

VII.

REPORT

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC QUESTIONS, RELIGION & MORALS

Introduction

There is a saying that every nation gets the government it deserves. This has generally been the rule throughout history. We can see it in Scripture, in the account we have of the Lord's dealings with Israel. During the time of the judges, which was a period when every man "did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25), the people demanded a king of the sort that other nations had. Of course, they already *had* a king – the very best King, even God Himself – but they had forsaken Him and were now incurring His displeasure. The Lord granted Israel their request, but He gave them Saul, who was of the same ungodly spirit as themselves, and would prove no blessing to them (1 Sam. 8:10-18).

Nations will not be judged at the last day, for the final judgement concerns individuals only. Rather they are judged *now*, in time, and in relation to how they either honour or dishonour God. We learn this from those wise words of Solomon, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34). Sin is a reproach to the western world in general now, especially to the United Kingdom and very especially to Scotland, because of the great favour shown to us by the Lord, beginning at the Reformation and continuing over the centuries since. Today, many sadly have no regard for our Christian heritage, and the godly society that resulted from it, but the sobering fact is that our sins are all the greater in God's sight because of what He graciously did among us for our good in former generations (Ps. 44:1).

The present times are difficult for believers, for "the wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted" (Ps. 12:8). It is a blessing that we still have the Word of God read and preached among us, to guide us in these perilous times of spiritual and moral confusion. We are thankful for the promises God has made to His people, which encourage us in standing firm on the side of Christ, as we must endeavour to do.

MALE AND FEMALE

Many of the issues affecting our nation, and with which the Committee have had to concern themselves, involve a very basic teaching of the Bible. We find that there is a concerted attack today on *the doctrine of man*, and particularly on man as male and female. The truths of which our generation needs to be reminded are there in the opening chapters of the Bible, and are worth considering briefly.

1. Man's Origin

"And God said, Let us make man" (Gen. 1:26)

Genesis chapter one details God's creating work, concluding with the account of man's creation, which is then expanded in chapter two. An awareness of the Creator is universal to man. Paul could say to the heathens at Athens concerning God: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring" (Acts 17:28). Satan does his best to eradicate this sense of God from man's consciousness. It may appear as though he is having great success today, given the irreligious and immoral way in which many choose to live, yet the light of nature remains in man, and the works of creation and providence continue to declare God's glory.

The truth that *God made man* is the key to everything about man, and especially to gaining an understanding of the purpose of his existence. It is therefore no surprise that man's great adversary seeks to undermine this truth. As we learn from Genesis chapter three, the chief way in which the devil works against man is to question God's word. He gets us to disobey God by getting us to doubt God. The same "Yea, hath God said...?" that he spoke when tempting Eve, he speaks to every individual, and often. He has persuaded many

that the Genesis narrative is a poetic description of the origin of the universe, derived from ancient myths, rather than a factual account of what God did in the beginning. The consequence is that Genesis is no longer viewed as a history book, chronicling real events in reliable detail, but as a story book. This faulty understanding then feeds into the rest of the Bible. The divine inspiration of Scripture is denied and its authority is undone – which is exactly what Satan wants.

God's authority over man is seen when He put Adam, our first covenant head, into the garden of Eden. He gave him a command as to what fruit he could eat and what fruit he could not eat, with a penalty for disobedience (Gen. 2:16,17). God had full rights over Adam and Eve and likewise over us. His law for mankind is set out in the Scriptures, and His commandments extend to the whole of our lives. Since the fall, man's desire is to be independent of God, and to assert his 'right' to do as he pleases, but he is still under God's authority.

2. Man's Uniqueness

"So God created man in his own image" (Gen. 1:27)

While the biblical account of creation is not in conflict with any scientific fact, it is opposed by the theory of evolution. This theory maintains that all living things, man included, came into being over long ages, developing from simple forms to complex ones. The Bible by contrast teaches that God brought everything into being out of nothing, over a period of six literal days. He did this by His command, and according to His goodness, wisdom and power, making each thing directly by a special act. When God created man there was *more* than this. It was not simply, "Let there be", but, "Let us make". William Ames said that the other creatures were brought forth "by a word only", but man "with greater counsel and deliberation". The result was that "the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7).

Man is God's supreme creation, for the reason that he is made *in God's image*. As God is a spirit, so man's likeness to God is seen chiefly in his soul, not in his body. God has made us rational, moral and immortal creatures, responsible for our actions, accountable to God for them, and existing ultimately in heaven or hell. The divine image in the first man and woman consisted of three things. They had *knowledge* in their minds, understanding God's nature and knowing their duty perfectly. They had *righteousness* in their wills, being inclined towards the things that are pleasing to God and knowing the difference between right and wrong. They had *holiness* in their hearts, loving the Lord with their whole being and delighting in all that is pure and good. Sin ruined this image in them and in us, yet even as a fallen creature, man still retains elements of his former honour.

The fact that man is created in God's image means that human life is of great value, and therefore must not be taken away unjustly (Gen. 9:6). John Calvin comments that "no one can be injurious to his brother without wounding God himself", which is why we can speak about human life as 'sacred'. God has given the sixth commandment, forbidding murder, as a garrison around each individual, especially the vulnerable. Abortion, assisted dying and euthanasia challenge the principle of the sanctity of life, and moves to introduce or further liberalise these evils must be resisted.

3. Man's Diversity

"male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27)

Knowing that the man needed a companion, God resolved to make him a suitable help (Gen. 2:18). Putting him into a deep sleep, God took one of Adam's ribs and from it He made (literally 'built') a woman, and brought her to Adam (Gen. 2:21,22). This is a figure of the Church, coming forth from the pierced side of Jesus Christ who slept the sleep of death for our sins. Christ is not complete without His Church, and Adam was not complete without Eve; she was "of the man" and "for the man" (1 Cor. 11:8,9) and became his wife. "As God by creation made two of one, so again by marriage He made one of two" (Thomas Adams). The covenant relation between Christ and His Church is very instructive for the covenant of marriage. It teaches the need for a benevolent headship on the part of the husband, with sacrificial, sustaining and protective love

of his wife, and a devoted submission on the part of the wife, with willing subjection to her husband (Eph. 5:22-29).

