

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**REPORTS OF
STANDING
COMMITTEES
OF SYNOD**

Submitted to Synod in May 2014

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REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND MORALS COMMITTEE

Convener: Rev. D. Campbell

THIS report details the work done by the committee during the year since the last meeting of Synod and reports with comments on a selected number of issues relating to religion and morals in the nation. The report was prepared by all members of the committee and as Convener I would like to thank the members of the committee for their work. The committee feels it is only touching the surface of the subjects taken up and that the influence of such efforts as it does make to testify to the truth and against evil in the nation is very small. Yet we continue in this duty in the prayerful hope that the Lord will hear the cry of those who tremble at His Word and who increasingly sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land (Ezekiel 9:4). In part this report is intended to act as a prompt and encouragement to more fervent prayer to the Most High that He would in wrath remember mercy (Habakkuk 3:1-3). It is also intended to convey to the Synod and its members the great burden of spiritual desolation that faces those who are called to preach the gospel in our generation. The great apostasy in our own beloved land is the particular burden that we ought to feel pressing on us and in view of it to pray the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers into His own harvest in this land.

1. THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

The committee carried out its duties to the Synod according to Synod instructions and some of these duties involve the presentation of material for Synod approval this year. Other matters that arose during the course of the year and which were either drawn to the attention of the committee by others or which commended themselves to the committee's attention, were dealt with.

1. Protest and appeal re Abortion Act 1967

As instructed by the Synod, the committee drew up a renewed appeal according to the terms of the resolution passed in 1978. The committee considered this renewed appeal at both its meetings and believed that it was wise to leave the matter with the Synod to give a final decision on. The committee would like to remind the Synod that in recent years, as pointed out in previous reports, it has sent letters to the Cabinet minister for Health on the evils of abortion calling for a review of the Act of 1967. On this occasion the committee took into consideration the terms of the Act, its relation to other Acts of Parliament past and present and the Synod resolution of 1978. The committee found evidence that the great majority (95% in England and Wales in 2004) of abortions in the UK are carried out on the basis of the first section 1(1(a)) of the Abortion Act 1967. The protest and appeal therefore seeks to

concentrate on that part of the Act in particular and commends an approach that the committee believes is in accordance with biblical principles.

2. Same-sex marriage legislation

The committee continued throughout the year to represent to the Scottish Government the biblical and constitutional position relative to marriage in opposition to the terms of the Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Scotland) Bill. In the week prior to the third and final stage of Parliamentary scrutiny of the Bill, the Convener wrote a personal letter to all 129 MSPs setting out the solemn action that the Parliament would be taking if it agreed to the Bill and warning of Divine judgement following such a course. Part of this letter was referred to in the debate by John Finnie MSP in a scornful manner and other MSPs responded by letter in the weeks that followed. However limited the effect of this warning and however mocked by those who fear not God, our prayer remains that the witness against our national sin will yet be honoured by the Lord in national repentance. The Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Scotland) Bill was passed on 4th February 2014 by a majority of 105 to 18 with no abstentions. It is a Bill that has nothing whatever to commend it and on the back of changing the definition of marriage it also removes several scriptural impediments to marriage by affinity which ought to be retained. A reforming Scottish Parliament would be required to strike down this Bill if it becomes an Act because it contains nothing that is morally good or even indifferent.

The committee was instructed by the Synod to prepare a report “setting out proposals whereby the Synod would in future approach the subject of biblical marriage in the light of legislation in Scotland, the UK and overseas introducing sodomite marriage”. In its approach to this task the committee considered an extended discussion document at its meeting in October 2013 which offered some proposals for withdrawal by ministers of the Church from the present status of “approved celebrant” under the Marriages (Scotland) Act 1977 as amended by the Act redefining marriage. After considerable discussion of this document and following consultation with the Church legal advisor, the committee considered a shorter document setting out a variety of options. This document is now offered to the Synod together with the legal advice obtained relative to the various options it contains. The committee did not feel it possible to investigate the legal implication of these options for ministers and congregations overseas but understands that the Australia and New Zealand Presbytery prepared a similar report on the issue.

It is a view held by some on the committee that the Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Scotland) Act 2014 is *ultra vires* of the constitution of the United Kingdom and is vulnerable to the restrictions of the Scotland Act 1998 which lists reserved matters not competent to the Scottish Parliament. While marriage law is not a reserved matter, constitutional matters are reserved to the UK Parliament, including the terms and conditions of the Treaty of Union. Accordingly it is the opinion of some in the legal profession that in theory

this legislation could be subjected to judicial review on the ground that it is a breach of the Act of Security. This Act, as office-bearers in the Church will well know from the Claim, Declaration and Protest to which they give their agreement at ordination, enshrines the *Westminster Confession of Faith* as the religion of the realm protected by and an inviolable condition of the Treaty of Union.

The prospect of success in seeking judicial review may be very small and the Synod did not opt to pursue that line on a previous occasion. However, the terms on which the Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Scotland) Act was passed are such that the implementation of the Act is delayed until the UK Parliament amends the Equality Act (2010). This interval of time (possibly extending to October 2014) makes a petition for judicial review a feasible option for the Church to consider again. This approach commends itself as that which is most honouring to the Lord and as having the precedent of the approach taken by the Disruption fathers when the co-operation of the Church with the State in matters in which both had an interest became impossible to preserve with a good conscience. The committee is not making any formal proposals on this matter, but invites the Synod to recognise the right and liberty of individual ministers to take such action as in conscience they must in accordance with their solemn vows of ordination relative to the constitution and their pastoral duties, notwithstanding what persecution may arise.

3. Relationships, sexual health and parenting guidance

The committee was approached by the Scottish government asking for comments on proposed guidance for local authorities relating to the new subject of Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenting to be taught in Scottish Schools. RSHP guidance replaces guidance on sex education and takes into account the changes in the law brought about by the Marriage and Civil Partnerships (Scotland) Act of 2014. The committee took this opportunity to respond in considerable detail to the guidance and offered the following points to the consideration of the government department involved, for each of which detailed evidence and supporting argument was also given:

1. The Church considers the subject to be an ethical one which ought to be approached from a Christian ethical position. The Christian ethic found in the Bible regards the homosexual lifestyle as sinful and requires that sexual relationships be within a monogamous marriage union between a man and a woman.
2. The Church does not consider the duties of informing parents and carers outlined in the guidance to be adequate and calls for all actual classroom materials to be provided to parents and carers upon request.
3. The Church considers the provision for withdrawal from RSHP education to be an essential right of parents and is concerned that perceived rights of a child to be consulted will be unduly divisive

and destructive of the partnership with parents that the guidance seeks to promote.

