

# **SYNOD STATEMENT OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF SCOTLAND AND THE OTHER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES IN SCOTLAND, BROUGHT UP TO DATE (2019)**

*The Synod Statement of Differences was originally published in 1933, with a substantial revision in 1962. This present Statement is a further revision of the 1962 document to address the current ecclesiastical situation in Scotland. Some historical matters dealt with more fully in the earlier editions have been abridged in the present Statement. Interested readers are directed to those earlier editions for further detail on these points.*

For the instruction of our people, the Synod desires to direct their attention to the following differences between the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland and the other eight Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, viz.: the Church of Scotland, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the United Free Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), the Associated Presbyterian Churches, the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster, and the International Presbyterian Church.

These differences may be set forth under three general divisions: I. Constitutional; II. Doctrinal; and III. Practical.

## **I. Constitutional Differences**

To the casual observer the constitutional differences may appear as scarcely worth any consideration. Yet the historical circumstances underlying these differences may go far to explain the reason for the separate existence of the various denominations, and to indicate their ecclesiastical policy and outlook. We would therefore call attention to the following constitutional differences between the various Presbyterian denominations, and in doing so would emphasise the fact that these are not the only constitutional differences but the main differences.

### **1. The Church of Scotland**

The present Church of Scotland is the result of the union of the Established Church and the majority of the United Free Church of Scotland in 1929. In the Articles Declaratory of 1921, the Church of Scotland claims to be “in historical continuity with the Church of Scotland which was reformed in 1560, whose liberties were ratified in 1592, and for whose security provision was made in the Treaty of Union of 1707. The continuity and identity of the Church of Scotland are not prejudiced by the adoption of these Articles.” This extraordinary claim, however, has little basis in reality. In 1843, at the Disruption, the Free Church of Scotland asserted, with good reason, that she was the Church of Scotland free; and although that claim was not recognised by Parliament nor by any legal tribunal, yet the righteousness of it was not invalidated, nor have the historic facts on which it was based (as set forth in the *Claim, Declaration, and Protest* of 1842) been disproved. The commitment of the Church of Scotland to the Westminster Confession of Faith was weakened by the Act of Parliament (1905), which gave permission to the General Assembly to introduce a new formula, and was effectively broken by the Articles Declaratory of 1921. These nine articles now constitute the minimal creed of the Church of Scotland, and they have proved sufficiently flexible to accommodate almost every error and heresy.

The claim made by this body to be “the true Church of Scotland”, while sanctioned by law, is rejected by most other Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, including the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

## **2. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland**

This Church derives its name from the Reformed Presbytery, set up in 1743. Ecclesiastically the Reformed Presbyterians are the descendants of the United Societies, who were the followers of Richard Cameron and James Renwick, and some of whom remained separate from the Church of Scotland at the Glorious Revolution of 1689. They refused to acknowledge the Revolution Settlement of 1690, holding that the attainments of the Second Reformation were ignored by that Settlement. Historically, therefore, Reformed Presbyterians refused to swear allegiance to, or take part in, the civil government of this country. Communicant members were not allowed to vote in Parliamentary elections. This, however, ceased to be a matter of discipline in 1960. The Reformed Presbyterians also made adherence to the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant a term of Christian communion, i.e. it was binding on all their communicants, but this requirement was dropped in 1932. The Reformed Presbyterian Church retains the Westminster Confession of Faith which she professes to hold as her principal subordinate standard. In 2011, her detailed *Testimony* of 1837-8 was placed “in abeyance” and a new constitution was adopted. The main distinctive of this is the continued rejection of the Revolution Settlement of 1690. The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland belongs to the Reformed Presbyterian Global Alliance and, in particular, is heavily influenced by the larger Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland which has adopted a declaratory statement permitting members to contract, and ministers to perform, marriage with a deceased wife’s sister.

## **3. The United Free Church of Scotland**

This Church consists of the continuing section of the United Free Church which refused to enter the union of 1929 with the Church of Scotland. Generally, it has been a theologically liberal body, and was the first Scottish denomination to ordain a woman to the ministry, in 1935. The relation of this Church to the Westminster Confession of Faith is of a very doubtful nature, receiving it, as she does, under the Declaratory Acts of the United Presbyterian Church (1879) and of the Free Church (1892). Her own statement is that she “holds as her Subordinate Standard the Westminster Confession of Faith; by her Declaratory Acts she recognises liberty of judgment on points of doctrine which do not enter into the substance of the Faith; and she further claims the right, as duty may require, to interpret, add to, modify, or change her Subordinate Standards and Formulas, under the promised guidance of the Holy Spirit, and with a sense of direct responsibility to her Lord.”

