Free Church (Continuing) in answer to the letter from that bodies' ecumenical relations committee, the Committee received a letter from within our own Church asking for clarification regarding some of the statements made in connection with the Free Church (Continuing). The Convener replied by stressing that the list pointing out areas of difference was intended to be a *preliminary notice* of what the forthcoming Statement of Differences would be *likely* to deal with. It was not intended as a final statement of our differences with the Free Church (Continuing). To avoid any further confusion on this matter, the Committee wishes to stress that it has not yet prepared the Statement of Differences between the Free Presbyterian Church and the Free Church (Continuing).

Letters

The Committee wrote letters to various politicians in connection with specific issues. The matters that the Committee deals with were researched by all the members of the Committee and are addressed by these members in the body of the report. The following letters were sent and, at the time of writing, responses are awaited.

1. To Rt. Hon. David Cameron, Prime Minister, re Satisfaction with some of his remarks concerning Christian Britain and the Authorised Version.
2. To Rt. Hon. David Cameron, Prime Minister, re the Act of Settlement, Protestant Succession and the securities of the Reformed Church in the light of a need to preserve the unity of the United Kingdom.
3. To Rt. Hon. William Hague, Foreign Secretary, re Persecution of Christians in Muslim Countries.
4. To Rt. Hon. William Hague, Foreign Secretary, re Continued Diplomatic relations between the United Kingdom and the Vatican.

5. To Rt. Hon. Andrew Lansley, Secretary of State for Health, re Statistics relating to Abortion, calling for a review of practice and tightening of legislation.
6. To Rt. Hon. Nicola Sturgeon, Scottish Minister for Communities, re Alcohol consumption in Scotland, calling for action to warn of the moral harm of Scotland's drinking culture and the need for Scripture principles in tackling it.

2. REPORT ON THE STATE OF RELIGION AND MORALS

Introduction

The spiritual state of Britain is described for us in the Scriptures and we have reason to be ashamed and to blush for our nation and its rulers. The words of the prophet Isaiah seem to be increasingly applicable to our country. The circumstances in which they were uttered are also very similar: "For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory. The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! for they have rewarded evil unto themselves. Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him" (Isaiah 3:8-11).

Our duty of confession

We ought, like Daniel (chapter 9) and Ezra (chapter 9) to confess the sins of our nation and of the Church of God in it. There are sins of the tongue against the Lord, such as open and public atheism, and blasphemy. When there is freedom of speech granted to the teachers of false and lying religions such as Popery, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, and other cults, then our nation is in breach of the third commandment. Blasphemy and cursing of the Bible and the gospel in the public press, in media outlets generally and on the internet, is also a sin to be confessed. In the Church heresies and false teaching and false worship permitted and promoted are breaches of the commandments of God which must be repented of. We have sinful deeds to confess also, most evidently in our breaches of the fourth commandment – a commandment which underpins public religion. Sins against our fellow men in breaches of the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth commandments are more numerous than can be reckoned and when viewed in the light of the full terms of the *Larger Catechism* must indeed be cause for shame.

That we have come to be identified with the sin of Sodom as a nation has not happened suddenly. We have, as a nation, been guilty of the spiritual sins of Sodom for many years in our pride, fullness of bread, abundance of idleness, and haughtiness (Ezekiel 16:49, 50). The sin of uncleanness is especially

offensive to the eyes of God's holiness. When such uncleanness is open and flagrant by way of entertainment, free discussion, conditioning and teaching of children, boasting and public display (such as the sins of the flesh and sodomy have now become), the sin has many aggravations. But our nation is also guilty of defending and promoting evil openly. It is "the show of their countenance . . . they hide it not". Even the Church is to be condemned for haughtiness, stretched forth necks, wanton eyes, ornamentation and outward evidences of worldliness (Isaiah 3:16-26). Certainly we have rewarded evil to ourselves.

It is clearly taught that the Church has a positive duty in connection with these things. The duty of the Church of God is to declare righteousness and sin to the nation. The ministry of the Word is the chief instrument in the Lord's hand to declare and reason of "righteousness, temperance and judgement to come" (Acts 24:25) and this report is not intended to supplant that ordinance but rather complements it. Sin is a reproach and shame to any people; it is a harbinger of most solemn and grievous judgements on a people. Particular sins of particular classes, as those of rulers, those ruled over, the Church, its officers, professing Christians, public servants, parents, families and children, are to be confessed as such. Confession of sin and repentance are essential to the reversal of judgements. This is also the way by which the Church will be brought to know that abundant outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the preached word, which will usher in the fall of Romanism and the ingathering of the Jews and the fullness of the Gentiles (Romans 11:22-32; Zechariah 12:9, 10)

REPORT ON RELIGION

This report follows the same pattern as previously. This year, each of the members of the Committee has submitted a section rather than the entire report being left to one or two individuals. While this breaks up the report, we believe that it gives a wider and deeper picture of what is the present state of religion and morals.

Romanism

The Reformation in the 16th century delivered Scotland from the yoke of Romanism and the established religion of our nation is Reformed and Confessional Presbyterianism. There can be no doubt that this fact is a source of great annoyance to the Romish hierarchy in this country. A disturbing aspect in the increasingly successful efforts of Roman Catholicism to break down the work of Reformation is the place and status given to it by politicians, churchmen and by media outlets. It has become common for our Scottish leadership to consult with Romish bishops and cardinals when considering policies and laws and it is now accepted that the voice of Rome on issues of morals gets more publicity than that of any other religious body. The moral and spiritual vacuum left in our national life and public media by an apostate Church of Scotland has been all but filled by Romanist dogma. It is a sad

declension indeed when its many errors are advanced and promoted without a contrary voice against it. The shame of this must be laid firmly at the door of the professing Christian Church and of so-called Protestant Churches in particular. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland must be unashamedly Protestant in its adherence to the gospel and to the work of Reformation from which Scotland has so grievously departed.

In spite of the glorious work of Reformation brought to this nation, it is now a sad reality that, in both England and Scotland, historic Protestantism is viewed with disapproval and Churches recoil from being identified by that name. The success of Romanism has extended also to Northern Ireland where, doubtless in the interests of the peace process, the Protestant First Minister has defended his attendance at a requiem mass. Such betrayal and departure distresses the people of God who feel increasingly that the Church of Christ is carried captive and is in a "strange land" where they can no longer sing "the Lord's song". We reject entirely the necessity for any politician or other public figure to give attendance at a requiem mass in order to show respect to the dead or sympathy to the living. The political reasons for Peter Robinson's attendance at a mass may prevail with some to bring them to endorse or defend his action. The Word of God requires of Christians that they "flee from idolatry". The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has always contended that public figures are bound by the law of God in their offices and positions and that attending a Roman Catholic mass as a public office-holder is a sin with several aggravations and, therefore, more rather than less heinous than attending in a private capacity.

The Free Church and Romanism

Spurious arguments defending declension prevail in many circles today. The *Free Presbyterian Magazine* has drawn attention to declension from historic Protestantism within the Free Church of Scotland in recent times. This was in evidence in 2011 when the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland joined with a Roman Catholic priest and a Church of Scotland minister at two separate ecumenical services in Lewis which were broadcast in the media. Rev. James MacIver defended his actions and denied that the services were ecumenical, but for every ordinary observer they could be considered as nothing less than this. Whatever attempt is made to justify such diluting of principle, whether for evangelistic ends, to court popularity or to prevent unfounded impressions of sectarian division in communities, the action was a departure from Reformation standards. This action of the Moderator of the Free Church follows closely on the public welcome offered to the Pope by Rev. David Robertson of Dundee Free Church, which the Committee referred to in its report last year. Other indications of departure from Protestant principles, such as joint funeral worship and memorial services with Romanist priests, display the decline in the Free Church. Prof. Donald MacLeod has publicly defended these joint services and scorns the opposition voiced against them.

The *Westminster Confession* closely follows Scripture language in its definition of the Pope as “that antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition” and Romanism as the spiritual Babylon and so a “synagogue of Satan”. It also exposes the very many heresies of Rome which fundamentally invalidates its profession of Christianity. That one of the services mentioned above marked the celebration of the Romanist festival of Christmas is enough to expose its unscriptural basis. That a priest of Rome led devotions highlights the spiritual darkness prevailing at the event. A Roman Catholic priest, according to Scripture, promotes the “working of Satan” and however unaware individual priests may be of it, they all suffer from “strong delusion” (2 Thessalonians 2:9-11). It may well be asked “what communion hath light with darkness?”. It should be no surprise that the people of God are left questioning the direction of ministers when such communion is defended or treated as a matter indifferent. We therefore utterly condemn this practice and resolve to expose such departures in future as dangerous to Protestants and to the interests of the Church of Christ in our land.

