

**FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND**

**REPORTS OF  
STANDING  
COMMITTEES  
OF SYNOD**

*Submitted to Synod in May 2011*

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## **INDEX**

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| Report of the Religion and Morals Committee.....          | page 5 |
| Sabbath Observance Committee's Report .....               | 35     |
| Jewish and Foreign Missions Committee's Report.....       | 38     |
| Jewish Report .....                                       | 40     |
| Ingwenya Mission Report .....                             | 42     |
| John Tallach Secondary School Report .....                | 44     |
| Zenka Mission Report .....                                | 47     |
| Nkayi Mission Report .....                                | 48     |
| Zvishavane Mission Report .....                           | 49     |
| Mbumba Mission Report .....                               | 50     |
| Mbumba Mission Hospital Report.....                       | 51     |
| Bulawayo Mission Report.....                              | 60     |
| Zimbabwe Presbytery Translation Committee's Report.....   | 62     |
| Thembiso Children's Home Report .....                     | 63     |
| Zimbabwe Mission Administrator's Report.....              | 65     |
| Transport and Building Projects Report.....               | 70     |
| Kenya Mission Report .....                                | 72     |
| Kenya Mission Clinic Report.....                          | 75     |
| Dominions and Overseas Committee's Report.....            | 76     |
| Australian Report .....                                   | 78     |
| New Zealand and Singapore Report .....                    | 80     |
| Eastern Europe Mission Report .....                       | 82     |
| Training of the Ministry Committee's Report .....         | 86     |
| Welfare of Youth Committee's Report.....                  | 87     |
| Ballifeary Residential Care Home Committee's Report.....  | 88     |
| Leverburgh Residential Care Home Committee's Report ..... | 89     |
| Outreach Committee's Report.....                          | 90     |
| Magazines Report.....                                     | 92     |
| Publications and Bookroom Committee's Report .....        | 93     |
| Church Archives Committee's Report .....                  | 95     |

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# **REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND MORALS COMMITTEE**

**Convener: Rev. D. Campbell**

## **INTRODUCTION**

THIS report consists of two parts, following the pattern adopted last year. The first part details the work of the Committee during the past year and refers to actions taken in response to Synod decisions and to decisions reached at the meetings of the Committee. The second part of the report contains a brief review of the state of religion and morals in Scotland. In previous years this second part of our report made up the entire report and varied from year to year. Last year's religion report, for example, was extensive in its aim and had many references to the state of religion beyond Scotland and the United Kingdom. In other years the religion report has focused on more theological concerns than on the practical. The Committee has agreed to this new format and, while some reservations were expressed, we offer our two-fold report to the Synod in the hope that besides acting as a stimulus to prayer for the Church of God in our land and for the nation in which the Lord has placed us, a degree of accountability between Committee and Synod would be encouraged.

## **1. REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

As in previous years, the Committee met twice in October and in March. Generally speaking it was felt that the items on the agenda could be adequately addressed in the new two-hour slot given to the Committee. There have been occasions when larger studies and documents have been before the Committee that this arrangement has been deemed inadequate, but so far the Committee has not felt the need to arrange another meeting.

The Committee consists of six ministers and three ruling elders, but not all the Presbyteries are equally represented, there being no ministerial member from the Northern Presbytery and no ruling elder from either the Western or the Outer Isles Presbytery. It may be that this anomaly should be remedied, but the Committee has not felt the need to formally petition the Synod in this regard. It has been represented to the Synod on a previous occasion that the Committee contains a predominance of younger members and would greatly value the appointment of more senior office-bearers to assist and help in its deliberations.

In response to the decisions of the Synod in 2010, the Committee concluded its responses to the issue of the then intended Papal visit and also the End of Life Assistance Bill at that time before the Scottish Parliament. Various items of correspondence followed the Synod meeting and the outcome of these has been more or less as would have been expected. The Papal visit went ahead and reference is made to this in our report below. The response from the government departments written to did not seem to convey the impression that

they grasped the enormity of the offence caused to Protestants by the Papal visit or the outrage against the constitutional obligations of our Sovereign Queen.

The Committee discussed the terms of the Synod decision that all Committees confer over the possibility of joining with another Committee. It was noted that most members of the Religion and Morals Committee were also members of the Sabbath Observance Committee. The Committee agreed not to propose joining another Committee.

### ***Items of Correspondence***

Following remarks made about the Pope on public radio by Rev. David Robertson, Free Church minister in Dundee, the Committee wrote to Mr. Robertson advising him of the widespread concern over his comments and calling on him to retract them. The Committee received no response from Mr. Robertson so communicated with his Presbytery to inform them of his views. These remarks were complimenting the Pope, welcoming his visit and honouring his person as a fellow Christian. The letter to the Presbytery of Edinburgh and Perth detailed the remarks in their context with a full transcript and identified the portion of the *Westminster Confession* which these remarks contradicted. The Committee received no response from the Presbytery. The Committee notes that the *Evangelical Times*, February 2011 edition, carried an article which highlighted their representations to the Free Church over the same issue with a similar failure to respond resulting.

The Committee also wrote to the Christian Institute Director regarding certain statements in the Articles of belief of the Christian Institute which suggested at best a weak stance on the exclusive claims of Christianity. The Committee's letter sought to commend the Christian Institute for its work but expressed concern that this statement of belief suggested that Christianity being established in the United Kingdom was something which was vulnerable to democratic repeal. It was also expressed as a matter of concern that the Christian Institute made use of Roman Catholic representatives in its public statements and that it made no attempt to raise a Protestant voice in connection with the Papal visit. The response from the Christian Institute was detailed and courteous but on the points raised was unsatisfactory.

The Committee is pleased to report that while its representation to the Scottish Parliament on End of Life Assistance did not lead to an invitation to give public evidence, the Bill was not accepted by the Parliament and fell at the first stage of scrutiny. This is cause for much thankfulness. It should be noted, however, that the new Scottish Parliament may well receive an amended version of this Bill from the same or another source and that therefore the Committee ought to remain vigilant in responding to any potential legislation.

The Committee received a communication from the General Medical Council entitled *Treatment and Care Towards the End of Life: Good Practice in Decision Making*. This booklet outlines new guidance for doctors and other health professionals relating to palliative care and end of life issues. Because

this communication was primarily intended for members of the medical profession the Committee referred it to Dr. Robert Dickie for advice and his response was that nothing has substantially changed in this area which would be reason for concern. This is to be noted with thankfulness.

The Committee also reviewed the current guidelines for the new Scottish Education curriculum, *Curriculum for Excellence*, as it related to religious and moral education in Scottish Schools. The Committee felt that the guidelines were vague and undefined as to the nature of true religion and, while commending the Bible for study, made no express reference to the only source of morality – the law of God. Of particular concern was the complete avoidance of any reference to Reformed Christianity. Accordingly the Committee wrote to the Education minister, Mr. Michael Russell in the following terms in February 2011:

*Inter alia*

Our Committee is, however, concerned that while frequent mention is made of the need to recognise the place of Christianity in the Scottish context, there is no express reference in the explanatory notes to our Scottish Reformers and the Scottish Reformation. Religious figures within the Christian tradition that are mentioned include Popes, Patriarchs and Saints but not Scottish Reformers. It is incomprehensible to us how the historical and heritage factors can be taught without the pivotal event of the Reformation and its repercussions being central to the teaching material. We would be grateful for assurances that this aspect of our heritage will be expressly included in the Curriculum guidelines in future.

In any future review of the Curriculum we would welcome an opportunity to present ways in which the Protestant Church in Scotland differs in fundamental ways from various other Christian traditions. We are concerned that not all teachers in Scottish Schools are equipped to give a full and fair representation of Reformation principles and would therefore welcome further dialogue with the Scottish Government on how this might in practice be incorporated into the Curriculum.

Our Committee is also concerned about the inclusion of Christian religious observance in Scottish Schools. We would welcome from you the detail of what is the most recent guidance to Local Authorities on this subject and also what measures are taken to ensure that religious observance of a Christian nature is actually being delivered in Scottish Schools.

The response of the Minister indicated that the means by which religious education and religious observance is delivered in schools “is for schools and local authorities to determine based on local needs and circumstances”. The Government representative responding to the Committee’s letter asserted that

while the Education (Scotland) Act of 1872 remains unchanged, “the subject is vastly different from what was envisaged in 1872”, and that “by no means is it about promoting one faith”. The extent to which the Curriculum conforms to the Act may be a subject of further interest, but on the present advice from the Government to Local Authorities, it seems expedient that the Presbyteries of the Church take up an active role in pressing for the provisions in the Curriculum to be practiced in every school. The Committee include this as a recommendation to the Synod.