## **4. The Free Church of Scotland**

### **4.1 The Disruption Free Church of Scotland**

The original Free Church came into existence at the Disruption of 1843, claiming to be the Church of Scotland free. At first it bore a clear testimony on the side of evangelical truth, and in 1851 it clearly defined its relation to the attainments of the Second Reformation in the Act passed in that year entitled “Act and Declaration anent the Publication of the Subordinate Standards and other Authoritative Documents of the Free Church of Scotland”. It is stated there that the several formularies, Confession of Faith, Catechisms, Directory for Public Worship and Form of Church Government agreed upon by the Westminster Assembly – “as ratified, with certain explanations by divers Acts of Assembly in the years 1645, 1646 and particularly in 1647, this Church continues till this day to acknowledge as her

subordinate standards of doctrine, worship, and government; with this difference, however, as regards the authority ascribed to them, that while the Confession of Faith contains the creed to which, as to a confession of his own faith, every office-bearer in the Church must testify in solemn form his personal adherence – and while the Catechisms, Larger and Shorter, are sanctioned as directories for catechising – The Directory for Public Worship, the Form of Church Government, and the Directory for Family Worship, are of the nature of regulations, rather than of tests – to be enforced by the Church like her other laws, but not to be imposed by subscription upon her ministers and elders. These documents, then, together with a practical application of the doctrine of the Confession, in the Sum of Saving Knowledge, a valuable treatise, which, though without any express Act of Assembly, has for ages had its place among them – have, ever since the era of the Second Reformation, constituted the authorised and authoritative symbolic books of the Church of Scotland.”

While acknowledging that the fathers of the Second Reformation were fallible in their many proceedings, yet the 1851 Act holds that “the work itself was the work of God”. In regard to the Revolution Settlement the following deliverance is worthy of attention:

That the Revolution Settlement by which the liberties of the Church were secured, under the reign of William and Mary, was in all respects satisfactory, has never been maintained by this Church. Thus, for instance, in the civil sanction then given to Presbytery, the Parliament of 1690, overlooking altogether the higher attainments of the Second Reformation, went back at once to the Act of 1592, and based its legislation upon that Act alone, as being the original charter of the Presbyterian Establishment. Accordingly, it left unrepealed the infamous ‘Act Recissory’ of King Charles, by which all that the Church had done, and all that the State had done for her, in the interval between 1638 and the Restoration, had been stigmatised as treasonable and rebellious. Thus the Revolution Settlement failed in adequately acknowledging the Lord’s work done formerly in the land; and it was, besides, in several matters of practical legislation, very generally considered by our fathers at the time to be defective and unsatisfactory.

At the same time, adds the Act, “it would be in a high degree ungrateful to overlook the signal and seasonable benefits which the Revolution Settlement really did confer upon the Church as well as upon the nation.” The Free Church, therefore, claimed to be the true Church of Scotland alike with respect to the attainments of the First and Second Reformations, and though she did find the Revolution Settlement defective, yet, unlike the Reformed Presbyterians, she accepted the same.

Four Churches – the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), and the Associated Presbyterian Churches – all claim to be the rightful heir of the Disruption Free Church.

#### **4.2 The present Free Church of Scotland**

The body presently called the Free Church of Scotland came into separate existence in 1900 at the union between the majority in the old Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. Had there been no union there would have been no body taking up the position of the present Free Church. This was conceded by Mr Salvesen (afterwards Lord Salvesen), one of the Free Church counsel, in answer to questions put to him by the Appeal Judges while the 1904 case was being heard in the House of Lords. Mr Salvesen said: “I think they (i.e. the United Free Church) would have to rescind the union,

because our view is that the union necessarily involves the abandonment of the principles of the Free Church; but if they rescinded the union and came back to the Church, of course they would be entitled to participate with the pursuers” (R.L. Orr, *The Free Church of Scotland Appeals*, p. 315). In other words, the Free Church counsel admitted in so many words that according to the case presented by the Free Church to the Law Lords, if it had not been for the union, no claim could be made for the property, and that the majority with the minority would have remained in possession of the property and been recognised as the legal Free Church of Scotland. There is, therefore, the greatest difference between the constitutional standing of the two Churches – Free Presbyterian and Free. The former came into separate existence in response to the passing of the Declaratory Act; the latter owes its being, as presently constituted, only to the 1900 union.

The 1900 Free Church of Scotland began its existence with the 1892 Declaratory Act on its statute books, and it hesitated to rescind that Act for several years lest, by so doing, it might invalidate its claim to the Church property. The “Constitutionalists” who had opposed the Declaratory Act prior to 1892 but who continued in the old Free Church, and who subsequently formed the new Free Church in 1900, argued that the Declaratory Act was *ultra vires*, and that the Assembly had no power to pass such legislation. They therefore regarded the Act as “inoperative”. The Declaratory Act undoubtedly was *ultra vires*, but it was certainly not inoperative, as was witnessed by the Assembly’s order that the protests against the Act that the Presbyteries of Inverness and Dornoch had engrossed in their records were to be deleted. As far as the admitting of unsound men to the ministry was concerned, the Act was in full operation in the old Free Church from 1892 onwards. Furthermore, the Declaratory Act had been sent down to the Presbyteries under the Barrier Act of 1697, and had been approved by the majority of them, and had therefore become a “binding rule and constitution” of the Church. Other Constitutionalists argued that the Questions and Formula used at the ordination and induction of office-bearers were unchanged. But the Declaratory Act, while it may not have changed the words of the Questions and Formula, changed the sense, which is the vital point. When a modernist probationer or minister signed the Formula after 1892, he did so with the liberty conferred upon him by the Declaratory Act, and this was understood to be the case by all concerned.

