

# REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND MORALS COMMITTEE

Convener: Rev. W. Weale

## INTRODUCTION

IN introducing this report we wish to draw attention to the fact that over and above the actual preparation of the Religion and Morals Report there were several letters of correspondence sent out. These regarded such issues as divorce, the Civil Partnership Bill, gambling and gaming machines, the BBC's blasphemous showing of *The Opera*, the Religious Hatred Bill and suicide.

We would also wish to put on record our indebtedness as a Church to the Christian Institute for the excellent work they do in keeping us abreast with events, in suggestions regarding letters of protest, and in the protests they themselves make which we believe are used by God as a restraint upon both Houses in Westminster.

## RELIGION

In the days of our reforming fathers in Scotland, there was reason seen to produce a lengthy and detailed document entitled *Causes of the Lord's Wrath Against Scotland*. The work, agreed upon by the Commission of the General Assembly of the Scottish Church in 1650, contains ten articles in which the sins of the Church and nation are set forth.<sup>1</sup> The primary concern of this confession was the backsliding from the National Covenant, which is dealt with more fully, but the people of the land were called to use the document as it drew attention to national sins, seen as the causes of the Lord's displeasure. We can see great reason to have the same approach to our own national sins in the present generation and desire the same work of repentance to go on among us as was known in those blessed days. It is our duty, as those who profess to be the true heirs of the Reformation Church and to uphold the Establishment Principle, to set out plainly the duties and obligations of those in authority and, in confessing our own sins and the sins of the Church, to make known also the sins of the nation, calling both people and rulers to repentance. While this is primarily the work of the pulpit, and while the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* regularly highlights such important issues, this opportunity to voice the mind of the Synod on such matters has its own place.

## THE STATE OF RELIGION IN BRITAIN

For the purposes of this annual report, we consider the state of religion in our land by looking at the breaches of the first table of the law of God. Within the framework of these commandments we will look more carefully at some

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1. *Works of George Gillespie*, Still Waters 1991, Vol. 2.

examples of the departure that we have seen in the past year from the Bible. We will then briefly consider the state of religion in the professing Church in our nation and draw attention to events in the Churches that give us reason to fear the Lord's wrath against us as a nation and people.

### ***False religion***

The First Commandment forbids all forms of false religion and atheism, requiring all men to know and acknowledge God to be the only true God, and to worship and glorify Him accordingly. The dominant philosophy of our society, which is being more aggressively promoted than before, is that all religions are equal and have the same claim to our respect and toleration. Humanists who deny the very existence of God have been behind much of what is said in our media and by our politicians for many years and continue to assert themselves in every aspect of our increasingly godless and materialistic society. Truly we are a people who like Israel of old, "change their gods" and who have forsaken the fountain of living waters in our enthusiasm for the broken cisterns of false religion. That we will yet regret our apostasy from the God of the Bible in favour of heathen darkness is certain. We need not expect anything less than the wrath of God for our breach of His first commandment.

### ***Atheism and Evolution***

We have daily evidence of the growing strength of atheism in our society. Even in the burial of the dead, men now demand that God be cast out. One Scottish local authority now organises humanist funeral services. Such services are up by 700% nationally in the past 5 years.<sup>2</sup> Atheistic science and education has also seen a further advance in the past year. The Vardy Foundation, which established Emmanuel College in Gateshead, and which was in the news in 2002 when Prof. Richard Dawkins attacked it viciously for teaching Creation alongside Evolutionary theory, was opposed in attempts to set up another Academy in Doncaster on the same principles.<sup>3</sup> A media storm was created and parents and educationalists drummed up opposition in a concerted campaign to discredit the record of this Christian establishment. The concerted efforts of various pressure groups nearly succeeded and while we are not in sympathy with everything produced by the Vardy Foundation, it is deplorable that such a worthy endeavour to bring the truths of Scripture to bear on young minds should be attacked with such naked intolerance and bigotry.

Another item of news arose in October with the discovery in a cave on an Indonesian island of what scientists have called a distant relative of the human species. This miniature skeleton, which measures a mere 3 feet in length, was found amidst what is referred to as evidence of considerable intelligence and ability. Whether a human or a monkey, this creature is no evidence against

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2. Scottish Christian News Monitor website – 15.02.04.

3. BBC News article published online 21.06.04.

what the Bible reveals concerning the uniqueness of the human race in relation to God. It is, however, an illustration of just how little intelligence is exercised by many in the scientific world over matters of human origins. Undermining the conclusions that they have arrived at, the scientists have had to work their way around cultural myths in the region concerning miniature people who were known to previous generations.<sup>4</sup> Their success in doing so is not entirely persuasive to the average onlooker and the hype drummed up around the discovery did not last more than a few weeks. This news item was referred to in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*.

### ***Ignorance of God***

The first article produced by the Scottish Reformers in their above mentioned document on the causes of God's wrath, bemoans the "gross atheism and ignorance of God, and of His Word and works, that is in a great part of the inhabitants of the land, which is such that neither law nor gospel, nor the most common and necessary points of truth are understood or known by many thousands". We may say the same regarding many millions of our fellow citizens. A survey of 10,000 people in 10 different countries, carried out in January 2004 by the research company ICM for a BBC programme, *What the world thinks of God*, revealed that Britain is among the most secular nations in the world.<sup>5</sup> Only 31% of Britons believed that God was the only true God and a mere 21% regularly attended a religious service. We can certainly conclude that a smaller percentage still have any remote connection with the Church of Christ or the truths of the Gospel. This is hardly surprising given the trends in education and the considerable pressure from humanists to remove all religious instruction from the education system.

In September 2004 *The Times* produced an extensive and authoritative survey of young people between 18 and 30 in the United Kingdom (the "Generation" survey). The findings draw attention to the dismal condition of British youth on the subject of religion and morality.<sup>6</sup> It reveals that only 10% of young people have ever been to a Church, while 53% profess to believe in life after death. The sad but predictable conclusion of many Church leaders is that the Church must modernise and adapt to the wishes and aspirations of the young. After the last Lambeth Conference, bishops announced, "We need to be in nightclubs connecting with the youth". All this goes to show that not only are the people ignorant of God and unconcerned about the Gospel, but the Churches of our land are filled with blind guides. Alas for our once Christian nation!

### ***False worship***

The Second Commandment requires us to worship God only in such ways as He has appointed in His Word, forbidding all forms of idolatry and will-worship

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4. BBC News article published online 27.10.04.

5. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/wtwtgod/default.stm>

6. Times Online 14.09.04.

devised by men. The Regulative Principle of worship has this second commandment as its foundation. We need not enter into the demands of this principle, further than to say that public worship has been almost universally corrupted in our beloved land where purity of worship was once a national boast. The inventions of men know no bounds in religion and there is plenty evidence that what was said of Ephraim may now be said of Scotland, with the dreadful judgement also applicable, "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone". The idolatry of the nation does not stop at false forms of worship, for men have turned wealth, sport and pleasures of every kind into idolatry. False gods abound and our people love to have it so. We may well wonder that the God of heaven has not avenged Himself on such a nation as this.

### *The false prophet*

The true Church of Christ has always taught that the religion of Mohammed is a false and pernicious religion. Islam has ever been a religion of the sword and there is much evidence in the world that it continues to be so. The BBC and other news agencies are somehow unable or unwilling to broadcast the murder and oppression of Christians in Arab and Muslim countries in Africa and the Middle East. Michael Gove points out (*Times* column, 14/12/04) that Church leaders in Britain also fail to raise their voices against it. There is nevertheless widespread persecution of Christian minorities throughout the world, most prominently by the disciples of Islam. The Barnabas Fund is a group that highlights this persecution and its workers draw attention continually to the suffering Church, as this report has mentioned in previous years. Whatever Western politicians say and do to cover the militancy of Islam as a religion and however blind they may be to the violence which has characterised its activities, our nation remains in constant danger while this false religion is encouraged by our rulers.

Another aspect of its destructive nature is in the area of marriage. Professing to have a strict moral agenda that challenges the loose morals of Western society, the Koran in fact gives place to the licentious and horrid practice of polygamy. While many may think this evil to be confined to Eastern nations, a Radio 4 programme, aired in October 2004, and presented by a Muslim woman, revealed that figures high up in Islamic society in the UK practise polygamy. The high moral ground that British Muslims take to themselves is further removed from under them by the tolerance shown to forced marriages and the very slight and ambiguous criticism of what have been wrongly termed "honour killings". When we consider this, together with the fact that many Muslims refuse to condemn unreservedly suicide bombing, we conclude that it is high time the immoralities of Islam were fully exposed. The highlighting of these evils is now categorised as Islamophobia, but such name calling does not diminish the urgent need to inform the people of Britain of what is becoming a real threat to our nation.

## *The Antichrist*

The false religion of Romanism is ever seeking ways to advance its interest in the world and to recover the power over the nations which it lost at the Reformation. That it has made significant advances in that direction in our own land is increasingly obvious. Quite apart from the fact that on nearly every moral or religious question discussed in the media a Romanist is called to air his views, many in positions of responsibility and trust in our Parliament and Government are committed Romanists. As such they are required to give their first loyalty to a crown other than the British crown. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has warned of these evils for many years, and the issues raised here were addressed in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* in the past year. That our Prime Minister openly courts the religion of his Romanist spouse has been frequently pointed out. We see further evidence of it in the statements made by Mrs. Blair's priest, Timothy Russ, who claims that the Premier "might well" convert to Rome, although he also declared that "a lot of things would have to change . . . in his way of thinking and working before he could be a Catholic".<sup>7</sup> We have good reason to fear our most powerful politician becoming a loyal Romanist, for as such he would have a religious obligation to give obedience and political loyalty to the Pope of Rome.

The upheavals which the new European Commission experienced when the European Parliament objected to one of its members, gave much concern to those who desire to see morality on the public agenda. Signor Rocco Buttiglione, the Italian representative on the Commission and an ardent Romanist, held views on sodomy and the role of women out of keeping with the dominant secular philosophy in Europe. His being proposed for the position of Minister for justice, was portrayed as being compromised by his "Christian" morals. Under enormous pressure, the Commissioners were deselected to suit the agenda of an increasingly powerful pro-sodomite lobby in the European Parliament and media. Given that Signor Buttiglione is a devotee of Romanism, it is perhaps a blessing in disguise that he was removed.

However, we did not see the same concerns raised among politicians and the media in our own country when Ruth Kelly, an ardent Romanist and a member of the secretive Opus Dei cult, was promoted to the post of Education Secretary. At the age of 33, she is the youngest cabinet minister and her appointment bodes ill for Protestant Britain, given that the Vatican has a very powerful influence upon all members of this much feared society within Romanism. Objections were raised to her promotion by scientists who claimed that her religious beliefs would conflict with the advance of stem-cell research in British Universities. To Protestants the great concern is when people with this religious background obtain high office.

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7. *Times* – Friday, 15th October 2004, page 7.

## REVERENCE TOWARDS GOD

The Third Commandment and its requirements are now almost universally forgotten. Far from men using God's names, titles, attributes, ordinances, word and works with reverence, His name is everywhere taken in vain. The public media sets the example of blasphemy with the names of Christ used as expletives to an alarming degree. The young are taught how to blaspheme before they can speak properly and even many politicians and those who ought to act as examples to others, use obscene and blasphemous language. The godlessness of our society may well be gauged by the profane language that has become current and we need not wonder if God judges us for it, for He will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. Those to whom the Name and Word of God are precious are filled with revulsion and grief when what they value is trampled under foot by man and made to serve his vile and godless humour. This tendency to mock at the holy things of God is becoming increasingly popular and again the public media, including television, radio and newspapers, are to be identified as particularly guilty.

### *Blasphemy*

Two prominent examples of the growing evil of blasphemy may be highlighted from the past year. In early 2004 a vile portrayal of the sufferings and death of Christ in a blasphemous Hollywood film reached the United Kingdom. It was difficult to know what to be more disgusted at: the film itself or professing Christians flocking to see it and their admiration of it. Among the admirers of the film was the Free Church of Scotland Moderator designate, Rev. Alex MacDonald, who in a "film review" for the April 2004 *Monthly Record* gave a positive assessment of the film. Discussing criticisms he asks: "Is the visual portrayal of Jesus not breaking the Second Commandment?" The answer, he says, "is not at all clear". Arguing from the fact that cherubim were engraved on the mercy seat he then takes several leaps of logic to conclude that "If film is legitimate, the portrayal of the events of the life of Jesus in film is legitimate". That any minister in a professedly Reformed Church should descend to this is sad indeed.