An area of recent concern has been the collusion in 1973 between the then Government and the Roman Catholic Church, identified by the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. The Ombudsman’s report was published in August 2010 and press coverage at the time made the connection between the practice of the Roman Catholic Church in moving suspected IRA priest, James Chesney, to another parish and the more recently uncovered practice of moving priests guilty of child abuse. The collusion of the State in the Northern Ireland case is shocking; any secret understanding on the child abuse scandal would be a very grievous betrayal of justice. The Committee wrote to the Ombudsman for clarification of some of his statements and also to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Secretary of State for Home Affairs and the Justice Secretary for further information and assurances.

The letters to Cabinet Ministers requested the following information:

Is there any present intention by any Department of Government to investigate further alleged criminality on the part of the Roman Catholic Church in allegedly shielding Father James Chesney or any other alleged terrorists or other alleged criminals; and is there any collusion of any kind presently known to your Government Department, (such as was identified in the report) between the UK Government or the Police in the UK and the Roman Catholic Church, which protects the identity of or shields from the ordinary processes of justice, any Roman Catholic Priest or other Roman Catholic Church official?

The letter to the Home Secretary was treated as a freedom of information request and received an emailed response that the Home Office was not aware of any intention to investigate further alleged criminality on the part of the Roman Catholic Church in this case and that it had no information regarding collusion with the Roman Catholic Church in protecting the identity of Roman Catholic priests. The response also referred the Committee to the Police Ombudsman who would clarify matters raised in our letter.

The response from the Justice Secretary merely alluded to the fact that the letter would be dealt with by the Police Ombudsman. To date the Committee has only received an acknowledgement but no response from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland or from the Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, but if these are forthcoming, the Synod will be informed.

### *Other Committee business*

A point of clarification arising from the last Synod may be appropriate here. It was not the Committee's suggestion that the proposed Day of Prayer in September 2010 should either replace or embrace the annual Synod appointed Day of Prayer. However, the need for a Day of Prayer with respect to specific concerns in the nation such as the then intended papal visit was clear. We are thankful that this Day of Prayer was observed throughout the Church. Reference was made at the Synod in May 2010 to some congregations treating Days of Prayer as they would an ordinary prayer meeting evening. The Committee notes that in June 1914, when a Day of Prayer was called over Irish Home Rule, members and adherents of the Church were advised as far as possible to abstain from ordinary business on that day, and further that two consecutive days were specified and the choice of which to observe was left to each congregation (see *FP Magazine*, Vol. 19, p. 130). It may be that the Synod would wish to advise congregations and Presbyteries regarding this practice so as to promote uniformity.

Prior to the papal visit to Scotland, the Convener was contacted by a representative of Flemish public television in Belgium who wished to conduct an interview after having heard of our Church's opposition to the visit. The Committee is grateful to Rev. Hugh M. Cartwright for agreeing to carry out this interview in which he presented the case against the papal visit. Mr. Cartwright provided the following summary of the responses he gave in this interview:

#### *Four Reasons for objecting to the Pope being granted a State Visit to the United Kingdom*

- (1) The pope is the head of a religious system which contradicts the Biblical and Protestant Faith established in this nation and does not regard the Scripture as the supreme authority for faith and practice, without tradition and the church. To give only two examples, the mass is claimed to be a repetition of the offering which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, made of Himself on Calvary to atone for the sins of His people and reconcile them to God and so denies the intrinsic and infinite value of that unique sacrifice – and anyone who denies that the bread and wine in the sacrament are converted into the body and blood of Christ is anathematised according to the Council of Trent. Also, the Council of Trent specifically condemns anyone who maintains that a sinner is justified by faith alone in Christ alone, which is a fundamental Biblical and Protestant doctrine on which the salvation of sinners depends.
- (2) The pope claims to be the head of the Church on earth and so takes the place which belongs to Christ alone and is antichrist, the substitute for Christ. He allows himself to be blasphemously called by names which belong to God alone such as Holy Father and he claims powers which belong to God alone.

- (3) The pope claims supremacy over every ruler and magistrate and this nation has specifically repudiated the authority of the pope in civil matters as well as in religious. That is the main reason why our supreme magistrate, the monarch, cannot be a Roman Catholic.
- (4) The pope is at the head of a system which, although it makes statements on moral matters, has certainly not promoted true holiness or morality. It has again in more recent times been exposed as the harbourer of men who claim to have power to bring God down from heaven in the mass and to be able to secure the forgiveness of the sins of others and yet have perpetrated the most horrible abuses against vulnerable youths to whom their position has given them access.

An opportunity was also given to present the view of the Church on the papal visit and on the proposed End of Life Assistance Bill for Gaelic radio and television and the Committee thanks Rev. John MacLeod for agreeing to contribute these interviews. It is not at all clear that the visit of the Pope to this country has been viewed as a great success, even by Roman Catholics. The protests in London certainly reflected significant opposition from various quarters and the cost of the visit continued to cause anxiety within the Roman Catholic Church. It was revealed in October 2010 that churchgoers were being asked to increase the level of their donations to make up a national shortfall of £4 million as bills for the visit were settled. The expected numbers in Scotland at the public Mass in Glasgow did not materialise. Perhaps we should take more comfort than we might otherwise do from these things, but we can be comforted in the sure fact that Popery will fall in the Lord's appointed time.

The Committee discussed further a proposal raised last year to prepare a Constitution outlining the remit of the Committee and its orders for conducting business. The Committee is proposing this constitution for adoption by the Synod and would encourage discussion of its terms so as to reach a final form which would fully reflect the accountability of the Committee to the Synod and the limits of its remit on the Synod's behalf. One significant request in this new constitution relates to the securing of funds for work commissioned by the Committee. It is not at present envisaged that much money would be required, beyond printing costs and such like, but the Committee is conscious that issues may arise which require expert advice for which payment would be needed and would prefer to pass on responsibility for this decision to the Finance Committee in the appropriate way.

The Committee also discussed a revision of the historic *Catechism of Church Principles*, published by the Church in the *Young People's Magazine* from August 1942. After considerable editing (the exact nature of which can be scrutinised by any person interested), the Committee agreed on the form and content of the document now proposed for publication by the Committee. It is proposed that the Synod will send this document to Presbyteries for further suggestions and it is hoped that the Synod will authorise this Catechism to be printed by the Publications Committee with the various accompanying

documents and for quantities to be sent to every minister of the Church for distribution among young people in every congregation.

The Committee have also prepared a Resolution on the subject of Exclusive Psalmody in Public worship which is intended to draw the attention of our people to our historic position and to our constitutional commitment to exclusive Psalmody. This resolution is offered in response to recent developments in the Free Church of Scotland which have led to the overturning of its 20th century legislation regarding purity of worship. The Committee is aware of a rapidly changing series of events within the Free Church in connection with this decision and of an intended Protest to the Assembly of 2011 seeking to overturn the Plenary Assembly decision. In the light of this fluid state of affairs the Committee have thought best to refrain from further comment or analysis on this occasion but is preparing a more detailed discussion of the whole subject for publication.

## **2. REPORT ON STATE OF RELIGION AND MORALS**

### ***Introductory***

This part of the report is generally confined to a consideration of the state of religion and morals in Scotland. It is in Scotland that the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland lays express claim in her constitution to the rights and privileges of the historic established relation with the State. Scotland is also the country in which our Presbyterian structures have a complete and biblical form with a supreme court of review. The Committee believes that this Presbyterian structure is the model for Church government in every nation and that our presence as a Church in other nations implies that we aim at fully established Presbyterian structures within these nations. The Committee would welcome separate reports on religion and morals to be sent to the Synod from Overseas Presbyteries.

### ***Church and State***

We are bound by the terms of our constitution to seek the recovery and restoration of our national establishment whenever God in His holy and wise providence may give a suitable opportunity. While that time does not seem to have come, we believe that the assertion of this claim should be expressed frequently and that we should take great care not to abandon the principle of establishment, even if the circumstances may be very adverse to its

outworking in practice. While we recognise the Government of the United Kingdom as that power ordained of God and as that ordinance to be obeyed for the Lord's sake, we lament the abandonment by the State of the Establishment Principle. It certainly reflects the low state of religion nationally that this principle is rejected by our rulers. It is indeed sad that it is also rejected by many professing affinity with the principles of the Scottish Reformation. It remains true that the Church of Christ in our land is treated as no more than a mere voluntary organisation. Our claim to the rights of the established Church of Scotland remain the same as it did in 1842 and in 1893 and our prayerful desire is that this nation and its rulers will honour that claim.

There are disturbing signs that those who desire a fully secular State with the complete separation of Church and State in Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom, are steadily gaining adherents. It is written of the Church of Christ that "the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted" (Isaiah 60:12). We should pray for the day to dawn when true religion would be supported in practical and legislative endorsement by the national Government of our nation.