While concessions to Romanism of this kind have been gathering pace on the Scottish mainland for some time, the practice is new in the professedly more conservative Free Church Presbytery of Lewis. It is clear that in this further concession to Rome the Free Church has lost credibility and authority, however ardently she desires to take the place nationally of the fallen Church of Scotland. At such a time as this it may well be asked what useful purpose the Free Church of Scotland serves in the promotion of the Protestant Reformation. It is becoming an increasingly schismatic ecclesiastical asylum for those fleeing discipline in other Churches or unwilling to tolerate the now century-old decline of the national Church. To all appearances the Free Church is on the same slide towards liberalism and declension and we can expect further revisions of its adherence to Protestantism and the Confession in the near future.

Scottish Independence

The following section of the report on this subject was prepared by Rev. Allan MacColl and reflects on a subject which the Synod may wish to make further direct representations to the Government on.

While we make no attempt to meddle with party political matters, there are some wider political issues which have such bearing on the cause of Christ that it is the duty of the Church to speak out concerning them. If there is anything that fits into that category, it is surely the future of the relation between Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom. The First Minister of Scotland, Mr. Alex Salmond, has announced his plans for a referendum on full independence for Scotland, which he hopes will take place in 2014.

What should the attitude of Christians be to this issue? Whatever political party we may support, it should be clear to us that the cause of Christ ought to take precedence in the formulation of our opinions over any secular interest. It is because of our overriding concern for the position of the Christian

religion in the nation that we must voice our serious concerns about independence. While there are many arguments which could be put in favour of retaining the Union, we will content ourselves with a few outstanding points at present.

Firstly, if Scotland became an independent nation state, what kind of constitution would it have? There is no doubt whatsoever that it would be a secular constitution which would give no recognition to the rights of Christ as King of Nations nor any significant place to the Christian religion and to Christ's Church in the life of the nation. While Britain is undoubtedly a most ungodly society, our constitution is still firmly Christian and Protestant, and we believe that that simple fact may be a means of hindering greater evils from coming upon us than already have. We pray for a day when our constitution may become an instrument in the hands of the Lord for guiding figures in public life in the direction of the Bible and the implementation of godly legislation. There will be no means of doing that in the secular political climate envisaged by Mr. Salmond. The removal of an avowedly-Christian constitution would be a most provoking act against the Most High. "My son, fear thou the Lord and the king, and meddle not with them that are given to change" (Proverbs 24:21).

Secondly, the position of the Church of Rome would be greatly strengthened if Scotland left the Union. Although the Church of Scotland still has more nominal adherents, the Roman Catholic Church has by far the greater influence on politicians and the media in Scotland today. But in Britain generally, though the political influence of Rome is all too strong, it is mitigated to some degree by the fact that the clear majority of the population are nominal Protestants. The Scottish National Party has been quick to court the Roman Catholic hierarchy in recent times in order to win over the Roman Catholic vote. They know that the underlying source of the Labour Party's electoral dominance in Scotland in the 20th century was the Roman Catholic vote in the central belt and they now greatly covet that for themselves. An independent Scotland would be a small nation in which the Roman Catholic Church would swiftly become the leading religious body and this would leave the rest of the population exposed to the power of Roman Catholicism in both political and religious life.

Another reason to oppose independence is the fact that it would inevitably mean that Scotland would be drawn into closer ties with the European Union than at present. It seems to us that there is a fundamental inconsistency within Scottish nationalism itself which nationalists never attempt to address. That inconsistency is simply the fact that, in leaving the United Kingdom, Scotland would depend more and more on the European Union. If independence from Britain is such a desirable goal, why immediately give away that independence into the increasingly unaccountable and unstable EU? Of course, our principal objection to the EU is that it plays into the hands of the Pope of Rome and his schemes to regain political and ecclesiastical hegemony in Europe. How pleased the Pope would be if the nation with the largest Protestant population

in Europe disappeared from the map! A vote for independence, therefore, is a vote to increase Roman Catholic influence one way or another, at the national and international levels.

It is not long since Mr. Salmond was holding up the Republic of Ireland as a model of how an independent Scotland should run its economy. We don't hear him saying that today however! If we had been an "independent" nation within the Euro-zone over the past decade we would be in as great straits as the Irish are today and perhaps much worse. The financial crisis in the EU is a salient reminder of how dangerous further European integration would have been for us all. The last thing an independent Scotland ought to do is to throw in its lot with the Euro and the EU. Of course, a Scottish currency would be unsustainable and liable to be destroyed on the financial markets. Clearly, the only viable and sane alternative is to stick with the Pound Sterling. Thus, the logical conclusion follows that Scotland should stay within the Union because if we leave the Union and yet retain the Pound we will have absolutely no democratic influence over the fiscal policies which would control our currency. We have never heard any nationalist politicians address these points satisfactorily and until they do, we regard the case for independence as economically naïve and dangerous to our political and religious interests. The eighth commandment forbids "whatsoever doth *or may* unjustly hinder our own or our neighbour's wealth or outward estate" and that is precisely what we fear will happen very quickly in an independent Scotland where the dominant political influences would be those of atheistic socialism and Roman Catholicism. "Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks and look well to thy herds" (Proverbs 27:23).

Another reason to retain the Union is the fact that the Lord has blessed Britain in the past as much as any other country in the world since the Reformation. To break the Union would be to break the spiritual bond which the Covenanters aimed to form between the nations of these islands. The vows they took in the *Solemn League and Covenant* stand as a witness to the obligations of the rulers and people of Britain to honour Christ as Head of the Church and as the Prince of the Kings of the Earth down to the end of time. We have no right to do anything to weaken that vision and obligation. The Lord will require it at the hands of this unthankful generation if we undermine the Protestant foundations of our United Kingdom. The Treaty of Union guarantees the Protestant religion as the religion of these islands in perpetuity and no Government in Edinburgh, London or Brussels has any right to change such provisions. We are well aware that many of the godly in Scotland at the time of the Union of the Parliaments in 1707 were against that Union, including the eminent Thomas Boston. However, the Presbyterian people of Scotland very soon came to see the link with the rest of Britain as a vital bulwark against the return of the tyrannical House of Stuart and against popery and poverty. The Union has been a great blessing to Scotland, especially in times of war. Who, for example, would have stood against Hitler in 1940 if Britain had not been a United Kingdom?

The final point in our case for the Union is that we desire future generations to enjoy the same liberties, prosperity and peace that we have known in the United Kingdom. Independence is a terrible risk to the future prospects of Scotland, both spiritually and temporally. In leaving the Union we would be, in effect, saying that we are dissatisfied with the blessings that the Lord has showered on us as a people. We have no confidence that the politicians – of all parties – who occupy the Scottish Parliament are of sufficient calibre to bring Scotland into the future age of golden temporal prosperity that they might dream of. In our opinion, the desire to break the Union smacks very much of the sin of discontentment and murmuring at the Lord’s dealings with us as a people. Furthermore, gambling is a heinous sin in God’s eyes and gambling with our nation’s future would be an act of criminal folly of the highest magnitude. Needless to say, without the Lord’s blessing, the future of Scotland spiritually and temporally is bleak indeed – whether in the UK or independent – but the dangers especially involved in independence make us tremble for the generations to come. “Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set” (Proverbs 22:28).

The Middle East

In the report to the Synod of 2011, reference was made to the proud boast of Muammar Gaddafi, the then leader of Libya who predicted that “the 50 plus million Muslims (in Europe) will turn it into the Muslim Continent within a few decades”. The unrest in Libya and Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries resulted in the removal of Gaddafi and others from power and the Libyan leader met his end in a most brutal manner. The unrest seems to be spreading now to other countries and it is shocking indeed to see the brutality of the ruling power in Syria towards its own people, suppressing what began as a relatively peaceful protest. The scourge of civil war seems to loom over these nations and the danger of a wider conflict in the region is real. Several factors in the events of 2011 in the Middle East suggest that the eventual outcome might not be as favourable to the Church of Christ or to Western peace as may have been at first envisaged. Firstly, the hand of those extreme elements of Islamic militancy seems to get stronger when civil unrest emerges in Middle Eastern countries. The internal divisions within Islam between Sunnis and Shi’ites is largely responsible for this, but it is clear that the more fanatical elements have a very aggressive policy towards Christianity and if they were to gain political power the consequences for small Christian groups and Churches in the Middle East would be catastrophic. Professing Christians in Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Libya are all experiencing a rise in persecution as a result of the upheavals which their countries have gone through in recent times. We should be stirred up to fervent prayer for the Lord’s cause and people in these lands.

A further concern is the position of Israel in the whole region. The declared policy of Iran, for example, is to destroy Israel altogether and to eradicate the Jews as a race. While this can never happen because “the gifts and calling of

God are without repentance” and they are “beloved for the fathers’ sakes” (Romans 11:28, 29), we cannot tell what sufferings God’s ancient people may yet have to endure from their enemies. We can only look on with prayerful longing for their redemption and deliverance which will be “life from the dead” to the Church of God among the Gentiles. That this blessed eventuality is inseparable from their repentance the Bible makes very plain and while they presently possess part of the land of Canaan, we cannot assume that they have a divine right to it while they remain impenitent.

