

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

**Convener: Mr. F. R. Daubney**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

THE following report is presented with a prayerful concern for sinners and for the honour of Christ's Cause in this evil day. Our people, especially the young, are under pressure from the world to adopt more and more lax views regarding biblical truths and moral standards. The laws enacted encourage secular and atheistical attitudes and are framed in such a way that protesting voices are silenced with threats of legal consequences. We imagine that things cannot get much worse but each year we find that we are sinking deeper into sin.

We were pleased to see that the Supreme Court has ruled that some of the proposals around information sharing in the Scottish Government's Named Person Scheme breached the right to privacy and family life. (The Named Person Scheme was the subject of a protest by the 2016 Synod.) The Scottish Government is therefore having a fundamental re-think before introducing a modified scheme. In June 2016 they said that they expected to roll out a modified scheme by the end of that year. When that did not happen the date was moved forward to August 2017. Details have not been forthcoming and it looks as though plans to re-introduce the scheme are presently in disarray.

Islam and the murderous behaviour of its more extreme followers is a continuing concern in this land and abroad. We should offer up our thanks to the Lord for the vigilance of the security forces, and pray for their continued success in rooting out and thwarting all attempts to terrorise those who differ from them.

Despite our own sinfulness and just deserts, and the grieving of the Lord's people, the day will come when the nations of the world will say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths:" (Isaiah 2:3).

## **2. RELIGION**

### ***The Scottish Churches***

The Scottish churches, both national and professedly reformed, continue their downward trend as they backslide from scriptural teaching and reformation attainments across doctrine, worship and practice. Numerous churches are apparently vying with each other to make themselves more acceptable to the world under the guise of modernizing worship. At the same time, old errors in doctrine are spreading across the churches.

### *Doctrine*

What this means in reality is that Arminianism is making strong headway in many professedly reformed churches. Many pulpits, including those of the Free Church are awash with a presentation of the gospel to sinners where the first lesson is that God loves them and that He requires love from them in return. The subtle way in which much of this teaching is presented means that perhaps no obviously heretical statement is made. Yet what is omitted regarding God's holiness and justice, man's inability, the Covenant of Grace, the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit and the necessity of the atonement, makes for an imbalance in the presentation of the truth which amounts to Arminianism.

Spiritual blindness and an obvious lack of regard to the Divine Head of the Church are displayed in the affection which many Scottish churches show to the Church of Rome. A previous Free Church Moderator has openly praised the current Pope and the attitude which seems to prevail among many in the membership of that church and others is that the Church of Rome is truly Christian.

### *Worship*

Not only in the Church of Scotland but also in the Free Church and the Reformed Presbyterian Church there is an increasingly modern element found in the divine worship. This is reflected initially in modern versions of the Psalms, the introduction of hymns, and then the inevitable trend which follows towards songs of praise and choruses. These praise materials are increasingly accompanied by musical instruments introducing a rock music style effect into the Divine worship.

### *Practice*

Lax admission to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, unscriptural views of what a true saving change is, and failure to administer discipline to those who fall into open worldliness and sin have all had a detrimental effect on the spiritual health of the churches in proportion as these trends have prevailed. The teaching of "easy-believism" and the lack of spiritual discernment in dealing with professed new converts is clearly deluding many poor souls with a false hope for eternity whose lives make manifest that they never were called out of the world and delivered from the reigning power of sin.

The most prominent downgrade in this field in recent times is the acceptance of homosexuals into church membership and even into the ministry by the Church of Scotland and the Scottish Anglican Church. Some churches are making the false distinction between homosexual behaviour and homosexual orientation as if the latter were not sin. It is obvious that a spirit of judicial blindness is coming over the churches of Scotland: "Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, he hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them" (John 12:39-40).

Within our own church we have reason to fear that worldliness has been making inroads and these little foxes have been destroying the vine. The example of the apostatising churches of Scotland ought surely to give sufficient warning as to where such a compromising and worldly attitude will lead.