A second example of blasphemy and wicked mockery of God and Christ occurred in early January 2005, when a heinous television show, *Jerry Springer – the Opera*, was broadcast by the BBC. In spite of some 50,000 complaints before-hand and much media condemnation, the BBC persisted in putting the show into private homes throughout the country. Many who find their base entertainment in such horrid blasphemy assert that no person can have a moral objection to it when they have not seen it for themselves. This position, however, is utterly false. It is enough to be informed of the kind of iniquity found in such plays and a shameful thing to participate in it when informed of its evil nature and design. It is most alarming that our government proposes to change the blasphemy law, and has in February 2005 voted to begin the process of making a law which outlaws "incitement to religious

hatred". Apart from turning a godly law into a man-centred one, this change robs God of His rightful claims on men and hinders the preaching of the Word of God. There has been much discussion in the media and elsewhere of this proposed change. A petition to Her Majesty the Queen concerning this matter was signed by many in the Church over the past year.

### ***The Word of God***

The irreverent use of the Word of God is also a grievous sin of our nation. It is not possible in this report to refer to the multitudinous examples of it, but the fact that God's Word is increasingly trampled under feet ought to be remembered and lamented. No longer are the claims of truth held sacred and absolute in the thinking of men. The relative morality of the majority and the place given to the "holy books" of every religion which shows its head is most dishonouring to the God of truth. We see that our rulers are again leaders of this confusion when our Prime Minister in an attempt, no doubt, to court favour in the Muslim constituency, commends the reading of the Koran and virtually places it on a par with Scripture as a source of light and guidance in the things of religion. Truly when the blind lead the blind both fall into the ditch.

We are bound to include as a the breach of this commandment all nativity plays and pictorial or dramatical representations of Christ. The place now given to these relics of popery during the celebration of Christmas is nauseous and hurtful to true Christians with biblical sensitivities. The holy things of God and His Word being prostituted to the vain and empty religious aspirations of men is a sin and a shame in our once Protestant nation. We trust that our people will continue to shun these things and that our children especially will be protected from becoming conditioned to them in our schools. The power of television to condition young minds to sinful words and actions is something parents must be very careful about.

### **THE SABBATH**

The Fourth Commandment and the obligations on man to keep it, together with protests against the decline of Sabbath observance, fall under the review of another Committee of Synod. However, we do not think it out of place to draw attention here to the fact that where Sabbath observance declines, public religion and public morality decline with it. When men will not acknowledge God on the Sabbath, they quickly forget Him altogether. It is not long before His authority over their lives is cast aside when the Sabbath is forgotten. Even nominal public Sabbath keeping has preserved our nation from many grievous departures in the past. Our rulers must yet give an account to God for refusing to encourage and preserve the keeping of the fourth commandment, although we are thankful for a few who stand in defence of it.

We now comment on some issues closely related to public observance of the Sabbath.



## ***Worldliness***

The picture of an ungodly nation that we see everywhere we look is very distressing. The bad example set by those in the public eye, including royalty, in their pursuit of pleasure is only one way in which the god of this world wins the hearts of young and old. Sport and music festivities are now common activities for many thousands on God's holy day. Indeed sport has become a new religion for many. The world itself recognises this, and as a BBC news magazine article recently declared, "Football is a religion". The adoration of the stars by the crowds, "doesn't just look like worship. It (sport) has taken over almost all the patterns of British life and behaviour that used to belong to Christianity."<sup>8</sup> As it is said in Jeremiah's prophecy, "They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13). As the nation forgets God and casts aside any remembrance of Him, it must find other gods to serve. Sadly many give to these gods not only the Sabbath of the Lord but every available hour of their free time also. The Scripture prophecy concerning men in the last days is everywhere fulfilled – "men shall be . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:24).

An evidence of this love of the world more than God, widespread throughout the country, revealed itself in the Western Isles in a prominent way early in 2004. In spite of objections from the local Police, the Free Church in Stornoway and from our own Outer Isles Presbytery, the licensing board permitted the extension of late night drinking into the Sabbath morning in several public houses in Stornoway.<sup>9</sup> Together with the recent opening of Stornoway airport on the Lord's Day, this marks a decision among the people in this part of the country, where Sabbath keeping has until now been outwardly maintained, to have the world before God. It is with thankfulness that we can record, however, that the Western Isles local council acknowledged the respect for the Sabbath by not allowing a new Sports centre in Stornoway to open on the Lord's Day. We are gratified by this and pray for the preservation of what remains of the Sabbath rest there, and for those who are willing to publicly defend it.

## ***Church and State***

The failure of rulers to protect the Sabbath or encourage Sabbath-keeping is one symptom of the fact that the State no longer feels under obligations to the Christian religion. Our nation has lost all sight of the benefits of the Establishment Principle. This scriptural principle, upheld in our constitution as a Church, protected the interests of the Church of the Reformation and advanced the good of society for centuries. We view this loss with considerable alarm because we are persuaded that our religious liberties are very closely tied to the Protestant heritage we have been entrusted with. Such moves as our government is making to outlaw and punish "incitement to

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8. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/3828767.stm>

9. *Stornoway Gazette*, 20th January 2004.



religious hatred”, while obviously commendable in so far as such incitement is sinful, have a more sinister side to them when viewed in the light of the attitude of many in power to our Protestant constitution. The strongest argument against this law is that the present law, if properly applied, is perfectly adequate. It seems very likely that the scriptural duty on ministers of the Gospel to unequivocally condemn and expose the evils of false religion will eventually come under the strictures of such a law.

With every religious creed given the same place and acceptance by the State, and the Protestant Church sidelined, the claims of truth now have very little influence upon men in high office. Nearly every matter of principle which arises is subjected to a democratic process and, whether right or wrong, the majority have their way. In this way true religion in our nation has been all but destroyed and the heritage of the Reformation sold for the supposed gains of a multi-cultural society. In spite of all the efforts of politicians (many of them sincere) to promote tolerance, there is a noticeable absence of tolerance and peace in the nation. The increasing restlessness among many bodes ill for the nation and it is greatly feared that the loyalty of many in our country to the throne and constitution is non-existent. This lack of unity, together with the continued opposition to our Protestant heritage, suggests strongly that we are living in very unsafe and uncertain times.

