

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**REPORTS OF
STANDING
COMMITTEES
OF SYNOD**

Submitted to Synod in May 2013

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

INTRODUCTION

THIS report follows the pattern of previous years in which details are given of what the Committee has been doing in the past year and then a limited report is offered of areas of significance in the nation. It is never possible to cover all or nearly all of what is important and readers of the report are assumed to be well aware of current events in the Church and State. The report therefore seeks to act as a witness in a world where so many competing voices are heard. We do not expect that this report will make any impression on our godless generation, but if it encourages and informs some of the children of God to prayer for the generation it will have fulfilled a very precious and worthy purpose.

THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

Catechism of Church Principles

The committee agreed to hand over the work of further editing of the Catechism to a sub-committee and the labour involved in this has been very considerable over the past year. The committee would especially like to thank Rev. Douglas Somerset and Mr. Matthew Vogan for the help they gave as co-opted members on the sub-committee. According to the decision of the Synod the committee has proceeded to implement the necessary editing changes and the Catechism should be available for distribution before the Synod meeting, DV.

Statement of Differences

Due to the considerable time that was required to complete the Catechism, limited progress has been made with the Statement of Differences document. An outline of how this Statement will be constructed has been discussed and some material has been gathered for it, but the Committee regrets that it has not been possible to complete the task for this year's meeting of Synod and hopes to have it ready for next year. We firmly believe that this Statement is both timely and necessary. In an effort to explain to our loyal people the need for our continued witness we hope that the testimony of the Reformed Church in Scotland to the Gospel and to the principles of the truth will be honoured and asserted.

Same-sex Marriage Protest – meeting and media coverage

The second process of consultation on proposals to legislate for so-called "same-sex marriage" in Scotland was launched by the Scottish Government in December 2012. Prior to the consultation being launched, the Convener was

able to arrange through his local MSP, Dr. Alasdair Allan, a meeting with the Minister responsible for the proposed Bill – Mr. Alex Neil, MSP. Accompanied by Mr. Alasdair MacPherson, the Convener met the Minister on 20th December 2012 in the Parliament building in Edinburgh. A detailed paper presenting our objections to the proposals as then known had previously been sent to the Scottish Government and to the press. (This paper is available to any Synod member who wishes to see it.) The meeting, however, was somewhat overtaken by the publication of the consultation in the previous week and with little time to digest its contents, comments and criticisms were also offered to the Minister about it. The Minister was courteous and friendly, but, as was expected, gave no indication that he was likely to re-think the policy. We believe that it was necessary to address the Minister directly and face to face on this most solemn issue and to speak to his conscience in a personal way, which we did. We can only pray that He, in whose hands is the heart of kings, may be pleased even yet to arrest the conscience of this man and of his fellow Ministers. Nothing is too hard for the Lord, who can intervene in ways we cannot now envisage but, as far as man can judge, a very serious change of heart among our rulers seems necessary if a most solemn judgement upon our nation will now be averted.

Following the meeting a television interview was arranged with the BBC. The Gaelic interview with Mr. MacPherson was aired that same evening. An earlier interview clip was broadcast on Scottish Television's *North Tonight* news bulletin. Following the meeting, a controversy arose involving the Free Church in the *Herald* newspaper. This newspaper mis-reported in January that it was the Free Church that had met Alex Neil, MSP, and that they had asked for the re-criminalisation of homosexuality. To this the Free Church reacted with considerable vehemence and denial, considering the allegation a slander. The resulting apology was reported on the Free Church website, identifying the Convener of the committee of our own Church as responsible for the alleged request. As can be seen in our representation to the Minister, no such request was made. In answer to a question, the Convener simply stated that the Church believed that the legal restrictions on homosexual practice should be re-instated and he offered no proposal as to how that should be policed. On return from his deputation visit in New Zealand, the Convener explained the Church's position and the true reason for the meeting in a letter to the press and in a local radio station interview. This dispute also received coverage in the *British Church Newspaper*. We welcome the fact that this supposedly negative publicity was an opportunity to stress again the fact that sodomy is a grievous sin and that its practice should certainly be suppressed by the civil power as contrary to the light of nature.

Preparation of Response to Consultation

While consideration was given to the merit of contributing to the second consultation process, the Committee agreed that a response to the questions dealing with the redefinition of marriage and the proposals to change the law

to provide for same-sex marriage was expedient. It was also agreed that these answers be given under protest against the consultation itself and the process being followed to implement the legislation. The protest and the answers were sent to the Scottish Government and will be made publicly available. All the Committee's representations to the Scottish Government are included as appendices to the Committee's Overture seeking further senior legal opinion concerning a Judicial Review of the legislation.