Office-bearers in the present Free Church profess unqualified subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith, but some of the teaching of the Westminster Confession – for example, that the Papacy is the Man of Sin, that God is impassible, and that the earth was created in six days – is openly denied and opposed in the Church. In 2010 the Free Church allowed the use of hymns and musical instruments in her public worship, notwithstanding the fact that all her ministers to that date had solemnly affirmed that they owned “the purity of worship presently authorized and practised in this Church” and would to the utmost of their power “assert, maintain, and defend” it – and that “present practice” had been explicitly defined in 1932 as being “to avoid the use in public worship of uninspired materials of praise as also of instrumental music”.

## **5. The Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)**

This Church came into separate existence in 2000 as a result of a case of discipline in the Free Church of Scotland. A minority regarded the majority as acting unconstitutionally over the matter, and when they themselves were disciplined for maintaining this position, they separated and reconstituted themselves as the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). Their constitution is that of the Free Church of Scotland at their separation in 2000, and is therefore subject to the various criticisms already levelled. In addition, in 2013, the Free Church of

Scotland (Continuing) adopted a “Right of Continued Protest” which allows parties to defy decisions of the supreme court indefinitely and without danger of discipline, if they consider those decisions to be unlawful. The document defining this right is not part of the constitution of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) but is, nevertheless, used in the examining of students for the ministry. Among other things, it contains the erroneous statement that Rev. Donald Macfarlane’s “separation from the [Free] Church did not become effective until his signing of a formal Deed of Separation on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1893.” Mr Macfarlane’s view was that he separated when he protested on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1893, and his subsequent conduct bore this out. The 2013 document’s claim that a ‘Right of Continued Protest’ has been the historic position of Scottish Presbyterianism was not sustained by the Scottish courts during legal cases between the Free Church and the Free Church (Continuing) in 2007 and 2008.

## **6. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland**

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland came into separate existence in 1893, owing to the passing of the 1892 Declaratory Act by the Disruption Free Church of Scotland. In her Deed of Separation, the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland asserts:

That by passing the Declaratory Act of 1892 the present subsisting Church, calling herself the Free Church of Scotland, through her Assemblies, has, in so far as the said Church is concerned, destroyed the integrity of the Confession of Faith as understood and accepted by the Disruption Fathers and their predecessors, and instead of the Westminster Confession of Faith as the recognised Standard of orthodoxy in the Church, in all its heads and articles, has substituted what is called ‘the substance of the Reformed Faith therein set forth’.

Those who formed the Free Presbyterian Church believed that it was not scriptural to remain in ecclesiastical communion any longer with men who were denying central tenets of the Christian faith (which they had previously affirmed under oath), and who could not be subjected to Church discipline for this. The Free Presbyterians regarded the 1892 Declaratory Act as changing the real constitution of the Free Church. The Formula and Questions remained the same, but the meaning of the vows taken by office-bearers was different, in that the Declaratory Act released those taking the vows from committing themselves to the whole doctrine of the Westminster Confession of Faith. Furthermore, there were leading men in the old Free Church who were openly denying not only Calvinistic doctrines but even the inspiration of the Word of God itself; and events had abundantly proved that these men were beyond the reach of Church discipline. To remain in communion with them, therefore, was to partake of their sins, to mar the witness to Truth of the Christian Church, to render Church discipline inoperable even at the congregational level (as the higher Church courts would not sustain that discipline), and to jeopardise the raising up of faithful ministers for the future (with young men being sent to study under heretical professors).

The separation of 1893 was a scriptural duty, and the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, therefore, is to be regarded not only as the rightful heir of the Disruption Free Church of Scotland, but also, through the Free Church of Scotland, as the rightful heir of the Church of Scotland from the days of the First and Second Reformations.

The Free Church Constitutionals regarded the step taken by the Free Presbyterians in 1893 as a blunder, and those who had taken it as schismatics. When the 1900 Free Church moved to rescind the Declaratory Act in 1905 she inserted in the preamble the words, “This Church adheres as she has always adhered to her subordinate standards in terms of the Act 1846

anent Questions and Formula”, implicitly condemning the Free Presbyterian position. This condemnation is enshrined as a binding law and constitution in the Class I legislation of both the Free Church and the Free Church (Continuing) and constitutes an insuperable barrier to union as long as it remains. The Free Church at first sent several unsuccessful overtures of union to the Free Presbyterian Church, but of recent years she has diverged so far from the position of the Free Presbyterian Church that she has lost interest in these attempts.

### **7. Associated Presbyterian Churches (APC)**

The APC came into existence in 1989 following a separation from the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The immediate cause of this was the disciplining of an elder for attending a Roman Catholic funeral mass, whereas those forming the APC believed that the elder should not have been disciplined. The APC maintains that the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has departed from the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith in the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter (on Liberty of Conscience) and the 26<sup>th</sup> chapter (on Communion of Saints). The Free Presbyterian Church maintains, on the contrary, that her practice accords with the historic position of the Reformed Church in Scotland while it is the APC that has adopted novel and erroneous positions which follow the prevailing religious fashions.