## THE CHURCHES

### *The Church of England*

Looking at the professing Protestant Churches of the United Kingdom, we can see that the multi-faith movement has for many years eaten away at biblical standards within the recognised national Churches. We can only look with dismay at the pronouncements of bishops and archbishops in the Church of England over the place of other religions in our Protestant Christian country. The plans within that Church to set up what have been called “heresy trials” may appear to be a step in the right direction but, as was pointed out in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, “the present pluralism of the Church of England makes the definition of heresy and the disciplining of heretics in the biblical sense a remote prospect”.<sup>10</sup> A growing split over sodomy within wider Anglicanism highlighted the extent to which many in the Church of England will go in wresting the Scriptures. It is to our shame as a nation that it is from the clerics of Africa that the strongest voice in defence of biblical morals has come. The Vatican was not slow to respond to the weakness in the Church of England either. In November 2004 the *Church of England Newspaper* drew attention to remarks by the Pope on the issue: “In a clear reference to the Anglican Church’s divisions over homosexuality, the Pope last weekend said that ‘new ethical obstacles’ had surfaced which blocked progress towards

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10. *FP Magazine*, Vol. 109, No. 2, page 60.

unity.”<sup>11</sup> In February 2005, Anglican leaders asked the US and Canadian Churches to withdraw from a key council temporarily because of their stance on homosexuality.<sup>12</sup> It remains to be seen if this split will become a real and permanent one or if the strong support for the North American position within the Church of England will prevail over the more scriptural position of the African bishops.

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

As was reported to last year’s Synod, in January 2004 the then Moderator of the Church of Scotland, Prof. Ian Torrance, took his Church another step Romeward by being the first in his office to preach in a Roman Catholic cathedral. The new female Moderator, Dr. Alison Elliot, did not do any better when in December she attended a Roman Catholic requiem mass with the representatives of various false religions, for the victims of the tsunami tragedy in South East Asia.<sup>13</sup> The fact that the Church of Scotland has descended to the level of having a woman as its Moderator, highlights just how far it has drifted from its Reformation moorings. It seems only a matter of time before it loses altogether the distinctives of a branch of the true Church of Christ. Known even to worldly men as aggressively liberal in its theology and recognised as losing any credibility in its pronouncements on matters of religion or morals, the Church of Scotland has sacrificed biblical principles for political correctness and expediency. In doing so it has ceased to be a voice in the nation and the voice of Rome is replacing it.<sup>14</sup> How needy Scotland is of a national Church that will herald the truth of God’s Word as in former days.

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

Since the recent departure of many from its ministry, the Free Church has shown signs of sliding considerably in its defence of biblical principles and practices. The Principal of the Free Church College continues to write provocatively in the press<sup>15</sup> and while many within the bounds of the Free Church are undoubtedly disturbed and grieved, he boldly advocates union with other Churches and proposes abandoning several long held principles of the Free Church. The *Monthly Record* “is understood to reflect generally the theological position of the Free Church of Scotland”.<sup>16</sup> If this is true and if the views of the Editor are broadly representative of the Free Church ministry, we can see that the Free Church has indeed shifted far from its moorings. There is growing evidence that no longer does the Free Church unambiguously stand for the purity of worship advanced in her historical testimony. The modern

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11. *Church of England Newspaper*, No. 5744, 19.11.04.

12. BBC News article, published online 25.02.05.

13. BBC News article, published online 03.01.05.

14. BBC Radio Scotland discussion of Sex Education in January 2005.

15. *West Highland Free Press* article on ecumenism (Autumn 2004).

16. Policy blurb in *Free Church Monthly Record*, page 2.

innovation of women holding ecclesiastical office is openly proposed as a possibility and the path to ecumenical relations with Churches of dubious doctrinal standards is eagerly sought out by many in her ministry. We urge those who seek to remain faithful to the old standards to open their eyes to these matters.

Among several changes which have developed in the Free Church, one stands out in the past year – the eventual issuing of a new version of the metrical psalms. The Scottish Psalter of 1650 has served the Scottish Church admirably and was produced by competent and godly men. The purpose of these men was to produce a metrical version for all time and one which was, while unquestionably accurate and faithful to the original, accessible to all. The use of a common metre tune for every psalm achieved this noble and scriptural end. On this point the new version falls very far short with many new tunes needing to be learned before the words of the Psalms can be sung. More significant, however, is the conformity to modern versions of the Bible in the use of irreverent language when addressing God. This factor alone renders this new version of the Psalms unsuitable for the worship of God. It seems clear that the distinctive testimony of the Free Church of 1843 needs defending today as much as ever and we must be zealous in holding the banner left with us by worthy and godly forefathers. We draw attention to these departures, not to malign others, but to warn our people and because these matters have become prominent in the past year again.

### ***The Free Church (Continuing)***

The grievous division which occurred within the Free Church and issued in the emergence of the Free Church (Continuing) in 2000 took a new but expected turn in the past year. The two sides came together in a court battle whose conclusion (at the time of writing) has not yet been reached. The court hearing was nearly averted when a reconciliation was proposed, but this fell through when the terms of compromise were not accepted by the Free Church (Continuing). While it is impossible to determine what the eventual outcome may be, we do not hesitate to draw attention to the glaring fact that the reasons for departing from the Free Church in 1893 were considerably stronger than those put forward for doing so in 2000. Furthermore, the interference of civil law in the decisions of Church courts should not be encouraged and while the property question is always a serious one, the example of the Disruption fathers, adopted by the Free Presbyterian fathers, was to suffer themselves to be defrauded.

### ***The Associated Presbyterian Churches***

It is with sadness that we see many of those who left our Church in 1989 dispersing to unscriptural Churches year after year. In saying that, however, it cannot be denied that the APC has contributed little to the defence of the heritage of the Reformed Church in Scotland in the past year. Set upon a foundation of compromise, this is not altogether surprising. Aspects of their

present position suggest a fragmentation of the Presbyterian structure of Church government upon which they started out. APC ministers continue to hold in their possession property belonging to the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The claim that the APC is the true representative of the Free Presbyterian Church has by now lost any appearance of credibility and is hardly mentioned by any but a very small minority in that denomination. We are saddened that so many young people who were within the Free Presbyterian Church have been betrayed and led astray by ministers who were once among us. It is to God that all are accountable in this matter, however, and we urge repentance in all who are guilty of the schism brought upon the Church and sustained indefensively over the past 15 years.

## MORALS

RELIGION and morals are inextricably linked. The religious beliefs and practices of a person or society will be reflected in their morality. Bearing this connection in mind, we might conveniently think of religion as our relationship to God, while morality distinguishes between right and wrong in human behaviour.

We believe and maintain that the Bible contains the moral standard to which the whole human race has a duty to conform. The ten commandments are a summary of the Bible's moral standard, and it is noteworthy that God Himself chose to summarise His moral law in these ten commandments.<sup>17</sup> The biblical teaching of the Church on moral issues is therefore founded on the authority of God, and so has a status far above the mere opinions of those who propagate it.