In making man in two distinct forms, *male* and *female*, and in bringing the first man and first woman together in the companionship of marriage, God set the permanent pattern for this important institution. There is no basis for marriage apart from the fact that man exists in two distinct sexes – something affirmed by Christ Himself (Mark 10:6,7). Clearly the two sexes are essential for procreation, but the complementary nature of the differences between them means that they provide for mutual flourishing generally. In a marriage there is plurality and unity: “*they shall be one flesh*” (Gen. 2:24). There is also diversity and equality. The male and female roles are *different*, yet they are of similar *importance*. Matthew Henry captured the essence of the marriage relation when he said that the woman was “not made out of [Adam’s] head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.”

The different roles belonging historically to men and women in marriage, the family, and wider society are not to be explained as simply a matter of culture or tradition. They are more or less inbuilt in mankind, as a result of God’s wise design in creation. Any interference with these roles is therefore bound to have harmful consequences. We witness the futility of same-sex unions, which can never amount to marriage, and the folly of sex ‘changes’, which are biologically, physically and emotionally impossible.

4. Man’s Purpose

“*And God blessed them, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion...*” (Gen. 1:28)

God made man to *glorify and enjoy Him*. The divine blessing is the source from which our race developed, through the creation ordinances of marriage and work. God formed the earth to be inhabited (Isa. 45:16), and to fulfil that end our first parents were directed by God to bring forth children for the increase of mankind, so that the whole earth might eventually be populated by their posterity. They were to take possession of it and make use of its resources in the service of God. Man, as God’s image-bearer, was God’s deputy in the world. The earth was his throne, and he had dominion over every living thing, so that all his needs might be met.

Such was the state of innocence. A great change then occurred that brought misery to the world. Sin entered the creation, being found in man’s heart, and sickness, suffering and death came upon all mankind. God visited Adam’s first sin with a temporal punishment, placing a curse upon the whole earth (Gen. 3:17), so that “wherever man might look, the atrocity of his sin should meet his eyes” (John Calvin). Only God is able to put things right, and He is doing so through the last Adam, Jesus Christ, who saves His people from their sins.

In Christ, God is forming a new humanity out of our sinful race, a people in whom His image is being restored. They are the men and women whom the Lord has chosen to make up Christ’s bride, and in whom His grace is revealed. He is preparing them to sit down at the marriage supper in heaven, where His purpose for man is fully realised. “And there shall be no more curse...and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads” (Rev. 22:3,4).

ISSUES CONSIDERED

Most of the issues considered by the Committee during the past year were continued from the previous year. The report therefore consists largely of updates on these matters.

1. Child Discipline

Scotland was the first part of the UK to ban outright the physical punishment of children. The Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Act 2019, which came into force on 7th November 2020, prohibits parents from engaging in any form of corporal punishment of their children, even when what is

done represents the discipline God requires of loving parents when their sons and daughters are unruly. Such discipline is referred to in Proverbs 13:24: “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.”

The Act abolished the defence of “reasonable chastisement”, with the result that parents (and carers) can now be prosecuted if they smack their children *at all*. A similar law came into effect in Wales on 21st March 2022. Thankfully, in April this year the Westminster Government rejected calls to ban the physical punishment of children in England, arguing that they are already protected in law from actions that cause actual bodily harm. Smacking can still therefore be used in England if it is “reasonable punishment”, and the same is the case in Northern Ireland. It is obvious though that such is the sense of moral superiority on the part of those campaigning for change, and such is their zeal, that they will not allow this matter to rest.

This issue remains under the scrutiny of the Committee, who are agreed that they should continue making the Scottish Government aware of the right that belongs to parents on the authority of God’s Word to correct their children with reasonable chastisement.

2. Gender Recognition

Last year’s report identified proposed legislation on this subject as an “area of alarm”, and said that “the damning evidence of the damage done to confused young people is mounting.” The aim behind the Scottish Government’s Gender Recognition Reform Bill is to simplify the process whereby a person in Scotland can obtain a certificate giving legal recognition to a change in their gender, and have the sex stated on their birth certificate altered. Applications may be made by people as young as sixteen, and must be granted if the conditions are met. A person aged eighteen or above must declare that he or she has lived in the ‘acquired’ gender for three months (what the ‘proof’ for this might be is not clear) and intends to live in it permanently (there is a ‘reflection period’ of three months following the application). A medical (psychiatric) diagnosis will no longer be required, and because of this it is fair to say that a person’s legal gender could become entirely a matter of ‘self-identification’. This Bill was bound to be opposed by Christians, but it has also been opposed by women’s groups and feminists, who believe that it poses a threat to women’s identity and safety.

The providence of God over recent months in relation to this Bill has been remarkable. On 22nd December the Bill was approved by the Scottish Parliament, by 86 votes to 39, yet it has *not* become law. In an unprecedented move on 16th January, the UK Government indicated that it would use its powers under Section 35 of the Act setting up the devolved Scottish Parliament to block the Bill from going for royal assent, on the grounds of a perceived conflict with UK equality law. The First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, responded immediately by saying that the Scottish Government would defend the legislation – yet on 15th February she unexpectedly announced her resignation.

What happened in the interim to cause this? Although other factors have emerged, it is likely that the lack of public backing for the legislation, including from supporters of her own party, was a major factor in the First Minister’s resignation. There was also the outcry on 24th January over the placement in a women’s prison of a ‘transgender woman’ who had been convicted of raping two women before ‘transitioning’. On 12th April, the new First Minister, Humza Yousaf, indicated that his government would seek a judicial review of the UK Government’s action. Unless either government backs down, the Supreme Court is likely to have to rule on the matter. We pray the Lord would again intervene in His merciful providence.

3. Transgenderism

The term ‘transgenderism’ appears to have been coined in the 1960s, and refers to having a gender identity that is different to one’s birth sex. It has become a phenomenon in the last few decades, especially among teenagers. The Committee are of the view that, because of its prominence, its defiance of the created order, and its repercussions for individuals, families, churches and society, this issue may warrant a public statement on behalf of the denomination. They intend to consider this further at their June meeting.