The APC claims to have the constitution of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, but to this she has added a Deed of Separation of 1989 which qualifies her relation to her constitutional documents: “insofar as each and every one of these documents is consistent with the Holy Scriptures.” This Deed of Separation functions virtually as a Declaratory Act in rendering uncertain her commitment to these constitutional documents. Thus Liberty of Conscience is supposed to extend to things such as attendance at the Roman mass (which the Confession characterises as gross idolatry), while the Communion of Saints is supposed to require ecclesiastical communion with other Scottish denominations (even though this is inconsistent with lawful separation from defection and error).

### **8. The Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster**

The Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster was founded by Rev. Ian Paisley and others in 1951. The subordinate standards of the Church are the Westminster Confession and the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster “Articles of Faith”. The denomination takes no formal position on baptism, and in the absence of covenantal teaching on the subject, the position tends to default into that of adult baptism. At present there are a few congregations in Scotland.

### **9. The International Presbyterian Church**

The International Presbyterian Church was founded by Francis Schaeffer and has been active in England since 1969. There are also congregations in mainland Europe and Korea. In Britain, ministers and elders are required to subscribe the Westminster Confession and Catechisms (though they may list the doctrines that they do not hold, with the Presbytery then judging whether the listed omissions are acceptable), and on the Continent subscription is to the “Three Forms of Unity” (the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, and the Heidelberg Catechism). Since 2012, several former Church of Scotland congregations have joined the International Presbyterian Church. For such congregations, this denomination represents a disregarding of the whole of Scottish Church history and a jettisoning of many of the attainments of the First and Second Reformations.

## **II. Doctrinal Differences**

The visible Church in Scotland is awash with Liberalism, Romanism, Pentecostalism, Arminianism, and Neo-Calvinism. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland seeks to maintain a testimony to the following biblical doctrines, among others.

### **1. Doctrine of Scripture**

Adherence to the Word of God as the only rule of faith and life ought to be universal among professing Christians. The Bible itself claims to be the inspired Word of God and this has been the belief of the Church of Christ from the beginning. The Westminster Confession of Faith sets forth the biblical doctrine of Scripture with admirable precision and fullness. “The authority of Scripture”, the Confession states, “for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or Church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the author thereof, and therefore it is to be received because it is the Word of God.” The Confession goes on to state that the Scriptures, “being immediately inspired of God, and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic, so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them”.

In the past century and a half, however, there has been a widespread departure from the Bible’s own teaching on this point which has caused more spiritual and practical damage in the Church of Christ than any other doctrinal error in modern times. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland took up its separate position from the Declaratory Act Free Church in 1893 to preserve the teaching that the Bible is the Word of God. This teaching includes the assertion that every word of the original manuscripts was inspired by the Holy Spirit and that the written Word of God is therefore inerrant and infallible. We believe, moreover, that the Holy Spirit has preserved the Word of God in His providence with a special care and that the Masoretic Text of the Old Testament and the Received Text of the New Testament are faithful witnesses to the original manuscripts. We thus believe that only those translations of the Scriptures which are based on the Masoretic Text and the Received Text in the original languages ought to be used in the Church of God, which is one reason we permit only the use of the Authorised (King James) Version in English worship services. We believe that the Authorised Version remains the most faithful and accurate translation available in the English language, and is the only commonly used version that adheres to the providentially preserved text of Scripture.

### **2. Doctrine of God**

The duty of the Christian theologian is to collect, assert, and combine all the facts which God has revealed concerning Himself and our relation to Him. These facts are set before us in the Bible. This is true because everything revealed in nature and in the constitution of man concerning God and our relation to Him is contained in and authenticated by Scripture. The Shorter Catechism teaches the scriptural doctrine that “God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth”. While receiving the truth that “God is love” (1 Jn 4:16) as a precious revelation from heaven, we emphatically protest against the modern interpretation of the text as if it read “Love is God”. The Scripture with no uncertain voice proclaims Him to be holy and just as well as merciful. We also reject with abhorrence the idea, popularised in the twentieth century and widely received in Scottish Churches, that the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable God is “passible” or able to suffer pain or loss. Satan undoubtedly wishes it were so, but the Scripture teaches us that God is “the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen” (Rom. 1:25). The Second Person of the Godhead became incarnate in order to suffer in the place of His people.

### **3. The Person of Christ**

As a Church we hold that “the only Redeemer of God’s elect is the Lord Jesus Christ, who, being the eternal Son of God, became man, and so was, and continueth to be, God and man in two distinct natures, and one person, forever”. We deny all doctrines and theories which in any way detract from the supreme Deity of the Son of God, or call in question the perfection of His humanity. For though at His incarnation He veiled His Deity, yet He was, and is, and ever shall be “over all, God blessed for ever. Amen” (Rom. 9:5). We deny the teaching of those who assert that our Lord, in becoming man, emptied Himself of His divine attributes. We protest against this dishonouring doctrine which in its various forms is usually designated the Kenotic theory.