Moral standards are absolute, and universal in their application. Much modern thinking is based on the idea that each person, or society, is free to choose a suitable moral standard. Such thinking is consistent with the many expressions of respect for different religions that are currently fashionable, but even simple reasoning demonstrates the absurdity of this unbiblical view.<sup>18</sup> Societies that have benefited from the influence of the Gospel have laws that recognise the principle of absolute and universally binding standards, as illustrated by their disapproval of such crimes as murder.

In the following sections of this report we comment on the moral state of our nation at the present time and seek to highlight relevant biblical truths. There can be no doubt that the general morality of the people of Scotland, and indeed the United Kingdom, comes very far short of the biblical standard set out in the ten commandments. This is a matter which grieves us, and leads us to fear the deserved judgements of God on our nation. The Bible proclaims

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17. Deuteronomy 4:13 and 5:22.

18. If every person's chosen standard can be described as morally right or acceptable, then that can be said of the person's standard who commits and condones cold-blooded murder.

Jesus Christ to be the only hope for sinners who come short of obeying God's holy law. Our desire as a Church is that our work and witness would be the means of not only bringing sin to the attention of our people, but also of bringing them to find salvation from sin through Jesus Christ.

## **THE MORALITY OF OUR NATION**

A comprehensive survey of moral affairs in our nation over the past year would result in a report much larger than this one. We have, therefore, used examples from our national life to highlight some of the more significant current moral issues. The framework for this part of the report is the second table of the moral law; that is, from the fifth commandment to the tenth commandment. The distinction usually drawn between these two tables of the law is that the first table represents our duty to God and the second our duty towards man. Most of the issues that are informally described as moral issues are covered by the second table of the law, although the requirements of the first four commandments can equally be described as moral in the proper sense.

### **LAWFUL AUTHORITY**

The fifth commandment requires us to recognise and submit to lawful authority. The terms in which this commandment is expressed in the Bible require children to honour their parents, but the scope of the commandment takes in all situations where God has ordained a lawful authority.

#### *Discipline of children*

There have been several moves in recent years to interfere with the way in which parents exercise their God given authority in their homes. The focus of these moves has been to restrict or remove the right of parents to physically chastise their children. Towards the end of 2003, legislation came into force in Scotland which prohibits the use of implements in the punishment of children, and there is no doubt that the Government would have gone further had they been able to.<sup>19</sup>

The Bible teaches that parents have a duty to discipline their children, and that there are circumstances in which physical chastisement is the proper form of discipline.<sup>20</sup> We, therefore, believe that it is unscriptural for our Government to use legislation to come between parents and their duty to God. The effects of a lack of discipline in the home are all too obvious in our society, when young people in particular are increasingly asserting their perceived right to do as they please. Teachers in some schools find it well nigh impossible to

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19. *Children, Physical Punishment and the Law*, produced by the Scottish Executive. On page 6 this booklet acknowledges that "smacking is not completely prohibited" but goes on to say that "smacking is not advisable as a method of disciplining children. . . ."

20. Proverbs 22:5; Proverbs 13:24.

perform their professional function, and instead spend much of their time and energy trying to control unruly and violent pupils.

We recognise the fact that in our increasingly depraved society there are some parents who physically abuse their children, and the law should indeed punish this crime, along with all other forms of unjustified violence.

### *Duties of those in authority*

While children are commanded to honour and obey their parents, parents have the corresponding duty to treat their children fairly and kindly,<sup>21</sup> and the same principle applies in every other relationship where God has instituted authority. We fear that our Government are guilty of provoking disrespect for authority and of breaking the fifth commandment, by bringing in unnecessary and often unscriptural legislation. Examples of particular concern are the laws on incitement to religious hatred, gender recognition and civil partnerships, and the legislation on punishment of children already referred to. In these areas Christian citizens are experiencing a conflict between their instinctive obedience to civil authority and their loyalty to the law of God. The desire of Christians is to be able to show their obedience to God by their respect for the lawful authorities ordained by Him, but the Bible teaches that when that is not possible we ought to obey God rather than men.<sup>22</sup>

Those in authority also have a duty to exercise their authority in the punishment of lawbreakers. The Bible describes the civil magistrate as a “minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil”.<sup>23</sup> We continue to be appalled by the leniency of the sentences sometimes served for very serious crimes. In the biblical concept of punishment, the requirement to satisfy justice takes priority over reform and rehabilitation of the offender, admirable as these secondary objectives might be in their own place.

We believe that significant contributions to an increased respect for authority would come from a reinstatement of the legal powers to discipline children in the home and in schools, and punishment of offenders in a way that better reflects the nature and wrong of their crimes.

## **MURDER AND VIOLENCE**

The sixth commandment prohibits murder, and within its scope fall all other sins which arise from the same attitude of hatred. The Bible describes the world just before the flood as being “filled with violence”<sup>24</sup> and a similar description would surely be appropriate for many parts of the world, and of our own country today.

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21. Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21.

22. Acts 5:29.

23. Romans 13:4.

24. Genesis 6:11.

## ***Murder***

Murder is so horrible a crime that even a single occurrence in a year should shock a nation. Yet we have become used to hearing reports of murders on a regular basis, and there are several hundred cases of homicide in the United Kingdom each year.<sup>25</sup>

We are thankful that, in recent years, the United Kingdom has experienced a reduction in the levels of murder and mass murder by terrorists, but we fear that the threat of such violence and murder is still present. Irish republican terrorists, by whatever political or paramilitary names they may from time to time call themselves, are still armed, and are still the principal obstacle to peace in Ulster. Our Government is verily guilty on account of having released murderers from prison in Northern Ireland, and the continuing lawlessness in that part of our nation suggests that many of those released have not found their way into peaceful occupations. Christian people in Northern Ireland will justifiably feel betrayed when our Prime Minister parades himself as one of the chief opponents of what he now conveniently calls “international” terrorism.

Meanwhile, the threat from Islamic terrorists has continued to overshadow many parts of the world, including the United Kingdom. A co-ordinated series of explosions on trains, which devastated Madrid in March 2004, is widely recognised as the work of Islamic extremists. There have been reports during the past year of security services foiling planned attacks in our own country, and senior police and public figures repeatedly urge vigilance. The teachings of the Koran are also claimed as justification by the perpetrators of suicide bombings and gruesome hostage murders in Iraq.

As Christians we mourn over the deaths of our fellow human beings in any of these circumstances, and seek to sympathise with those who are bereaved. But in the midst of these human considerations we recognise that the breach of the law of God is the most serious aspect of murder, and indeed of every other sin.