The people of God love the Jewish people and, wherever true religion is, the fervent desire for their salvation and grafting back into their own olive tree will be included in the prayers of the Church of Christ. The present attitude of the Jews towards their Gentile neighbours is the very antithesis of the spirit of Christ “who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). The only real path to peace in Israel and the Middle East is the proclamation of the gospel to these peoples and their subjection to Christ. Thus the middle wall of partition will be broken down and the literal walls that presently carve up the land of Palestine and over which so much blood has been spilt, will be no longer needed, for “they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion” (Isaiah 52:8).

Islam

The following section of the report was prepared by Rev. Barry Whear and details the true nature and effects of the religion of Muhammad which has spread itself so rapidly and which continues to threaten the world with violence and oppression.

Islam is the second largest religion in the United Kingdom, behind Christianity. It had close to 3 million followers according to the 2010 census, of whom 44,000 were living in Scotland. However, there are some who believe the number of Muslims in the United Kingdom exceeds 3 million, of which about 1.4 million are under the age of 25, and about 1 million are described as “active in the faith”. Most are of the Sunni tradition. There are 1,500 mosques throughout the United Kingdom, with a quarter of them being located in London. Also, there are about 80 Muslim schools, and 14 different Islamic organisations, such as the British Muslim Forum, the Muslim Association of Britain, the Ahmadyya Muslim Association, etc.; which are dedicated to the advancement of Islam, and the nurture of its communities.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that about 5,200 people converted to Islam in 2011. Those so doing were mainly young white British women, and approximately half of them were from London. The number converting to Islam appears to be steadily increasing annually. Muslim conversion merely requires the convert to recite a few words known as the Declaration of Faith (Shahadah), which is considered to be the Pillar of Islam, and states: “I bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except God, and Muhammad is his messenger.” This may be done either privately or, as others may insist, before two Muslim witnesses. This declaration is an intellectual assent to

worship a false god, and to acknowledge a false prophet (Muhammad) as his messenger. True conversion involves the soul being wrought upon by the Holy Ghost, usually under the preaching of the gospel, effecting that favourable change, whereby Christ becomes precious. This may be seen in the heart declaration of the woman of Samaria: "Come see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29).

Islam is a religion of violence, and persecutes professing Christians to death. The persecution of Christians is endemic to Islamic countries. Muslims are adept at slandering Christians and then persecuting them for alleged disreputable behaviour. Apostasy from Islam is treated in many Islamic countries as a capital offence. There are some Afghanistan observers who fear the Christians there are in danger of sudden slaughter:

. . . the very serious issue of the persecution of Christian minority communities in Muslim-majority settings, where daily innocent children, women and men are murdered or mutilated, and churches are burned, while Muslim minorities in the West remain silent in their enjoyment of freedom of religion.

Islam's presence and growth in the land, is a further cause of the Lord's wrath against this Kingdom. Islam is blasphemous, heretical and guilty of persecuting the truly godly and ought not be tolerated but suppressed by the Civil Magistrate. We are to pray that the devilish institution of Islam be destroyed by the Lord, and that any of the elect bewitched by its soul-destroying heresies be drawn out of it by God. The Lord's wrath is against Scotland, and the rest of the United Kingdom, because almost universally the people of the land are slighting and despising Jesus Christ, freely offered in the gospel to all sorts of sinners, guilty of all manner of sin. The gross atheism, assailing of the Bible, horrible uncleanness and open contempt for true religion and the truly godly, is also greatly provoking to the Lord.

O that the Lord Christ would strengthen His own dear groaning people to wrestle with Him at the throne of grace, agonisingly and unceasingly, as to obtain from Him the promised dawning of the glorious militant, millennial Church. Perhaps that day may not be far off. While we may not know the exact time, we are encouraged in the Word of God to seek to understand the book of prophecy which promises it and to discern our own times to know what "Israel ought to do" (1 Chronicles 12:32). When that time comes the Church will be revived and flourish in Scotland, the rest of the United Kingdom and throughout the whole world by means of the Spirit-owned and increasing proclamation of the gospel (a good report of Christ). Then the Jews will be converted, the fullness of the Gentiles affected, Popery (that anti-Christian abomination, dominated by that Wicked, the Pope of Rome) will be destroyed, together with all other false religion, including Islam, that Christ-persecuting, man-made institution. We believe the better days are near, when ". . . the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9b). "And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every

man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:34).

The European Union and the debt crisis

This part of the report was prepared by Dr. Alex Ross and explains the much publicised crisis in Europe already alluded to. The rapidly changing nature of events in Europe may bring up unexpected results, but it is important to look at these things in the light of biblical principles.

In recent years debt has become a worrying problem, not only in regard to individuals, but also to businesses and governments. For individuals, in most situations it is prudent to avoid debt altogether. However, there comes a time for many people where they need to get into debt, such as to buy a house. Some students indeed are constrained to take on debt to advance their education. The idea being that when they are working, they will be able to repay. Such an arrangement is still prudent because there is a well-expected opportunity for repayment. Where debt is taken on, where there is no obvious means of repayment, it effectively becomes akin to gambling in its imprudence. The present worldwide debt crisis is due, at least in measure, to taking on imprudent debt; e.g. mortgages that were of greater value than the property, the excessive leveraging of financial products, etc.

Such imprudence is also in evidence concerning the sovereign debt crisis in Europe, where governments have borrowed to fund their present policies in order to meet costs in excess of income. Their hope has been that their national economies would expand to allow the debt to be repaid at some time in future. The present market judgement, in regard to the default risk of that debt, indicates that much of it was indeed imprudent. Four of those countries most affected by the debt crisis – Greece, Ireland, Italy, and Spain – are reported to be in the top ten of those nations with the highest gambling addiction, as evidenced by per capita gambling losses in 2010 (*The Economist*, “The biggest losers”, 16th May 2011). Lack of prudence amongst the citizens, therefore, seems to have gone hand in hand with the imprudence of the governments, and is evidence of deeper societal ills.

These southern European nations have also very long ago cast off the true gospel in favour of the traditions of men. Therefore we might expect to see the fruit of prudence more diminished there, than in those European nations where there was a greater influence of the Reformation. The degree of worldwide angst about the European debt crisis calls to mind that prophecy concerning the fall of Babylon, “And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more” (Revelation 18:11). We are not in a position to judge the application of that prophecy to the present crisis, but ought to be mindful that both the evil fruits of Babylon and her judgement are likely to be conjoined.

The lack of acceptance of responsibility amongst both government and citizens in Greece regarding their unsustainable debt, presents a dishonourable

character. The failure to honour debts, which ought to be a matter of shame and humiliation, and have a humbling and repenting effect, is instead accompanied by violent demonstration amongst the populace in response to politicians who are not prepared to accept the blame for their actions. The present debt crisis is fluid. It has the potential to become much worse if the lawless behaviour seen in Greece deteriorates further and spreads to the Latin nations.

Whilst the debt crisis has arisen through imprudence, it appears to be exacerbated by the structural economic imbalances between Eurozone countries caused by its one-size-fits-all economic policy, which severely limits sovereign action at the national level. The imprudence of successive UK governments in regard to our own mounting debt burden is not much less than that of the nations of southern Europe. That we are not so deeply embroiled in the present crisis is due to the providential circumstances of not having joined the Eurozone; and we ought to be rendering thanks to the Most High for that blessing. We ought also to pray that the crisis would yet be made instrumental in leading those affected to say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Psalm 119:71).

Science

A major source of trouble to the Church of Christ has arisen in recent times from an aggressively secular movement which claims to have scientific authority for its opposition to the Bible and to religious teaching. Prominent scientists have identified themselves with this movement and are increasingly seeking to influence the education system. This part of the report, prepared by Dr. Alex Ross, addresses aspects of this important subject.

The "oppositions of science falsely so called", which Paul warned Timothy to avoid, have for many years proven to be a fierce enemy of true religion. Great damage has been done to the church from the influential teachings of academics, supposedly reputable scientists that teach atheistic and evolutionary doctrines under the guise of science. The theories of Charles Darwin and, more recently, Professor Stephen Hawking, are often appealed to by promoters of atheism and evolution in the media. In reality there are, and have been, very many who have been actively engaged in developing theories which are at variance with Scripture truth concerning creation and natural history. In their own minds, the repudiation of a creator that would interfere with their speculations is a necessary condition. Hawking's mathematical modelling of how the universe was formed, is a vehicle used to "push-back" by their billions of years, that time when they inevitably must confront the reality of their impotence to explain the beginning of the universe, in whatever form their latest theory has coaxed the universe to assume.