#### *The Reformed Churches in Scotland*

Churches claiming identity with the historic Church of the Reformation are five in number within the confines of Scotland. This situation is inherently schismatic and to be deplored. Many view the determination of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland not to share pulpits with ministers from other Scottish denominations as un-brotherly and divisive. We consider the contrary to be the case. If the high and solemn responsibility of preaching can be shared between denominations it strikes one as strange that other lesser responsibilities may not also be shared. The schism is therefore to be traced to those who remain separate ecclesiastically but who share in the highest duties as though no separation was necessary. The question of how exactly the principle of Church unity should be worked out in practice in the present day is far from being easy to resolve. There is no doubt that we have a duty to seek unity with brethren but that unity must only be scriptural and according to our solemn ordination vows and constitutional commitments. We are sorry that others do not see the reasons behind our position but we feel that much that is advanced as promoting unity may, however inadvertently, be schismatic and divisive.

#### *(i) The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland*

If we are to be faithful, we must examine the state of religion among ourselves. It may be questioned if this forum is the best place in which such an analysis should take place, as the Religion and Morals Committee acts on behalf of the Synod in areas which cannot be addressed by Presbyteries or Kirk Sessions. It is, however, interesting to note that the first Religion and Morals Report, presented to the Synod in 1915, was restricted to the bounds of one part of the Church and was largely confined to a discussion of the state of religion within our own Church. Historically reports on the state of religion in each parish

were contributed regularly to Presbyteries who also saw it as their yearly duty to visit congregations within their bounds. (See Act, Assembly 1638, September 23, 24; Act XVI, Assembly 1706; Reports to Free Church Assembly, 1845, 1846; and Manual of Practice, pp. 61, 62) This commendable custom of Presbyterianism has been dropped and its resurrection might be an advantage among us. This brief overview only takes cognisance of the general state of religion within the Free Presbyterian Church in Scotland.

In the nation generally there is presently “a famine . . . of hearing the words of the Lord” (Amos 8:11). There is “a great forsaking in the midst of the land” (Isaiah 6:12). Comparisons with previous times may not always be useful but it is instructive to report that in the Report on Religion and Morals in 1915 it is observed that it is gratifying and encouraging to notice that those who despise, to their own hurt, the instituted ordinances of the Lord are comparatively few, and that general, if not universal, obedience is outwardly given to the apostolic precept, “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is”. What a great change has come over our people in the intervening 100 years! Non-attendance at the public means of grace on the Sabbath Day is probably the single most accurate indication of the low state of religion in a nation. Certainly the ways of Zion do mourn when “none come to the solemn feasts” (Lamentations 1:4).

Within our own Church in Scotland we have only a small number of congregations with over 100 souls of all ages attending the regular public worship of God each Sabbath day. This does not mean that more do not come under the pastoral oversight of our ministers. In many congregations there are elderly and infirm people and also very many who have ceased to attend Church services, but who are recognised as Free Presbyterians. However, the figures attending public worship should be a stark reminder of the great forsaking among ourselves. Prayer meeting attendance is similarly very low indeed throughout the Church, in some places now down to single figures where once many dozens gathered. Our question must be whether we have sins to confess and wrongs to put right as a body so as to enjoy again the gathering of men and women to the worship of God. In particular we need the blessing the Holy Spirit in such assemblies and even where two or three are gathered in Christ’s name, we can crave His presence in the midst.

Further indications of the low state of religion in our Church may also be identified. Firstly, there is a very noticeable fall in the numbers of people seeking admittance to the Lord’s Supper and consequently full communicant membership in our congregations. We deplore the tendency in many Churches to lay great emphasis on the number of new communicants, especially where little or no discrimination is exercised as to the nature of the religion professed. Yet we lament how few there are in our congregations who are coming under the power and authority of the truth and are inclined as a consequence to obey Christ’s dying command to remember His death at his Table. Disobedience to Christ’s dying command is a sin among our people, however difficult it may be to assess the extent of it.

A further comment in the 1915 report makes for a sad comparison with our Church of today: "In regard to extraordinary occasions, such as a Communion season, none, except those who are placed in circumstances over which they have no control, absent themselves, and these solemn seasons are usually looked forward to with eager expectation." It is sad to report that there has been of late a marked decline in the number of persons attending Communion seasons in our congregations. Fewer still travel outwith their own congregation to Communion seasons. This old practice, so greatly blessed by God to generations in this country from the Reformation period, reflects the unity of the Church of Christ and makes provision of the Sacrament for those who would otherwise be unable to observe it but once or twice in the year. While we recognise that small congregations need to be supported by their people and that many in them feel unable to be absent, yet we heartily commend the practice to communicants in particular. Our young people would also, we believe, derive spiritual benefit from attending gospel preaching at such times. Nothing of this world can replace the advantage gained by gathering to worship God and hear His Word.

Perhaps the most telling comment on the change that has taken place since 1915 relates to family religion. The first Religion and Morals Report, confining itself to Skye, states, "with regard to family religion, there are few families if any, belonging to our denomination, in which family worship is not regularly observed. . . . Families as a rule, grow up to revere the religious sentiments and convictions of their parents." The report then goes on to sound a note of caution about "outside influences having a deleterious effect" on the family. As a witness to the truth in a community, family religion is possibly the single most beneficial influence, apart from preaching, that the Church of Christ can bring to a society. It is greatly to be deplored therefore that many children of Christian parents, brought up to follow the religion of their parents, have departed from that way. Many Free Presbyterians have joined with the world in the pursuit of vanity to the complete abandonment of religion. Sabbath Observance in our own Church may be a further cause for concern, but it is not in the remit of this Committee to report on that.

We would not wish to discourage the Lord's praying people in our congregations or His servants who spend themselves in His cause, but we believe it is the confession of many of the Lord's own children that prayerlessness is our great sin. It is written, that "if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face . . . then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14). The Lord honours the diligent use of means and we have no warrant to first wait for evidence of the Spirit's influence among us before we set ourselves to the duty of particular and concerted prayer.

It is most instructive to note from the pages of our magazine (Volume 18, pp. 281-2) that shortly before the First World War broke out, a special call to prayer was made to the congregations of the Church. This call, proposed by Rev. Neil Cameron, was in response to a letter of apology for absence from

Rev. Donald MacFarlane, and declared the need for all congregations to seek a revival of true religion within our own Church. Mr. MacFarlane's letter, printed in the *Free Presbyterian Magazine*, closed with the pertinent and applicable remark, "Our own Church is not so living as at the beginning and needs a revival". Having himself lived through a revival in 1860, this witness knew what he spoke about and should be heard today. "He, being dead, yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4). We would do well to follow the practice of our fathers who saw social and concerted prayer as a God appointed means of grace to be used by the Church in all circumstances and on all occasions of decay, declension and departure from the old paths.

*(ii) The Associated Presbyterian Churches*

It is sad to consider the fact that the schism of 1989 has persisted for over 20 years and shows no sign of being abandoned. The duty of all within the APC is to return to the Church that reared them, not for the sake of custom, history or mere human loyalty, but because it is the Church that represents the Reformed Scottish Church in this nation. The APC have some six or seven ministers and about 16 congregations in Scotland. Three of these congregations have joint worship with the Free Church and one or two seem to have no services at present. Professedly still Presbyterian, they form a Scottish Presbytery. They also have representation overseas in Vancouver.

There appears to be considerable activity in the APC's relations with the Church of Scotland and other denominations overseas. The November 2009 issue of the *APC News* carries a brief account of "a unique and historical induction" which took place in Edinburgh which resulted from an initiative between several "evangelical ministers in Scotland and the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church of the USA". What seems to be the work of "a new presbytery of churches" is managed by an advisory Committee including two APC members. The ARPC of the USA seem to have licensed and ordained a minister to preach in Leith in Edinburgh and it is hoped that a new Presbytery will be formed to take over the oversight of new Church planting. While the end may appear laudable, the methods adopted seem to be strongly suggestive of an independent form of Church government.

Useful work is being done in the wider cause of religious truth by the two organisations which were set up within the Free Presbyterian Church but which are now under the care of those adhering to the APC. The worldwide charity work of Blythswold is worthy of commendation and support as it seeks to provide for the needs of the poor and destitute in countries far beyond our shores. Similarly the continuing and expanding effort to publish Reformed literature for all ages which is carried on by Christian Focus Publications is welcome. We cannot endorse all these publications, but we are thankful for the work that is done to make available in good quality print material from our older divines in particular. A more truly reformed perspective might have the effect of curtailing some of the activities pursued, especially relating to

Sabbath observance, worship practice and the observance of Romish holidays such as Christmas.