4. Conversion Therapy

So-called ‘conversion therapy’ involves attempts of various kinds to change a person’s orientation from homosexual to heterosexual. It may also involve efforts to change a person’s gender ‘identity’ or ‘expression’. Over the last twenty or more years, bans on conversion therapy have been introduced by governments in various countries, including Brazil, Taiwan, Malta, Canada, France, New Zealand and Israel, and in some Spanish provinces and some individual states in Australia and the US. The bans may apply to health practitioners or in all settings. But what *exactly* is being banned? There are ‘conversion’ practices using medical and surgical treatments that probably almost everyone would object to, but some who advocate these bans appear to have ‘talking therapy’ and even prayer in their sights too. The logic of their position would appear to mean that the Gospel itself, with its call to repentance, would need to be kept from homosexuals, despite what we read in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

This is an obvious threat to the Church in carrying out her mandate from the Lord Jesus Christ to proclaim salvation to sinners without exception. In March 2022 the Scottish Government set up an Expert Advisory Group on Ending Conversion Practices, and its report and recommendations were published in October last year. The Executive Summary states: “The Group recommends that the definition of conversion practices must apply equally to sexual orientation, expression of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression, must be wide enough to encompass any treatment, practice or effort that aims to change, suppress, and/or eliminate a person’s sexual orientation, expression of sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression.”

With the likelihood that proposals to ban ‘conversion therapy’ will be introduced to the Scottish Parliament before long, at their March meeting the Committee agreed that the Acting Convener and the Clerk would draft a document on behalf of the Committee, pointing out the dangers posed to Christian conversion by the sort of ban the Government appears to have in mind. The Committee will seek to maintain a watching brief on this issue.

5. Abortion

On 18th May 2022, Gillian Mackay, a Green MSP, lodged a proposal for a Member’s Bill to introduce ‘buffer zones’ around healthcare settings that provide abortion services. The effect of her Abortion Services Safe Access Zones (Scotland) Bill would be to prevent Christians and others from engaging in pro-life protests in an area measuring 150 metres from an abortion clinic. The consultation closed on 11th August 2022 and there has been no further development in the Scottish Parliament since then. What has happened is that on 8th December the UK Supreme Court ruled that legislation for setting up such zones in Northern Ireland does not “disproportionately interfere” with protesters’ rights. This ruling sadly paves the way for Gillian Mackay’s proposed Bill.

In August the Committee wrote to the First Minister, stating our opposition to these zones. Sadly the reply received did not appropriately address the concerns of the Committee. It ought to be obvious that any measures that are aimed at providing ‘protection’ for women who are seeking an abortion will necessarily have the effect of *removing* the protection that rightly belongs to the unborn child. The letter sent to the First Minister was later e-mailed to MSPs, and the Committee were pleased to receive a supportive response from John Mason (SNP), who in September was given a formal warning by his party for expressing pro-life views. Abortion is a fearful stain upon our national life, and it is imperative that the fight against it is maintained. The Committee commend such efforts, including the ‘Abort Abortion’ campaign organised by our Home Mission Worker, to the prayers of our people.

6. Assisted Suicide

On 10th October 2022, Liam McArthur MSP (Liberal Democrat) won sufficient support from MSPs to officially introduce his proposed Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill to the Scottish Parliament, obtaining backing from 36 MSPs across all five parties represented in the Parliament (there are

129 MSPs in total). He then had to draft the Bill, and said that he would introduce it early in 2023, but this has not yet happened. What the proposed Bill terms ‘assisted dying’ is of course assisted *suicide*. There have been two previous attempts in the Scottish Parliament to bring about the legalisation of assisted suicide, in 2010 and 2015, and both were heavily defeated; our hope is that Liam McArthur’s Bill will meet with the same fate. The Committee are keeping a watching brief on this matter.

7. Saint Margaret Declaration

On 24th May 2022 the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland approved the Saint Margaret Declaration – a declaration of friendship between the Kirk and the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland, which had already given approval to it through its Bishops Conference. The following day, our General Assembly expressed their grave concern at this decision, which was thereafter communicated to the Church of Scotland.

At their October meeting the Committee noted that a motion welcoming the Declaration had been submitted to the Scottish Parliament on 31st May by Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP, and that to date twenty-five MSPs from all parties represented in the parliament had indicated their support for this motion. The motion reads as follows:

“That the Parliament welcomes the approval of the St Margaret Declaration, a joint statement of friendship between the Catholic Church in Scotland and the Church of Scotland, by the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Scotland and the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland; commends the Catholic Church in Scotland and the Church of Scotland for acknowledging the historic issues that have divided the churches, and further commends the churches for, it believes, refusing to be bound by the past and their desire to promote the healing of division within the life of the Scottish nation.”

The Committee felt bound to communicate to the Parliament their disquiet at this motion, and they agreed that a document responding to the Declaration, which had been drawn up by Mr Lindsay MacCallum and was to be edited by Rev. David Blunt, should be sent by the Committee to the Parliament’s Presiding Officer. This document is presented below:

A Response to the Saint Margaret Declaration

(The Declaration is considered section by section. In each case the text of the Declaration, presented in italics and within square brackets, is followed by our response. The fact that we have cited from an author should not be taken to mean that we necessarily agree with everything the author wrote.)

Introduction (a)

[“We, the undersigned, representing the Church of Scotland and the Catholic Church in Scotland, wish publicly to express our recognition of each other as Christians, and as children of God in Christ (Galatians 3: 25-28). We recognise each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, and we wish to express our friendship and respect for one another as fellow Christians, citizens and partners in announcing the kingdom of God in our land...”]

Response:

The Primacy of Truth

According to Christ, our first obligation is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and mind (Matthew 22:37). The God that we love is a God of truth, and our friendships must never be at the expense of truth. A mark of true friendship is that we speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Christians also have an obligation to earnestly contend for “*the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*” (Jude 3). The Bible, and not history or tradition, is the authoritative manual for the Church’s beliefs and practice.

In a letter to *The Scotsman* of 23rd October 1957, Thomas F. Torrance, Professor of Dogmatics at Edinburgh University (1952-1979), wrote:

“While we must not be antagonistic towards the Roman Church, we must defend the Truth, expose its heresy, and pray that the Roman Church will be led back to the purity of the faith as it is in Christ Jesus.”