4. The Church is concerned at the definitions used in identifying bullying on grounds of sexual orientation, at the one-sided approach to bullying in this area and at the unqualified acceptance of an unscientific and very limited survey of bullying by lobby groups promoting a homosexual life-style.
5. The Church calls for Christian resources to be made available which explain the value of monogamous marriage between a man and a woman and for true objectivity to be achieved through factual information being provided to senior age groups on the health dangers of aspects of the homosexual lifestyle.
6. The Church, in consideration of the revolutionary nature of the legislation presently passing through the Scottish Parliament, on which the guidance is based, calls for a national consultation on the guidance prior to any implementation.

In issuing this response, the committee agreed to provide a press release and to circulate the response among media outlets, including the Christian Institute, the *English Churchman* and the *British Church Newspaper*. It is not yet known when the guidance will be given and how it will be adapted in light of responses offered but to date the committee has not received any formal confirmation that its response has in any way affected the final version of the guidance. The committee considers this subject one which will certainly meet parents and children in the Church involved with State schools at primary and secondary level. The full response can be made available on the Church website.

4. Protest re Law of Succession

The committee prepared a Protest against the terms of the Succession to the Crown Act 2013 which it now offers to the Synod.

5. Resolution re Scottish Independence referendum

The committee prepared a Resolution in opposition to Scottish Independence and appealing to the nation in connection with the forth-coming Scottish Independence referendum which it now offers to the Synod. After discussion it was agreed to incorporate the following reasons to support the proposed resolution in this report. These set out some of the issues which make this referendum such a serious constitutional issue as to require this particular intervention by the Synod.

1. The forth-coming referendum is, in our considered opinion, a manifest constitutional illegality authorising as it does the potential destruction of what is an international treaty and inviolable for all time coming and

protected by the oath of the Sovereign and binding statutes of the realm of Scotland and of England prior to the Union in 1707 which no Act or decision of the present UK Parliament can overturn.

2. The forth-coming referendum is also a manifest injustice towards the people in the rest of the United Kingdom outside Scotland and in the Commonwealth whose rights and liberties under the constitution it disregards and subverts, they not being permitted any voice in a decision which will necessarily affect them profoundly and which will utterly remove the protections presently enshrined in our statutes and Treaty of Union which constitute this nation a United Kingdom.
3. The Prime Minister and the Scottish First Minister had neither a mandate nor a constitutional liberty to enforce this referendum on Scottish Independence on the Scottish people in the manner in which they did, and the terms under which the referendum will be carried out contain manifest contradictions and is essentially unfair and unjust in that (a) the question to be voted on is not consistent with the true legal status of Scotland as a nation with an independent legal system already and (b) the final outcome in favour of independence does not require a majority of people in the nation voting for it.
4. The proposal in favour of Scottish Independence produced by the Scottish Government, entitled *Scotland's Future: Your Guide to an Independent Scotland*, contains inaccuracy when it declares that Independence will result in “no change to the legal status of any religion or of Scotland’s churches” (page 564).
5. The proposal in favour of Scottish Independence produced by the Scottish Government, referred to above thus provides no security for the doctrine, worship or government of the Church of Scotland, nor the rights and privileges of the Church as secured by the oath of the Sovereign and therefore Scottish Independence would represent an act of treason against Her Majesty the Queen and her subjects, and would therefore not be binding upon any citizen of the United Kingdom or the Commonwealth whom she reigns over under that oath.

6. Letter to HRH the Prince of Wales

The committee agreed to write a letter to the Prince of Wales objecting to his attendance at a requiem mass in September 2013. The letter was in the following terms:

Your Royal Highness,

We write with regret and sadness over a subject of concern to us which we were only recently informed of and which, while some time ago, remains to us a point of principle. As loyal subjects to a Protestant Queen and concerned for the future of her throne, we are painfully

constrained to express our grief that in showing your respects in connection with the lamented death of your late friend Hugh van Cutsem, you, together with your sons, HRH the Duke of Cambridge and Prince Harry, attended a Roman Catholic requiem mass at Brentwood Cathedral. We feel it our sad and difficult duty to remind Your Highness that this attendance is injurious to Your Highnesses' spiritual welfare and that it is an ill-advised example in a constitutionally Protestant nation.

As heir to the throne of the United Kingdom, Your Highness is bound to show respect to the laws of God and the religion of the realm which, in both England and Scotland, recognises the requiem mass of the Roman Catholic religion as injurious and blasphemous. The Reformation of the 16th century demonstrated to all succeeding generations the dangerous nature of Roman Catholic theology respecting the dead and exposed the falsehood of the arrogated power of Roman priests to help souls in so-called purgatory.

We fully recognise that this position and this letter may be viewed as offensive and even hurtful to you. This we sincerely wish to mitigate and so we do most earnestly ask that you would receive it as from those prayerfully concerned for you and for the religious future of this nation. With due respect to Your Highnesses' feelings of loss and recognising Your Highnesses' duty and wish to share your sympathy and condolences with the bereaved at a time of mourning, we would respectfully suggest that attendance at a requiem mass cannot but confirm them and others in grievous error.

Yours sincerely

7. Other business still in hand

The committee made considerable progress in drafting a revised statement of differences but requires further time to have this document in a state of readiness for Synod discussion and adoption.

The committee has not been able to make further progress with papers on the subject of divorce and proposes that this matter be taken up by the Training of the Ministry Committee at a Theological Conference as relevant to the training of present and future ministers of the Church.

The convener of the committee attended a conference in May 2013 on the future of Scottish Education and reported to the committee on the papers and discussions.

8. Items of business relating to Presbyteries

While the committee is not accountable to the Presbyteries of the Church, it sees its role as including being of service to Presbyteries in connection with matters it has taken in hand or has been instructed by the Synod to pursue. In

the past year the committee took in hand business first raised at the Southern Presbytery in connection with the use of Church properties following the implementation of the Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Scotland) Act 2014. This business involved reviewing a note by the Church legal advisor on this question. The committee agreed to include this with a separate brief report to the Synod.

The committee also agreed to incorporate in this report on religion and morals part of a report prepared for the Outer Isles Presbytery on the subject of spiritual declension and false evangelism. This report, together with the resolution of that Presbytery, was made available to the public and was authored by two members of the committee on behalf of the Presbytery. It is felt that because the resolution received significant coverage in the local press, the underlying report on which it was based would with advantage be shared with the wider Church through this report on religion and morals.

As already mentioned, the committee interacted in a limited way with members of the Australia and New Zealand Presbytery on the subject of same-sex marriage legislation.