*(iii) The Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)*

There has been very little public comment on this denomination in our own publications. There is possibly a degree of uncertainty among some as to the way in which this Church and the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland view each other. It seems prudent that we would not enter into the internal disputes of other Churches unnecessarily and for this reason we do not comment further on the events which led to its formation beyond questioning the constitutional legitimacy of their present position. There should be no ambiguity concerning our firm adherence to our Deed of Separation. This remains the notable difference between the two Churches at a Constitutional level. All office-bearers in the Free Presbyterian Church vow that they approve of that Deed of Separation. It is manifest that exception is taken to this stance when others do not desire to join us but profess to adhere to our position in doctrine, worship and government. This lamentable situation is one over which we should wait patiently for the Lord's time. It is He who can cause men to see eye to eye in matters of such high importance.

We welcome the fact that, as far as we can judge, the Free Church (Continuing) gives a credible witness to the Reformed faith and worship in its congregations in Scotland. A degree of discipline continues to be exerted and some consistency in practice is generally preserved throughout its bounds. We welcome the efforts to encourage outreach within the towns and cities which show evidence of zeal and prayerful diligence. There are, however, several significant obstacles to unity between the Free Church (Continuing) and the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. It would be prudent for the Synod to list these in an orderly manner for the sake of openness and for the benefit of our people who may be confused over this issue. The Committee has agreed in the past to prepare an updated version of the Synod approved Statement of Differences of 1962, but due to the rapidly changing nature of ecclesiastical events in Scotland at present, it was felt necessary to postpone this work. It may be useful at this point to outline where such a document would likely lay emphasis in connection with the Free Church (Continuing):

- (a) The exact attitude of this Church to the nature and content of the Declaratory Act and its fruits as also to the Deed of Separation of the Free Presbyterian Church and her stand taken in 1893.
- (b) The use of alternative modern versions of Scripture.
- (c) The suggestion of schism in the practice of using preachers from other Scottish denominations, particularly the APCs, independents and anti-paedo Baptists.
- (d) The issue of an alleged continued right of protest against decisions by supreme courts in a Presbyterian Church which became a constitutional

distinctive and the continued use of property which in law seems to belong to another party.

- (e) The continuing unrest within this denomination regarding the nature of the free offer of the gospel and its alleged denial by some as a scriptural requirement, as also alleged hypothetical universalism in others.
- (f) Practical issues relating to the doctrine of the Church, and Church membership, including baptism vows, examination of communicants, and also the views held by office-bearers on the six-day creation, the nature of antichrist, the ingathering of the Jews, Sabbath observance, issues about Christian education, and the dress of women as required by Scripture principles.

In connection with the differences between the Free Presbyterian Church and other Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, it is important to remind ourselves of our formal position, which has often been misunderstood or even misrepresented. Rev. Neil Cameron, when moving the motion regarding Union with other Churches in 1905 stated that “he was not opposed to union, and as soon as a Church could be found fulfilling the requirements of the motion he had submitted, he would consider it his duty to consider the matter of union with it” (*FP Magazine*, Vol. 10, p. 283) The resolution of Synod on the subject is as follows:

The Synod refuses to consider any motion for union with any Church which does not hold the absolute infallibility of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith, both in her profession and practice; and it warns the office-bearers of this Church of the danger of following divisive courses contrary to the solemn engagements under which they came at their ordination, and, further, it instructs the Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to maintain order and discipline in the several congregations under their charge, in accordance with the constitution of the Church, as necessity may arise (1923 Booklet, No. XIII).

*(iv) The Free Church of Scotland*

The significant development of November 2010, when the Free Church Plenary Assembly enacted to abolish its position on purity of worship, will be dealt with in a publication presently being prepared by members of the Committee. The rapidly changing events in the Free Church suggest that full comment on the situation cannot yet be offered. The 2011 General Assembly is to consider a “Memorial and Protestation” against the decision from office-bearers, communicants and adherents. Several have threatened to leave the denomination if this measure proves unsuccessful.

An internal survey of congregations in the Free Church of Scotland in 2006 revealed that there were then about 12,000 persons of all ages attending public worship on the Lord’s Day in this denomination. This considerable number

(but relatively tiny proportion of the Scottish population) is now riven into factions which represent conflicting stances on doctrine, worship and practice, with some congregations reflecting a very serious declension from biblical standards. This declension is most noticeable in worship, since the recent decision already alluded to, but includes Sabbath observance, open involvement in worldly practices and pursuits, rejection by office-bearers of the Protestantism of the Westminster Standards enshrined in her constitutional documents, and an increasingly indiscriminate admittance to the Lord's Supper as a matter of principle. The widespread use of modern versions of Scripture is a relatively old practice in the Free Church, but the newest version of the metrical psalms which follows the style of modern versions of Scriptures, might seem, from the recent decision on worship, to be doomed to a short life.

The preaching of many Free Church pulpits is now available on the internet. It is clear that a wide diversity of doctrinal emphasis and evangelistic approach is to be found. In many Free Church pulpits the emphasis is no longer placed on the total depravity of man, the absolute need of regeneration and its nature in the soul, or on the definite nature of the atonement. The doctrine of election is similarly given little room in preaching. What seems to be conspicuous for its absence is that searching discrimination between true and false professions when a mixed assembly is addressed. In the light of this we feel it is appropriate to issue a serious caution to those who may unsuspectingly listen to modern Free Church sermons available on the internet. The danger of a distorted emphasis having a leavening effect on hearers is a real one in an age of mass communication.

Our remarks here are not intended to suggest that preaching among ourselves is all that it should be, nor that the endeavours of others who have undoubted gifts is to be rejected for the sake of common infirmities. We would do well to remind ourselves of the importance of these fundamental truths in our preaching and to preserve a witness to them in Scotland according to the plain terms of our Confession and our ordination vows. It is alarming how fully the doctrines advanced in the Declaratory Act of 1892 have permeated the evangelical world and we ought to be resolute in lifting up a loud voice against this trend.

Another gauge of the state of religion and morals in the Churches is what social networks reveal of the use made by people professing godliness of the world of entertainment. The popular internet site – *Facebook* – now has many millions of users world-wide and doubtless has great advantages for young and old. However, what it reveals as to the current practice, taste for and use of modern music, film, television and sport, gives a disturbing glimpse of the priorities of many. The life of a Christian ought to be one of separation from the world. Conformity to the world in its norms of behaviour, in its habits, choices and priorities is evidence of serious spiritual declension or evidence of hypocrisy. Today many young people professing Christ are encouraged, by ministers and others, in the name of being good witnesses to Christ, to pursue

sport to the highest level, to immerse themselves in the cultures of music and theatre, to attend the public house, and to make full use of the productions of the modern film and television industries. Watching football on television on the Lord's Day is also common among young Free Church communicants, as are other forms of open Sabbath-breaking. The comments of some of its ministers in the public press on Sabbath sport must also be condemned.

The Committee believes that the baneful effect of modern licence and worldliness is clearly seen in the Free Church. The Committee therefore takes this opportunity to warn parents of young people in our own Church to be watchful in protecting their children from the leavening influence of the world, and particularly from those forms of entertainment which make sin in its many forms either glamorous, attractive or matter of jest and amusement.

*(v) The Church of Scotland*

The extent of moral decay within the bounds of the Church of Scotland has been brought starkly to public view with the recent decision to allow an openly homosexual man to continue to be a minister. It is clear from his words and his works that this man was never born again and is not taught of the Spirit of God. Consequently he ought not to be recognised as a minister until he repents of the sin he is living in. The attitude of the Church which has appointed him to that office and has refused to remove him, is a telling sign of its inner rottenness. Many within the Church of Scotland await the decision of the Assembly in 2011 which is due to arise from a report of a special commission set up in 2009 to deal with the question of practising homosexuals in office. A former Free Presbyterian minister, Rev. Dr. Angus Morrison (who seconded the motion appointing the commission), is a member of the Commission that will report.

Whatever the outcome of the special commission's report, the decision already taken (which is very unlikely to be reversed), testifies to the fact that the Church of Scotland is now proclaiming its sin as Sodom. Like all others who promote this form of wickedness, that body must come under the woe of the Word of God (Isaiah 3:9). The duty of all who love the truth is to depart out of this increasingly apostate body, and to acknowledge the dishonour done to the God of truth in its midst. The liberal theology and corrupted worship of that Church only serve to emphasise the need it has of a more thorough reformation. Perhaps that need is even greater than was required in the days of John Knox. Any evangelicals remaining (and we have no doubt that there are some) are now hopelessly compromised, with some openly acknowledging that "instead of evangelicalism quietly infiltrating the national church (as had been hoped), evangelicalism has been infiltrated by Biblical liberals". The people of Scotland increasingly view our national Church as a disgrace to religion and to morals.