### ***Secular Humanism***

The Bible gives a moral framework which is perfectly adapted to the nature of mankind as responsible and accountable beings. Humanism aims to replace God's law. It teaches a way of thinking which is designed to eliminate the influence of the Bible on the morals of this generation. Twentieth century Humanist manifestos can be described as rebellion against the august authority of heaven and atheism in respect of both the being and the will of God. Some humanists think of Humanism as a religion without God. It glorifies what is natural and denies what is supernatural.

Secular Humanism is the most influential school of atheistic thought in our day. It is characterised by opposition to the idea of moral absolutes. Like the serpent who ensnared Eve, it encourages religious skepticism. It rejects any but an evolutionary view of creation. It affirms that man is capable of being moral, not only without God but without religion. The place of God, revelation and religion are replaced by reason and science. It advocates "education" to further its alternative moral framework. By demanding what it defines as justice and fairness, it will eliminate what it regards as inequality, discrimination and intolerance. Secular Atheism has "educated" this generation to think that it is outrageously immoral for us to claim that biblical axioms of right and wrong are non-negotiable Divine absolutes. It elevates human reason to a throne, where it is the judge of all things, including God. "Man is the measure of all things".

But this is an old deceiver in a change of clothing. The set of ideas which we call Secular Humanism has been around for a long time. It first emerged when Satan tempted Eve. He promised freedom from the shackles of God's restrictive laws, informing her that this was possible by discarding God's moral framework for man. Faith in God, he claimed, was below her dignity as a rational being (Genesis 3:1-5).

Solomon denounces the idea which claims that man's happiness and progress demands the rejection of all other than that which is "under the sun". He sees "vanity of vanity" in the rejection of the fear of God (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

To refuse the Bible as the moral framework for lost mankind is, in the language of the New Testament to "change the truth of God into a lie, and worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen" (Romans 1:25). "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Romans 1:22) when they "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man" (Romans 1:23a). The folly of Secular Humanism is that it maintains that man is everything and that God is nothing.

Many examples of the vicious effect of this philosophy on the morals of our generation could be cited. We will mention only two. Biblical morality gives us marriage between one man and one woman and regular family life as the cornerstone of society. But Secular Humanism, under the lure of fairness and equality is “educating” this generation.

This “education” explains the gradual acceptance by the general public of homosexuality. It explains how this popular softening of opinion with regard to what was once regarded as abhorrent, has opened the way for the protection of immoral practice by laws. It explains the increasingly bold defiance of God’s law by law makers and law enforcers. By the cumulative effect of this “education” a generation has been indoctrinated with the view that when Christians refuse to support, e.g. same sex marriage, they need to be “educated” and catch up with society. This clamorous imperious force now insists that our children must be “educated” in the idea that a homosexual relationship is a legitimate alternative to biblical marriage.

Biblical morality insists that the life of an unborn child is sacrosanct. But this atheistic framework of morals, by spurious claims in respect of liberty, has invited and encouraged us to decide what value an unborn child has. Under the reign of Secular Humanism, the life in the womb can be terminated, even on the whim of an inconvenienced parent. The doleful disregard respecting the termination of the lives of millions of unborn children in our generation is explained by the fact that our generation has been “educated” to think in Secular Humanistic terms.

Humanism has sat at the head of the meetings of governments, shaping the way our laws are framed. It has criminalised God, His Word and His people. But for a few exceptions, its principles have been successful in permeating intellectual disciplines in schools and universities. Its representatives are welcome on powerful international committees. It is a danger to humanity and a threat to Christians.

### ***Freedom and persecution in the UK***

There have been various attempts to use the law either to compel or punish Christians in relation to the exercise of their beliefs. The most obvious of these was the Asher’s Bakery Case. The Government appears to support the idea of an “Equality Oath” or “British Values Oath” for everyone who holds public office. This could include school governors, civil servants, people working in the NHS and councillors. Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has supported the oath. He believes those who do not accept the Government’s narrow definition of these values will “struggle to play a positive role in British life”. It was recommended by Dame Louise Casey’s report on integration and extremism. Some people have recalled how such tests and oaths were used to persecute the Covenanters as well as excluding non-conformists from public roles in England and Ireland.