## ***The death penalty***

We take this opportunity to state once again that the Bible requires the death penalty for murder: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.”<sup>26</sup> It is likely that the reintroduction of the death penalty would have a deterrent effect, but the principal consideration is that the death of murderers would satisfy justice in the way required by the Judge of all the earth. When murderers are allowed to live, the blood of the murdered continues to call out for vengeance against our nation, and against our rulers in particular.

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25. The Home Office publication, *Crime in England and Wales 2003/2004*, states on page 89 that there were 853 cases of homicide in the year 2003/4. Homicide includes murder, manslaughter and infanticide. See [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/hosb1004.pdf](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs04/hosb1004.pdf)

26. Genesis 9:6.



## *Hatred*

The Bible clearly identifies hatred with the sin of murder when it states: “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.”<sup>27</sup> Hatred is the attitude of mind which leads to, and finds its ultimate expression in, murder. The Scriptures describe unconverted sinners as “hateful, and hating one another”,<sup>28</sup> while the effect of the Gospel is to replace hatred with love and to teach us to love our neighbour as ourselves. But the Bible also claims exclusivity for the Christian religion, as is well illustrated in the statement of Christ himself: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”<sup>29</sup> This, and many other teachings of Christianity, have caused it and its followers to be hated over the centuries.

Against the background of terrorism, our Government proposes legislation which would make incitement to hatred on religious grounds a criminal offence. Although we long to see an end of hatred in our society, we are suspicious of the motives behind the proposed law and fear that it would cause more harm than good if it were to get to the statute book. The main practical effect of the proposed law would probably be to provide a tool with which haters of Christianity could try to silence Gospel ministers and others who propagate the truths of the Bible. Existing laws provide sufficient protection against incitement to commit criminal acts.

## *Euthanasia*

The issue of euthanasia has continued to feature in public debate. Press reports have described cases where people have travelled from Britain to Switzerland – where assisted suicide is legal in some circumstances – in order to be helped to kill themselves.<sup>30</sup> In one case a husband accompanied his wife to Switzerland for this purpose, after the High Court lifted an injunction banning him from doing so.<sup>31</sup> And debate has continued on the issue of the circumstances in which doctors should withdraw medical treatment and life support from patients who are considered to be terminally ill.

The sixth commandment requires that we use all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life and the life of others.<sup>32</sup> While we acknowledge that medical decisions in particular cases are often too complex for the layman, we also insist that the guiding principle must be that human life is immeasurably precious and to be preserved by all lawful endeavours. God has given us our life in this world so that we might live to His glory and seek preparation for our eternal existence, and He alone retains the authority to decide when each

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27. 1 John 3:15.

28. Titus 3:3.

29. John 14:6.

30. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/3623874.stm>

31. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4056149.stm> and <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4067939.stm>

32. *Shorter Catechism*, answer 68.

member of the human race should leave this world and go to the next. We are glad that our Government's stated position is against euthanasia and we urge it to use its powers to protect life in this area.

### ***Abortion***

The slaughter of unborn children makes our nation, along with many others, guilty of bloodshed on an enormous scale. The issues involved in abortion, and the Christian view on the matter, are well known and documented, and we as a Church have consistently witnessed against this evil for many years. In the year 2004 the grim statistics showed a continued increase in the number of abortions, with over 50,000 cases in England and Wales during the first quarter of the year.<sup>33</sup> Statistics also reveal that some of the highest rates of increase are seen among the youngest mothers.<sup>34</sup> We are warned in Scripture that vengeance belongs to God,<sup>35</sup> and we fear that the blood of millions of unborn children is calling for that vengeance on our nation.

### **RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUAL SINS**

The sins forbidden in the seventh commandment are all forms of sexual uncleanness. It is an unpleasant duty to have to comment on any sin but particularly so when the sin is of such a vile nature. Our everyday interactions with society illustrate the extent of this form of moral depravity, and it is neither necessary nor profitable for this report to recycle the sorts of stories regularly carried in the media. Yet sins against the seventh commandment are so prevalent and prominent in our society that any meaningful witness on the side of biblical morality would be incomplete without some reference to these matters.

### ***Divorce***

The biblical pattern and rule for human relationships is that one man and one woman should live together in marriage and remain faithful to each other throughout their lives. Many in our society have rejected this pattern and it is now considered the norm for unmarried couples to live together as if they were married. Among those who do marry, over 160,000 couples are divorced each year in the United Kingdom,<sup>36</sup> with around 10,000 of these in Scotland.<sup>37</sup>

In April 2004 the Scottish Executive published a consultation paper on family law. One of the proposals in the paper was to reduce the time for which a couple must be separated before they can be divorced – from two years to

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33. <http://www.prolife.org.uk/document.asp?id=prabratessoar0205.htm&se=2&st=4>

34. <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article0,,2087-1491802,00.html>

35. Deuteronomy 32:35; Hebrews 10:30; Romans 12:19.

36. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=170>

37. *Family Matters – Improving Family Law in Scotland* – consultation paper issued by the Scottish Executive in April 2004, page 16. See <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/consultations/justice/iflis-03.asp#3>

one year with consent, and from five years to two years without consent. The consultation paper also made no effort to hide the Executive's strong preference for divorces to be on a no-fault basis. We believe that the only legal grounds for divorce should be fault-based grounds, and the only two grounds allowed by Scripture are adultery and irremediable wilful desertion.

### ***Civil Partnership Act***

This Act received Royal Assent in November 2004 and will come into force in December 2005. It gives to same-sex couples who live together most of the legal status currently enjoyed only within marriage, and is widely recognised as introducing homosexual marriage in all but name. In their own words, "the Government has sought to give civil partners parity of treatment with spouses, as far as is possible, in the rights and responsibilities that flow from forming a civil partnership. There are a small number of differences between civil partnership and marriage. . . ." <sup>38</sup> As well as being manifestly unfair to those of opposite sexes who live together as relatives, or in a care situation, this Act undermines the institution of marriage and brings yet more divine displeasure on our nation.

### ***Gender Recognition Act***

Another ungodly piece of legislation which received Royal Assent in 2004 was the Gender Recognition Act. This Act provides a process whereby people who are not at ease with their natural, physical gender can eventually have their legal gender redefined by the issue of a certificate which is effectively a new birth certificate (and is physically indistinguishable from a birth certificate). <sup>39</sup> For most purposes they must then be treated as being of the opposite sex.