Conflict And Agreement In The Church (London: Lutterworth Press, 1959), p. 165.

We wish to make clear that our criticism of the Saint Margaret Declaration is primarily theological and historical. We make a distinction between friendship with the Roman Catholic Church and friendship with individual Roman Catholics.

Introduction (b)

[“...Since the World Missionary Conference (Edinburgh, 1910), and the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) much has been done ecumenically to repair what was broken and to restore mutual respect and friendship.”]

Response:

How Rome views Ecumenism

It is very important to understand the basis upon which the Roman Catholic Church engages in ecumenism.

The Church of Scotland minister Rev. Dr. E. Stanley P. Heavenor (1919-1992) stated:

“What is the road to unity?’ The Roman Catholic has no doubt about the answer to that question. It is to be found in a phrase which has been used with increasing frequency: ‘the return of the separated brethren’. The phrase holds two clear implications: (1) Protestants are separated from the one true Church. (2) The way of progress in unity is the way of return to the Roman fold.”

Protestant-Catholic Reformation? (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1967), p. 122.

In his autobiography, Rev. G. N. M. Collins (1901-1989), Professor of Church History & Principles at the Free Church College, Edinburgh (1963-1983), wrote:

“So far as the Roman Catholic Church was concerned the reunion of the church was simple. The Church of Rome was Apostolic and Infallible, and therefore authoritarian. The Reformed Church, like the Prodigal Son, had left the Father’s House but his door was always open for his return.

All would be forgiven and forgotten if they came back and accepted anew, and with penitence, the parental rule which they had formerly rejected. The Papacy changed its voice. Protestants, who used to be stigmatised as ‘heretics’ were now referred to as ‘separated brethren’. But the change of voice did not signify a change of heart. Rome is not really interested in the modern Ecumenical Movement, nor in its projected World Church. She herself is the World Church and is ready to receive the ‘separated brethren’ who have lost their way.”

The Days of the Years of My Pilgrimage (Edinburgh: Knox Press, 1991), pp. 128-9.

In confirmation of the above, Stephen McGinty states the view on ecumenism held by Thomas Winning (1925-2001), Roman Catholic Archbishop of Glasgow (1974-2001):

“A reunion would only occur when Protestants returned, head bowed, to Rome, and in the meantime the best that could be achieved was to replace antagonism with pleasantries.”

This Turbulent Priest: The Life of Cardinal Winning (London: Harper Collins, 2003), p. 184.

We would regard the Saint Margaret Declaration, the initiative for which came from the Roman Catholic Church, as the most egregious example to date of such “pleasantries”.

Introduction (c)

["A great deal has been achieved spiritually, practically and affectively, through joint prayer among our parishes, various joint commissions, and the growing knowledge and appreciation of each other as Christian friends and fellow pilgrims."]

Response:*(i) Why the Reformation was Needed*

Truth always exposes error, and that is what made the Reformation of the sixteenth century essential. We are in general agreement with the following observations on the Reformation in Scotland in 1560:

The Scottish historian and antiquary David Hay Fleming (1849-1931) wrote:

"The Reformation rid the country of a bloated hierarchy and a debased priesthood, the burghs realised their strength as they had never done before, social progress was rendered possible, education was extended and set on a wider basis, and, above all, the Gospel of Christ was proclaimed in all its fullness and all its freeness. Henceforth, the people were taught that there is only one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

The Scottish Reformation (Edinburgh: Scottish Reformation Society, 1937), p. 112.

In a sermon given in 1959 in King's College Chapel, Aberdeen, at the annual Kirking of the Students' Representative Council, Thomas Taylor (1896-1962), Principal of Aberdeen University, stated:

"It is sometimes said, in a superior kind of way, that our Reforming forefathers were intolerant, i.e. intolerant of Roman Catholicism. So they were, for good reason. But the issue before them was not whether they should be tolerant or intolerant. It was in fact an issue of life or death; it was, in plain terms, whether the familiars of the Inquisition were to be allowed to walk the streets of Edinburgh, as they walked the streets of Lisbon and Madrid, of Rome, Brussels, and Amsterdam."

Where One Man Stands (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1960), p. 97.

Stanley Heavenor, to whom we have already referred, said:

"The Reformation represented a victory of the grace of God. It struck a blow for the placing of the word 'grace' at the very heart of Christianity. The true children of the Reformation have continued the battle down to the present day. While man needs a Saviour the battle must go on being fought."

Protestant-Catholic Reformation?, p. 11.

Dr. Anette Hagan, senior curator of rare book collections at the National Library of Scotland, said of the Scottish Reformation:

"It marked a switch in international alliances away from Catholic France and towards Protestant England, enabling the Union of the Crowns in 1603, and established Calvinism as one of the dominant influences of Scottish life, leading to centuries of hellfire sermons – but also to a society with a strong sense of social responsibility and the highest rate of literacy in Europe."

Source: '450 years after the Reformation'. Article by Phyllis Stephen on the Edinburgh Reporter website. Retrieved October 7, 2022 from: <https://theedinburghreporter.co.uk/2010/08/450-years-after-the-reformation/>

(ii) The Legal and Constitutional Position

At the Reformation, the jurisdiction of the Papacy in Scotland was thrown off for all time, as is evident from legislation relating to church and state:

"Papal jurisdiction was rejected in Scots law by the Papal Jurisdiction Act 1560, as ratified in 1567, which Act still remains part of the statute law of Scotland. In this, Catholicism is unique in that it is the only religion in Scotland whose jurisdiction is expressly prohibited by statute from every (sic) being formally recognised in Scots law, in the way in which the jurisdiction of the Church of Scotland is still recognised."

Callum G. Brown, Thomas Green and Jane Mair, *Religion in Scots Law: The Report of an Audit at the University of Glasgow*: Sponsored by Humanist Society Scotland (Edinburgh, HSS, 2016), p. 101.

David M. Walker (1920-2014), who was Regius Professor of Law in the University of Glasgow, wrote:

“But the courts of the Church of Scotland are legally established courts of the realm within their own field whereas courts of other churches have jurisdiction only so far as conferred by their own constitutions and the adherence of their members.”