The efforts at ecumenism within the Church of Scotland were again brought to light in the visit of the Pope to Scotland in September 2010. To the initial embarrassment of the Church of Scotland, the Moderator was not present to

greet the Man of Sin on his arrival at Holyrood Palace. This fortuitous release from a grievous sin was, however, quickly squandered and a private audience was arranged. Because there is no communion between light and darkness, one can only assume that the result of this meeting was and will be the darkness for which Rome is famed.

The Church of Scotland is gravitating with alarming speed towards the errors and superstitions of Rome. Many things serve to highlight this but the attitude of Rome herself towards it is perhaps the clearest evidence of the unreformed nature of the Church of Scotland. In an article written in advance of the papal visit to Scotland, Prof. Patrick Reilly of Glasgow University (who was awarded the Papal Knighthood of St Gregory the Great in 2008 by the present Pope), declared that “among their best friends and allies Scottish Catholics can now number that same Church of Scotland who once clamoured for their eviction”. While doubtless being a piece of clever opportunism, this avowal of friendship speaks volumes concerning the present state of religion in the Church of Scotland.

We have no hesitation in denouncing the present Church of Scotland as an unreformed Church with no right whatever to the heritage of the Reformation Kirk and to the securities contained in the Act of Union of 1707 or the privileges of establishment for which our Reformers fought at such a cost. We assert our constitutional claim to that heritage and are prepared to demonstrate that the body now called the Church of Scotland has long since ceased to represent Christ or His truth in this land.

### ***Religion outside the Reformed Churches***

#### *Popery*

The Word of God teaches that the Pope is Christ’s chief enemy in the New Testament dispensation and is “that antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God” (*WCF* 25:6). There can be little doubt that the Vatican continues to pursue its claims on universal dominion over the faith and life of men and women in all nations, and that Scotland remains a high priority in its struggle to assert its supremacy. While there is evidence of much falling away from Rome in Central America, Asia and even in Europe, the advances of Rome in the United Kingdom and in Scotland ought to cause concern and alarm to Protestants. With bluster and self-confidence in view of the Papal visit, the previously quoted writer – Prof. Patrick Reilly – sneeringly remarks of Protestants in Scotland that “regrettably, there are still pockets where the old hatreds persist but these are Rip van Winkels who have slept through the changes and are oblivious to the world transformed. They are no longer significant. Their day is over and their sun has set.” The words only serve to remind us of the proud boast of Rabshakeh (Isaiah 36), whose end and destruction was closer than he had envisaged. Our response should be that of godly Hezekiah, “Now therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that

all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only” (Isaiah 37:20). Rome’s end will be like that of Assyria and Babylon as most clearly intimated in the Word of God.

The dreadful evil of Romanism protecting paedophile priests is still being uncovered by the authorities in the United Kingdom and in many other countries. The former head of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O’Connor, is implicated in this. He is alleged to have covered-up for a priest – Michael Hill – whom he had also appointed at a time when he had full knowledge of some of his crimes. It is our view that this kind of behaviour by senior Roman Catholic figures merits police action. It was for this reason the Committee Convener raised the issue with the Home Secretary and the Justice Secretary. In December 2010 it was reported (*The Times*, 30.12.10) that a priest from Belgium who had been promoted as a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize of 2011 had been found guilty of the depravity already mentioned. The former head of the Roman Catholic Church in Belgium, Cardinal Godfried Danneels, who admitted trying to suppress the scandal, was questioned for four hours by Belgian MPs. The revelations which followed prompted 475 complaints from other victims of abuse. Rome is demonstrating continually that she is that “mystery of iniquity” spoken of in the Word of God.

The *Free Presbyterian Magazine* continues to bear regular witness against the evils of Romanism and we refer readers of this report to the articles and comments which have appeared throughout the year. According to Rome’s own system of numbering, which is doubtless an inflation of the reality, the following statistics have been offered for Scotland: Number of Roman Catholics – 667,017 (out of a population of 5,168,500); Priests – 740; Dioceses – 8; Parishes – 452; Baptisms (in 2008) – 8,270; Marriages (in 2008) – 1,949; weekly attendance at Mass – 185,608.

It is well known that Rome claims every baptised person as under her command and that those who are married by a Romish priest, together with their offspring, are bound to the Roman Catholic Church for life. This tyranny over conscience and liberty is reflected in the statistics and it may well be that many of those identified by Rome as her followers are in fact of no religion whatever, or may even adhere to a Protestant Church of some kind. There is also an acknowledged problem in the recruitment of priests and many of those serving in Scottish parishes have an Irish background. How we ought to pray that the Lord would open the eyes of our rulers to the dangers of Rome in this and in the more spiritual dangers of false doctrine, so that our Protestant heritage would again be given the protection and encouragement established as its right at the Reformation. Our prayer ought also to be that light would enter the souls of the many blind priests of Rome, as it did in the sixteenth century, and they might rise up to testify against the mystery of iniquity for which they presently labour. The urgent need of those bound in Romish error and superstition is of the gospel of God’s free grace. Establishing a missionary endeavour to Scottish Roman Catholics may be something Presbyteries could consider.

A witness against Rome is an important mark of the true Church of Christ in our day and it is therefore very sad to find that silence, indifference and even open recognition is often the response in professed Reformed and Evangelical bodies. Notice has already been taken of the remarks made by Rev. David Robertson of Dundee Free Church and of his failure to respond to the Committee's approach. Sadder still perhaps is the complete failure of any Free Church office-bearer or court to take this man to task for his remarks. The inference that must be drawn from this silence is that the terms of the *Westminster Confession* regarding the nature of the papacy are no longer believed in the Free Church. Thus the seeds of the Declaratory Act, which relieved consciences from strict adherence to the Confession, have produced their fruits. We are similarly saddened by the silence of the Christian Institute regarding Rome and her pretensions. On the other hand, we welcome the witness of others, including the Scottish Reformation Society, the Protestant Truth Society and the Free Church (Continuing).

#### *Islam*

The Committee agreed to assign to different members the duty of producing material for the report and the following was contributed by one member regarding the religion of Islam.

Islam is the second largest of the world religions and is the major religion in about forty countries, claiming over 900 million adherents, which is about one-sixth of the world's population. These statistics ought to cause us concern when we consider that the very nature of this religion cannot live and let live.

At the beginning of 2010 Geert Wilders, a member of the Dutch Parliament, delivered a speech at "The 4 Seasons", New York, in which he stated, "There is a tremendous danger looming, and it is very difficult to be optimistic. We may be in the final stages of the Islamization of Europe . . . throughout Europe, a new reality is rising: entire Muslim neighbourhoods where very few indigenous people reside or are even seen. And if they are, they might regret it. This goes for the police as well. It's the world of head scarves, where women walk around in figureless tents, with baby strollers and a group of children. Their husbands, or slaveholders if you prefer, walk three steps ahead. With mosques on many street corners. The shops have signs that you and I cannot read. You will be hard-pressed to find any economic activity. These are Muslim ghettos controlled by religious fanatics. These are Muslim neighbourhoods, and they are mushrooming in every city across Europe. These are the building-blocks for territorial control of increasingly large portions of Europe, street by street, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, city by city."

While Wilders is no Christian and his speech undoubtedly was designed to stir up hostility against Muslims, yet his assertions cannot be denied or ignored. What ought to be our response as Christians to this rise of a religion which is quite intolerant to any word of opposition against it? First we ought to recognise the hand of God in all this. Just as heathen nations were raised up at other times to punish Israel for her departure from Him, so Islam has been

raised up to punish our own as well as other western nations. Recognition of this ought to bring us to our knees before God in repentance. Secondly, however, we ought to see our opportunity and obligation in this to use all the means at our disposal to bring the gospel to those people who are in such great need of knowing the freedom that Christ alone can give. "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Criticism of Islam is often described as Islamophobia – meaning "fear of Islam". Being a religion associated with blood and oppression from its first rising, it is not surprising that civilised nations have always feared its advance. However much our rulers are persuaded by modern Western Islamic scholars and leaders that Islam inherently promotes peace, there is plenty evidence world-wide that it is still the religion of the sword. What is of more concern, however, is the falsehood and spiritual oppression which this system of lies spreads throughout the world. Denial of the doctrines of the Trinity, the Person and work of Christ and the way of salvation revealed in Scripture, renders Islam nothing more than a deceit. It is, however, an extremely pervasive and encroaching deceit. An alarming report which appeared on a website and was contributed by another member of the Committee, highlights the same trends in the progress of Islam throughout Europe:

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said that Germans have failed to grasp how Muslim immigration has transformed their country and will have to come to terms with more mosques than churches throughout the countryside, according to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* daily. "Our country is going to carry on changing, and integration is also a task for the society taking up the task of dealing with immigrants," Ms. Merkel told the daily newspaper. "For years we've been deceiving ourselves about this. Mosques, for example, are going to be a more prominent part of our cities than they were before."