2. REPORT ON ASPECTS OF RELIGION AND MORALS

This second part of the report was prepared by members of the committee and covers a number of subjects. These observations are offered to the Synod with a deep consciousness of the spiritual declension that we must acknowledge among ourselves and the great forsaking in the midst of the land which we have witnessed among our families and congregations in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. This report is offered also in the hope and prayer that the spirit of grace and supplication will be poured out on the Church, both among office-bearers and people and that the Lord will have respect to the prayers of His poor and needy people who mourn over sin and plead with Him not to leave His heritage to reproach. The subjects dealt with in this report do not make encouraging reading and we feel pained that over many years this report has treated the state of religion and morals in the nation with such a sense of foreboding and dejection. Our hope is in the Lord and we would encourage all the readers of this report to cast their eye often with longing and believing prayer to the exceeding great and precious promises of the Lord's work being revived. In the certain hope of better days, we seek to be marked as those who sigh and cry and who are grieved for the afflictions of Joseph.

1. Census information

The Scottish census figures from 2011 have been gradually made available over the past year. The details regarding religion make sad reading and make plain the great need that Scotland has of a spiritual awakening. In a population of 5,295,403 Scots, a total of 1,717,871 claim to belong to the Church of Scotland and 841,053 claim to be Roman Catholics. Those identifying as what the census defines as "Other Christian" number 291,275 of which 66,717

identify as Church of England. The variety of categories under this section makes for disturbing reading yet some interesting figures emerge. Pentecostals number 12,357 while those identifying themselves as Free Church of Scotland number 10,896. Those describing themselves as Jehovah's Witnesses number 8,543, while Mormons living in Scotland number 4,651. The figures possibly do not reveal the true picture for any of the categories because several identifications overlap within this category of "Other Christian", such as 36,208 identifying themselves as Christian, while another 16,609 identify themselves as Protestant and a further separate figure of 13,229 refer to themselves as Evangelical. Thus while 3,553 self-identify as Presbyterians, some Presbyterians may describe themselves as Protestant, some as Christian and some as Evangelical, while all may belong to a small Church such as our own. There are two figures for Free Presbyterians, one with 1,197 and the other with 132. A total of 368,039 did not state their religion.

About a third of Scots (1,941,996) described themselves as having no religion in what was a voluntary part of the census. This shocking figure has of course been eagerly seized on by secularists who wish to further undermine the Christian heritage of the nation. There are several responses to the reaction that this figure supports further secularising of national institutions.

Firstly, the concept that the number of people adhering to truth determines whether truth should be publicly recognised and supported is deeply flawed. Truth is not relative nor can it be determined in terms of democratic choice.

Secondly, the question of whether people's own perception of their religious stance is accurate is far from simple. Many people who would consider themselves as having no religion mean by this that they are not connected to any religious organisation. This does not always mean that they have no religion whatsoever. Furthermore, being a voluntary question, the distortion in the figures could be quite considerable.

Thirdly, it is of great interest to learn that in spite of nearly 2 million Scots describing themselves as having no religion, only 2,992 described themselves as being humanists and 2,848 others described themselves as being atheists. These statistics confirm what is the truth of the human heart – that man has a religious nature and that real and genuine atheism is a matter of the heart and will, not of the conscience and intellect. The plea of secularists for the removal of religion from state institutions cannot be supported on democratic grounds from the census figures because to enforce national atheism would be in theory the choice of only 3,000 people out of over 5 million.

Fourthly, the fact remains that two thirds of the population did not say that they have no religion and so must view themselves as having a religion. Such a percentage in any democratic election would be considered so overwhelming that governments and politicians would consider themselves mandated to act for that majority in any way they saw fit. If public religion and the recognition of religion in national institutions was something that should be determined by force of numbers, it is clear from the census that secularists have no grounds to demand the abolition of religion in the state.

Nevertheless, the figures cannot but be viewed as a most grievous illustration of the degeneracy of the nation in spiritual things. The true children of God in Scotland are very few in number and those who prize the testimony of the Reformation that was only comparatively recently professed by the whole nation, are becoming fewer still. Every kind of false creed and superstition is practised and encouraged to flourish in Scotland today. This is the boast of our politicians and of multitudes of professing Christians who have lost all sense of what is truth and error. For the Church of God in Scotland, one fact is now plain – “the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few”. Some might respond to this that the neglect of the means of grace by the nation generally would suggest that a harvest is not set before the Church. However, the Saviour spoke these words when He saw the multitudes fainting and scattered abroad as sheep without a shepherd and He was moved with compassion towards them (Matthew 9:36). This is the true picture of Scotland today – many multitudes fainting in spiritual death, ready to perish in hell for ever; scattered abroad like sheep because of false shepherds and hirelings who lead them astray with false doctrine and perverse rituals; without a shepherd to lead them and having no knowledge of the great Shepherd of the sheep.

We firmly believe that the census figures are a particular call to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland to earnestly, consistently and solemnly pray to the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth labourers into His own harvest. Our land is now a mission field needing missionary labourers as much, if not more, than darkest Africa and Asia. If we ignore this fact and do not act and take our responsibilities to perishing souls seriously, the Lord will certainly cast us off from further usefulness and will raise up deliverance from the sons of strangers. Of the precious Church of Christ in Scotland we may ask, are there none among her sons whom she hath brought forth to take her by the hand and guide her? (Isaiah 51:18)

2. The Church of Scotland

The present Church of Scotland is unrecognisable from the body incepted by John Knox in 1560. It is no true Church, being devoid of all of its marks; that is, the faithful proclamation of all the counsel of God, the right administration of the sacraments and biblical discipline. In May 2013, its General Assembly (moderated by a woman ineligible to hold office in the Church, 1 Timothy 3:2), in evidence of increasing defection from Scripture truth and holiness, decided to allow liberal congregations to call known sodomites. It seems likely, in view of the current trend within that organisation, that this wicked proposal will be ratified in 2015. This institution falsely claims adherence to its previous, long-standing opposition to sodomy. The fact is, that it is promoting that grievous sin, which is condemned in Scripture as wicked (Romans 1:28), vile and unnatural (Romans 1:26), and unseemly (Romans 1:27). This is especially obvious in the odious spectacle of a shameless sodomite occupying one of its pulpits in Aberdeen. A faithful Church would

not tolerate such wickedness, but rather condemn it, and depose the offender. He needs to be reproved of his gross sin against the seventh commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14), in the sincere hope that he may be convinced of his sin, condemn himself, and come to Christ for salvation; as was the blessed case of some sodomites at Corinth: “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus . . .” (1 Corinthians 6:11).