We believe that a person's physical gender is given by God, and that it is unnatural and sinful to be discontent with one's gender. Such discontent must indeed be a burden to any who are subject to it, but it calls for mental and spiritual help rather than legal recognition of a lie – and the gender recognition certificate is a lie. We are also very concerned that this Act could cause legal difficulties for Christians who cannot conscientiously recognise a person's redefined legal gender, especially within the Church. This is likely to be a particularly difficult area because there are offences under the Act relating to disclosure of the natural gender of a person whose legal gender has been changed. This and other aspects of the legislation were strongly opposed during the Bill's passage through parliament, and while the Act itself does not contain the amendments that were sought, the Christian Institute did obtain assurances that secondary legislation would provide some protection for church officials. <sup>40</sup>

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38. "Frequently asked questions" answered on the Government's website. See <http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/lgbt/faq.htm#geninfo>

39. <http://www.answers.com/topic/gender-recognition-act-2004>

40. [http://www.christian.org.uk/transsexualism/finalbill\\_statement.htm](http://www.christian.org.uk/transsexualism/finalbill_statement.htm)

### ***Sexual health***

As well as being contrary to the law of God, sexual promiscuity has many negative effects on health and wellbeing and this is recognised by society and by Government. Following a consultation exercise in 2004, the Scottish Executive recently published its strategy for improving sexual health.<sup>41</sup> The title of the publication – *Respect and Responsibility* – sounds encouraging, as does the emphasis on strong, trusting relationships as the proper context for sexual activity. But, sadly, the strategy fails to take its moral message beyond these vague, general phrases. The only successful strategy would be the biblical one, which recognises mutual faithfulness within heterosexual marriage as the best preventative for such social problems as sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted teenage pregnancies and abortions.

### ***Widespread moral depravity***

The previous paragraphs cover some of the areas where the requirements of the seventh commandment have been disregarded by our Government in the public affairs of the nation. The effects of such unscriptural laws are clearly seen in the widespread moral depravity of our people. Homosexuality continues to be aggressively promoted. Public figures give no impression of being ashamed when their immoral lifestyles are exposed. The media seems to be getting ever bolder and to be descending ever lower in the depravity of the material it broadcasts. Biblical distinctions between the appearances and roles of men and women are virtually unknown to most people in our society. When we consider the standards of God's holy law, as summarised in the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*,<sup>42</sup> we can only wonder that an even greater measure of His wrath has not been revealed from heaven against our nation.<sup>43</sup>

## **THEFT AND DISHONEST DEALINGS**

In the eighth commandment the sin of theft, which includes all forms of dishonest dealing, is forbidden. This is probably one of the commandments on which the stated laws of our nation are still reasonably conformed to the law of God, although there are undoubtedly many instances of theft.

### ***Bank robbery***

One such instance which was prominently reported at the end of 2004 was the theft of over £26 million from a bank in Northern Ireland. The way in which the robbery was executed was particularly cruel towards the bank employees involved, and their families. The police have publicly stated their belief that the IRA was responsible for the crime, although no convictions have yet taken place. We deplore the crime as a flagrant and very public breach of the

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41. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/health/shst-00.asp>

42. *Shorter Catechism*, answers 70 to 72; *Larger Catechism*, answers 137 to 139.

43. Romans 1:18.

eighth commandment and we hope that the perpetrators will soon be brought to justice.

Another example of large scale breach of the eighth commandment is the fact that over £500 million was lost through credit and debit card fraud in the UK during 2004, a 20% increase over the previous year.<sup>44</sup>

The eighth commandment can also be broken in less obvious ways. The judicial laws given to the nation of Israel under the Old Testament contained provisions which ensured fairness and justice in commercial life<sup>45</sup> and the general equity of these laws still applies today,<sup>46</sup> condemning all forms of oppression. We would also comment that the Government is guilty of theft when it extracts unwarranted taxes from the people, which can surely be said of that portion of tax revenues which is used for such unscriptural purposes as NHS funded abortion and sex change operations.

### **TRUTHFULNESS**

The ninth commandment takes to do with honesty and specifically forbids lying and the bearing of false witness. Truthfulness is one of the glorious attributes in which God reveals Himself in His Word, while lying is held out in Scripture as a characteristic of Satan.<sup>47</sup> Truthfulness is also fundamentally important for the stability of civilised society, as illustrated by the requirement that witnesses and jurors in court give a solemn oath or affirmation.

#### ***The Government and the EU***

Patriotic citizens of the United Kingdom have a longstanding grievance against successive governments over the deceitful way in which the nation has been entangled within the European Union. The long history of deceit is well documented by many able writers. But it is still a very current issue and one of the most important facing our nation at the present time. The Government has promised a referendum on the treaty establishing the proposed EU constitution, and if it wins the forthcoming general election we can expect a major campaign to achieve a vote in favour of the constitution. We protest against the Government's refusal to straightforwardly tell the British people that the whole European project is aimed at incorporating our nation within a federal superstate. We have many concerns about the consequences of such a union with other European countries, but our chief concern arises from the Romanist religion and culture of these countries.

#### ***The news media***

The free dissemination of news has many benefits for society, and indeed for the Church. Under repressive regimes, government control of news

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44. <http://www.apacs.org.uk/downloads/cardfraudfigures%20national&regional%20-%208mar05.pdf>

45. Leviticus 19:35-36; Deuteronomy 25:13-15; Proverbs 11:1. See also many of the proof texts given for answer 142 in the *Larger Catechism*.

46. *Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 19, section 4.

47. John 8:44.

broadcasting keeps the people in ignorance and thus deprives them of the ability to challenge the activities of those in power.

The benefits of a free press in a free country obviously depend on the truthfulness and completeness of the news that is broadcast. We as a Church know from our own experience that many news outlets have scant regard for the accuracy of their stories. The Hutton Inquiry, which reported in January 2004, brought under scrutiny the truthfulness and accuracy of BBC news reporting, and of public statements by the Government. Whatever the proper allocation of blame might be in this complex case, it is evident that the truth did not accurately reach the public through the press reports. It is also a matter of general concern that we hear virtually nothing through the major news outlets about very significant things that we know to be happening in the world, such as the persecution and murder of professing Christians in some Islamic countries.<sup>48</sup> We have reason to believe that through inaccuracy, invention and omission, the witness borne by our news publishers is sometimes a false witness.