Letters

Rather than write further letters in opposition to the legislation before the UK and Scottish Parliaments on same-sex marriage, the Convener wrote to some leading politicians who had expressed their own opposition. These letters were by way of support and prayerful encouragement and directed them to the Word of God as the only safe guide in this matter. In connection with proposals in the Scottish Parliament, the Convener wrote to the legal team of the Minister responsible asking for further clarification on the intended changes to the marriage schedule under the new legislation. At the time of writing, no response has been received but the Synod will be informed of this crucial issue as it may materially affect the freedom of ministers to perform marriages for the State with a clear conscience. The Convener of the Committee has also been working on an investigation into the possibility of seeking Judicial Review of any future legislation in this area and has consulted the Church legal advisor on this matter. Options open to the Synod in this regard will be raised in an Overture from the Committee.

Work in progress

The Committee's work on the subject of divorce and remarriage is on-going with nothing new to report to the Synod on this occasion. The Committee believe that it would prove very beneficial if the Training of the Ministry Committee included several papers on the subject of marriage and divorce at future Theological Conferences. The duty of the Church to uphold its own Confession in this area is plain and it is becoming apparent that few, if any, other Churches are willing to take a firm and biblical line on this highly important and increasingly difficult subject.

REPORT ON RELIGION

This part of the report addresses a few of the very many pressing and serious concerns on religious subjects facing our poor nation. As the Word of God identifies Popery as the great spiritual enemy to the Church of Christ, this report continues to testify to the biblical depiction of that evil system. Notice is also taken of the significant events in the Romish hierarchy and also of changes in the Church of England and proposals for alterations in the constitution which will affect religion. Notice is taken of some trends detected in the Free Church of Scotland and an exposure of the growing menace of

Charismatic teaching is presented. Various members of the Committee contributed to this section of the report and their work is appreciated as a reflection of what ought to be a burden to the people of God today.

Popery in Britain

Popery is exposed in Holy Scripture (to discerning men anointed with the divine eye salve), as “. . . the mystery of iniquity . . .” (2 Thessalonians 2:7), and its head, the Pope of Rome as “. . . that Wicked . . .” (2 Thessalonians 2:8), and “. . . that man of sin . . . the son of perdition . . .” (2 Thessalonians 2:3). It is a mystery, that is, a thing concealed and secret, making a fair pretence of love to Christ, truth and piety, when in reality, despising Christ, and engaged in heresy and wickedness. Romanism condemns sodomy, yet is a breeding ground for such filthiness; contends against sodomite-marriage yet forbids its priests to marry, permits divorce on unscriptural grounds, and is cruel to the innocent divorced; rejects abortion under any circumstances, even when the mother’s life is in imminent danger, yet murders the souls of those that it bewitches under another gospel. It also asserts that there is no salvation outside of itself, yet smothers the way of salvation, and erroneously teaches justification by works and regeneration by baptism, and transubstantiation. Within its rotten heart it is intent upon the destruction of true religion or genuine Protestantism, and the truly godly. Popery has been rightly described as Satan’s masterpiece, and an anti-Christian abomination. Its wicked and often subtle activity is a substantial cause of the Lord’s wrath against Scotland.

The false religion of Romanism (once rightly outlawed and suppressed during the First Reformation in Scotland) and reduced to a very few adherents, now claims 184,000 followers in Scotland. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Popery has greatly increased in size and influence (largely due to Irish immigration in central Scotland during the nineteenth century), and true religion has alarmingly decreased. Papists now appear as a “roaring lion”, monopolising the media, and are widely regarded as the voice of the Christian church in Scotland. Its opinions regarding the current religious and moral issues are readily sought after, and are given prominence by the media. By contrast, we as a Church, together with other Protestant Churches in Scotland, have noticeably declined in recent years, numerically and influentially. We have been marginalised to the extent that our prayerful and diligent endeavours to scripturally uncover and condemn Popish heresy, and advance the true Reformed, Protestant religion, the salvation of sinners and holiness, has been considerably curtailed by our many adversaries.