In January this year, one of its Ministers, the Reverend Donald MacInnes (Gairbraid) described sodomy as a “perversion” and “disorder”, and further stated that should the Scottish Government succeed in legalising sodomite marriage it would be a “tragic day”. However, he also stated that he favoured civil partnerships. Despite this inconsistent and tempered denunciation of sodomy, he was removed from his position as Chaplain at the prestigious Glasgow Gaelic School. Mr. MacInnes thereafter did not publicly repeat and defend his derogation of sodomy, nor did his denomination endorse his previous remarks, but rather kept a strange and conniving silence in the matter, implying that it does not regard sodomy as a detestable sin; “He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord” (Proverbs 17:15).

In the same month, a female minister of this body joined with a humanist group (in an unlawful association) that is bent upon the complete destruction of religious instruction in State Schools, and agreed to support a proposal by them to change the term “Religious Observance” to that of “Time for Reflection”.

3. Spiritual declension and loss of Church discipline

This part of the report is the first section of a report submitted by two members of the Committee when acting for the Outer Isles Presbytery. This report was dealt with at a public meeting of Presbytery and was available to the public and this extract is used to illustrate what may be considered true of many parts of the nation.

General outlook of spiritual declension –

(i) Within our own Church

If we are to be faithful to the souls of our generation and to those whom the Lord has given us the charge and care of in spiritual things, we must acknowledge the low state of religion among ourselves. While this report seeks to address movements outside our borders as a Church, it does so with a deep sense of sorrow and pain at the low spiritual temperature of the congregations in our own Church within the Presbytery. It is to be greatly lamented that there are few conversions to Christ and few evidences of the convicting work of the Holy Spirit among our people, young or old. This shows itself in the fewness of additions to the rolls of communicants in our congregations and in the very limited impact of the work of the ministry among the people in our parishes and communities. We must therefore confess

that there is manifest spiritual declension among ourselves over which the ministers of the Lord are called to weep and mourn.

It is the duty of every congregation of the Lord's people to search and examine the reasons for such a withdrawing of the working of the Holy Spirit in His convicting and converting power and to prayerfully entreat His return. In adopting this report, the Presbytery therefore would seek to encourage and exhort the brethren and the Lord's people to more fervent prayerfulness and diligence in the use of all the appointed and instituted means of grace so graciously preserved to us. Our heritage of the gospel is very dear to us and we are determined not to allow it to be diluted or corrupted in our hands with false and erroneous methods or expedients in so-called evangelism. We believe that the Lord does and will honour His own appointed means in the reviving of His cause and in restoring to us "the years that the locust hath eaten" (Joel 2:25).

(ii) In other Presbyterian Churches

We are grieved to record that there seems to us to be but little sign of the work of the Holy Spirit in conviction and true conversion in other Presbyterian Churches in the Western Isles either. That there is much religious activity in these islands cannot be disputed. However, when we contrast this religious activity with what was the religion of previous generations since the gospel first arrived in spiritual power to these islands, we find a great and sad difference. Most evident is the manifest worldliness of many professing Christians, and the failure of Church courts to exercise spiritual discipline over such as live as the world in their activities, interests and pursuits, while professing Christ in full communion. Without descending to specifics, we find that many professing Christians in the Churches are actively encouraged to continue their former worldly interest in professional and amateur sport, worldly music, entertainments such as the cinema, dances, use of public houses, concerts and ceilidhs, and that many speak and dress like the world with little distinction to be found between them and their former companions. This is a marked declension from former times of spiritual awakening and blessing.

We are not in a position to identify what is amiss or defective in the preaching within other Churches other than by occasional report and even more occasional listening to online sermons. However, we infer from the above general picture that a clear distinction between sin and holiness, as defined by the Word and law of God, is not being made in preaching as in former days. We fear that the solemn voice of the law of God and its searching demands for holiness, separation from the world and watchfulness against temptation and sinful practices is not being sounded. However fervently, sincerely and accurately the truths of the gospel may be preached – and we can neither affirm nor deny the reality of this – we believe that the trumpet must be giving an uncertain sound if law and gospel are not both preached and sinners warned against sin as well as called to Christ as a Saviour from sin. The

spiritual declension apparent in our islands is, we firmly believe, largely owing to the decline of the pulpit and the unfaithfulness of ministers and of Kirk Sessions in connection with the sins of the generation.

Areas of particular concern:

(i) Corruptions in worship

The practice of adding to the worship of God what is not commanded or allowed in His Word is nothing new in the Western Isles. In Church of Scotland congregations, particularly, uninspired hymns and instrumental music have had a place for many years with the obvious effects of declension and sin associated with that. The recent permissive legislation brought into the Free Church has not yet, as far as we know, resulted in actual corruption of the purity of worship formerly known and practised in Island congregations. However, it is manifest that the Free Church now publically teaches through this legislation that both uninspired hymns and instrumental music are sanctioned by the Word of God and this teaching will certainly have a corrosive and damaging effect on the present generation. We believe that many in the Free Church are sincerely grieved at this development and yet we fear that the lack of action on their part to remove the offence will bring forth bitter fruits of further declension from purity of worship in the future.

Within some congregations, notably in the Church of Scotland, worship practices, including loud and boisterous music accompaniment, have drawn in many young people and many of these have made professions of faith within that Church. The use of entertainment (for it is not more than that) is an old device for drawing young people into public worship, but we believe it is sinful and dangerous. Such manifestly worldly activities in the worship of God and in the public assemblies have no sanction in the Word and are therefore idolatrous worship and cannot be identified with that worship “in spirit and in truth” which the Lord requires. This ought to be a special concern because young people from our own congregations have been, and are presently being, drawn into the congregations where such worship practices are going on. This is not something that the Presbytery can look at as though it does not affect our people.

(ii) Admission to the Lord's Supper

It is to be noted that large-scale admission to the Lord's Supper following a profession of saving faith is not an altogether new practice in Presbyterian Churches in recent decades. It is sad to reflect on how many who were formerly encouraged to make and accepted by Kirk Sessions in making such a profession, have now renounced that profession. It is true that in times of revival there have always been such as have not continued in their profession, but we believe this feature is particularly noticeable in the past few decades in Lewis. This is an alarming trend which ought to be inquired into. We greatly fear that the process of admission to the Lord's Table has changed and that standards formerly recognised in the Scottish Church have been systematically

abandoned. It is now accepted practice within the Free Church, as it has been in the Church of Scotland for some time to leave applicants for the Lord's Table to approach this ordinance without any meaningful examination by the Kirk Session. We have reason to fear that this tendency has also become common in the Western Isles in some Churches.