The futility of such an exercise must be apparent to all who perceive what true science is – the development of a body of verifiable knowledge pertaining to the material world. Not a single moment or aspect of the history of the universe is verifiable without a reliable witness to the events that actually happened. Through Scripture we are privileged to have such witness. Those

who deny the truth of the Bible have no such reliable witness, and are therefore confined to the unending shifting sands of unverifiable speculations. “The testimony of the rocks”, as the geologist Hugh Miller so unadvisedly put it in the title of his last book, is falsehood and a betrayal of the Creator. Neither the rocks, nor the stars, nor living things, nor any part of creation, speak concerning their history, other than that which the vain speculations of unbelieving writers impose upon them. There are, no doubt, uncommon abilities and gifts manifest amongst those who develop such speculations, which are consumed and believed by multitudes to their ruin. They may be very clever and sophisticated speculations, with much detail that is appealing to the natural man, with much seeming self-consistency; but that cannot make up for lack of verification. The palpable frustration of the atheist at this final and immovable impotency, leads them to attempt to change the meaning of words such as “science” and “fact”, as for example in the recent utterly erroneous statement of the prominent atheist Richard Dawkins: “We need to stop calling evolution a theory. In the ordinary language sense of the word it is a fact. It is as solidly demonstrated as any fact in science” (*Daily Telegraph*, 19th September 2011).

The speculations of the theorists have been promoted by incessant propaganda from both the broadcast and print media, and by the indoctrination of the young in schools and universities. The charismatic broadcaster David Attenborough recently joined prominent atheists in calling for a ban on the teaching of creation in schools as part of science education. Such teaching does not presently occur in state schools, but the enemies of truth are clearly fearful of the consequences of what will happen if it is allowed to expose the weakness of their speculations. It is now very difficult indeed for children to go through their education without being tainted with falsehood concerning creation and natural history. Where there is a godly counteracting of this falsehood by teaching within the home and church, there is hope for a child that it will not cause them to cut adrift from the church but, alas, there is a grave danger that such teaching is weak or absent, and there follows a disengagement from the ordinances of the gospel.

A widespread delusion exists amongst the general public that “evolutionary science” is the building of a pyramid of knowledge which will ultimately lead to a complete knowledge of the history of the universe, physical and biological. The reality is very different – it is an ever expanding collection of loosely-tied speculative and unprovable theories, of which there are potentially a vast number of competing alternative theories that have not yet been considered; and those that have been are continually being reformulated in the light of new observations. These are often falsely reported in the media as if they were scientific facts. The absence of opportunity for verifiability regarding evolutionary theory has encouraged an appeal to its popularity – “the vast majority of scientists believe it, therefore it must be true”. By which method they hope to humiliate and silence its detractors. The recent promotion of anthropogenic global warming theory has proceeded along similar lines in an

attempt to eradicate scientific and political opposition. It seems that, for many, science is no longer about what is right, but rather about what is most popular.

In practice, the chief motivation of the evolutionist has proven to be to move further away from the truth of the Bible. Any explanation is tolerated for serious consideration, in the light of a new observation which contradicts an existing speculation, so long as it is not contrary to that chief motivation. Thus, whatever may be the stated beliefs of the evolutionists, and those allied to them such as Roman Catholic and liberal theologians, their practice is undeniably atheistic, by denying God His rightful place as the Creator of the universe and everything in it, according to His own Word. May the Lord hasten that day when the veil of ignorance that is upon the face of all nations, concerning the truth of creation, is removed.

REPORT ON MORALS

Divorce

In the aftermath of the consultation process regarding same-sex marriage the impression may be left that the Churches in Scotland are united in their approach to marriage as a divine ordinance and in their determination to defend it as it is regulated by the Word of God. Sadly this is not the case and the attitudes to divorce and re-marriage evidence a very serious departure from Scripture, even in Churches claiming to stand on the scriptural ground of the *Westminster Confession of Faith*. The Church of Scotland has long ago shifted its position from the restrictions defined in the Confession. The Committee gave consideration to a document produced by the Free Church of Scotland which significantly changes the stance of this Church on the subject of divorce. A panel was set up by the General Assembly to prepare a study paper “in light of recent Biblical research”, and its report has been circulated to Presbyteries of the Free Church seeking their responses to a proposed new position on divorce. The Study Panel will submit its final report to the 2012 General Assembly.

The new position is that the true scriptural position allows for divorce, not only on the grounds of desertion and adultery, but also on the grounds of emotional and physical neglect and abuse. It is argued that such behaviour in a marriage is “an abandonment of the promises involved in a marriage, a rejection of the other”. This, it is argued, is “in essence desertion”. Conveniently “this could fit within the terms of the Confession”. This position may appear plausible and it is offered on the basis of arguments purporting to have Scripture foundations. It is true that desertion needs to be defined, but the proposed definition is excessively wide. A whole range of things could come under the category of “neglect” and of “abandonment of promises involved in a marriage”. The arguments in favour of the new position are spurious and depend on extra-biblical propositions relating to Jewish customs.

However inadvertently, the whole endeavour looks remarkably similar to the very thing our Westminster divines warned against. The Confession states:

“Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to *study arguments*, unduly to put asunder those whom God has joined together in marriage; yet nothing but adultery, or such wilful desertion as can no way be remedied by the church or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage: wherein a public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed, and the persons concerned in it not left to their own wills and discretion in their own case” (Chapter 24, VI) The new definition seems to better fit the civil grounds of “irretrievable breakdown” which was demonstrated by a multitude of faults other than adultery or desertion. This position, which was the basis of legislation (first introduced in 1937 and added to in 1967) has been largely discredited. The reason for this is due to the increased acrimony in divorce cases and the implications for courts that resulted from it. Present legislation favours the equally unscriptural no-fault divorce. We must maintain the Reformed position on this subject.

The Scottish Parliament

That our rulers are obliged to keep the law of God as rulers and in their offices of state is clearly taught in Scripture and reason itself demands it also. Righteousness exalts a nation and sin is a reproach to any people. The moves in our Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh suggest strongly that the causes of irreligion and immorality have considerable influence on our policy-makers and that in time ungodly legislation will be further embedded into our statute books. Two areas of concern in relation to the morals of the nation are highlighted in this part of the report which was prepared by Mr. Alasdair MacPherson.

End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

On 1st December 2010 the Scottish Parliament rejected the End of Life Assistance (Scot) Bill discussed by Margo MacDonald by 85 votes to 16 with 2 abstentions. It was a matter for thankfulness that it was rejected. The Sixth Commandment forbids “all taking away the life of ourselves or of others, except in the case of public justice, lawful war, or necessary defence; the neglecting or withdrawing the lawful and necessary means of preservation of life” (*Larger Catechism*, Answer 136).

At the start of 2012 the Commission on Assisted Dying – a year-long Commission chaired by Lord Falconer, the former Lord Chancellor – has published its findings. If implemented, the proposals would give adults, who are likely to have less than a year to live, the ability to ask their doctor for a dose of medication which would end their lives. Scottish right-to-die campaigners have welcomed these moves at Westminster. Margo MacDonald (Independent MSP) is preparing to re-launch her own bill in the Scottish Parliament this month. She said she was “120%” behind the work of the Commission. It is widely understood that the Commission consisted of members hand-picked for their known bias in favour of euthanasia and its credibility is thus to be seriously questioned.

The Scottish Government has said there are no plans to change the law here on deliberately taking a life while BMA Scotland said it was “firmly opposed” to legalisation of assisted dying. When a terminal cancer patient, Geraldine McClelland, London, finally decided to take her own life in a Swiss suicide clinic, she asked the UK pro euthanasia organisation, Dignity in Dying, to publicise her decision. She stated that she was angry because of the cowardice of our politicians in not legalising assisted suicide, thus preventing her from taking her own life in her own country and with her family around her.

Another Press article says that “Parliament has stood up bravely to fierce lobbying from activists intent on introducing euthanasia to our legislature. It has been debated four times in recent years and on the two occasions it has come to a vote it has been defeated. That’s not cowardice. It’s democracy.” Sadly and alarmingly, if our rulers place their confidence in mere democracy rather than the law of God, immoral and irreligious laws will eventually be accepted.

What need for prayer without ceasing that these forces, which promote evil, might be suppressed and our rulers brought in repentance to the law of God as their only safe guide in such matters!

Same-sex “marriage” consultation

In the wider sphere of UK politics, the Prime Minister, Mr. David Cameron, is personally pushing the issue forward. In his speech to the Conservative Party Conference he expressed his support for the institution of marriage, but then stated his strong support for same sex marriage. To equate same sex marriage vows with traditional marriage vows is nothing less than perverse. The Scottish Conservative Party also elected an openly lesbian leader in 2011, thus identifying itself with this sin. That Christians could now vote with a clear conscience for any of the main political parties in Westminster or Holyrood elections is to be seriously questioned. How much we need that the Lord would raise up those who fear His name to lead us in our Parliaments!

The Scottish Parliament launched a public consultation on whether to redefine marriage in order that people of the same sex may marry. This was to run to 9th December 2011. That such a consultation is being held at all would have astonished people 20 years ago. Marriage is defined by the Bible: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). This cannot be brushed aside as “Old Testament” because it is cited by Christ in connection with marriage and divorce (Matthew 19:5). The relevant point here being, “He which made them at the beginning made them male and female”, in order that there might be such a thing as marriage. Two men or two women cannot marry in biblical terms, precisely because they are the same sex.