The resignation of the Pope/Cardinal O’Brien

The resignation of both the Pope and the Scottish Cardinal within the space of a few weeks received considerable coverage in the media in early 2013. These events demonstrate the weak foundations of this system and how quickly and easily those who lift themselves up can be cast down. The very serious allegations against numerous Romish priests, which possibly triggered both

resignations, reveal widespread perversion within the whole body. Truly Romanism is “a cage of every unclean and hateful bird” (Revelation 18:2). That the former Cardinal O’Brien spoke so loudly against homosexuality and was given a platform by professed Protestants in doing so, demonstrates the danger of any parley with Rome. The manifest hypocrisy of the Cardinal is even acknowledged by a reluctant BBC. At the time of writing it is being asserted that Cardinal O’Brien has not been accused of any criminal actions. However, it seems impossible to avoid the conclusion that his acknowledged offences were, to some extent, an abuse of power, which in many other contexts would require, at least, a police investigation. The absence of this strongly suggests that our nation has within it those in high office belonging to other sovereign states (such as the Vatican is) who can live above and outside the law. It is high time that the diplomatic ties with and formal recognition of the Roman Catholic Church as a political power be reversed by the Government of the United Kingdom.

The UK and Scottish Parliaments and the Union

In November 2012 the British Prime Minister signed an agreement with the Scottish Government which provides for a referendum in 2014 on the future of the United Kingdom. The Treaty of Union is of greater force and of higher obligation than the noisy clamour of politicians or the pretended voice of democracy in the present day. The oaths of the monarch and the obligations of the whole of the State to preserve the true Protestant religion are now under threat with this dangerous political adventurism. Our nation comes under very weighty responsibilities in connection with the Union and to think that a referendum result which produced perhaps a very slim majority in favour of secession would undo the whole constitutional arrangements protecting the Church of Christ in both lands should be a grave concern. It does not give any comfort to think that the referendum will only include those living in Scotland, excluding the many Scots loyal to the union who live in the rest of the UK and abroad. Without asserting it as a duty with respect to voting in this referendum, we cannot see how a faithful Protestant could view the prospect of Scottish Independence with anything less than anxiety and concern. We will unhesitatingly resist the dismantling of the protections secured to the Scottish Church by the Acts of Security, which we have a justifiable claim to as the true heir of the Reformed Church in Scotland and prayerfully seek the preservation of the Treaty of Union of 1707 as a worthy if imperfect arrangement until better days dawn.

The long-term aspirations of the Roman hierarchy to break down the strong bulwarks of the British constitution took a further step forward in the past year with the now open resolve of the UK Government to repeal the ancient hereditary restriction on the monarch preventing him or her from marrying a Roman Catholic. The government of all the Commonwealth countries were polled on their opinion of this measure and, according to our Prime Minister and his government, all agreed to it, along with the abolition of the right of

male primogeniture. The change, it is stated, is a removal of an archaic and intolerant rule from a past age which it is thought should have no place in our more equal and tolerant society. The further equality of allowing a Romanist to be the monarch is not yet sought for openly, but the present change could effect that by default within a generation. The claims that Rome makes on every child born to a Roman Catholic parent secures for that religion a central place within the Royal Family in the future if and when they secure a marriage to an heir to the throne.

The European Union and Britain's membership

Also in 2012 the Prime Minister promised a referendum on the UK membership of the EU before the end of 2017 if his party wins the next election. Many view this pledge as unreliable and as itself highlighting a broken promise to hold a referendum on the recently signed Lisbon Treaty which further bound our nation to the EU. Without offering any comment on the many political, economic and social implications of EU membership, the Church of Christ in Scotland ought to have serious concerns at the tendencies by which our laws and our heritage are being systematically subjected to the dictates of Romanist and secular politicians and legal establishments in Europe. The break-up of the United Kingdom seems to be a political goal of the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland and we have reason to fear that the spiritual bondage of pre-Reformation times would be one sad consequence of closer federal and legal union with the nations of Europe. The very serious moral and social liberalism of the political institutions of Europe also undermine the laws of nations which are founded on a truly Christian basis. It cannot be denied that the pro-sodomite equalities legislation emanating from Europe has done untold damage to the statute books of member states, including the UK. Looking at the affairs of nations it is easy to be overwhelmed with discouragement, but we must ever remember that whatever the princes of the earth may think, the government is on the shoulders of “another king, one Jesus” and that He has all power in heaven and in earth. The joyful prospect of the nations of Europe being united under the banner of the Gospel should stir up the prayerful desire that His Kingdom would soon come in Gospel power.