### **4. The Atonement**

We also believe and hold forth God’s sovereign electing love, in that He from all eternity loved some of the human race and elected them in Christ, not because He foreknew any merit in them, but simply in accordance with the good pleasure of His will. We deny the doctrine of the so-called Universal Fatherhood of God taught in many of the Churches in Scotland today. We also deny every kind of teaching which would give the atonement a universalistic application which it does not have in Scripture. For while we hold that Christ’s death is infinite in value, and that Christ is to be freely offered to all sinners in the preaching of the Gospel, on the other hand we as firmly hold that the saving benefits of Christ’s death are applied only to the elect. We recognise to the fullest extent the perfect example of the Lord Jesus Christ; yet because of man’s condemned and helpless condition under sentence of death, we deny that the mere following of the example of the Saviour apart from a personal interest in His atoning death will avail to save the souls of men. The Churches in Scotland which teach that Christ died for all, or that His example with a little effort on our own part will save men, are deceiving sinners; and such teaching cannot be for the glory of God or for the eternal good of their fellow men.

### **5. The Holy Spirit**

We firmly believe in the distinct Personality of the Holy Spirit; further we hold that He is the Third Person of the adorable Trinity, God equal with the Father and with the Son. We deny that He is merely an influence proceeding from God. As the incarnation and atonement were absolutely necessary for the salvation of God’s elect, so the work of the Holy Spirit is necessary for their regeneration and sanctification. We believe wholeheartedly the teaching of Scripture that it is the Holy Spirit who convinces of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, and that no scheme devised by man can ever take the place of His work in the conversion and sanctification of sinners. It is when sinners are convinced by the Holy Spirit that they realise that total depravity is not merely a doctrine taught in Scripture, but a bitter experience. It is then also through the teaching of the Holy Spirit that they realise their great need of the atonement and find in it a suitability and a sufficiency to meet their needs.

### **6. Total Depravity**

We deny the teaching too common in the Churches of Scotland that there is some moral good in unregenerate man towards God, and that by human effort, influences, or associations it may be so wrought upon as to bring him into a state of grace. We also deny that the natural man is “capable of affections and actions” *towards God* “which in themselves are virtuous and praiseworthy”. We hold that “works done by unregenerate men, although, for the matter of them, they may be things which God commands, and of good use both to themselves and others; yet, because they proceed not from a heart purified by faith; nor are done in a right manner, according to the Word; nor to a right end, the glory of God; they are therefore sinful,

and cannot please God, or make a man meet to receive grace from God. And yet their neglect of them is more sinful, and displeasing unto God” (Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 16, Section 7).

### **7. The Law of God**

We believe in the binding obligation and divine authority of the moral law summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments. Christians are under a duty to obey God’s law out of love and gratitude to Christ – “if ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). The enforcing of this duty from the pulpit is widely neglected in the Scottish Churches at present, and sometimes ignorantly denounced as “legalism”. Professing Christians, as a result, often have little understanding of the requirements of God’s law as a rule of conduct, especially with regard to the Sabbath. Light views of sin, lax views of the requirements for sanctified Christian living, and low views of the danger of worldly conformity, can all be traced to this doctrinal root.

### **8. The Sabbath**

The Fourth Commandment – “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Ex. 20:8) – is the keystone of the Ten Commandments, and the attempt to remove it wrecks the whole structure. We hold that “from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath: and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian Sabbath.” We deny that the Fourth Commandment was merely a Jewish institution, and that it was abolished with the ceremonial law. We also deny the view that one day of the week is as good as another, and that it remains with men to say which day of the week should be observed as the Sabbath.

The Larger Catechism teaches that “the Sabbath or Lord’s day is to be sanctified by an holy resting all the day, not only from such works as are at all times sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful; and making it our delight to spend the whole time (except so much of it as is to be taken up in works of necessity and mercy) in the public and private exercises of God’s worship” (A. 117). This “delight” in the Sabbath is a foretaste of heaven and is one of the most precious parts of true religion (Is. 58:13).

The erroneous doctrine and ungodly practice regarding the Fourth Commandment in the Churches has done much to banish the Sabbath from Scotland, and the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has sought to withstand this trend from the beginning. In particular, she has opposed Sabbath broadcasting since its inception, and counsels against the use of the internet on the Sabbath, except for purposes of necessity and mercy.

### **9. Creation**

The Word of God testifies first of all to the fact of the creation of the world out of nothing in the space of six days and all very good, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear” (Heb. 11:3). The work of creation is fundamental to all the other acts of God in the world. While we believe that true science will always corroborate the biblical testimony, the Bible’s account of creation is to be received as entirely trustworthy and accurate. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland rejects the view that the days of creation are symbolic of long periods of time or that a “gap” of millions of years exists between the creation of the physical elements and the appearance of mankind.