The Scottish Legal System – An Introduction to the Study of Scots Law
(Edinburgh: W. Green & Son Ltd., 1963), p. 190.

On 10th September 2022, at a meeting of the Accession Council, King Charles III read and signed the following oath, promising to uphold the security of the Church in Scotland:

“I, Charles the Third, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of My other Realms and Territories, King, Defender of the Faith, do faithfully promise and swear that I shall inviolably maintain and preserve the settlement of the true Protestant religion as established by the Laws made in Scotland in prosecution of the Claim of Right and particularly by an act intituled ‘An Act for securing the Protestant Religion and Presbyterian Church Government’ and by the Acts passed in the Parliament of both Kingdoms for Union of the two Kingdoms, together with the Government, Worship, Discipline, Rights and Privileges of the Church of Scotland.

So help me God.”

Source: ‘His Majesty The King’s Oath relating to the security of the Church of Scotland’.
Retrieved October 7, 2022 from: <https://www.royal.uk/his-majesty-kings-oath-relating-security-church-scotland>

The full text of the Protestant Religion and Presbyterian Church Act 1707 Act is found at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/aosp/1707/6>

(iii) *Sectarianism as seen by Rome*

In Rome’s eyes the problem in Scotland is actually ‘anti-Catholicism’. On 5th February 2010, Pope Benedict XVI addressed Scotland’s Roman Catholic Bishops and said:

“The Church in your country, like many in Northern Europe, has suffered the tragedy of division. It is sobering to recall the great rupture with Scotland’s Catholic past that occurred four hundred and fifty years ago. I give thanks to God for the progress that has been made in healing the wounds that were the legacy of that period, especially the sectarianism that has continued to rear its head even in recent times.”

Source: ‘Pope Benedict XVI Addresses the Bishops of Scotland’. Article dated 14 March 2010.
Retrieved October 7, 2022 from: <http://thepapalvisit.org.uk/2010/03/14/pope-benedict-xvi-addresses-the-bishops-of-scotland>

According to the Roman Catholic Church, the blame for ‘sectarianism’ lies squarely at the door of Protestants. She views the Reformation as a “rupture with Scotland’s Catholic past”, when in reality it was a divine deliverance of the Church from grievous error in her doctrine and practice, returning the Church to Scripture as the sole standard for both.

John Murray (1898-1975) was a Scottish-born Reformed theologian who taught in the USA, briefly at Princeton Seminary and then for many years at Westminster Theological Seminary. He got to the heart of the matter when he wrote:

“The Romish Church has attempted to monopolize the word ‘Catholic’ by trying to fix upon itself the denominational name, ‘the Catholic Church.’ Protestants should not be the dupes of Rome in this respect and should resist every attempt on the part of Rome to appropriate that denomination. The Church of Rome is not the catholic church. It is presumption for her to claim to be. We should understand that all who profess the true religion belong to the catholic church and in the catholic tradition we glory. The catholic tradition is enshrined particularly in the ecumenical creeds, and is found also in the line of orthodox interpreters and theologians throughout the centuries.”

Source: ‘Tradition: Romish and Protestant’. The Presbyterian Guardian, May 10, 1947 (vol. 16, no. 9), pp. 134, 138.
Retrieved October 7, 2022 from: https://opc.org/cfh/guardian/Volume_16/1947-05-10.pdf

“A shared faith” (a)

[“Progress has been made on that which we hold in common.

We believe in one God, the Creator; we believe in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, true God and true man, fully divine and fully human, who died in the flesh and rose to save us from sin and death; and we believe in the Holy Spirit. We believe in the Holy Trinity, one God in three persons. We believe that the Church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic; we acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.]

Response:*(i) The historic Protestant view of the Roman Church*

We agree with the American theologian Lorraine Boettner (1901-1990), who wrote:

“That the Roman Church has within it much of truth is not to be denied. It teaches the inspiration of the Scriptures, the deity of Christ, the virgin birth, the miracles, the resurrection of the body, a future judgment, heaven and hell, and many other Scripture truths. In every instance, however, it nullifies these truths to a considerable extent by adding to or subtracting from what the Bible teaches.”

Roman Catholicism (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1966), p. 455.

(ii) The Place of Baptism

The Declaration’s reference to baptism is ambiguous, and could easily be understood to mean that without the sacrament of baptism there can be no forgiveness of sins, and that baptism confers this forgiveness. The wording is no doubt deliberate, for Roman Catholicism and the Reformed faith are clearly at variance on the matter of baptism.

The Canons of the Roman Catholic Council of Trent (1545-1563) state:

“If any one saith, that baptism is free, that is, not necessary unto salvation; **let him be anathema.**” [Emphasis ours. An ‘anathema’ is a formal curse by a pope or a council of the Roman Catholic Church, excommunicating a person or denouncing a doctrine.]

(Seventh Session: Decree concerning the Sacraments: Touching Baptism, Canon 5)

By contrast, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647), the principal Subordinate Standard of the Church of Scotland, states:

“Although it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.” (Ch. 28:5)

We agree with the reformer John Calvin (1509-1564), who wrote:

“Indeed, baptism promises us no other purification than through the sprinkling of Christ’s blood, which is represented by means of water from the resemblance to cleansing and washing. Who, therefore, may say that we are cleansed by this water which attests with certainty that Christ’s blood is our true and only laver?”

Institutes of the Christian Religion, translated by Ford L. Battles. John T. McNeill, Ed. (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA: The Westminster Press, 1960), book IV, ch. XV, section 2, p. 1305.

“A shared faith” (b)

[“We believe our faith to be rooted in that of the Apostles, Christ’s first disciples, those who knew and followed our Lord in this life.”]

Response:*(i) The Papacy*

The claims made by the Roman Catholic Church for the Papacy have not altered since the Reformation; if anything they have increased.