The Church of England – resignation of Archbishop

The Episcopal system of Church Government which is found in the Anglican Communion is unscriptural. The office of Archbishop is nowhere found in the Word of God and is an affront to Christ, the only Head of the Church, and to any true ministers of Christ over whom he might assert lordly dominion. The Church of England was once blessed with many godly men and while its unscriptural Church government was always a solemn error and hindrance to usefulness, its formal witness to the Reformed faith is not altogether extinguished even yet. The resignation of Archbishop Rowan Williams is seen by many as the removal of a weak and vacillating liberal from a position of

influence in the nation. This can only be a good thing. The new Archbishop does not, however, seem to offer any more conservative credentials in the eyes of observers. The office of archbishop requires to be utterly abolished, together with all lordly bishops and prelates in the Church of England and those foreign Churches in communion with it.

Theological liberalism has long ago destroyed the credibility of the Church of England and while the media seem to take delight in discussing and highlighting its many backslidings as though they were advances and improvements, we long for a better day to dawn when the Church of Christ in England and Ireland will recognise afresh their solemn obligations to Scripture truth and avowed Reformation principles. The obligations to pray for the honouring of the Solemn League and Covenant, which was designed with the other Westminster standards to bind this Church to further Reformation, remains a blessed duty upon Protestants in Scotland. It must therefore be our present endeavour, as God may provide the opportunity, “to bring the Churches of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion, confession of faith, form of church government, directory of worship and catechising, that we, and our posterity after us, may, as brethren, live in faith and love, and that the Lord may delight to dwell in the midst of us” (Solemn League and Covenant, Section 1).

Ambiguous stance of the Free Church on the Establishment Principle

That the Disruption Free Church was both anti-erastian and also firmly opposed to the principles of voluntaryism ought to be recognised by anyone with a small acquaintance with that period of Scottish Church history. The vigorous opposition to voluntary principles articulated by Dr. James Begg during the nineteenth century Free Church Union controversy, remind us that there were once faithful and godly defenders of the Establishment Principle in the Free Church. It is the claim of the present Free Church that she too is founded on that principle, and her legal right to the large properties and funds in 1905 was in part based on her assertion of it as a fundamental principle. It was in part on account of the recognition of voluntary principles that the Deed of Separation was signed in 1893 by the fathers of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and our firm adherence to the principle that nations and their rulers are obliged to recognise and support the true religion and the Church of Christ is enshrined in our constitution.

In the light of its profession and constitutional obligations it might seem strange that the present-day Free Church would therefore express itself as opposed to the view that the civil power has a duty to suppress the evil practices of sodomy, as was done in January 2013 in response to media reports. Comments by the present Moderator of the Free Church General Assembly, which display a distinctly pro-Scottish Independence slant and at best an unhealthy ambivalence over the terms of the Treaty of Union, also raise questions over the commitment of the Free Church to her founding principles.

In a more recent news item on the Free Church website (accessed 4th March 2013) Rev. Gordon Matheson attacked the *Secular Society* for its “allegation” that Christianity “enjoys an exclusive place in religious education in schools in Scotland’s ‘Christian’ areas”. Far from expressing the desire that this was actually true and in line with the legal commitment which the State entered into when Free Church Schools were brought under its jurisdiction, Mr. Matheson seems to oppose any exclusive place to Christianity in religious education.

The website affirms that “The Sleat and Strath Free Church minister pointed to a total lack of evidence in Secular Scotland’s outburst”, adding that the completely unsubstantiated remarks would mean hundreds of primary and secondary school teachers were failing pupils in their care. Mr. Matheson said if Secular Scotland’s claims were true, then education departments across the country “would be turning more than a blind eye” and this would justifiably lead to “a barrage of complaints, investigations and eventually sackings”. Mr. Matheson went on to assert that “when you put general religious education solely in the hands of religious bodies, you get sectarianism, not respect. Never has there been a more important time for partnership between the state and Christianity. Religious education in Schools promotes respect and tolerance, especially when it’s done well, like in the religious areas of Scotland.”

Exactly what kind of “partnership between the state and Christianity” Mr. Matheson seeks is open to question, but it seems not to be one in which Christianity would or should have an exclusive place in religious education. The role of the old Free Church in giving religious education in schools and of many Presbyterian ministers fulfilling the same worthy role well into the twentieth century is thus roundly denounced as sectarianism. These remarks being broadcast on the Free Church website suggests that this is an official position. The question that arises from these events is, When will the Free Church move yet further from her moorings by making alterations to her Confession itself? For some time now the Free Church standard of subscription to the Confession in several of its statements is ambiguous, with many of her office-bearers holding it by a very tenuous grasp.