It is part of the Reformed Church's historic testimony and practice to require applicants for the Lord's Supper to have sufficient knowledge of the truth and of Christian ordinances and to have a walk in life that is both credible and does not contradict the profession of godliness required for the use of the Lord's Supper. When professors of Christ are outwardly conformed to the world and live in practices manifestly inconsistent with the solemn ordinance of the Lord's Supper, not only is Christ and His Name dishonoured, but the Church is made a scorn in the world and its usefulness among the ungodly greatly hindered. We therefore must solemnly warn against indiscriminate and irresponsible admission of young people especially to the Lord's Supper. We do so by way of duty, not to discourage those who are truly and sincerely following Christ. We can and do only wish young people who are made willing to take up the cross and follow Christ well in the Lord. Yet we believe that a call to greater self-examination and greater Sessional examination of applicants for the Lord's Supper is urgently needed in our day, lest this solemn ordinance be treated with the dishonour and indifference so common in many Christian Churches in the world.

4. Our present need of Home Missionaries

The committee feels that the people of the Church are apt to be very discouraged reading many of the details and comments in this report. Many among us are holding on to the testimony of the Church under extremely difficult circumstances. The Lord alone is our refuge in time of trouble and to Him we must ever look when the interests of the cause of truth are before us. "By whom shall Jacob arise? For he is small" (Amos 7:2). The committee wants to suggest a possible way to address the very serious need for a re-construction of a national Church in Scotland. Such a reconstruction was clearly considered by the founders of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, both in their Deed of Separation and when they began to establish congregations up and down the land.

It is abundantly clear from early editions of the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* that while the number of ministers was always low, the Church was greatly aided by the appointment of many home missionaries. From 1893 onwards, for several generations, the Church employed home missionaries to conduct the services in many of the pastor-less congregations. However, from 1960 onwards their number decreased until, at presently only one is employed, in the Southern Presbytery. The committee feels that this is a situation that has emerged without any planning or decision and that there is good reason to seek to reverse the trend and to adopt the former practice of the Church in times when, however small and despised, it enjoyed much of the Lord's gracious

favour. At present there are around sixteen congregations which are pastor-less and these are supplied by elders, a number of whom are gainfully employed during the week and it is quite a burden for them to have to take services most Sabbaths. Several of these congregations are in danger of closing due to their being no resident person qualified to engage in pastoral or missionary activity. “Then saith he unto his disciples, the harvest is truly plenteous but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matthew 9: 37-38).

5. The UK constitution and Scottish Independence

On 18th September 2014 the Scottish National Party instigated Independence proceedings. A Referendum will be held which will ask the question of eligible voters: “Should Scotland be an independent country?” A simple majority in favour will result in the dissolution of the United Kingdom as presently constituted. Scotland has not been an independently governed country since 1st May 1707, when Acts of Union were passed in both the English and Scottish Parliaments giving rise to the Treaty of Union. The momentum for union came initially from the ascension of King James VI of Scotland to the throne of England in 1603 in the union of the crowns. A further, and most important, impetus towards a beneficial Union was occasioned by the signing of the Solemn League and Covenant between the Parliaments of England and Scotland in 1643. That agreement resulted in the good labours of the Westminster Assembly Divines toward church reform in both nations, which have proved such a blessing, as the subordinate standards of the true church of Christ in Scotland; which we as a denomination profess to be, by virtue of maintaining those standards when others have let them fall.

In order to safeguard the then established Church of Scotland, which had fully subscribed the Westminster Standards, one of the last acts passed by the Scottish Parliament before its dissolution, was the Protestant Religion and Presbyterian Church Act 1707. This Act stated that: “Her Majesty with advice and consent of the said Estates of Parliament Doth hereby Establish and Confirm the said true Protestant Religion and the Worship Discipline and Government of this Church to continue without any alteration to the people of this land in all succeeding generations.” This Act was a condition of Union “expressly declared to be a fundamental and essential Condition of the said Treaty or Union in all time coming”, and remains to this day the law of the land. Unquestionably our Protestant constitution has been seriously undermined by legislation in recent years, but its continued existence is a restraint on the evil schemes of those in high places in the government and judiciary, who desire the obliteration of our nation’s godly heritage; and in some measure is a holding on to the good old paths for which we may expect a continued blessing.

The SNP have not yet proposed a constitution for an independent Scotland. Instead they have produced a discussion paper on the development of a written

constitution, if there should be a “yes” vote in the referendum. They propose to set up a constitutional convention under the authority of the Scottish Parliament. Their discussion paper is very short on detail, but whereas it does not mention churches or religion, it does say that, “a constitutional convention should consider how to further embed equality and human rights within the constitution”. It is all too obvious that the safeguarding of our Protestant heritage will not be a priority, nor likely indeed to feature at all. The token assurance of protection for every citizen to practise their religion, experience has shown will hold only so far as it is considered consistent with human rights and equality legislation. In practise, in recent years the judiciary has given precedence to homosexual equality rights over the objections of those who have refused to provide commercial or public services to practising homosexuals on the grounds of conscience. A new SNP inspired constitution is only likely to make matters worse.

The proposed relationship of an independent Scotland to the Crown is tentative. Initially it would have a similar status to other seceding nations such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand; and the Protestant constitution would be protected to the same extent as other commonwealth countries. However, presumably to satisfy pro-independence republicans, the “yes” campaign is emphasising the ability to vote for the abolition of monarchy once independence has been achieved. That would be a much higher risk in an independent Scotland than in the UK as a whole, due to the large Irish RC population, and other ethnic groups, unsympathetic to the Crown.

Thus the referendum represents a very significant and real threat to the well-being of the church and nation. In recognition of which the synod of May 2012 passed a Resolution on Scottish independence which stated that: “The Synod is of the view that the Treaty of Union is inviolable and cannot be lawfully overturned in all time coming and is a fundamental guarantee of the civil and religious liberties of the people of Scotland which cannot be tampered with except at great peril to our spiritual and temporal welfare.” We ought to do what we can to ensure the rejection of this drastic proposal – not only by ourselves voting “no” in the referendum, but where possible encouraging other eligible voters to do so. A postal vote is an option for every eligible voter.

6. Romanism in Scotland

Prior to the Reformation, the church of Rome displayed a moral corruption that revolted the people of Scotland. In divine providence, that corruption gave an impetus to reformation, and the overthrow of the false doctrines, worship and practice, which an unenlightened populace had come to see as essential aspects of true religion. So powerful was the revulsion of Romanism that accompanied the light of truth revealing its real nature, that it was swept almost completely away, being subsequently confined to a few outlying areas. But since the Catholic Emancipation movement in the early nineteenth century, and the passing of the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829, and the

large-scale Irish immigration that followed, the RC church has risen again in Scotland from a position of relative obscurity, to become once more a major influence in the nation. With her return to a position of strength, the moral perversions of the Church of Rome have once more come to light. That moral corruption, which is an inevitable consequence of this God-dishonouring, man-centred sect, has been oozing into the public domain.