The *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, published in 1992, has the following question and answer:

“182. *What is the mission of the Pope?*”

“The Pope, Bishop of Rome and the Successor of Saint Peter, is the perpetual, visible source and foundation of the unity of the Church. He is the vicar of Christ, the head of the College of bishops and **pastor of the universal Church over which he has by divine institution full, supreme, immediate, and universal power.**” [emphasis ours]

Source: Retrieved October 7, 2022 from:
http://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.html

By contrast, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* teaches the following on the doctrine of the Church, which we assert to be true to God’s Word:

“There is no other head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ: nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof; but 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.” (Ch. 25:6).

This teaching of the Confession is based especially on 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4: “*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.*”

When Paul wrote these words, there was already a principle of evil at work in the Church which was going to culminate in the appearance of the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition. Church authority was going to be centred in one person who would usurp the headship of Christ over the Church and thus facilitate the spread and imposition of error. This was going to happen after there was a falling away (an apostasy) within the Church. This is what happened in the history of the Church. However it did not happen overnight. The development of the distinctive doctrines and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, which were unknown in the New Testament Church, were later engrafted on to the doctrine and practice of the primitive Church

“A shared faith” (c)

[“*We recognise and treasure the Sacred Scriptures, as God’s revelation of His love for all humanity.*”]

Response:

(ii) *The Scriptures*

The *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* has the following question and answer:

“14. *What is the relationship between Tradition and Sacred Scripture?*”

Tradition and Sacred Scripture are bound closely together and communicate one with the other. Each of them makes present and fruitful in the Church the mystery of Christ. They flow out of the same divine well-spring and together make up one sacred deposit of faith from which the Church derives her certainty about revelation.”

Source: Retrieved October 7, 2022 from:
https://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.html

By contrast, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* states:

“The Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be **no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scripture.**” [emphasis ours] (Ch. 1:10)

The fundamental importance of Scripture is recognised by at least some in the Church of Scotland.

In 2014 the group ‘Covenant Fellowship Scotland’ was formed within the Kirk. Its Vision Statement says:

“We are deeply concerned that the Church of Scotland is moving away from its roots in Scripture and the Westminster Confession of Faith. We believe that Covenant Fellowship Scotland provides a force for spiritual good and a focus for Christian fellowship for those who believe that the Scriptures, in their entirety, are the Word of God and must provide the basis for everything we believe and do. Our vision is nothing less than the reformation and renewal of the Church of Scotland, in accordance with the Word of God and by the empowering of his life-giving Spirit.”

Source: Retrieved October 7, 2022 from: <https://covenantfellowshipscotland.com/about/our-vision/>

“A shared faith” (d)

[“We recognise and hold in common the great ecumenical councils of the first five Christian centuries.”]

Response:

The Doctrine of Justification

The ecumenical councils of the first five Christian centuries are important, but they do not deal specifically with the central and crucial doctrine of the Gospel, which is *justification*. The reformer Martin Luther rightly said that justification is the article “by which the Church stands or falls”.

The Canons of the Roman Catholic Council of Trent state:

“If anyone says that the sinner is justified by faith alone, meaning that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to obtain the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will, **let him be anathema.**” [emphasis ours]

(Sixth Session: Decree concerning Justification: On Justification, Canon 9)

By contrast, the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (1648) has the following question and answer:

“Q. 33. *What is justification?*”

A. Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins, and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, **and received by faith alone.**” [emphasis ours]

This is not to mention the grievous errors of the mass, auricular confession, the worship of images, clerical celibacy and purgatory, all of which are affirmed by the Roman Catholic Church today. These errors have actually been added to since the Reformation, with the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception (1854), Papal Infallibility (1870) and the Assumption of Mary (1950).

“Our common home”

[“We recognise, as our common heritage, the Gospel first brought to our shores so very long ago. We recall with gratitude to God the earliest missionaries, our forebears in the faith, who lived and preached the Christian faith to our land. We recall those from that time who led and formed the Church, nurturing a society inspired by Christian values, including St Ninian, St Columba and St Margaret.”]

Response:

The meaning of the term ‘saint’

Lorraine Boettner (1901-1990) wrote:

“According to New Testament usage, all true Christians are saints. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians was addressed, “to the saints that are at Ephesus” (1:1); his letter to the Philippians, “to all the saints that are at Philippi” (1:1). See also Romans 1:7, 16:15; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1.”

Roman Catholicism (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1962), p. 145.

William Barclay (1907-1978), Professor of Divinity and Biblical Criticism at the University of Glasgow, stated:

“In the Protestant Church there is only one line to be taken on Roman Catholic canonisation...and that is the hard line”.

In: Clive L. Rawlins, *William Barclay – The Authorized Biography* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans/The Paternoster Press, 1984), p. 684.

The religious sympathies of ‘St Margaret’ after whom the Declaration is named are quite clear. Born circa 1045, and an English princess, she became a Scottish queen when she married Malcolm III of Scotland. She died in 1093 and was ‘canonised’ by Pope Innocent IV in 1250. W. Stanford Reid (1913-1996), Professor of History, Guelph University, Ontario, Canada, indicated Margaret’s role when he wrote:

“**The spread of Roman control in Scotland** was brought to its culmination in the reign of Malcolm Canmore (1057-93) through the influence of his Anglo-Saxon queen, Margaret.” [emphasis ours]

In: J. D. Douglas & Earle Edwin Cairns (Eds.), *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1974), p. 890.

It is instructive to learn that the ‘Saint Margaret Declaration’ began as the ‘Declaration of Friendship’, the new name being proposed at the Church of Scotland General Assembly of 2022, subject to the approval of the Scottish Catholic Bishops’ Conference. The Assembly unanimously accepted this proposal.

“Past divisions”

[“*We recognise the hurt and the harm that our forebears did to each other in times past, and we repent and ask forgiveness of one other. We also recognise that, even in more recent times, much could have been said between us more kindly, written more magnanimously, and done more charitably, to promote pardon and healing and friendship among Christians in our land.*”]

Response:

The martyrs of the Scottish Reformation

Two individuals, one a follower of the English reformer John Wycliffe and the other of the Bohemian reformer Jan Hus, were executed in Scotland under heresy laws during the reign of James I (1406-1437).

From 1528 to 1558, a total of twenty Protestants were martyred for their faith in Scotland. During the reign of James V (1513-1542), eleven individuals were executed during persecutions against Protestants, with another nine during the reign of Mary, Queen of Scots (1542-1567). Some were prominent individuals, such as the former priest Patrick Hamilton and the preacher George Wishart, but others were little known.