The Charismatic movement

The greatest danger in the Visible Church over many generations has been laxity in doctrine. For well over a century there has been a willingness to embrace every opinion and wind of doctrine that emanates from the kingdom of darkness and appeals to the corruption and pride of the heart of fallen, worldly man. From this laxity all the prevailing worldliness, ungodliness and lack of biblical discipline we see around us in the Church has emerged.

One of the most blatant manifestations of this has been the “Charismatic movement”, which has brought the teachings of Pentecostalism into the wider Church. The modern Pentecostal movement began in the USA in 1905 but has roots that may be traced to Scotland in the early nineteenth century. There are estimated to be just fewer than 1 million Pentecostals in the UK today. The

leading feature of this delusion is the emphasis on the so-called spiritual gifts or *charismata* allegedly bestowed subsequent to conversion by the Holy Spirit. But we firmly believe the idea that the so-called “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” refers to the charismatic gifts of the Apostolic Church is an erroneous, dangerous and divisive doctrine. These gifts were for a certain time in order to establish and confirm the Apostles’ teachings in the earliest stages of the Church’s development. There is no evidence that they were intended to continue and, of course, it is a historical fact that they *did actually die out* in the Apostolic Church as soon as the Canon of Scripture was completed and a permanent Gospel ministry was established. This happened because God *intended* these gifts to die out. If He had willed them to survive in the Church then they would have survived down through Church history. Paul told the Corinthians that “tongues will cease” (1 Corinthians 13:8). If the “Charismatic” view is correct then the Holy Spirit has left His Church without His “baptism” for around 1,900 years until it reappeared in the nineteenth century. That is a ludicrous notion and stands in complete contradiction of Christ’s promise regarding the Comforter “that He may abide with you for ever” (John 14:16).

Not only does this false doctrine foster a spirit of looking down on those who do not possess these so-called gifts as second-class, unspiritual Christians, but it greatly derogates from the greatest miracle of all which can happen to a ruined sinner – the real baptism of the Holy Spirit: “the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost”. It leaves men dissatisfied with what they imagine to be regeneration and faith in Christ and makes them want these “marvellous” and “miraculous” experiences purportedly associated with the charismatic gifts. This is to dishonour both Christ and His Spirit. The Spirit always points to Christ – He doesn’t draw attention to His own work since His true work is to show Christ to the soul through the Word (John 16:13-15). If someone is dissatisfied with their Christian experience they need more of Christ revealed through His Word and Spirit in their hearts rather than the ability to work “miracles”. We fear the absence of the Spirit of Holiness from the worship of Charismatics is the chief reason that their “worship” services are largely an extravaganza of puerility and irreverent worldliness. If they would be brought to return to the solid preaching and teaching of the Word of God their misguided notions of the work of the Holy Spirit would evaporate very rapidly. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again” (John 3:6-7).

REPORT ON MORALS

This part of the report was written by several members of the Committee and also from other sources, all of whom we thank for their valuable contributions. The subject of homosexual marriage has taken up considerable attention and the comments here are reiterating what can be found in various places by way

of criticism and concern. The section dealing with education and matters relating to mothers and family life is an attempt to respond to the concern expressed at the Synod that this issue be given coverage in the report. The oft-forgotten subject of capital punishment is again addressed in light of the Word of God. The biblical injunction “thou shalt not kill” is also of central relevance to the final issue considered – euthanasia and assisted suicide.

Legislation in favour of homosexual “marriage”

In spite of it not appearing in their election manifestos, both the Scottish Executive and the Westminster Government, at the time of writing (January 2013), are continuing to force through their plans to redefine marriage. It is a grief to Christians, and to others of traditional values, to see the sin of sodomy becoming more and more acceptable in our society. Not many years ago homosexual activity was illegal. Now civil partnerships are legislated for on our statute books. Not content with that, our legislators want to bow to a minority and are intent on making same sex “marriage” legal.

However, making it legal will certainly not make it right. The definition of marriage was set in Scripture before the Fall of man. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24): a definition which can be seen in practice across all kinds of human culture, throughout human history. Nature itself teaches us that only men and women have the complementary characteristics, both biologically and emotionally, to constitute a real marriage. If the law is changed it cannot change reality. As one contributor on a recent BBC *Question Time* programme said, it is “an ontological impossibility”. Same sex “marriage” ultimately cannot exist.