The Religion and Morals Committee responded to the Consultation paper in the strongest of terms, a sample quoted as follows:

We reject utterly the legal right of any government to redefine marriage as it pleases, or even as it may please the democratic majority of the people. In principle we will oppose and condemn any such move as an iniquity and public shame. No law or public opprobrium will prevent our ministers from publicly preaching against the sins of sodomy and unnatural union which this consultation process seeks to promote.

We therefore herewith warn and solemnly protest to the Scottish Government that they desist forthwith from what would, if enacted, tend to erode the institution of marriage. We exhort all concerned in this process to beware of inviting the deserved judgement of God on our nation by such actions and decisions as would pretend to validate what God has condemned as abomination and wickedness.

As can be seen in the references above, the danger of euthanasia becoming legalised in some form is very real. Consequently the Committee feels that this matter must be kept before our minds continually in this report. The following section of the report was prepared by Mr. Hector Munro, who has detailed the problem in greater depth.

Euthanasia

Euthanasia is a term which was virtually unheard of not so many years ago. Today, however, we find it regularly referred to in the media, but what exactly does this word mean? Well the word itself means “to die well” or “good dying”. Now, if that was all it meant, the Christian would have no quarrel with the definition. We should all pray earnestly to die well; indeed this should be our chief occupation in life. We need to be prepared for death which is appointed for us all. The Word of God tells us, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord” (Revelation 14:13). We should cry to the Saviour, who overcame sin and death, and who graciously gives this preparation to all who will diligently seek it from Him.

Looking a little more closely, though, we see sinister connotations attached to this word. The Oxford dictionary states, “Euthanasia is the *killing* of a patient suffering from an incurable and painful disease”. Yes, the *killing*. This changes the meaning radically. It is now a patient, which means an ill person, indeed a terminally ill person . . . a vulnerable, sick person, who should be receiving as much care, love, kindness and treatment as it is possible to give from our medical profession, yet they are to be *killed* if we legalise euthanasia, as a significant and vociferous section of society are bent on doing.

Euthanasia can be further divided into categories. (1) *Active euthanasia*, where the medical professional deliberately does something to cause the patient to die, i.e. knowingly giving a dose of medicine which will certainly cause death. (2) *Passive euthanasia*, where the patient is deprived of treatment necessary to life, i.e. withholding certain drugs from him/her or being taken off a life support machine. (3) *Voluntary euthanasia* is where the patient refuses

treatment to save their lives and they want to die. It is effectively suicide. (4) *Non voluntary euthanasia* is where the patient cannot make a decision about life or death due to, say, being in a coma or having brain damage. Someone else makes the decision for him or her. (5) *Involuntary euthanasia* is where the patient clearly states that he/she wants to live but is killed anyway. This is usually classed as murder.

There have been endless arguments over the relative morality of those various categories, however the Bible rises high above them all with its absolute commandment, "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13). In a world of secular relativism where man sets himself up as autonomous, claiming a right to die when he chooses, or taking another's life when he considers its quality to be at or near zero, the Bible speaks loudly and authoritatively, when the Psalmist acknowledges, "My times are in thine hand" (Psalm 31:15). How solemn! Man, not considering an afterlife, is ready to usher himself and his fellow sinners into the endless eternity to meet their Maker and Judge.

Currently, in the United Kingdom there is a constant clamour to legalise euthanasia in its more subtle forms. Some other countries have already done this. Here we have the powerful lobby group, "Dignity in Dying" (formerly called the Voluntary Euthanasia Society), wielding arguments, stimulating debate, and attracting patrons from high profile and influential positions to gain their evil ends. One patron, Patricia Hewitt, a well known minister in the last government states: "I have become convinced of the need for a change in the law to protect people with terminal illness who have made the painful decision to seek help in dying . . . all of us have a real choice" (Dying in Dignity website). What a distorted view of protection! Here is plausible but poisonous language which is echoed by other patrons such as Terry Pratchett, the author, who suffers from Alzheimer's disease, Lord Joffe, the vigorous euthanasia campaigner, and Simon Weston, the Falklands War veteran.

Another patron of "Dying in Dignity" is Nick Ross, a former prominent BBC *Crimewatch* presenter. He commented on a colleague, Geraldine McClelland, going to die at the notorious Dignitas clinic in Zurich in December 2011. She was suffering from lung and liver cancer. Ross said bitterly, "never let organised religion be a trump card to imprison free spirits like Gerry in its own dogma" (*Daily Mail*, 9th December 2011). In the same newspaper, alongside Nick Ross' emotive language, a more balanced view was expressed by Baroness Finlay, who is Professor of Palliative Medicine at Cardiff University and part of the research body "Living and Dying Well". She said, "there was no reason why this lady could not die at home with her family around her, especially as Britain has internationally renowned palliative care". One would expect her to have more practical knowledge of the course of Geraldine McClelland's disease than Nick Ross would have.

Medicine is continually improving. Cures are found and new techniques are discovered. As Baroness Finlay has said, palliative care is becoming increasingly sophisticated, so that the suffering of terminally ill patients can be alleviated to a great degree. Euthanasia inevitably slows down and thwarts

this medical progress. The life which could have been benefited is ended. Proponents of euthanasia state that what the patient *wants* is the issue and if he or she is rational they should not be denied the right to die. But who is rational when they are in pain and focussing on an uncertain future? Fear, shock and, of course, sin in the heart and the devil's influence, all act as factors in the situation. One is asked to make a decision at the worst possible moment. In any case, most people in such circumstances cannot know for certain how accurate the prognosis is in their own case.

In 1996 Australia legalised euthanasia for a short time. Dr. Philip Nitschke was the first doctor in the world to administer legal voluntary euthanasia. After the law was repealed he and his supporters campaigned for a return to legalised euthanasia. One supporter/patient, June Burns, pleaded for death on national TV in 1999 saying that she would rather kill herself than "die like a dog" from cancer. She went into remission a year later. Would she not be glad that she was not allowed to make that choice? How many more are like her?

The debate is about getting the law changed to give the "right to die" and "letting people die" as if it was a gentle, passive concept, ignoring the fact that this is asking the state to take part in the act of terminating life, i.e. doctors actually *killing* patients. Surely reason tells us that the state's duty, on our behalf, is to protect all of us from danger. Such protection should define a civilised society. That is why we have police, military forces, magistrates, etc. The state may say that there is a right to life but it cannot say that there is a right to death. People must die, yes, but the state should not kill them. If euthanasia were legalised then the state would decide who should live and who should die. The state should never determine that a person's life is not worth living. One House of Lords' pronouncement reinforces this by stating: "The message which society sends to vulnerable and disadvantaged people should not, however obliquely, encourage them to seek death, and instead, should assure them of our care and support in life."

The stated aim of medicine is to preserve life, not end it; the principle of medicine is to heal, not destroy. The Hippocratic Oath requires doctors to pledge, "I will give no deadly medicine to anyone even if asked, or suggest any such course". This underpins our understanding of medicine. The relationship between a doctor and a patient is based on trust. If euthanasia were legalised, the patient could justly say, "I fear going to my doctor; he may prescribe death". Of course, in practice palliative care, itself, may shorten the patient's life. However, this is not the *intention* . . . that is the crucial difference. The *intention* is to control the pain; the hastening of death, then, is an unwanted side effect.

If a "euthanasia environment" is created, families may urge doctors to "let their loved ones go" or patients themselves may feel obliged to request death, as they may be made to feel guilty for the care they have every right to receive. Others may gain, materially, from their deaths or have the "burden" of caring for them taken away. The temptation to collude with doctors or even bribe them is greater. At present, technically at least, the law gives protection to patients

and their interests are fundamental, not the wishes of relatives or others. Suicide itself used to be illegal and though now not a punishable offence, there is certainly no legal right to take one's life. Of course, assisted suicide is still illegal and punishable on the statute book by up to 14 years' imprisonment.

In addition to the pressure put on society to formally legalise euthanasia, there is a very real fear that in certain places it is already taking place by stealth. Law courts in the UK have authorised the withdrawal of tube feeding from some patients who are in a so-called "Persistent Vegetative State". This amounts to euthanasia if the intention is to bring about death. The term "vegetative" itself is misleading, as it implies the person is no longer human. Assisted suicide is another area where stealth is becoming apparent.

Keir Starmer, Britain's Director of Public Prosecutions, has published guidelines on assisted suicide in response to an instruction by Law Lords who ruled in the case of Debbie Purdy. She is an MS sufferer who wanted legal guidance on how her husband would be treated if he helped her to die (assisted suicide). The DPP ruled that any relative or friend who helps a suicide out of compassion and not for personal gain is less likely to be prosecuted. Those guidelines have really muddied the waters. None of the 44 people suspected of helping friends or relatives to die over the 18 months to September 2011 has yet been prosecuted. Starmer himself has the role of judging all assisted suicide cases personally, so he interprets his own ruling. Medical professionals would normally not be protected under the guidelines, yet we find a doctor, Michael Irwin, not facing trial for helping a cancer victim to kill himself, despite, apparently, there being enough evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction. The Christian Institute has said that Dr. Irwin wrote to Mr. Starmer admitting helping a terminally ill patient, Raymond Cutkelvin, to commit suicide at the Dignitas facility in Switzerland in 2007.