### **COVETOUSNESS**

While all the commandments are as applicable to our thoughts and desires as to our conduct, the tenth commandment deals more directly with heart sins when it forbids covetousness. The Bible teaches that the love of money is the root of all evil.<sup>49</sup>

Our age is a very materialistic one. The Bible certainly teaches that we ought to earn our living by honest labour and we would always seek to commend diligence. But even honest labour in a lawful calling can go too far. Working hours in Britain are considered to be among the longest in Europe, yet the amounts earned are insufficient to satisfy the thirst for material possessions, so that consumer credit has reached record levels. We fear that the effect of so much wealth in our nation is to make many feel independent of God.

### ***Gambling***

In October 2004 the Government published its Gambling Bill<sup>50</sup> which proposes sweeping liberalisation of the existing gambling laws. In recognition of the very undesirable consequences of gambling for the gambler and indeed the whole of society, the law currently places restrictions on many aspects of gambling, such as the maximum prizes that can be won and the concentration of gambling outlets in any locality. The Bill proposes that these restrictions be largely abolished, and would generally make gambling much easier to participate in, and much more harmful for those who do participate.<sup>51</sup> The

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48. These events are well documented by, for example, The Barnabus Fund.

49. 1 Timothy 6:10.

50. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmbills/163/2004163.htm>

51. The Christian Institute provides a typically comprehensive analysis of the Bill in its recent publication, *Gambling with our Future*. [http://www.christian.org.uk/gambling/gamblingbill/gambling\\_feb05.pdf](http://www.christian.org.uk/gambling/gamblingbill/gambling_feb05.pdf)

proposed legislation is another predictable step down the slippery slope that our nation chose when the National Lottery was introduced 10 years ago. As well as being harmful to individuals and society, gambling is motivated by covetousness and therefore a sin against the tenth commandment. If the experience of other countries is repeated here our Government might soon rue the day it passes into law this iniquitous Bill.<sup>52</sup>

## **FACTORS AND TRENDS IN NATIONAL MORALITY**

We conclude our survey with a brief analysis of some of the main factors influencing the present state of morality in our nation.

### ***The media***

The media wields enormous power in modern society – a power that could be put to very good use but is more often effective in the advancement of moral degeneracy. Television in particular is principally used for entertainment and the moral quality of what is called entertainment is continuing to deteriorate. We need not be surprised by the attitudes and behaviours that prevail in our society when we consider that considerable numbers are feeding their lusts daily on depraved television programmes. The controversial musical *Jerry Springer – the Opera* quite rightly attracted strong opposition on account of its blasphemy, but would have belonged to the moral gutter even if the Lord’s Name had not been mentioned. Many Christians have found that the safest course is to avoid television altogether, and have banished it from their homes.

Much is also available on the internet that has a very negative influence on the morals of our nation. The use of the internet to transmit child pornography is just one example of how far man will go to gratify his unnatural lusts, and there have been news reports of criminal convictions of some who use such websites.

### ***Tyrannical minority pressure groups***

For many years, key areas of our national life have been influenced for the worse by the activities of pressure groups representing the interests of small minorities of the population. Such pressure groups often use aggressive and intimidating tactics to achieve their goals. The homosexual rights lobby has been particularly successful at imposing its agenda on those in authority and has gained many concessions as a result. We have already commented on a number of pieces of legislation which cater for the wishes of homosexuals, which have progressed into law during 2004. There are also religious and racial minorities which are successful in campaigning for recognition and benefits far beyond what a tolerant Christian nation should be expected to provide. We believe that our Government has a duty to resist such minority groups and instead to govern in accordance with the Christian constitution of the country and the wishes of the vast majority of citizens. One of the reasons

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52. *Gambling with our Future*, page 37.



why these groups have been so successful is that they have managed to get a disproportionate number of their own into places of authority.

### ***Human rights***

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights begins with the words, “Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world. . . .” This preamble unmasks the humanistic and God defying basis on which the modern human rights movement is founded. The Gospel teaches that man, by his sin, has lost the dignity and rights with which he was created, and that the death of Christ on the cross is the only foundation for freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Human rights are claimed as the basis for many of the God dishonouring practices and laws of modern society. Our nation’s ties with the European Union have bound us to a mass of alien legislation based on what are called principles of human rights. Most of these laws do nothing to defend the God given rights of the people of our Christian nation to live and worship in accordance with the Bible, and in many cases they are designed to have the opposite effect. We believe that the way to promote the freedom of the people of our country and indeed of the whole world, is to proclaim the Gospel way of salvation and the associated life of obedience to the law of God.

### ***Addiction***

Addition to harmful substances is one of the causes of many of the problems in our society. Alcohol and drug abuse are often directly involved in accidents and violent crimes. It is now many years since smoking was recognised as an indisputable cause of disease and death, yet millions are still in the grip of tobacco addiction. Gambling is also well known to be highly addictive. It is surely remarkable that in many of these areas the Government is active in liberalising the law to make it even easier for people to be ensnared by life-ruining addictions.

### ***Christian influence***

The Church is described by Christ Himself as the salt and light of the world.<sup>53</sup> In our day the salt has to a large extent lost its savour and the light is hidden under a bushel. Christian influence on our increasingly godless society is therefore very weak. On the one hand the professing Church is fragmented, and weakened by heresy and worldliness, while on the other hand the media and the civil authorities pursue a policy of silencing, ignoring or ridiculing any witness that is raised on the side of truth.

We are, however, thankful that the Lord has yet left a witness to the truth in our nation. Although the voice is often weak and despised, yet it is heard. The Christian Institute continues to campaign against the flood of ungodly

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53. Matthew 5:13-14.

legislation that is overflowing our land, and we have to acknowledge with thankfulness that God has blessed these efforts in the past year. There are a few in our Houses of Parliament who are prepared to stand up on the side of truth. We have no doubt that there are still many in the nation who pray earnestly for the defence of our nation against the false religion and godlessness that is advancing so rapidly.

Most of the things discussed in this report will cause grief and concern to the godly. We take no delight in recording our negative views on the state of society but as far as moral issues are concerned there is relatively little positive news to report in our day. In the midst of so much evil, the Church is to be encouraged by the fact that Christ rules over the nations, and that all power in heaven and in earth belongs to Him.<sup>54</sup> Our duty is to continue endeavouring to witness on the side of truth and to continue proclaiming Christ as the only hope for lost and perishing sinners. We know that the power of God could bring about a moral and spiritual transformation of our nation and generation within a very short space of time, and we feel encouraged by the Scriptures to pray that such a change would indeed take place. Our chief desire is that whether we live in a dark day or in a day of Gospel prosperity, He would use our work and witness to glorify His name through Jesus Christ. “And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory” (Psalm 72:19).

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54. Matthew 28:18.