Similarly, the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland opposes the theory of evolution as blatantly unbiblical and, therefore, untrue. The theory is subversive of a proper understanding of the nature of mankind as created in the image of God, and is inconsistent both with the doctrine of the Fall of man and with the atonement of Christ. The spiritual and moral devastation which has well-nigh destroyed the foundations of western civilisation over the last century can largely be traced to the outworking of the theory of evolution in the various departments of human enquiry and activity. This has been verified in the fearful wars which atheistic states committed to evolutionary ideologies unleashed upon one another, and in the slaughter of millions of unborn children by godless governments in the name of human “freedom” and “progress”. Evolutionary theory has been used by Satan to erase from men’s minds all idea of man as accountable to God the Creator and Lawgiver: if men are taught that they are descended from brutes then brutish behaviour will almost certainly result. This has been a mighty weapon of the kingdom of darkness to further the godlessness and brutality which has reached such heights in the modern world.

### **10. The Covenants**

The Scriptures teach that the way of salvation is through the Covenant that God has made with Christ and with His people in Him. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland maintains with the Westminster Confession that all God’s dealings with mankind are by means of covenant – either the Covenant of Works in Adam, or the Covenant of Grace in Christ. “As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Rom. 5:19). “As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22). This biblical teaching is greatly neglected in many Scottish pulpits, and this neglect has impoverished the spiritual life of the Church by undermining people’s understanding of the connection between the Old and the New Testaments, and hence between the Law and the Gospel.

### **11. Doctrine of Hell**

The doctrine of hell is sparingly taught in the Scottish Churches in the present day. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, seeking to follow the balance of Scripture, endeavours to warn sinners faithfully and plainly about the dangers of hell – that is, of eternal conscious torment, “where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mk 9:44).

### **12. False Assurance of Salvation**

One of the great religious dangers facing mankind is the false assurance of salvation. Christ warns us that many will say to him in that day “Lord, Lord”, to whom he will say, “I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Mt. 7:23). The Scripture therefore directs men to a close and prayerful searching of their hearts, in dependence on the Spirit of God, to make their “calling and election sure”; and ministers ought to preach accordingly and not to make a blanket-assumption that their hearers are in a state of salvation. Nevertheless, exhortations to this duty of self-examination are all too often received with impatience in Scottish Christian circles, and it is considered unchristian and uncharitable to suggest that there may be professing Christians who are not true believers. We fear that there may be much “wood, hay, stubble” built in this way, and those pastors who are thus leaving their hearers in a state of false assurance are not their true friends for eternity. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland therefore seeks to lay a biblical emphasis on the need for a “man [to] examine himself”, and so to “eat of that bread, and drink of that cup” (1 Cor. 11:28).

### **13. The Establishment Principle**

The Scriptures teach that it is the duty of the civil powers to support the Church of God, to discountenance false religion, and to legislate only in accordance with the principles of the law of God, having due regard to both tables of the law. This is also the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the position of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The Church of Scotland, while claiming a favoured position as the National Church, is not entitled to such a position because she has so largely forsaken the Gospel; nor does she provide the necessary spiritual guidance to the nation, having herself departed from the Word of God and from His law. So far from discountenancing false religion, she often encourages it with events such as “multi-faith” services and ecumenical ventures.

## **III. Differences in Practice**

### **1. Creed and Practice**

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland firmly maintains that while it is the duty of all Churches to have a sound scriptural creed, it is also incumbent upon them that the practice should be in keeping with the profession. She regards the profession of a sound creed without a practice in keeping with the same as a glaring inconsistency unbecoming a professing Church of Christ.

In this connection the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland strongly condemns the disingenuous making of ordination vows and signing of strict formulas which are never intended to be kept. The Free Presbyterian ‘Resolution on Creed Subscription’ (1904) rejects any notion that the Free Presbyterian Church will “at any time be at liberty to depart from the doctrine, government, mode of worship, and discipline which the said Confession sets forth.” It protests against “the dishonest and degrading manner in which the most solemn promises and engagements relative to subordinate standards are violated by many that hold office in Presbyterian Churches”. It further laments “the great reproach brought thereby on the name of Christ, and the reflection cast upon all office-bearers”. It asserts that these are binding vows made to God and that if any office-bearers cease to believe “in any of these doctrines and principles, or to approve of the mode of worship, which they have vowed to maintain, they should lay down their office and not help to deprive the Church of its peace and purity”. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland requires her Church courts to preserve discipline in this matter.

### **2. Admission as Office-Bearers**

(1) We condemn the practice of allowing into office in the Church men whose only qualifications may be gifts, social position, or wealth, but who manifest signs that they are still in a state of nature, spiritually dead, and have never come under the quickening power of the Holy Spirit. Dead material of this kind is only a drag on the Church which carries it. (2) We condemn, as contrary to Scripture, the practice of the Church of Scotland and the United Free Church of Scotland in admitting women to office as ministers or ruling-elders in the Church. (3) We condemn, as contrary to Scripture, the admission of sodomites to office, or to communicant membership, in the Church.