The major scandal was the sudden resignation of Cardinal Keith O'Brien, Archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh, following allegations which were brought to light by the *Observer* newspaper. O'Brien had risen rapidly through the hierarchy in Scotland during the Popedom of John-Paul II, who elevated him to Cardinal in 2003. In February 2013, three priests and one former priest (who resigned upon O'Brien being made Cardinal), accused him of engaging in coercive sexual behaviour when he was in a position of authority over them. After initially contesting the allegation, O'Brien's feeble excuses were soon beached by a Vatican announcement that his resignation had been accepted. Although the allegations pre-dated his being made Cardinal, it came to light subsequently that O'Brien had been a practising homosexual "until at least 2009". This has rendered farcical his fierce public opposition against homosexuality, and particularly homosexual marriage. As to whether O'Brien will face a trial under Canon Law, no public announcement has yet been made. At present, he remains Cardinal O'Brien, the most senior RC prelate in Britain.

A further scandal to hit the RC church in Scotland during 2013 was the exposing by the BBC in August of the abuse of school children at the Benedictine Abbey at Fort Augustus, and its preparatory school in East Lothian, Carlekempthe. The television documentary, *Sins of our Fathers*, reported the cruel physical and sexual abuse of children by a number of priests and lay teachers. The pattern of abuse that occurred at these schools is sadly not new, but is indeed a common pattern observed in schools, orphanages and other RC institutions in many countries around the world. (For example, in the USA alone, 4,392 priests have been accused of abuse.) The abuser, often a priest, has manipulated the victim, typically a young boy, emotionally, and threatened them in order to prevent reporting of the abuse to their parents or authorities. As a consequence, in most cases, the abuse has not been reported for many years afterwards. When confronted with the accusation, the abuser is reclusive, and in denial, causing further distress to the victim. The RC church itself often shielded abusive priests. In some cases, as at Fort Augustus, when they were found out, they were merely moved on to create new victims elsewhere. The English Congregation of the Benedictines which owned these schools, has been particularly notorious in the UK, with criminal convictions of serious abuse by priests at their other schools: Ealing Abbey, Downside Abbey, Buckfast Abbey, Belmont Abbey and Ampleforth College. At Fort Augustus, two men have been charged so far with enquiries ongoing. Cardinal O'Brien and the late now notorious child-abuser Jimmy Savile, were visitors to the Abbey.

The least publicised but possibly the most serious scandal to affect the RC church in 2013 was the publication of a book by Father Matthew Despard of St. John Ogilvie RC church in Blantyre, in the Diocese of Motherwell. The book was self-published through Amazon for its Kindle reader. It was written in 2010 but not published until the resignation of Cardinal O'Brien in 2013. The book was removed by Amazon shortly after publication for sale to UK residents, statedly for legal reasons, but it is still available outside the UK. In *Priesthood In Crisis* Despard alleges a "culture of homosexual bullying" within the RC church in Scotland, alleging that sexual misconduct was rife among the clergy. He claims that in seminaries where trainee priests rejected homosexual advances, they were bullied, and that homosexuals were preferentially advanced. When he alerted Church authorities, including his own bishop and the papal nuncio in London, to allegations of sexual misconduct, he was ignored. After the publication of the book, the then bishop of Motherwell, Joseph Devine, stated in April 2013 that no action would be taken against Despard. However, the following month Devine resigned after dissatisfaction was expressed with his handling of the affair. Thereafter a disciplinary process was instigated against Despard, by the new interim Bishop of Motherwell, Joseph Toal. Against the wishes of many of his parishioners, Despard was removed from his duties as parish priest and awaits trial under canon law.

His treatment is in stark contrast to another priest in the archdiocese of Glasgow, Father Paul Milarvie, a former rector of the Scot's College in Rome where priests are trained. Milarvie was subject to an allegation of "unwanted harassment" and trying to "constrain" a male guest at his parish house, and was subsequently found to be involved in "a drunken homosexual incident" by Archbishop Conti with conduct "totally unworthy of a priest"; but was nevertheless allowed to retain his position. Indeed he has reportedly had his responsibilities increased by Conti's successor as Archbishop of Glasgow, Philip Tartaglia, who was a friend of Milarvie's and preceded him as rector of the Scot's college at Rome.

To the outsider, the overwhelming impression of these scandals is that sodomy, whether coercive or consensual, has been an unacknowledged part of the RC church in Scotland for many years. Sodomy, as it was in Sodom, is one of the signature sins of the wicked age in which we live. That culture in the RC church in Scotland goes back many years, and it has become apparent, through these and other scandals, that it has been a breeding ground for this sin – showing that far from being the true Church of Jesus Christ as it claims, it has been a synagogue of Satan. The sad fact is that very few will acknowledge the real link that exists between the notorious behaviour of some of their clergy, and the man-centred worship, doctrines and practise of the church of Rome. The strong public opposition that the RC church had previously shown to the homosexual marriage legislation in Scotland withered, of course, following these scandals, since they could not be taken seriously, and by that means have seriously damaged the opposition to that cursed legislation.

7. Romanism and homosexuality

The Word of God describes the church of Rome in terms which highlight its spiritual adultery and apostasy from Christ. It depicts it as the spiritual Babylon, the “mother of harlots and abominations of the earth” (Revelation 17:5). The nations of the earth are described as hating her in the time of her fall and the people of God are exhorted to come out of her that they would not be partakers of her sins or receive of her plagues (Revelation 17:16-18 and 18:4). At the time of the destruction of this spiritual Babylon the cry will be heard “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all the nations have drunk of the wine of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies” (Revelation 18:2-3). The corruptions exposed within the Roman Catholic system, which have led to calls from the United Nations for tighter controls to be imposed, suggest that the abominations described in the Scriptures are being exposed. There may be small indications at present that, as far as some nations are concerned, the prophecy of them turning against Romanism has some fulfilment in the present day.

We do not profess to have knowledge of the times or the seasons, nor do we claim to understand all that the prophecies concerning the Kingdom of Christ in the Book of the Revelation point to. Yet, the depiction of mystery Babylon as the church of Rome was the faithful exegesis of these passages and others like them since the Reformation. The morality of the Roman Catholic system can only be described as spiritual fornication because it gives doctrinal and practical licence to men to continue in sin and to profess religion at the same time. Whether one considers the nature and use of the confessional, the Mass, the notion of purgatory and the merit of saints, or the distinction made between venial and mortal sins by the church of Rome, a picture emerges of a system which gives free rein to the lusts of men under the cloak of piety and religion. The present pope has instigated a consultation through the entire Roman Catholic Church to obtain the views of what it defines as “the laity” on the morality, among other things of contraception, same-sex marriage, sexual relations outside marriage, and whether divorced and remarried people should be allowed Holy Communion. It is perfectly possible that the official position of Romanism could change on all these matters to give greater freedom in sin. This would be a doctrinally consistent approach.