No Roman Catholics were executed for their faith during the above period. The first and only Roman Catholic to be executed in Scotland and is viewed as a martyr was the Jesuit John Ogilvie, who was hanged in 1615 for refusing to pledge allegiance to King James VI. John Spottiswoode, Archbishop of St Andrews, was instrumental in having Ogilvie arrested and tried for this crime.

“Challenges which remain”

[“*There remain points at which we have not yet found a meeting place, and it is true that some questions still divide us.*”]

Acknowledging what separates us still, we reaffirm that what we hold in common is often greater than what divides us. While recognising that unity does not mean uniformity, we commit ourselves to continuing our pilgrimage towards greater unity, as we believe that it is the Lord’s will that we be one (John 17: 21). We trust that such developing unity in Christ is the Lord’s work and the Spirit’s doing.”]

Response:

The Declaration does not specify what still divides the two communions. If what unites the two bodies is greater than what divides them, and the differences between them are minor, the Reformation was unjustified. The Church of Scotland therefore was, and is, guilty of the sin of schism, and should rejoin the Roman Catholic Church. But our reformers were not guilty of schism, and the cause for separation today is as great, if not greater, than it was in the sixteenth century.

(i) Rome claims to be the true Church

On 16th June 2000, Pope John Paul II ratified and confirmed the following statement in the Declaration made by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith entitled *Dominus Iesus*, which dealt with the subject of “the unicity and salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the Church”:

“On the other hand, the ecclesial communities which have not preserved the valid Episcopate and the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic mystery, are not Churches in the proper sense; however, those who are baptized in these communities are, by Baptism, incorporated in Christ and thus are in a certain communion, albeit imperfect, with the Church. Baptism in fact tends per se toward the full development of life in Christ, through the integral profession of faith, the Eucharist, and full communion in the Church.” [emphasis ours]

Dominus Iesus, IV, 17. Retrieved October 7, 2022 from:
http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html

In an article in *The Scotsman* of 15th January 2008, John Haldane, Professor of Philosophy and director of the Centre for Ethics, Philosophy and Public Affairs at the University of St Andrews, and also a consultant to the Pontifical Council for Culture, wrote:

“Half a millennium on from the Reformation, there appears the prospect of **the restoration of the supremacy of Roman Christianity** in these islands and beyond....But in the past few decades, interesting things have been happening which offer prospects of some reintegration of Christianity.” [emphasis ours]

Source: ‘Do Protestants have reason to fear Catholicism’s resurgence?’ Retrieved October 7, 2022 from:
<https://www.scotsman.com/news/do-protestants-have-reason-to-fear-catholicism-s-resurgence-1-1073968>

(ii) Why unity with Rome is impossible for Protestants

Rome’s claim is false. On 29th January 1961, Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981), of Westminster Chapel, London, preached a sermon on the Roman Catholic Church which was subsequently published in the *Westminster Record* in May 1963. In his sermon Lloyd-Jones listed the orthodox positions held by the Roman Church, but then he stated:

“To all that she ‘adds,’ with a ‘damnable plus,’ things which are utterly unscriptural and which, indeed, become a denial of the Scripture. So she lands us eventually in a position in which, if we accept her teaching, we are believing a lie!”

Source: Retrieved October 7, 2022 from: <https://www.monergism.com/roman-catholicism>

The refusal of the Roman Catholic Church to submit to Scripture as the only authority for the Church’s faith and life is the reason why Protestant churches that would be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ, the only King and sole Head of the Church in heaven and on earth, must remain separate from Rome.

“Looking towards the future”

[“We therefore pledge ourselves to live as sisters and brothers in Christ, in public and in private, in life and in mission; to pray with each other and for each other; to be good neighbours, both to each other and to all people among whom we live, of all faiths and none; and to work together for the common good of the nation, as it is given to us to see it.

May there be an ever more united Christian voice in the land, informed always by the charity and love of Christ and our call to participate in the mission of God. May we contribute to the good of

society, while humbly learning from others and from our own mistakes. May our theological reflections and initiatives together thrive; and may our pilgrimage together in our dear land of Scotland bear much fruit to the good of all, and to the greater glory of God.”]

Response:

The Roman Catholic idea of unity

J. K. S. Reid (1910-2002), Professor of Systematic Theology at Aberdeen University (1961-1979), wrote:

“It is clear that when the Roman Church speaks of unity what is connoted is something quite different from what the term means for other churches.”

Presbyterians and Unity (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1962), p. 75.

The truth of what Reid said is evident from the General Audience given by Pope John Paul II on 12th July 1995. He made reference to the history of those who have separated from the universal Catholic Church which is under the authority of the Pope:

“It was the start of a painful history, recorded in every age, with the formation of particular groups of Christians who broke away from the Catholic Church, the emergence of schisms and heresies, and the birth of ‘separated’ Churches. These were not in communion either with the other particular Churches nor with the universal Church, constituted as ‘one flock’ under the care of ‘one Shepherd’, Christ (Jn 10:16), represented by one universal Vicar, the Supreme Pontiff.”

Source: Retrieved October 7, 2022 from: <https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=5570>

G. T. Manley (1872-c.1964), Fellow of Christ’s College, Cambridge, wrote:

“As regards Rome, any thought of reunion is precluded by its claim to infallibility and predominance, and must remain a fanciful dream, unless and until a great reformation takes place from within, as in the days of Luther and Calvin, changing both the faith and practice, and causing it to return to a primitive and scriptural form of Christianity.”

Christian Unity (London: Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1945), p. 83.

In 2017 the Evangelical Alliance UK issued a statement entitled ‘The Reformation, evangelicals and Roman Catholicism: A statement for the 500th Anniversary of the Protestant Reformation’, which stated, *inter alia*:

“The claim that the one universal Church of Christ subsists in the Roman Catholic church is based in large measure on its claim that the apostolic mission of the early church was led, embodied and continued in by an unbroken lineage of bishops, that Peter occupied a position of primacy among the apostles, that he was the first bishop of Rome, and that the see of Rome is therefore also a universal, primatial or papal one. While some evangelicals belong to churches led by bishops, we reject this narrative of papal supremacy and petrine succession as without biblical warrant. We also reject the linked doctrine of papal infallibility that has evolved in relation to it, whereby the Pope is deemed to speak without error when pronouncing on matters of doctrine and practice *ex cathedra*.”