Dr. Peter Saunders, of the campaign group Care not Killing, warned (in the *Daily Mail*, 6th September 2011), "There is a very real danger here of legalisation by stealth which runs contrary to the will of Parliament. This could place vulnerable sick, disabled and elderly people at much greater risk. The law is clear and has not been changed . . . it acts as a powerful disincentive to exploitation and abuse. The DPP has a duty to uphold the will of Parliament . . . he appears to be interpreting his own guidance very liberally."

It is solemn indeed when we cannot trust those in places of high authority to deal faithfully with the vital issues of life and death.

Of course, the unspeakably awful fact is that one form of euthanasia has been legalised and has been carried out routinely since 1967. The killing of some of the most fragile and vulnerable members of our society in Britain is commonplace. The baby in the womb is denied the right to live if the mother so chooses. As John Calvin said so long ago, ". . . the *foetus*, though enclosed in the womb of its mother is already a human being (*homo*). . . . If it seems more horrible to kill a man in his own house than in a field, because a man's house is his most secure refuge, it ought surely to be deemed more atrocious

to destroy a *foetus* in the womb before it has come to light” (Commentary on Exodus 21:22).

The following sections of the report, which detail the statistics on the subjects of alcohol, drugs and crime, were prepared by Rev. Bruce Jardine. The details illustrate the terrible blight which sin has brought on our nation and how ineffectual the response of our rulers has been while they continue to reject the Word of God as their guide. These statistics are provided to encourage prayerful and practical concern for those whose lives are destroyed by sin in its more overt forms. If the facts detailed place a burden of prayer on the Lord’s people, this report will have served a useful purpose.

Alcohol

We read in the Word of God of the entrance and prevalence of sin in the world. There is no clearer place to see this than in the abuse that is made of alcohol and drugs in our day and the crime which so often follows from it. The information contained in this section is taken from that published by the charities, Alcohol Focus Scotland and Drink Aware UK. These charities not only publish information on Alcohol abuse but provide guidance for those with alcohol problems. Alcohol is not just an ordinary commodity but can also be a hazardous substance. Scotland has the highest level of alcohol consumption and harm in the United Kingdom. Over the past year almost 51 million litres of pure alcohol has been drunk by Scots – this is equivalent to every person over the age of 16 drinking 119 bottles of wine.

Over the last 30 years there has been a 450% increase in deaths caused by liver cirrhosis. Alcohol Focus Scotland has published the following facts:

- 25 people die in Scotland every week as a direct result of their drinking.
- Accident and emergency units treat an average of 4 alcohol-related cases every hour.
- Alcohol misuse in Scotland costs £3.5 billion every year, that is equivalent to £900 for every taxpayer.
- 77% of young offenders were drunk at the time of their offence.
- During 2009, Scottish hospitals dealt with 39,278 alcohol-related discharges. Of these, 36,121 were emergency admissions.

General Health

Over 60 diseases or types of trauma have been linked with alcohol use. Average alcohol consumption is causally related to the following major diseases: Tuberculosis, Mouth cancer, Oesophageal cancer, Colon and rectum cancer, Liver cancer, Diabetes mellitus, Depressive disorders, Epilepsy, Heart disease, Stroke, Lower respiratory infections (pneumonia), Cirrhosis of the liver, and Pre-term birth complications and foetal alcohol syndrome. Each year in Scotland up to 500 new cases of breast cancer could be linked to alcohol

consumption. The world's largest study of women's drinking behaviour showed that the risk of breast cancer increases by 10% for every extra alcoholic drink you drink every day over the recommended daily amount.

Alcohol and stress

Stress occurs when the pressure and challenges of life exceed our ability to cope. Though stress isn't a physical problem it makes us prone to physical and mental illness. Many people use alcohol to relax and to combat the effects of stress. However, using alcohol for this purpose leads to the following problems:

- The more a person drinks the more drink he needs to feel "relaxed" – this more often than not leads to alcohol dependency.
- Hangovers make concentration harder and even simple tasks more difficult, adding to stress level.
- Alcohol disrupts sleep, leaving the drinker tired and irritable.
- Drinking can also result in stressful financial difficulties.

Clearly drinking to try and cope with stress will only make the situation worse.

Drink driving

Drink-drivers are responsible for one in six deaths on British roads. In 2009 there were seven drink-drive deaths and 28 serious injuries every week. A further estimated 80 road deaths per year are caused by drivers who are under the drink-drive limit, but who have alcohol in their blood. Drunken car passengers can be as dangerous as drivers who drink. Research suggests that 100,000 accidents a year are caused by inebriated passengers who can cause drivers to lose control of their vehicle, swerve or crash by grappling with the steering wheel, or fiddling with the handbrake. Alcohol is recognised as a contributory factor in a wide range of other social evils, including anti-social behaviour, crime, violence, domestic violence, strained relationships, family breakdown, child abuse and child neglect. The following gives an indication of this:

- Alcohol played a major role in 14 out of 18 murders in Strathclyde in 2010.
- Half the prisoners in Scotland's jails were drunk at the time of the offence.
- 70% of assaults presenting at A&E were alcohol-related.

Alcohol and the young

It is estimated that at least 65,000 children in Scotland are negatively affected by a parent having a drink problem. Children have to cope with their parent's unpredictable behaviour, rows, neglect, domestic violence, and can often feel

ashamed as well as under-achieving at school. It is not easy being a young person in today's society. Young people are under pressure to start drinking at a young age. Without the restraints of grace and of true religion in the home, peer pressure, a lack of better alternatives and influences from film, television and social media, make it almost impossible for young people to abstain from the sinful habits of drunkenness. However, more than 10,000 children end up in hospital every year due to drinking alcohol. Research tells us that 15 per cent of young people think it is normal to get drunk at least once a week. By this they are putting themselves at risk of harm, including liver disease, depression, and brain damage. They are also grievously imperilling their immortal souls. As a young person's body is developing the most during their teenage years, the negative effects of drinking alcohol in their youth can result in lifelong illnesses and problems. Briefly:

- Alcohol makes children more vulnerable to becoming a victim of crime.
- Young people's bodies are more vulnerable than adults' to the effects of alcohol.
- Drinking can lead to and be a symptom of poor mental health.
- The earlier a child starts drinking, the higher their chances of alcohol-related problems as adults.

Drugs

This section of the report deals with the abuse of controlled substances. The information contained in this section was published by the Scottish Drugs Forum and Scottish Government. Controlled substances or illegal drugs come in a variety of forms:

- Amphetamines/Amphetamine stimulate the central nervous system and give the user increased energy, reduced appetite and an overall feeling of wellbeing.
- Barbiturates/Barbiturate which are prescription sedatives.
- Benzodiazepine/Benzodiazepines are widely prescribed for depression and sleeping disorders.
- Buprenorphine (Subutex, Buprenex, Temgesic and Suboxone), which is often used in the treatment of opioid addiction.
- Cannabis/Marijuana. Cannabis is the most commonly abused illegal drug.
- Cocaine is a potent stimulant and one of the most powerfully addictive drugs.
- Heroin is an addictive narcotic drug derived from the opium poppy.
- Inhalants or solvents are ordinary household or industrial products that are inhaled or sniffed by solvent abusers to achieve intoxication.

- Ketamine hydrochloride is a depressant of the central nervous system and a fast-acting general anaesthetic with sedative-hypnotic, analgesic, and hallucinogenic properties.
- LSD is the most common hallucinogen and is one of the most potent mood-changing chemicals available.
- Magic Mushrooms are certain types of naturally occurring mushrooms which contain hallucinogenic chemicals that can be released when eaten.
- MDMA, or Ecstasy, is a synthetic drug with amphetamine-like and hallucinogenic properties.
- Methadone is prescribed to people who take heroin (or other opiates) to help reduce the risks of their illicit drug use.
- Phencyclidine or PCP.

The prevalence of illicit drug use in Scotland

The following figures are based on a survey carried out by the Scottish Government:

- One in four (25.2%) adults have taken one or more illicit drugs at some point in their lives.
- 7.2% of adults have used one or more illicit drugs in the last year.
- 4.2% have used one or more illicit drug in the last month.

Cannabis is by far the most commonly used illegal drug. 22.9% of adults have taken cannabis at some point in their lives, around 6.1% of adults reported using cannabis in the last year, and around 3.6% reported using cannabis in the last month. The next most common drugs were amphetamines (7.6%), ecstasy (7.4%), and cocaine (6.7%).