Germany, with a population of 4-5 million Muslims, has been divided in recent weeks by a debate over remarks by the Bundesbank's Thilo Sarrazin, who argued Turkish and Arab immigrants were failing to integrate and were swamping Germany with a higher birth rate. The Chancellor's remarks represent the first official acknowledgement that Germany, like other European countries, is destined to become a stronghold of Islam. She has admitted that the country will soon become a stronghold. In France, 30% of children age 20 years and below are Muslims. The ratio in Paris and Marseille has soared to 45%. In southern France, there are more mosques than churches.

The situation within the United Kingdom is not much different. In the last 30 years, the Muslim population has climbed from 82,000 to 2.5 million. Presently, there are over 1,000 mosques throughout Great Britain – many of which were converted from churches. In Belgium, 50% of the newborns are Muslims and reportedly its Islamic population hovers around 25%. A similar statistic holds true for The Netherlands. It is the same story in Russia where one in five inhabitants is a Muslim.

Muammar Gaddafi recently stated that “There are signs that Allah will grant victory to Islam in Europe without sword, without gun, without conquest. We don’t need terrorists; we don’t need homicide bombers. The 50 plus million Muslims (in Europe) will turn it into the Muslim Continent within a few decades.”

What Muammar Gaddafi and many other commentators fail to consider is the God of truth. He has left it on record for the comfort of His Church in every age that “All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him” (Psalm 22:27). Whatever shaking of the nations may precede that glorious advance of the cause of Christ in the world, we are sure that “. . . men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed” (Psalm 72:17). It is indeed instructive to note that within a year of Gaddafi making this proud boast, so reminiscent again of the vanity of Rabshakeh, both his own and several other Muslim countries were thrown into civil chaos and strife in an attempt of their people to remove their tyrannical rulers from power. “Verily upon the earth a God to judge there is” (Psalm 58:11, metrical). The end of these things is not known to us, but rulers and kings should be wise and learn the lesson taught to Nebuchadnezzar that “the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will”, and that “his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom from generation to generation; and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth” (Daniel 4:32, 34, 35).

#### *Cults and Sects*

There is little space in this report for the details concerning the many false forms of religion which the devil engenders in the world. Details concerning many of these are widely known and have been referred to in previous reports to the Synod. It is sad to reflect that as true religion is excluded more and more from national and family life and as our rulers endeavour to exclude it from the world of politics and education, men and women become increasingly ensnared by falsehood. The religious nature of the human soul finds expression in religious sentiment and in forms of religious worship or veneration. This can be seen in the strange gods devised by our modern world as much as in the pagan religions of history. Modern heresies and abominations such as those promoted by the Russelites (so-called Jehovah’s Witnesses) and Mormons are expressions of the false religion which is native to the heart of man. The worship practiced by the Hindus, Buddhist and eastern religions is not essentially different to the forms of religious fervour evidenced by some in the modern environmentalist movement. The humanism evident in this movement has striking aspects of nature worship in it and while many environmentalists would repudiate any religious sentiment, by their fruits they are to be known.

There is also a religious element to the more fundamentalist elements among the advocates of evolutionary theory. The fervour and charismatic drive

of such modern false prophets as Richard Dawkins evince a religiosity of spirit which is as manipulative and ensnaring as many of the false religions which he vilifies in his blasphemous book, *The God Delusion*. Like these false prophets and false religions identified in Scripture, the religion of Richard Dawkins requires a degree of credulity that assaults the reason of most thinking people. The fury with which he and others attack the Scriptures of truth plainly reveal the working of natural conscience. The zealous adherents of atheism – a religion of the heart of man like every other falsehood – should not be feared any more than the hosts of Romanism, Islam and Hinduism, which are yet to be overthrown and destroyed by the power of gospel preaching. The deliverance of souls from these systems of bondage and delusion is the earnest crave of that large prayer taught to the disciples of Christ, “Thy kingdom come”. It is comforting to be instructed that in that petition we pray “that the kingdom of sin and Satan may be destroyed, the gospel propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, the fullness of the Gentiles brought in; the church furnished with all gospel-officers and ordinances, purged from corruption, countenanced and maintained by the civil magistrate . . .”, etc., and that “He would be pleased to exercise the kingdom of his power in all the world, as may best conduce to these ends” (*Larger Catechism*, Q.191).

#### *Our Houses of Parliament*

The General Election of members to the Parliament of the United Kingdom which took place in May 2010 removed the Labour party from office and after significant delay (during which negotiations took place over the Lord’s Day), the first political coalition since the Second World War was formed between the dominant Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats. This turn of events does not auger well for the religion and morals of our land. The leader of the Liberal Democrats (a party priding itself in secular ideology) – Nick Clegg – professes to have no religion and is openly in favour of homosexual marriage, which he has endeavoured to advance into law. It is sad indeed to report that the other party leaders are equally taken in or overwhelmed by the pressure from the aggressive pro-sodomite lobby groups in this country. The Committee will make every possible representation opposing any change in the law which would legalise sodomite marriage.

The present difficulties of our nation in financial matters are not within the scope of this report. More expert analysis would be required to contribute a meaningful discussion. However, there seems little evidence of gracious humility, repentance or dependence on the Most High for help on the part of those requiring to deal with the problem. This is deeply to be lamented and, were it not for the remnant of praying people in Britain, we believe the situation would be much worse. The Lord may yet have sorer chastisements for our nation than financial pressures presently being experienced, but our prayer should be that our people would learn to turn to Him.

The involvement of our armed forces in fields of conflict ought ever to be a burden to the Church of God in our land and we should pray for a speedy end

to their deployment and a return to peace. That hundreds of our young men and women in the armed services have already lost their lives fighting in foreign fields and at the hands of evil men is cause for great sorrow and grief. As in every conflict and war, God's judgements are to be recognised. Yet our sympathy for the bereaved and our desire for their consolation and comfort needs to be shown. We hope that this matter being highlighted in this report will serve to remind our people of the need for prayer on behalf of our fellow-countrymen exposed to such dangers and to death.

#### *The Scottish Parliament*

By the time this report is presented to the Synod, another election of members to the Scottish Parliament will have taken place. The outcome as yet is unknown. It is sad to report, although it will not be news to many readers, that the previous administration has shown little regard to true religion in its deliberations and decisions. We are grateful to the Lord for the two matters already identified in our report – the failure of the End of Life Assistance Bill and the limited but continued provision for teaching Christianity in the Scottish education curriculum. Yet we have little confidence that our rulers in Scotland, any more than in the UK Parliament, desire to acknowledge the authority of Scripture at any level. Our prayer is that the Lord would raise up godly men to bear rule; such as fear His name, loving truth and hating covetousness. A godly Parliament in Scotland would be a great blessing and benefit and while we must never trust in princes, we are commanded to pray for “. . . all in authority that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (1 Timothy 2:2).

It is the duty of rulers to legislate against the open breach of both tables of the moral law of God and so it ought to be of particular sorrow to us that the commandments of God are all regularly and frequently broken, many of them with the approval or connivance of our rulers. The suppression of false religion and the maintenance of the true religion is a duty of rulers and is part of that righteousness that exalts a nation. The unrestrained and unqualified tolerance of all forms of false religion, superstition and gross idolatry, which in practical terms our rulers promote, is an offence to God and in conflict with our constitutional provisions. The name of God is continually every day blasphemed in our nation and while we have a law concerning blasphemy on our statute books it is seldom, if ever, enforced. The world of entertainment in particular is very guilty of this heinous sin, concerning which the Lord has solemnly warned that He will not hold those responsible to be guiltless. The sanctity of the Lord's Day as provided for in the fourth commandment is notoriously ignored and trampled underfoot. We pray that our endeavours as a Church to promote Sabbath Observance will not be altogether without fruit.

## REPORT ON MORALS

While these provisions of the first table of God's law ought to concern rulers, it is often the matters which come under the terms of the second table that most exercise their attention. We therefore turn, in the remainder of this report to such matters which can be categorised as the Committee's report on the moral state of our nation.

### *Crime statistics*

While many in our land deplore the crime statistics and while our rulers attempt one solution after another, few recognise the authority of the divine law in connection with crime and fewer still admit that the law of God is the source and guide for all human judicial authority and justice. The principles of God's Word being applied to present day evils is the only source from which a resolution of society's acknowledged ills will come. Of primary use in the reformation of offenders is not prison or even recovery programmes or rehabilitation schemes, but the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. A ministry to criminals and offenders is a great need in our country and we might well pray that the Lord would raise up and equip godly men for this task.