Source: Retrieved October 7, 2022 from: <https://www.eauk.org/church/tag/upload/Evangelical-Alliance-Reformation-Anniversary-Statement.pdf>

Conclusion

We find it alarming to witness the national Church of Scotland, with its roots in the Protestant Reformation, continuing to pursue a course which is leading it further into apostasy and decline, and sadly also leading the nation into greater religious error, confusion, indifference and unbelief. We earnestly pray that both Church and State in Scotland will return to the teaching of the Bible, the foundation of the Christian faith, which, at the time of the Reformation, transformed Scotland spiritually, and also socially.

Finally, we wholeheartedly endorse what Rev. William Still (1911-1997), Minister of Gilcomston South Church of Scotland, Aberdeen (1945-1997) said:

“The future of Protestantism, like its past, lies in its faithfulness to the canonical Scriptures, which shall never pass away.”

In: Robert D. Kernohan, *The Protestant Future*
(Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 1991), p. 148.

A reply was received, indicating that it is not possible for the Presiding Officer to circulate material to MSPs. The Clerk then sent the Response to individual MSPs. A reply was received from John Mason MSP, who sadly was not so supportive on this issue. The Response was later sent out to a number of Christian publications, and the Committee were pleased that several printed it in full; that included *The Bulwark*, the magazine of the Scottish Reformation Society.

8. Lord’s Day Matters

The Committee makes periodic requests to Presbyteries that they report any notable infringements of the Sabbath within their bounds, so that the Committee are aware of them and able to take them up if appropriate. This is not at all meant to replace the actions of Presbyteries, who are primarily responsible for responding to such matters. No particular issues were reported during the past year.

9. Funerals

During the year the Committee, at the request of the Publications Committee, considered two subjects raised within the Publications Committee in connection with the draft of a document on Funerals by Rev. James Gracie, namely practice at funerals and cremation. The Committee set up a sub-committee to look at these subjects. As a result the Committee have suggested some rewording of the text and are presently considering some further possible adjustments.

10. Conclusion

It is good to end on an encouraging note. For all that we have to lament concerning the state of our parliaments, there are at least a few politicians who are willing to make a stand for Christian beliefs. This was seen during the recent election for a new leader of the Scottish National Party. During the campaign, Kate Forbes MSP, who was one of the candidates, stated the Biblical teaching regarding same-sex ‘marriage’ and extra-marital sexual relationships, and experienced a hostile reaction from various quarters. The Committee agreed to write a supportive letter to her, and received an appreciative reply.

There are Christian voices in the other legislatures of the UK also, including the Westminster Parliament. We were pleased to read a speech made by Nick Fletcher MP, at a debate on Christianity in Society in Westminster Hall on 30th March. Having extolled Christianity’s contribution to our culture, and affirmed his personal belief in Christ and salvation by grace alone, he concluded with words which seem appropriate in light of the remarks we made at the beginning of this report: *“Whether we see Christianity as part of our history, or whether we embrace it as our own personal faith, it matters to all of us. Whether or not we are believers, our way of life is built on Christianity, and I believe that to let it fall by the wayside, thinking that it does not matter, would be a terrible mistake.”*

May the Lord raise up many others in public life who will be unashamed of the gospel of Christ and our Christian heritage!

DAVID M. BLUNT, *Acting Convener*
LINDSAY MACCALLUM, *Vice-convener*

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE

1. The General Assembly receive and adopt the Report of the Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee and thank the Committee, especially the Clerk, Convener, and Vice-convener;
2. The General Assembly commend the work of the Committee to the prayers of our people. They encourage Church courts to take up matters of moral and spiritual concern as appropriate, and to notify the Committee of any issues which may be of relevance to the wider Church and which might benefit from being considered in greater depth;
3. The General Assembly note the Committee's ongoing concern for the right of parents to exercise biblical discipline in the training of their children;
4. The General Assembly give thanks to God, whose kingdom rules over all, that the Gender Recognition Reform Bill passed by the Scottish Parliament has not become law. They urge the people of our Church and Christians throughout our land to continue in prayer that this harmful legislation will be abandoned, and that the ideology behind it will be rejected by our governments and society in general;
5. The General Assembly note that the Committee are giving consideration to a public statement on transgenderism, and pray that the Lord will grant the Committee guidance;
6. The General Assembly note with concern the threat to the work of the Church and Christian conversion posed by a possible ban on so-called 'conversion therapy'. They encourage the Committee in the production of a document highlighting these dangers;
7. The General Assembly note with concern the moves to introduce 'buffer zones' around abortion clinics. They resolve to continue in the fight against abortion and commend to the prayers of the Church the efforts being made to bring this evil to an end, including the 'Abort Abortion' campaign organised by our Home Mission Worker;
8. The General Assembly note that the proposed legislation for the legalisation of assisted suicide has not yet been introduced to the Scottish Parliament. They instruct the Committee to continue monitoring this subject and to report further to the next General Assembly;
9. The General Assembly thank the Committee for their Response to the Saint Margaret Declaration and for their action in sending it to the Scottish Parliament. They pray that the Lord will hasten the day when such unbiblical ecumenism will be repented of and the nation will return to its Reformed and Presbyterian heritage;
10. The General Assembly lament the increasing desecration of the Lord's Day throughout our land and encourage Presbyteries to take up local violations. They exhort our people to be steadfast in keeping the Sabbath holy and commend to all God's day of rest and its benefits to man;
11. The General Assembly urge prayer for Christian members of the various parliaments in the United Kingdom, that the Lord may grant them strength and boldness in asserting Biblical teaching and bearing witness to the Lord Jesus Christ;
12. The General Assembly appeal to governments throughout the United Kingdom, and in particular at Holyrood and Westminster, to recognise that they are ordained of God and accountable to Him, and to begin to repeal ungodly legislation.