### **3. Misguided ecumenism**

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland maintains that there should be a single Christian Church in Scotland, united in doctrine, government, and practice, as there was after the Reformation of 1560. Furthermore, she believes that her separations (from the Church of Scotland in 1843 and from the Free Church of Scotland in 1893) were justified; and she

regards herself, therefore, as that Church in Scotland around whose testimony all Christians should unite. The “pulpit-swapping” that is widely practised between other Scottish denominations she thinks is a misguided attempt to promote unity, tending instead to foster low views of the importance of Church principles, and to cement rather than to heal the divisions between the Churches. In 1975, therefore, the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church declared that “conduct giving the impression that there is no obstacle to association with other churches undermines the necessity for a separate position and is therefore inconsistent with loyal adherence to the Free Presbyterian Church, and is consequently disapproved of by this Church.” If every Church in Scotland would adhere faithfully to the scriptural position which the Church of Scotland adopted at the First and Second Reformations, the fractured state of the visible Church would be healed.

In 1905, the Synod of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland resolved that “the Synod refuses to consider any motion for union with any Church which does not hold the absolute infallibility of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, and the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith, both in her profession and practice; and it warns the office-bearers of this Church of the danger of following divisive courses contrary to the solemn engagements under which they came at their ordination; and further, it instructs the Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to maintain order and discipline in the several congregations under their charge, in accordance with the constitution of the Church, as necessity may arise.”

The Free Presbyterian Church holds that the Pope of Rome is the Antichrist prophesied in the Word of God. She utterly repudiates, on scriptural grounds, the practice of giving place to Roman Catholic priests and prelates in ecumenical services and other activities.

#### **4. Church Privileges**

While the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland does not hold the doctrine of Close Communion, she seeks to exercise the greatest care in granting Church privileges. The Church’s rule is that Church privileges, such as baptism and admission to the Lord’s Table, are to be granted only to those who have been carefully examined by, and have given satisfaction to, the Kirk Session. All who engage in Sabbath work (except works of necessity and mercy), or who travel by buses, trains, trams, taxis, aeroplanes, or ferries run in systematic disregard of the Lord’s Day, and all who are members of secret societies such as Freemasonry are denied Church privileges.

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland condemns the carelessness of Church courts, too prevalent in Scotland, in granting Church privileges to those who, on account of the life they lead, ought never to get such privileges. For Church discipline to be effective, there needs to be a consistency of standard across the courts of the Church. We therefore condemn, in particular, the practice of granting privileges to fugitives from our discipline on the part of other Presbyterian Churches without ever enquiring as to why they have been refused Church privileges. Such action renders useless the very purpose for which discipline was set up in the Christian Church. We utter an emphatic protest against the custom of asking young people to become communicants when they reach a certain age, or of presuming that those baptised and brought up in church must be regenerated, regardless of whether they display marks of a saving change.

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland maintains a distinction in administering the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These signify and seal the same Covenant, but the privileges of the Lord’s Supper are greater than those of baptism; and the Free

Presbyterian Church follows scriptural example in examining those who desire to sit at the Lord's Table with more scrutiny than she examines those members of the visible Church who desire baptism for their children yet do not feel able to profess saving faith in Christ. This important distinction in administering the sacraments is often neglected, with the practical outcome either of unduly raising the standard required for baptism, leading to the exclusive "gathered church" of Congregationalism, or, more commonly, of lowering the standard required for communicant membership so that virtually everybody becomes a communicant.

### **5. Public Worship**

The worship of God is to be from the heart, and to be undertaken with reverence and godly fear. There ought to be a solemnity in the Divine presence, which excludes all frivolity and joking. The clothing worn should be formal – as befits such a solemn and holy occasion – rather than casual (except in cases of necessity, where God "will have mercy and not sacrifice"). Men should have their heads uncovered in public worship (1 Cor. 11), and women should have their heads covered. Women should not occupy prominent roles such as addressing the assembly or leading in public prayer (1 Cor. 14:34-35).

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, in contrast with most other Scottish Churches, upholds the Regulative Principle of worship, that is, that only what God has appointed in His Word should have a place in divine worship. Thus she confines herself to the singing of psalms in praise, and rejects the use of musical instruments as pertaining to the Old Testament worship. She regards it as a glaring inconsistency for ministers of Churches which profess the Regulative Principle to conduct public worship in circumstances where the Regulative Principle is disregarded and hymns and musical instruments are used. In pursuit of the covenanted uniformity of religion, the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland continues the exclusive use of the 1650 metrical psalms, a faithful and accurate translation which was adopted by the 1650 General Assembly in pursuit of uniformity. The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland maintains the biblical practice of standing for public prayer; and she continues to employ the singular pronouns "thee" and "thou" in addressing the Most High in English prayer, a usage which dates back to the Reformation. The practice of using "you" in prayer – introduced in the twentieth century through the influence of modern Bible versions – has not benefitted the Church but has brought irreverence, division, increasing conformity to the world, and loss of contact with the religious heritage of the past.

### **6. Church festivals**

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland rejects the practice, re-introduced by ritualists in the Church of Scotland in the nineteenth century, and now spread throughout most of the Scottish Churches, of observing Christmas and Easter. She regards the observance of these days as a step back towards Romanism. At the time of the Reformation in Scotland all these festivals were cast out of the Church as things unscriptural and unprofitable.