Men have higher levels of illicit drug use than women:

- Around 31.4% of men reported taking an illicit drug at some point in their lives compared with 19.5% of women.
- 10.1% of men reported having used one or more illicit drugs in the last year which was twice as high as the 4.5% percentage of women.
- 6.0% of men compared with 2.6% of women reported having used one or more illicit drug in the last month.

38.2% of 16-24-year-olds and 41.9% of 25-44-year-olds reported having used illicit drugs at some point in their lives. Reported drug use was lower among 45-59-year-olds and decreased further among those aged 60 or over.

Tobacco/nicotine

There is another drug which, though not illegal or as controlled as the above, is just as harmful. According to the American Council for Drug Education, tobacco use has been implicated in:

- Cancers of the lungs, mouth, throat, larynx, oesophagus, stomach, pancreas, uterus, cervix, kidney, bladder, and some forms of leukaemia.
- Cardiovascular disease, heart attack, fatal heart failure, and stroke.
- Pulmonary diseases, such as sinusitis, bronchitis, pneumonia, emphysema, and inflammation of the trachea.
- Reproductive complications, such as miscarriage, premature birth, birth defects, and, especially, low-birth weight babies and babies with developmental problems. Nicotine depresses the appetite at a time when a woman should be gaining weight, and smoking reduces the ability of the lungs to absorb oxygen. Deprived of nourishment and oxygen, a child in the womb may not grow as fast and as much as it should.

This reminds us of the responsibility we are under to take every lawful endeavour to preserve our own life and the life of others (*Shorter Catechism* Q.68).

According to the Government, smoking-related conditions cost the NHS over £5bn a year.

Crime

The following information is taken from the *Scottish Crime and Justice Survey (SCJS) 2010-11* as published by the Scottish Government. The figures given are, in part, estimates originating from a sample survey and are, therefore, subject to uncertainty.

Some of the most significant findings of the report claimed that:

- The risk of being a victim of crime is falling. The risk of crime was 17.8% in 2010-11 compared with 19.3% in 2009-10 and 20.4% in 2008-09.
- The number of crimes has fallen by 16% or 171,000 in the two years between 2008-09 and 2010-11, from 1,045,000 crimes in 2008-09 to 874,000 crimes in 2010-11.

The extent of crime in Scotland

An estimate of the extent of crime among the adult population living in private households in Scotland can be given. There were 874,000 crimes, including:

- Approximately 654,000 property crimes (75% of crime) involved theft or damage to personal or household property (including vehicles).
- Around 32% of crimes were incidents of vandalism – 17% was vandalism to vehicles and 15% was vandalism to property.
- 7% related to motor vehicle theft and actual thefts of and from a motor vehicle.

- 3% of crime was housebreaking and 19% was other household theft (including bicycle theft).
- 14% of crime was personal theft (excluding robbery).
- Approximately 220,000 violent crimes of assault or robbery (25% of crime).
- Assault accounted for 24% of crime (2% was serious assault and 22% was minor assault).
- 1% of the crime was robbery.

The number of crimes has fallen by 16% in the two years between 2008/09 and 2010/11, from 1,045,000 crimes in 2008/09 to 874,000 crimes in 2010/11.

Violent crime

The following are the main claims according to the report:

- The risk of being a victim of violent crime is falling. 3.0% in 2010-11 compared with 3.6% in 2009-10. The estimated number of violent crimes was 220,000 in 2010-11 compared with 266,000 in 2009-10.
- The offender was under the influence of alcohol in 63% of cases of violent crime in 2010-11 compared with 62% in 2009-10.
- 22% of violent crime happened in or around a pub, bar or club and 46% of violent crime occurred at the weekend between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.
- The victim reported that the offender had a knife in 11% of violent crime in 2010-11 compared with 12% in 2009-10.

A weapon was used in 24% of violent crime in 2010/11 compared with 30% in 2009/10. Where victims reported that the offender had a weapon a knife was the most common weapon. It was used in 11% of violent crime in 2010/11 compared with 12% in 2009/10. Victims perceived the offender to have been under the influence of alcohol in 63% of violent crime and to have taken drugs in 34% of violent crime.

The risk of being a victim

The survey estimates that around 17.8% of adults aged 16 or over were the victims of at least one crime:

- 15.9% of adults were estimated to have been a victim of property crime.
- 3% of adults had been a victim of violent crime.

The risk of being a victim of a crime has fallen from 19.3% in 2009/10 to 17.8% in 2010/11. The risk to the individual:

- Males and females had an equal risk of being a victim of property crime (16%); males had a higher risk of being a victim of violent crime compared with females (4% and 2% respectively).

- 26% of males aged 16-24 were at risk of being a victim of crime. The risk of being a victim for females of the same age was 25%.
- 11% of 16-24-year-old males had the highest risk of being a victim of violent crime compared with all other combined age/gender groups.

The risk of being a victim of crime decreases with age. 26% of those aged 16-24 had been a victim of crime in the last year, compared with 9% of those aged 60+. Males had a higher risk of being a victim of violent crime compared with females. 4% of adult males had been a victim of violent crime in the last year compared with 2% of females.

The risk of repeated victimisation:

- 5% of adults or 35% of victims of property crime were repeat victims of property crime.
- 1% of adults or 35% of victims of violent crime were repeat victims of violent crime.

Where and when crime happened

Nearly 63% of all property crimes took place immediately outside the home. In contrast, violent crime happened in a number of locations:

- 22% of violent crime happened in or around a pub, bar or club.
- 19% happened in or near the respondent's place of work.
- 12% of violent crimes took place inside the victims' home and 11% took place immediately outside the home.
- 6% of violent crimes happened in or around a shop, supermarket, shopping centre or precinct.

Almost 48% of all crime took place on a weekday and a little less, 41%, took place at the weekend. 51% of all property crime took place on a weekday and 36%, took place at the weekend. In contrast, 57% of violent crime took place at the weekend and 46% of all violent crime took place at the weekend between 6 p.m. and 6 a.m.

Some characteristics of offenders

- Males were more likely than females to be offenders. In 74% of crime, where the victim was able to say something about the offender, the offender was male compared with 12% of crimes where the offender was female and 13% where there was a group of both male and female offenders. Males were more likely to be the offender in both property and violent crime.
- Offenders were most likely to be aged 16-24. In 41% of crime, where the victim was able to say something about the offender, the offender was described as being aged 16-24.

- In 34% of property crime, where the victim was able to provide details, the offender was of school age, compared with 15% of violent crime. Property vandalism was the crime most likely to have been committed by school age children.
- In 19% of crime, where the victim knew the offender well, the offender was a friend or acquaintance; in 16% a neighbour and in 9% the current partner of the victim.
- 26% of property crime, where the victim knew the offender well, was committed by a friend or acquaintance and 16% committed by a neighbour.
- 16% of violent crime, where the victim knew the offender well, was committed by a neighbour, 15% by a friend or acquaintance, 13% by the victim's current partner and 13% by client or member of the public contacted through work.

It is clear from the above that sin is as rampant today as it has ever been and that it is then just as necessary for us to pray for the outpouring of the Spirit.

Conclusion

What need there is for another Reformation. The dreadful apostasy from the truth is going on apace and, while the Lord is able in a short time to turn the tide of iniquity, we greatly fear that our nation must yet be brought exceedingly low for its sins. For ourselves we must consider solemnly the question, "are there not with you, even with you, sins against the Lord your God?" (2 Chronicles 28:10). It has often been said that repentance begins in the Church of God and how fervently we should seek that the spirit of grace and of supplication would again be poured out on Scotland to effect that great and necessary change. May the Lord hasten it in His time.

APPENDIX 1

RESPONSE TO CHANGES IN THE WORSHIP OF THE FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

(a) Constitutional changes in the Free Church

- (1) The Act of the Plenary Assembly of November 2010 introduced a new constitutional arrangement to the Free Church of Scotland. By this Act it was legislated for the first time that the Free Church can change its form of worship which previously had been protected by its written constitution. By this Act, there is a new Free Church of Scotland.
- (2) The Act of the Plenary Assembly of November 2010 being treated as a Class 1 Act and assuming powers only granted under the Barrier Act to pass legislation into standing law, has circumvented

the provision of the Barrier Act and the Assembly has rejected the provision of the Barrier Act for this piece of legislation, making it constitutionally illegal.

- (3) The Act of the Plenary Assembly of November 2010 has repealed all previous Acts of Assembly since 1846 relating to Hymns and Instrumental Music in Public Worship. This would have had the effect of restoring the Free Church to the constitutional position in 1846 but the Act goes on to enact fresh legislation sanctioning the use of Hymns and Instrumental Music as a Class 1 Act.
- (4) The terms upon which the Act of the Plenary Assembly of November 2010 which has sanctioned the use of Hymns leaves the worship of God and the material used in it open to the subjective and changing interpretation of office-bearers who have disavowed the constitutional purity of worship in the Free Church.
- (5) As in 1892 when the constitution of the Free Church had changed in relation to the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the Plenary Assembly Act on worship has changed the constitution of the Free Church in relation to the worship of God and so there is now a new Church calling herself the Free Church of Scotland.
- (6) The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has always claimed to be the Free Church of 1843 and claims to be the true heir of the Disruption Church of Scotland. This claim is further substantiated and would have every reason to succeed in law were the matter ever put to trial as in 1900 in relation to property.
- (7) The competing claims of the Free Church (Continuing) as the true heirs of the Free Church constitution are to be dismissed on account of their being a new denomination and being established on unfounded and new principles relating to an alleged continued right of protest.