Our Governments have tried to reassure churches, who would not conduct same sex “marriages” on conscientious grounds, that safeguards will be put in place to protect their position. The Church of England and the Church in Wales will be forbidden to conduct them while other churches have been assured they would not be compelled to do so. However, a homosexual activist, declared “This faith based discrimination could be open to legal challenges. The Government is treating two churches differently from all other religions. Discrimination between faith groups is probably illegal under the Human Rights Act and the European Convention of Human Rights.” The argument will almost inevitably follow that any church refusing to conduct these ceremonies will be accused of discrimination. They will be forced to conform or face the consequences. Already, according to a BBC website report in December, two men in a civil partnership from Essex are considering mounting a legal challenge over the right to have a same sex “marriage” in the Church of England; the ban, they say, would “legally discriminate” against them.

Andrea Williams, of Christian Concern, warns “The Government has been told repeatedly that redefining marriage will have unforeseen consequences. It has been warned that legal challenges will be made against churches if this

legislation passes. . . . (It) will not only create legal difficulties, it threatens to alienate a huge section of the public who believe that marriage is between, and can only ever be between, one man and one woman.”

A leading human rights lawyer, Aidan O’Neill, QC, asserted that, in his opinion, this legislation would have far-reaching legal consequences for many sectors of society. For example, a teacher could be dismissed if he/she refused to teach that same sex “marriage” had the same validity as heterosexual marriage; a parent may lose all rights to ask for their child to be withdrawn from lessons which presented homosexual “marriage” as an equal alternative to heterosexual marriage, and foster parents who showed opposition to same-sex “marriage” may no longer be allowed to care for children in their homes.

There is some encouragement, however, when we see mounting pressure from a significant number of MPs. Fifty-eight cross-party members have signed an open letter opposing the Government’s plans and some more are very disturbed by them. We are in a time when increasingly those who cannot conscientiously agree or comply with the liberal agenda are being labelled as “intolerant”, “bigots” and “homophobic”. Worse, we fear they will be persecuted and hounded for their beliefs and new laws will be passed to legitimise this treatment. Peter Hitchens, the writer and journalist, notes, “Liberal bigotry is the worst of all because it thinks it is so enlightened”. How we need to pray for the true enlightenment of the Holy Spirit for ourselves and for our nation. “Mine eyes enlighten, lest the sleep of death me overtake” (Psalm 13:3, metrical version).

The difficult choices in education

The following section of the report has been taken with permission from an article discussing aspects of education which are of concern to many in the Church.

“Few things worry parents so much as how their children are going to turn out. Christian parents worry especially about bringing up their children in a way that is consistent with their Christian profession. This makes Christian parents especially interested in (and vulnerable to pressure from) various theories of how children should be educated.

“Until recently, there were two options for how to educate children – state school or private school. Since private schools are prohibitively expensive for most people, state schools have normally been the obvious and natural place for children to go. Recently though, people have started exploring other options. One is home educating, once the resort of parents who objected to traditional forms of structure and authority, and parents of children who struggled in the conventional classroom (as victims of severe bullying, or with medical conditions, or similar), and the other is Christian schools.

“Parents faced with this array of choices need to be reassured that there is no single right option. None is automatically the right choice for everyone. The decision to select one or another is constrained by circumstances – the personal circumstances of individual families, given their geographical location, their

finances, their academic ability, their context in their community, and their personal tastes, inclinations and temperaments. It's not a question of absolute right and wrong but a question of what's appropriate, wise, and practical in a particular set of local circumstances.

"On the one hand, this means that home-schooling and Christian schools are perfectly legitimate routes for Christian parents to go down. Nobody would or should deny the right of parents to educate their children at home or in Christian schools. It's a question of what's appropriate in their circumstances.

"On the other hand, it also means that it is a perfectly legitimate option for Christian parents to educate their children in state schools. This is a point which needs to be stated explicitly in our current context where Christian parents may find themselves in constant danger of being rebuked, browbeaten, and judged for sending their children to state schools (or for that matter private schools that are not overtly Christian). But for them as for anyone else, it's a question of what's appropriate in their circumstances."

Family life and the role of mothers

That the divine institution of the family is under very severe attack in the present day has often been identified in this report and by many other organisations besides the Christian Church. The laws passed in our Parliaments over the past 60 years since World War II have increasingly eroded family life. Very many children are now reared in homes where marriages have broken down, two or more partners become identified with the family and where increasingly the biblical role of a mother is all but obliterated. The education system and employment changes, together with a revolution in the ethics of matters surrounding fertility and birth-control, have all contributed. A particularly pervasive and successful feminist agenda in the 1970s and 1980s has reaped this fruit in the present generation. Some social commentators are beginning to see signs that this movement is facing something of a reversal in more recent times. It is now more common for young mothers to openly recognise the fallacy of the dogma that a woman is repressed when she acts in the role of a mother and home-maker rather than as a career-driven professional or money-maker. This is certainly a welcome trend if it is finding wider acceptance. It is particularly interesting that this trend is found among highly educated and otherwise employable young women. However, it is clear that much more biblical teaching is needed to break down the decades of destructive legislation and social engineering in our society.