The vow of celibacy has for a long time been recognised as a most oppressive yoke and burden on such as come under it and its imposition has made the priesthood a fertile breeding ground for all manner of uncleanness. While many would like to portray Romanism as considerably reformed in this area since the time of the Reformation, there is no reason to credit such an outlook. In countries where Romanism has had a long and established hold of the population, immorality of a most heinous kind has been found to be

rife among priests. It is widely recognised that homosexuality is a large issue among Roman Catholic priests. A Roman Catholic priest, Donald B. Cozzens, in his book, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood*, gives estimates of between 23% and 58% homosexual priests in the US, with higher percentages among younger priests (see <http://americamagazine.org/node/146081>). In a book written before his death and published in 2003, Gareth Moore, a Dominican priest, seeks to argue against the official position of the Catholic Catechism regarding homosexual practice. Extracts from the book were published by *The Times* in June 2003 under the headline, "The love that is not a sin". It is not at all surprising, therefore, that the wider population has come to view homosexuality with indifference and acceptance.

Even from a pragmatic point of view it is an utterly mistaken and dangerous policy to be associated with Roman priests or officials on subjects of morality. A correct estimate of the nature of Romanism is given to us in the Word of God and our prayer ought to be for its destruction and the deliverance of the many souls, both priests and people, presently kept in spiritual and moral bondage by that system. We firmly believe that the nations of the earth will yet see and expose the filth of that system which contains within it the very principle of lust and concupiscence. The Church of Christ is urgently called to come out of her and to have no part with her in her abominations.

8. Islamic terror and persecution of Christians

Christians have suffered persecution since the time of Christ. "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). But the persecution of Christians in the Muslim world is unremitting. Political Islamism calls for the elimination of Christians in many areas and consequently encourages and feeds a climate of sectarian violence.

Professed Christians in Pakistan are persecuted with impunity from the law so that they are afraid to express their religious beliefs. Private religious services are frequently called "gatherings" to avoid arousing the prying of those who may have a malevolent interest. We read of Christians being charged with blasphemy which can lead to very serious consequences, such as imprisonment, torture and, in some cases, lynching. It is always dangerous to keep Christian material in the home as accusations of blasphemy can be raised at any time. There were several violent attacks on Christians and churches during 2013. One bomb attack on the Peshawar All Saints church resulted in the death of 84 of the congregation. The Pakistani government offers little or no protection when attacks occur.

In Egypt, the Coptic community, which represents about 10% of the country's population, has increasingly been targeted in recent years. Following the ousting of President Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood has been responsible for the burning of 38 churches and damaging 23 others.

The western media is more concerned with the perceived persecution of sodomites in Russia than with the genocide of Christians. When the 84

Christians were blown up in Pakistan, the BBC placed it below the Emmy television awards in the news agenda.

It is estimated that since 2004 over a million Christians have fled persecution in the Middle East and thousands have been murdered.

According to an annual list drawn up by Open Doors USA, a non-denominational group supporting persecuted Christians worldwide, the majority of anti-Christian persecution is by Muslims. It reports increasing violence against Christians in Africa and notes that radical Muslims are mainly responsible for persecution in 36 countries on its list. North Korea, where Christianity is completely banned, headed the list of the worst perpetrators for the 12th consecutive year. The next nine countries were Islamic: Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Maldives, Pakistan, Iran and Yemen.

The courage, faith and fortitude of these persecuted people continuing to live under these regimes is remarkable. "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

In Syria, according to the Barnabas Fund, more than 1,200 Christians were reportedly martyred in 2013 alone and over 600,000 have fled the country. Christians are being kidnapped, raped and killed by Islamic militants who are backed and armed by Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey.

And yet there are flickers of hope in some of the places of persecution. Following the bombing of the All Saints Church in Pakistan, a body of leading Muslim scholars condemned the incident, saying, "It is an extremely shameful attack which has shamed all Pakistanis and Muslims. There is no room for such terrorist acts in Islam." Both Sunni and Shia Muslims gathered outside a church in Baghdad on the anniversary of an atrocity and said, "The Christians are the people of Iraq, for thousands of years, and Christianity is one of the oldest religions in Iraq. We invite them not to leave Iraq because all Iraqis share their pain."

The Barnabas Fund reports: "It is no small matter for moderate Muslims to take a stand over Islamic violence. Being Muslim does not protect them from becoming targets." In fact the threat to a number of British Muslims who condemned the killing of Drummer Lee Rigby is so great that they are now under police protection.

In September 2013, the King of Jordan convened a conference in the Jordanian capital, Amman, to address the challenge facing Arab Christians, especially those in Egypt and Syria.

At a reception in Clarence House, Prince Charles said that he was deeply troubled by the growing difficulties faced by Christian communities in the Middle East.

Recently, both British Houses of Parliament held debates on the persecution of Christians in the Middle East. Fiona Bruce MP, said, "We should be crying out with the same abhorrence and horror that we feel about the terrible atrocities towards Jews on Kristallnacht and on other occasions in Germany during the Second World War". It was good to see such debates taking place, but the Government response was disappointing, with no acknowledgement

that our own foreign policy has not been helpful, and in some instances quite the opposite.

The list of atrocities is endless and the number of countries where they are tolerated is large. There is a great need for prayerful support of those being persecuted throughout the world. Over the centuries the Lord has always maintained His cause and that promised day will surely dawn when His enemies shall be His footstool and the knowledge of His glory shall cover the whole earth. “Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake; for their’s is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:10).

9. Abortion

There are 200,000 abortions in Britain each year and it is believed that over 7 million have been carried out since the Abortion Act was introduced in 1967. The law was intended to allow abortion in only very limited circumstances. 196,000 abortions, which is 95%, are performed on mental health grounds when there is no evidence that carrying a pregnancy for the full term damages a woman’s mental health more than an abortion does. In fact there is growing evidence suggesting just the opposite, that abortion hurts and damages women both mentally and physically.

There is growing public and parliamentary support for a reform of the law. Dr. Peter Saunders, of the Christian Medical Fellowship, reported that 13 of the current 16 Conservative members of the Cabinet voted for a reduction in the upper limit when the issue was last debated in Parliament in 2008, including 7 for a reduction to 20 weeks, 2 for 16 weeks and 3 for 12 weeks. Many European countries, including Germany, France, Italy and Spain, have upper limits of 10 to 12 weeks. A significant body of medical experts are now questioning the controversial claim that babies younger than 24 weeks cannot feel pain.