### **7. Family worship**

Family worship is a duty laid upon all heads of families who are communicant members or are seeking baptism in the Free Presbyterian Church. It is a duty that is firmly based in Scripture. For example, Abraham was commended by the Lord for commanding his household in "the way of the Lord" (Gen. 18:19).

### **8. The burial of the dead**

In 1560, the Scottish Reformers reintroduced the simplicity found in the New Testament in the burial of the dead, and the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has sought to adhere to

this. She therefore confines the devotions at funerals to family worship with a brief address at the grave. The Directory of Public Worship states that prayers at the grave have been “grossly abused, are no way beneficial to the dead, and have proved many ways hurtful to the living”, and for this reason – as valid today as ever – the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland rejects them. Likewise, she rejects cremation as a heathen practice, unknown among the people of God in the Bible. While recognising the sacrifice of those who died in battle, and deeply sympathising with those who mourned them, the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland condemns “Remembrance Day” services as tending to idolatry and leaning in the direction of prayers for the dead.

## **9. Worldliness**

The world is the enemy of Christ. Its spirit is as much opposed to Him today as when He tabernacled among men, and if its hostility may not be so apparent, yet this is not because of its friendliness but the outcome of changed tactics on the part of the god of this world. The Church is Christ’s witness in the world, and it is her duty as the professing Bride of Christ to keep her garments unspotted from the world. In Scotland the Churches have opened the door, and the world has poured into the sanctuary, until in many cases it is difficult to distinguish the one from the other. That spurious “charity”, which condones evil and condemns those who speak against it, has been a powerful agent for defending and promoting worldliness in the Church. How different is such a Laodicean spirit from that charity extolled by the Apostle, which “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth” (1 Cor. 13:6).

One common way in which the world enters the Church is through various social meetings organised in connection with the Church. These meetings have many advocates, but when one remembers the cheap buffoonery often indulged in by professing ministers of Christ, the frivolous atmosphere, the copious floods of empty flattery, and the mixture of the songs of Sion with the songs of the world, the less said in their defence the better. Almost every ordination or induction of a minister in a congregation is accompanied with these excrescences of the flesh, bringing what ought to be a most solemn event in the life of a congregation into the deepest contempt. The history of these meetings in Scotland ought to be a warning to all who say that they are quite innocent and in keeping with the aims of the Church of Christ.

Another means of entry for the world is through sport: communicant members enthusing about professional sport, ministers casually mentioning sporting events in the pulpit, and children being entertained by sports clubs run by the Church. The professing Church of Christ was never intended to provide recreation for the young. The plea usually offered is that something must be done to keep hold of the young, but there are legitimate ways of caring for their interests which do not dangle before them a hook with such baits.

Among the innumerable other ways, direct or insidious, in which the world seeks to draw the Church and the people of God away from Christ are immodest clothing and alluring make-up; dances and ceilidhs; Mòds; raffles and gambling; public houses and nightclubs; popular music; acting and theatre; atheistical and immoral novels; pornography; and fictional films whether at the cinema, on television, or on the internet.

## **10. Distinction between the sexes**

The Word of God requires a distinction in dress between the sexes. The practice of men and women wearing clothes which obliterate this distinction is quite contrary to God’s Word and expressly declared to be an abomination to Him. “The woman shall not wear that which

pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God" (Deut. 22:5). In the same way, the Word of God clearly teaches that the hair of women should be long and the hair of men (and boys) short. Long and short are relatives. To argue from hence that the matter cannot be determined is to cast aspersions upon Divine wisdom. "Doth not even nature itself teach you that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering" (1 Cor. 11:14, 15). The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland refuses privileges to those who blatantly and persistently blur the distinction between the sexes in matters of clothing and hair length.

### **11. Marriage and Divorce**

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has witnessed over many years against the departures from the biblical law of marriage – in particular the Deceased Wife's Sister Marriage Act of 1907 – which have increasingly made their way into the civil law of the land. She rejects the idea of marriage as a "sacrament", and believes that the innocent party in a case of adultery is entitled to seek a divorce, and after the divorce to remarry another, as if the guilty party were dead. She rejects the idea of "no-fault" divorces as subversive of the binding nature of marriage; and she utterly condemns the redefinition of marriage to allow sodomites – male and female – to "marry". Of such unions, it cannot be said that they are "honourable" and "the bed undefiled" (Heb. 13:4), but rather that such people "dishonour their own bodies between themselves" (Rom. 1:24).

### **Conclusion**

In summing up, the Free Presbyterian Church accepts the Bible as her infallible supreme standard; and the whole doctrine of the Confession of Faith, which we believe to be founded on the Bible, as her subordinate standard. Our desire is to hand down to our children and our children's children this precious heritage which God has given to the Scottish Church. We make no claim to perfection; we are painfully conscious of many defects in ourselves and in our witnessing for the truth; yet we believe that the truths for which we are contending and which call us at present to maintain a separate existence are the truths of God's Word, and therefore are to be upheld at all costs.