The time and labour invested in the apparently trivial concerns of the home and around infants and young children is indeed a worthy trading with God-given talents and will be sure to find a gracious recompense when performed as unto the Lord. The security and comfort of a home in which the mother is always found and to which she gives all her talents and gifts and time will be a legacy that children will treasure long after their mother is removed from time into eternity. The absence of a mother from that most fulfilling and yet most difficult and taxing of roles will be felt by every child who suffers that

loss. We therefore most earnestly encourage young women to value and cherish these years of motherhood if and when God blesses them with children. It is neither patronising nor repressing to be instructed from divine truth in matters of such high importance for the future of the Church of Christ and of the nation in which we live. Being a mother is not incompatible with a good and complete university education. The prayerful care of a mother cannot be replaced with any other benefit in the lives of children and if the time to give it passes, it will not be reclaimed later. Mothers are therefore to pay no heed whatever to the clamouring calls of a godless age to throw off what it calls repression and bondage but what the Word of God describes in the most honourable of terms.

“Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates” (Proverbs 31:10-31).

The Death Penalty

The scriptural warrant for capital punishment is plain: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man” (Genesis 9:6). The duty for the just operation of the penalty for murder is laid upon the civil magistrate who is that “minister of God” appointed to execute justice, to bear the sword against the evildoer (Romans 13:3-4). In practice the scriptural position largely prevailed in most countries up until the first half of the twentieth century. The early movement for abolition came mainly from northern Europe, and has progressed worldwide since. The European Community (EC) and its predecessor organisations have been a major force in

its abolition. During 1969, the United Kingdom abolished the death penalty for murder in readiness for entering the EEC. Like all other member states, the UK is now bound by the Treaty of Lisbon which prohibits the use of the death penalty for all offences. But notably there is a provision made for reintroducing it quickly, should it be needed, in times of war or serious civil unrest. The EU very actively campaigns for worldwide abolition. It funds anti-death penalty lobby groups in various countries which have retained the death penalty. A total of 16 million euros was “allocated to support the fight against death penalty worldwide” between 2007 and 2013. During 2009 alone, various lobby groups in the USA were given grants totalling \$3.6m – further evidence, if it were needed, of the deeply iniquitous and troubling practises of the EU.

The abolition of the death penalty has proceeded and been retained, despite public opinion consistently favouring capital punishment, particularly for the murder of children and police. In regard to much of the wicked legislation that has been introduced in recent years, it is sadly true that our leaders have the support of public opinion. However, in regard to the abolition of the death penalty, they have defied; and in refusing to countenance its reinstatement, continue to defy, public opinion. Recent polls in the UK have shown a desire for the death penalty to be reinstated: for “standard murder” 51% in favour and 37% against (YouGov, 2010); for “child murder” 62% in favour and for “murder in some circumstances” 70% in favour (Mori 2009). Writing in the *Daily Telegraph* (18th September 2012), the ex-minister of the Conservative government, Norman Tebbit, called for the re-instatement of the death penalty to be examined. He noted, according to his records, that about 150 people have been murdered since abolition by those who had a prior conviction for murder. Surely our lawmakers must share in the guilt of those entirely unnecessary murders, at least those of them who are not actively seeking the re-instatement of the death penalty. That is but part of the guilt: above all they have sought to break the Lord’s bands asunder in defying His express command and, in some cases, have engaged to persuade other nations to do likewise.

Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS) and Euthanasia

Definitions

Euthanasia: “The intentional killing by act or omission of a person whose life is felt not to be worth living.”

Suicide: “The action or act of intentionally killing one’s self.”

Physician-Assisted Suicide: “The doctor prescribes a lethal medication but the person administers the dose himself or herself.”

Physician Assisted Suicide

In the last year moves by the group “Health Care Professionals for Assisted Dying” in the British Medical Association to accept PAS were defeated. Lord Falconer’s Commission on Assisted Dying was rejected in both Houses of Parliament; however, his new bill is to be debated shortly in the Lords. A new

bill by Margo Macdonald will also be debated in the spring. A poll taken in September showed that seven out of ten MPs were against PAS.