The statistics for last year disclosed that more than 4,500 women had had at least 4 abortions, 1,334 were on at least their fifth and 33 women had 9 or more terminations. A *Daily Telegraph* investigation uncovered that some doctors had been signing abortion forms for women they had never met. A series of spot inspections by the Care Quality Commission, as a result of the investigation, led to 14 NHS hospitals being formally censured for conducting potentially illegal abortions. Ann Furedi, the chief executive of the British Pregnancy Advisory Service, said that pregnant women and doctors actively “pretend” that the women’s mental health is at risk. This was part of her argument for relaxing the requirements.

New government guidelines, proposed by ministers, state that there will be no legal requirement that a woman must consult a doctor before terminating her unborn child. This renders meaningless the central safeguard of the 1967 Abortion Act – that two doctors must authorise a termination. If these regulations go through, nurses or others can gather the information and all that the doctor needs to do is sign the form. It is also worded in such a way as to allow nurses to prescribe abortion drugs.

In 1966, when Parliament was debating the bill, David Steel, one of its architects, said, "It is not the intention of the promoters of the bill to leave a wide open door for abortion on request". Since the Act became law, 7 million abortions have been carried out in Britain.

"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect" (Psalm 139:14-16).

10. Euthanasia

The British Social Attitudes survey, conducted by the National Centre for Social Research, shows that for a number of years there has been widespread support for voluntary euthanasia of terminally ill patients. However, it is thought that Lord Falconer's Assisted Dying Bill is unlikely to make the statute books in Westminster, although Margo MacDonald MSP, who has launched her latest assisted suicide bill, claims to have high hopes of its success in Holyrood. Although the electorate support assisted dying, they do so in a very restricted way. They generally think that it should be medically supervised and should only apply in cases of incurable and painful medical conditions, and must be entirely voluntary. The problem facing the legislators is ensuring the safeguards.

Belgium legalised euthanasia in 2002. In 2003 the number of Belgians euthanised was 235 and numbers continue to increase and are now at about 1,400 per year. As was reported in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* of February 2014, the Belgians now intend to extend it to children of any age. There will be no age limit to minors suffering from terminal illness who can seek a lethal injection. There will be safeguards but how can there be any assurance that a small child will be making a lucid decision to die? The number of cases in Holland has doubled over the last few years and now stands at 1 in 30 deaths. Their definition of unbearable suffering now includes mental and emotional distress. Peter Franklin, writing in *The Times*, said that "psychiatric patients are among those helped to die by Dutch physicians". Furthermore we are likely to see an increase following an article by Dutch authors in their *Journal of Psychiatry*, advocating the expansion of euthanasia for psychiatric patients.

If euthanasia is legalised in the United Kingdom then step-by-step it will become normal. Definitions will be stretched, restrictions will be re-interpreted and safeguards will be lowered. Slowly but surely, as with abortion, the lid will come off and those who are unable to live independently or are in great pain will be encouraged to think that they can take the readily available option to escape at a time of their choosing. They will then discover, too late, that the Lord is sovereign and that their "escape" was an illusion. How very dreadful it is for those who suffer such awful pain, living without hope and believing that life is unbearable; so much so that they wish to end it. The

command “Thou shall not kill” applies just as surely to euthanasia as to any other form of the taking of a human life.

II. Crime

Drug-related crime is a serious problem in Britain and in a number of other countries throughout the world. A high proportion of those convicted for property and drug offences have committed their crimes to get money for drugs. A typical addict spends around £1,400 per month on drugs and many addicts commit crime to pay for their drugs. Treatment and recovery are key parts of the Government’s strategy to tackle drug addiction and the crime it causes. The annual bill for drug-related crime runs to billions of pounds. Ten addicts who began treatment in 2011 admitted a total of 13 robberies and bag snatches, 23 burglaries, 21 car-related thefts and more than 380 shoplifting thefts. It is estimated that crimes prevented as a result of treatment in 2011/12, numbered 95,000 with an estimated benefit to society of £17.9 million. The misery caused to addicts, their families and the victims of their crimes is incalculable.

Police figures show that overall crime fell in England and Wales for the year to September 2013 by 10%. Household crime related to vehicles and property was down 10%, while personal crime, including thefts from persons and violent crime, fell by 9%. The number of sexual offences recorded increased by 17%. This followed the dreadful Savile revelations. It would seem that there is now a greater willingness on the part of victims of sexual crime to come forward. Recent claims that police have “massaged” the crime figures to make them look better have obscured the picture, but *The Crime Survey*, which is independent of the police, suggests that there has been a reduction. It is expected that when the statistics for Scotland are published they will reveal a similar downward trend.

The prison population in Scotland in 2010/11 was 7,853. Prisoners suspected or known to have a drugs problem undergo an addiction prevalence test on arrival. 1,343 tests were carried out and 73% were positive for illegal drug use, including illegal use of prescribed drugs. Of 735 addiction prevalence tests carried out on prisoner release, 17% were positive for illegal drug use. Prisoners are offered treatment for addiction and one-to-one motivational support sessions are given.

It should also be noted that many crimes go unreported for a variety of reasons, one of which seems to be a public perception that the police downgrade crime and do not take sufficient interest in what they categorise as minor offences.

Whatever is revealed by the official statistics, theft, violence and other transgressions of God’s law, are rebellion against God and a lack of love for our neighbour. Paul said that the works of the flesh are manifest but the fruit of the Spirit is love. He exhorted the Corinthians to “Awake to righteousness, and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God” (1 Corinthians 15:34). And there we have the root of it!

CONCLUSION

The nation of Scotland has had great privileges since the Reformation and is now in the process of casting off the knowledge of God. Multitudes in our land are in great spiritual and moral darkness and rush along the broad road which leads to eternal destruction, blind to their danger and rejoicing in their iniquity. Many are filled with enmity towards the truth and towards anything that savours of the gospel, deceiving themselves with dreams of atheism and evolution as reliable answers to the Bible and its claims. Children grow up in Scotland not only having never heard of John Knox, the *Shorter Catechism* and the Sabbath, but having never heard of Christ, the Bible and salvation from sin. The urgency with which this gross darkness ought to stir the Church of God to prayer and duty cannot be over emphasised. Those who possess the gospel and who have the means to send it or ensure that it is sent to those who are their neighbours, acquaintances and fellow-citizens are bound to seek to be serviceable to the interests of Christ's cause. The Lord alone can give the increase to the small efforts made in His Name to spread that gospel in Scotland and while we may yet become weaker and smaller before the tide turns, we firmly believe that,

“God in His glory shall appear,
When Sion He builds and repairs.
He shall regard and lend His ear
Unto the needy's humble pray'rs.”

(Psalm 102:16-17, second version, metrical)