(b) A new Free Church Declaratory Act

The General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland in May 2011 passed a further Act on the subject of the worship of that denomination in an attempt to put a line under the disputes of the past 10 years. The form of the Act in several particulars resembles in form the infamous Free Church Declaratory Act of 1892. In what is all but an admission of a very significant change in the Questions and Formula put to Free Church office-bearers, the new Act of 2011 recognises that the decision of the Plenary Assembly of November 2010 “may have created difficulties of conscience for some office-bearers and some who may be elected to office”. It then enacts that, “in order to address such difficulties”, all candidates for office at the time of licensing, ordination or induction “may intimate to the relevant Church Court their own personal conviction with regard to sung praise and instrumental music in public worship”.

In substance and in form this is a new Declaratory Act and is, like the Declaratory Act of 1892, a relieving Act. Yet, unlike the carefully crafted production of Robert Rainy, it clearly identifies what the 1892 Declaratory Act in fact constituted – a change in the relation of the Free Church to her constitution. While the 2011 Act is constructed to relieve the consciences of office-bearers, it would appear that the consciences intended in the Declaratory Act of 2011 are those of the Free Church office-bearers who wish to *preserve* rather than those who wish to *change* the constitution. Such is the new understanding of liberty of conscience that office-bearers who have *not* changed their avowed position on purity of worship are now required to make known their “personal conviction” and “it shall be the duty of the Clerk of Presbytery or Kirk Session in all cases to record any such intimation”. Those who *have* changed their position relative to the vows they have taken are not required to make any such statement as the Plenary Assembly has granted them the licence to change their avowed convictions with impunity.

It remains to be seen how many existing office-bearers in the Free Church will make use of the liberty and advice of the new Act which ordains that “existing office-bearers may intimate to the relevant Church Court at any suitable opportunity their own personal conviction with regard to sung praise and instrumental music in public worship”. This provision of the Act seems so wide open to misuse and misconstruction that it would hardly seem credible that a Presbyterian Church could long endure the ambiguity it has potential to create. If, for example, a candidate for office in the Free Church of Scotland were to declare his personal conviction to be in favour of some particular body of uninspired hymns presently disallowed by the Free Church understanding of her “purity” of worship, would an argument not immediately ensue as to whether this or that particular hymn was according to the doctrine of the Scriptures and the Confession? Similarly, if an office-bearer who previously swore to “assert, maintain and defend” the purity of worship as authorised and practised when he was ordained, intimated that he would do all in his power as an office-bearer to overturn the Plenary Assembly decision, could the Church Court to which he is accountable legitimately accept and approve of this intimation? Anarchy would ensue in either hypothetical case.

It is very possible that what lies behind the new Declaratory Act is a hope that such anarchy is only hypothetical and not likely to prove a reality in the present-day Free Church. Doubtless Robert Rainy thought similarly in 1892 before he encountered the support given to the consistent witness of the Free Presbyterian Church, which saw the reality of the situation clearly. Similar zeal for the old purity of worship is sadly little in evidence. Separation or re-constitution are ultimately very unlikely. The nearly universal cry for “unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace” is likely to create such a din in the ears of would-be protesters that they would shrink from asserting themselves any further. Flight to other denominations would now be the preferred option for those unwilling to accept the changes. Thus, once again, the Free Church of Scotland, by declining from her testimony and constitutional obligations, has

been the agent of schism and in the name of unity has again rent a division, however small in numbers, in the Church of Christ.

APPENDIX 2

ADDITIONAL COMMENT ON THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In the Committee's report to the May 2011 Synod a review of the Scottish Churches was presented to the Synod which included, together with our own Church, reference to four other bodies claiming to represent the Reformed Church in Scotland. Attention has been drawn to the fact that the Reformed Presbyterian Church was not included in this brief survey. The fact that this denomination had all but disappeared from the ecclesiastical scene at the time may account for this omission, but this situation has changed in the past year. Mainly due to the decisions on worship in the Free Church of Scotland, this denomination has increased in size and has changed its constitution in the past year. The following survey is intended to update the Synod on the position of this Church and, as in last year's survey, to offer some reflections on the general subject of schism and Church unity in view of the forth-coming revision of the Statement of Differences.

Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland

There have been no formal relations between this Church and the Synod at any time. The Reformed Presbyterian Church (established in 1743) does not share or claim the historic Disruption heritage of other Scottish Presbyterian Churches, but it is recognised as claiming a heritage and constitutional continuity with the Reformation Church of Scotland. The Free Presbyterian Church Statement of Differences in 1962 highlighted several points in the constitution of this Church with which we could not entirely agree. These were: (1) the complete rejection of the Revolution Settlement, (2) the signing of the Covenants being made a term of communion, (3) the belief that the Civil Magistrate must have respect to the Word of God and the interest of the Church before he can be recognised as having a valid standing, and (4) the rejection of political involvement by Christians either in taking any office of State requiring an oath of allegiance or in voting for members of Parliament.

On the other hand the Synod affirmation of the Second Reformation attainments in its statement of 1910 clearly expressed sympathy with and a measure of harmony between the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the outlook of the Reformed Presbyterians on the inadequacies of the Revolution Settlement. This statement clearly identifies the main complaints about the Revolution Settlement which we share with the Reformed Presbyterian Church and others. It contends, however, that these are not sufficient to reject the Settlement altogether but rather that it should still be

recognised as a work of God. It also showed that this was the position held by the Disruption fathers as expressed in their 1851 Declaration which, among other things, expressly called for the repeal of the Act Recissory which stigmatised the Second Reformation as treasonable and rebellious.

The separate position of the Reformed Presbyterian Church was therefore to be viewed as invalid for these constitutional reasons. It is to be further noted that a majority in the Reformed Presbyterian Church saw the stand for truth in 1843 as fulfilling the terms of their testimony sufficiently to effect a union with the Free Church of Scotland in 1876. That this was the correct conclusion on a constitutional level is evident and therefore leaves the remaining Reformed Presbyterian body open to the charge of schismatic division.

The constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland has, however, been considerably altered in the past year and has been all but stripped of its previously distinctive elements. This action seems, in part, to have been carried out for pragmatic reasons rather than from conviction or deeply held principle. As such it is also open to the charge of promoting and maintaining schism. The separate jurisdiction claimed and practised by the Reformed Presbyterian body seems no longer to be justified even to themselves.

The new constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church states that the putting in abeyance of its distinctive testimony and the adding of new statements is intended to produce “a standard around which all who agree may gather”. The clear duty of a body of Christians finding themselves in such a position must be to come under the jurisdiction of that body which reflects the biblical and constitutional identity to which they have deliberately aligned themselves. To demand that others suddenly abandon their principled stand and testimony to the same truths and heritage in order to be united to a body which has only really come into its present separate existence a little more than a year ago seems a most extravagant suggestion. While recognising the testimony of Churches which hold to the Disruption heritage as doing “good work”, the position adopted by the Reformed Presbyterian Church implies that the testimony of the Free Presbyterian Church is not one around which they and others ought to gather. That the alteration in the constitution was in part at least for pragmatic reasons tends to undermine confidence in the commitment of such parties to constitutions which have the honourable distinction of many generations of allegiance. This justified doubt requires to be satisfactorily dispelled.

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has openly declared its position on Church unity and its willingness to consider the matter of union a duty if certain important conditions were met. It considers that adherence to the whole doctrine of the *Confession of Faith* must be in practice as well as in profession and views the matter of discipline founded upon Scripture as of fundamental importance to the credibility of any profession made in constitutional documents or ordination vows. The Synod has several times declared its reasons for maintaining a separate position and does so firmly on the ground

of strict adherence to the First and Second Reformation and Disruption attainments. Its constitutional claim to be the true Free Church of Scotland as settled in 1843 has never been refuted.

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland maintains that its separate existence is justified because it is necessary. The necessity of its testimony against the serious doctrinal errors as identified in the doctrines of the Declaratory Act of 1892 and other serious defections of the Churches in Scotland since that time, is as great in 2012 as at any time in its near 120-year history. It welcomes those who wish to adhere to its testimony and has received many such from other denominations over the years. It is willing to assert, maintain and defend its position from Scripture and the *Westminster Confession* to which it adheres. It does so in the prayerful hope that the Lord will again restore and revive His cause in Scotland by Reformation and repentance so that the attainments of previous Reformation work will be returned to and valued by the Church and people of God.