The question of suicide deals with moral accountability. Usually we are morally responsible for those actions which we freely perform and come to freely. But what if we are influenced by an argument when in a weakened frame of mind or by the medication we are taking? Does the moral responsibility move elsewhere? At what stage is a person coerced into committing suicide and the coercer share or take responsibility for the action? This question must be asked, as it is believed:

Firstly, that a growing number of people are opting for PAS through the coercion of others rather than coming to that position with open eyes and a clear head. A person comes to a situation when they “feel” that they can no longer face the future due to some traumatic event such as the onset and progression of a terminal illness. They are advised that assisted suicide is an alternative to a long and lingering onset of death. A physician offering such advice would be in breach of the Hippocratic Oath (c. 400 BC), “I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if asked, nor suggest such counsel”, and the International Code of Medical Ethics (1949), “a doctor must always bear in mind the importance of preserving human life from the time of conception until death”. The autonomy of the doctor is impinged upon and ultimately the trust of all patients in their doctors to “do no harm” is undermined.

Secondly, an increasing number of medications have been developed for the treatment of terminal illnesses as well as other conditions such as heart disease and depression that can cause the user to feel suicidal. There have been numerous cases reported in the Media of families claiming that their loved ones have taken their own lives under the “influence” of such medications.

Thirdly, increasingly the elderly and terminally ill when physically and mentally weak are being made to feel that there is not only no quality or value to their life but that they are really a burden to their loved ones and therefore ought to end their lives. Experienced hospice doctors advise that this sense of being a burden is a symptom of underlying depression and once the depression is treated the suicidal thoughts end. This position is clearly opposed to the basic Christian teaching of the New Testament in which suffering by one member is to be shared by all (2 Corinthians 1:4-5).

Euthanasia

The first European Symposium on the prevention of euthanasia in Europe was held in Edinburgh in September with delegates from 12 countries. This comes as figures showed that euthanasia deaths in Holland rose by 18% in 2011 and now account for 2.8% of all deaths in the country. It was encouraging that the challenges by two men with “locked in syndrome” were rejected by the High Court.

As far as the law is concerned, euthanasia for the moment remains illegal and yet there is a growing concern that euthanasia is being actively practiced by many health-care physicians. Families of loved ones with a terminal illness,

or those ones whose loved ones have suffered a stroke, speak of attempts by medical staff to end their lives. However, due to the nature of this, there is little documented evidence.

Yet we believe, it true to say, that relatives find themselves under increasing pressure to withdraw life-sustaining fluids from the ill in order to end their suffering and because there is no hope of recovery. Some relatives have refused to yield to this pressure and their loved ones have made at least a partial recovery.

There is also rising concern that medications such as morphine-based substances, used to make the terminally ill more comfortable, are actually ending their lives earlier than otherwise might be the case. It is essential that patients and family understand that this is a side effect of such medications and that there is a difference between taking the drug to end a life and to make the end of life more comfortable through palliative care.

The biblical argument against Physician Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia

The sovereignty of God

The account of Creation as described in Genesis chapters one and two tells us that life is the gift of God. God is “the fountain of life” (Psalm 36:9). Man is, therefore, not the creator or author of life, he did not create life and it is not his to take life away. The moral law of God states plainly, “Thou shalt not kill”. Physician Assisted Suicide and Euthanasia are, therefore, sins against God.

Caution

The motives and causes which would make a person consider Physician Assisted Suicide or Euthanasia are complex. Therefore, we must be very careful not to pre-judge difficult cases, nor to neglect the simple Gospel teaching that we are to show compassionate love towards the sinner. No matter what our own views are, the final judgement of all men lies with God who alone sees into the heart. “I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works” (Revelation 2:23). However, this does not mean that we compromise the clear biblical precept summed up for us in the answer to question 68 of the Shorter Catechism, “The sixth commandment requireth all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life, and the life of others”.

CONCLUSION

This report does not make pleasant reading. It has been the sad duty of the Church in its 120-year history to testify to a nation that has had many favours, that its works are evil. This evil came in like a flood with doctrinal error and unfaithfulness in the Church in the nineteenth century and has now spread into nearly every area of society. It has now reached the height of the most glaring wickedness whereby our rulers seek to destroy the very foundations of human society. The sins of our land cry to God for vengeance, yet we are encouraged

in the Bible to pray with Habakkuk, “O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy” (Habakkuk 3:2). The Committee’s report will achieve one of its aims if that is the fervent cry of its readers.