The following collection of statistics is given here from the Scottish Government website and relates to Scotland only. The statistics are included in this report to illustrate the fact that our prayers for our nation are as needed now as before, particularly that equity and justice might again flourish and peace and security be enjoyed. It is for this in particular that our prayers for rulers should be offered (1 Timothy 2:2 quoted above). Government surveys charting the risk of being a victim of crime (measured as the proportion of adults who are the victim of crime), and of public perception of crime, can only be taken as reliable guides to actual crime if all crimes are reported and known about. This is certainly not the case and therefore government statistics must be understood in that light. However, the eyes of the Lord are open to all evil in our land and he has perfect understanding of evil-doers and those oppressed by them. It is a solemn consideration that at last the Judge of all the earth will do right in avenging wrong.

### *Crime*

Domestic abuse seems to be an increasing problem in Scotland. The government report states that "there were 53,681 incidents of domestic abuse recorded by the police in 2008-09 . . . an increase of 8% from 2007-08". It goes on that "just over half of the incidents (55%) recorded in 2008-09 led to the recording of a crime or an offence (29,283) and of these, 64% were reported to the procurator fiscal". How sad to consider that the security and sanctity of the home and family would become so violated as to make it a place of terror, fear and injury. In Scotland in 2009-10, "there were 78 cases of homicide involving 79 victims". While this represents a decrease over the past 10 years, it is still a very sad statistic. That sadness is only heightened by the following

record – “Over the last 10 years, the most common method of killing has consistently been with a sharp instrument. In 2009-10, around half of those accused of homicide were reported to have been drunk and/or under the influence of drugs at the time.” A further reflection on the dangers faced in our streets is in the use of firearms. “In 2009-10, Scottish police recorded 839 offences in which a firearm was alleged to have been used. . . . The number of offences in which a firearm was fired and killed or caused injury to a person increased from 137 in 2008-09 to 154 in 2009-10.”

### ***Combating crime***

This is one of the primary functions of the civil magistrate and we believe that the resources of government ought to be mainly channelled in this direction instead of being wasted on frivolous and often sinful schemes and entertainments. The number of full time police officers in Scotland as of 30th September 2010 was 17,371, which is an increase over previous years. It is, however, a little concerning that the number of crimes recorded by these police officers is the lowest in 30 years, at around 900,000 crimes. The question must be asked if this is the real picture. Even so, the figure is staggering. The type of crime recorded gives a sad reflection on the moral state of our nation. Government statistics record that, “non-sexual crimes of violence, and crimes of indecency, account for only 3%, and 2% respectively, of all crimes recorded. Crimes of dishonesty, which include housebreaking and shoplifting, account for over two fifths of the overall total (45%). Fire-raising and vandalism account for 28% of all crimes and ‘other’ crimes, which includes handling of offensive weapons, drug crimes and breaches of bail conditions, account for just over a fifth of all crimes.” The Scottish Police success rate in clearing up crimes, so as to lead to prosecution, is a very mixed affair. Only 26% of some crimes are cleared up while 98% of “other crimes” are cleared up. Under 40% of crimes of dishonesty are cleared up.

### ***Drugs and Alcohol***

According to the above mentioned Government summary of statistics, “there were an estimated 55,328 problem drug users in Scotland in 2006”. In response to this terrible blight on our nation, it is also recorded that in “2006-07, the total number of drug seizures saw a decrease of 17% compared with 2005-06, from 25,314 to 20,938”. These figures strongly suggest that the Scottish government and law enforcement is not in control of this menace which blights the lives of so many and involves so many victims, particularly young children in the home. The evil of drunkenness is similarly a growing problem and Scotland stands out among the nations of Europe for the prevalence of excessive drinking of alcohol. One way of accounting for this must surely be the prevalence of licensed premises. At the end of 2007 there were 17,021 liquor licenses in force in Scotland. As many as 37% of these were for off-sale premises and a further 30% were for public houses. A reduction in the number of licenses granted for off-sales and public

houses would surely contribute something to addressing Scotland's problem with drunkenness.

In 2010 an attempt was made by the Scottish ruling party – the SNP – to bring in legislation setting a minimum price for alcohol. This proposal may have had advantages, but does not address the real problem. Indeed the danger might well be that the poor drunkard would impoverish himself and those dependent on him all the more if the source of his addiction was more expensive. The proposal was defeated in the Scottish Parliament and while this may appear to be a set-back in the fight against drunkenness, we believe that the only real solution to this, as to every other sin in our land, is the Word of God and its authority in the lives of men and women. Until our rulers acknowledge their need of that Word as their guide and as the guide of our nation's morals, all social and political schemes to address the ills of society are bound to fall short.

### ***Prison and Re-offending***

One indicator as to the truth of this is the rate of re-offending in Scotland. While statistics cannot give the full picture, it is surely reason for our rulers to take far more radical action when around 45% of offenders released from custody are found to re-offend. Doubtless many more re-offend and are not re-convicted and many offenders are never caught. Government statistics show that “the total number of persons convicted in Scottish courts increased from 108,600 in 2000-01 to a peak of 134,400 in 2006-07 before falling to 120,800 in 2009-10”. The aim of our government is to have fewer cases brought to court needlessly and to have more dealt with by non-court actions, where it is more appropriate to do so. While we might have reservations concerning this policy as open to abuse, it is surely appropriate that certain crimes would be dealt with on the spot and without the waste of public money involved in court action. Non-court disposals by the Procurator Fiscal Service, which include anti-social behaviour fixed penalty notices have also increased by 26% from 48,400 in 2008-09 to 61,000 in 2009-10.

The prison population in Scotland continues to increase and this is yet another indicator of the moral decay of our nation. It should not be a wonder to us that this is so, and while it is common to lay much blame at the door of rulers, who certainly have their own responsibilities, we believe that the primary cause of moral decay is to be laid at the door of the professing Church of Christ.

The uncertain sound issuing from many pulpits in Scotland and the practical anti-nomianism of many who profess to follow Christ is doubtless one of the leading causes of lawlessness more generally. The doctrines of sin, of eternal punishment and of the absolute authority of the law of God over the lives of all men are truths seldom heard in pulpits today. Our duty as a Church is clearly to preserve a testimony to these truths, but how we ought to be stirred up to seek a new Reformation in Scotland such as our fathers in the sixteenth century witnessed. Besides praying for this, it will ever be our duty to pray for

those in authority that grace and wisdom would be given to them in these matters of law and justice.

### ***Abortion***

The following summary of the state of affairs regarding abortion was submitted by a member of the Committee who takes responsibility for researching this field.

The Department of Health statistics for 2009 reveal a fall of 3.2% in the total number of abortions for England and Wales – 189,100 compared to 195,296 in 2008. In Scotland the total comparable figure was 13,005, down from 13,817 in 2008 with 3,214 abortion procedures carried out on girls aged 19 and under. Although these figures are all less than the previous year they are still adding significantly to the sin of our nation and yet more blood of the unborn is on our hands. God, who says, “Thou shalt not kill” applies His Word to those who take the lives of unborn babies as well as to those who take the lives of their fellows.

It appears that, of these figures, 63,309 women in England and Wales and 3,658 women in Scotland have had at least one previous abortion. The *Daily Mail* of 25.5.10 reports that dozens of women in the UK have possibly had as many as seven abortions. However unbelievable it may seem, abortion can be seen increasingly as a form of contraception. No wonder Norman Wells, the Director of Family Education Trust, says that, “the high UK abortion rate is an inevitable consequence of a society that has made an idol out of sexual pleasure”.

There has been a sharp rise in the number of NHS Trusts offering early abortions (up to 9 weeks). One GP magazine states that there are now 17 Trusts about to offer the “service”, so further opening up opportunities to make abortion easier and in an oblique way acknowledging the failure of sex education, free condoms, morning-after pills and other God dishonouring methods.

One evil but bold move by the pro-abortion movement, this year (2010) has been to advertise on Channel 4 TV. The Marie Stopes clinics were allowed to promote their abortion programmes in spite of protests by Mediawatch UK who said: “we have issues because women who have an unplanned pregnancy are in a vulnerable position”. The Broadcasting Committee of Advertising Practice also wanted to put the adverts on hold; however, Marie Stopes sought legal advice and got permission to go ahead on the basis, it is said, that they are a “non commercial organisation”. Such a claim is astounding as they receive £30 million in funding per annum from the NHS and charge from £80 per consultation up to as much as £1,775 for a private (i.e. a non NHS funded) abortion.

Marie Stopes is believed to be carrying out 65,000 terminations a year in the UK and also has an international dimension. There can be little doubt that the aim of the advert was to sell abortion to vulnerable women. Marketing Director, Julie Douglas, attempted to defend it by saying, “the ad is all about

providing information so that women can have the confidence . . . to reach people who will be non-judgemental". Michaela Aston from "Life" counters this by saying "to allow abortion providers to advertise on TV as though they were no different from car companies and detergent manufacturers is grotesque . . . by suggesting that abortion is yet another consumer choice it trivialises human life". A pro life Alliance spokesman claims that the adverts are breaking broadcasting guidelines stating that, "the purpose of an abortion commercial is to sell abortion". This is hardly conducive to making the "informed sexual health choice" which Marie Stopes claims to provide.

All this evil is further compounded by the increasing availability of the "morning after pill". It can be bought for around £25 without prescription and whereas it had previously required a GP or pharmacist to dispense it after a consultation with the woman, it can now be obtained more easily. The pill can be bought on the internet from Lloyd's Pharmacy (and soon from Boots) by credit card. Neither consultation nor details of the buyer are necessary. Promiscuity will inevitably increase and the result will surely be an increase in disease. Dr. Trevor Stammers, a GP and lecturer in Health Care ethics, so wisely says, "the morning after pill is fuelling an epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases . . . the fact that it will be available over the internet is a further proof of our increasingly sexualised society". Thankfully at least current legislation still allows pharmacists to refuse to prescribe the pill on conscientious grounds.

The hardness and cruelty of our society is shown by a recent medical study on a baby's awareness of pain in the womb. This study asserts that, contrary to results of previous research, babies do not feel pain at 24 weeks in the womb. It then goes on to say that terminations can take place without anaesthetics. This further demeans life and ignores accounts of babies being born at 22 weeks.

An English Minister correctly explained recently that "any society which can tolerate these things, let alone legislate for them, has ceased to be civilised". He goes on to say that, "one of the major signs of decadence in the Roman Empire was that its unwanted babies were 'exposed' or abandoned and left to die. Can we claim that contemporary Western society is any less decadent because it consigns its unwanted babies to the hospital incinerator instead of the local rubbish dump? Indeed modern abortion is even worse than ancient exposure because it has been commercialised, and has become, at least to some doctors and clinics, an extremely lucrative practice. But reverence for human life is an indisputable characteristic of a humane and civilised society."

In light of this it is encouraging to learn that efforts are being made in the UK Parliament to tighten existing legislation on abortion. The *Telegraph* of 25.03.11 (online version) reports that, "A cross-party alliance of MPs will launch a fresh bid to tighten the rules on terminations. Nadine Dorries, a Conservative MP, and Frank Field, a former Labour minister, will table amendments to the Health and Social Care Bill now passing through the Commons. Supporters of the amendments say that passing them would lead to

a dramatic reduction in the number of abortions that take place in the UK. The first amendment would create a new precondition for any women having an abortion to receive advice and counselling from an organisation that does not itself carry out terminations.” The report goes on to say that, “The second amendment that will be tabled next week would strip the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of its role setting clinical guidelines on abortions. Instead, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence should advise doctors on when to allow an abortion, the MPs believe. The RCOG is currently drawing up new clinical guidelines for terminations. Anti-abortion campaigners say the college is biased towards favouring abortion and should not be allowed to set the rules.” It remains to be seen if these provisions will become law.

### *National family life*

This part of the report is a brief review of items from national newspapers that were contributed by various members of the Committee and reflects only a small portion of what may be generally available in this branch of the media. This report does not endorse all that is advanced through the media as fact and merely cites the articles as representative of events that take place as the media views them.

### *Smoking*

On the rarely discussed problem of smoking, the *Scotsman* (15.09.10) reported that, “tobacco is still Scotland’s biggest preventable killer”. It is felt by many that it is time to explore new ways to continue to reduce the harm caused and Government reports reveal that 34% of all deaths (13,500 adults) in the 35-69 age group are linked to smoking. It is widely understood now that thousands of others suffer smoking related illnesses. Scotland’s most deprived areas seem to suffer the most from smoking related illness. With the growing body of evidence for the harm caused by this addiction, it may be that more support should be given to government initiatives in this area.

### *Death*

The lack of biblical teaching that this generation has received is finding expression in many different ways, not least in attitudes to death and the world to come. In a very harrowing report the *Scotsman* (22.12.10) reported on a mother who had entered a suicide pact with her husband so that “one of them could be with their son following his death in a car accident”. The past was put into effect with the death of Allan Hogg at the age of 30, leaving a doubtless doubly traumatised daughter to endure the pain of bereavement with her mother. Such reports only call for deep pity and grief at the lack of understanding and the suffering which ensues. A feature in the *Times* (30.06.10) on the subject of how to explain death to young children perhaps illustrates how fundamentally empty our society is of answers to these great and ultimate questions. It is sad indeed to note that the use of anti-depressant

drugs rose again in the past year – by 7% – with over 40 million prescriptions from medical professionals. How greatly our nation needs the good news of salvation.

### *Marriage*

Marriage and divorce in the United Kingdom and in Scotland in particular has been thrown into great confusion with the passing of unbiblical legislation sanctioning no-fault divorce. It is reported in the *Times Magazine* (25.09.10) that in 2008 there were 22.8 divorces per 1,000 married men of ages 25-29 and 26 divorces per 1,000 married women of the same age group. A *Scotsman* report (14.10.10) gave evidence of what is widely recognised but seldom admitted in relation to marriage and the behaviour of children. A recent survey revealed that “youngsters living with a single parent or in step-families are at least twice as likely to exhibit serious behaviour problems as those living with their natural parents”. In a separate but related area of marriage, the *Scotsman* (18.09.10) reported on attempts being made by some lawyers involved in matrimonial cases to criminalise men who marry women who have been forced into wedlock by their parents. This menace is largely confined to Asian communities in the United Kingdom, but is well known to be taking place in Scotland.

The sin of pre-marital fornication is widespread in our country. The *Telegraph* (16.04.09) carried a report with evidence from the Office of National Statistics revealing that women are more likely to give birth before they turn 25 than they are to get married. The traditional (and biblical) family unit of a married couple with children of their own is no longer the norm in our society. The number of married couples hit the lowest levels in England and Wales since 1895. It is reported that some 1.66 million children are being brought up by an unmarried couple – up from 1 million 10 years ago. The number brought up by married parents dropped from 9.57 million to 8.32 million over the same period. These figures were released only two months after statistics showed that the annual rate of teenage pregnancy in England and Wales had risen to 42 in every 1,000, despite a £286 million government campaign to tackle the problem.

### *Children*

A landmark report for the Children’s Society, entitled *A Good Childhood*, published in 2009, details extensively the influences to which every child is exposed. This study would make worthwhile reading for those wishing to understand how government policy is being shaped in this area in years to come. The study itself raises plenty of points which gives a negative answer to the question it poses – Is childhood all it should be? Statistics for the lifestyle of modern children should give cause for real concern. We learn, for example, that the average child aged 8-11 spends over 17 hours per week watching television. Sadly the answers offered to the questions raised, while being common sense in many instances, are not founded in the Word of God.

The suffering of children is a subject which ought to trouble any society and it is clear that much work continues to be done to seek to prevent the abuse of children in every sphere possible. Poverty is often blamed as the root cause of the suffering of children, but this does not seem to explain all the issues. A report in the *Scotsman* (13.10.10) revealed that “more than half of children polled in Scotland have noticed signs of suspected neglect in other youngsters they know”. Neglect, as well as being criminal, is seriously damaging to young people. That neglect is also to be seen in the lawlessness of children. A further *Scotsman* report (15.06.10) revealed that 192 children under the age of 8 years were caught for offences such as vandalism, fire-raising and robbery. Children as young as 6 and 7 have been caught assaulting people and even 4-year-olds have been found with knives. The number of children deemed to be offenders increased in Glasgow by 45% in three years. This blight on young lives must be laid at the door of parents. How great is our need as a nation to turn again to the Lord from whose law we have so deeply revolted.

#### CONCLUSION

The Committee’s report is not to be considered as anything more than a limited and general analysis of some facts and trends which reflect on the state of religion and morals in Scotland. The Committee is well aware that members of Synod are well informed already of the situation in the nation as to these and many other matters of concern, but believe that this forum is a useful place to summarise the condition of our nation. Our primary purpose in writing this report is to encourage prayerfulness among our people in the pursuit of reformation. How greatly we should long for a restoration of what we have departed from as a nation. We trust that it is not in the spirit of self-righteousness, nor of despising others, that we write, which spirit is so largely condemned in the Pharisees by the Saviour. We tremble to think of the judgements of God which we, together with our guilty nation, richly deserve and offer this report to the Synod with the warning of the Apostle before our minds and upon our consciences: “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (1 Corinthians 10:12). We also offer it in the fervent and expectant hope and prayer that the day will dawn in Scotland and among the nations of the world that Christ’s kingdom will be established and many will go and say, “Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths” (Isaiah 2:3).