A particular issue of concern relates to government plans to introduce Extremism Disruption Orders (EDOs). EDOs would cover “spreading,

inciting, promoting or justifying hatred on the grounds of disability, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation and/or transgender identity”. EDOs would be triggered by “harmful activities of extremist individuals who spread hate but do not break laws”. Banning orders will not only relate to individuals but also be used to “tackle those venues and facilitators that help extremists to continue their activities”.

An EDO might involve banning someone from speaking in public including on social media; taking a position of authority, such as a school governor; or even restricting who they can associate with. When she was Home Secretary, Theresa May said that the “anti-extremism” strategy involves promoting “acceptance of different faiths”. This development is particularly concerning because the application of the hate crime legislation seems to target Christians in particular.

Muslims who convert to Christianity in the UK can experience persecution and violence. Channel 4’s *Dispatches* related the case of Nissar Hussain, who received death threats after he became a Christian. He was rejected by his parents and siblings, had his house and property repeatedly vandalised, and his family were intimidated. Muslim women who become Christians in the UK are often pressured to leave Christianity. Some are made to attend mosque instead of church, physically abused, or threatened with divorce and having their children taken away.

“Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also” (John 15:20)

### ***Popery (Roman Catholicism)***

Popery, that pre-eminent anti-Christian sect (which was abhorred and detested by the Scottish Reformers), purposely chose a known Jesuit (a member of the notorious Society of Jesus and adept at casuistry) as its Pope in 2014. The Jesuits are infamous for their avowed determination (by any means) to extirpate true Protestantism world-wide, and more implicitly enslave all mankind under the guise of an inter-faith union. Pope Francis, though a Jesuit, is a liberal papist endeavouring to implement a looser approach to that organisation’s dogma and practice; for example, by directing priests to be more accommodating when hearing confession and forgiving sin. This has led to tension in that body, with the conservative faction of the Vatican curia opposing him, contending vigorously for more traditional tenets against abortion, sodomy and pornography, and for a generally stricter testimony.

The Reformation greatly weakened Popery, and since then it has been steadily declining. Its former ensnarement of South America seems to be rapidly crumbling. Also, a recent papist expedition to Georgia in September, 2016, was strongly opposed by Georgian Orthodox fundamentalists. At one rally opposing the visit there were banners that declared, “Pope, arch-heretic, you are not welcome in Orthodox Georgia”, “Antichrist stay away from Georgia” and “Death of Popery”. The open air mass held in connection with

the visit was attended by a mere 3,000 people in a venue capable of holding 27,000. Furthermore, it is deeply concerned about a very substantial decline in the number of priests and nuns world-wide, which is a trend that has continued unabated for decades. In seeming desperation it has in more recent years been pursuing a global inter-faith strategy. It has been making overtures to other false religions, such as Mohammedanism (Islam), Judaism, Eastern Orthodoxy and false Protestantism. The Pope has publicly stated that “Christians and Muslims are brothers and sisters”, and he has produced a video featuring a Buddhist priest, a Jewish Rabbi, a Popish priest and an Islamic leader, all declaring their faith in their gods: with him implying that each of their statements are equally valid, and that they all were “seeking God or meeting God in different ways”. The papacy is bent upon the utter destruction of true Protestantism and, conversely, the establishment of a one world government and church, dominated by itself.

Despite the malicious, immense and extensive efforts of the papacy to destroy true Protestantism over many hundreds of years, it remains (effected and kept by the Holy Ghost), and shall soon flourish through the faithful and powerful preaching of the gospel, when “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9a), to the initial torment of that anti-Christian sect, and its eventual destruction: “And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into the fire burning with brimstone” (Revelation 19:20).

### **3. MORALS**

#### ***Islamic terrorism***

Islamic terrorism has been defined as, “any terrorist act, set of acts or campaign committed by groups or individuals who profess Islamic or Islamist motivations or goals” (Columbia University Press). Islamic terrorists justify their actions by applying their own interpretation of the Quran in a way that suits their own purposes.

The UK counter intelligence agency, MI5, on the other hand, has said, “far from being religious zealots, a large number of those involved in terrorism do not practise their faith regularly. Many lack religious literacy and could actually be regarded as religious novices. There is a higher than average number of converts.” It would also seem that a well established religious identity actually protects against violent radicalisation.

France has suffered greatly in recent times from the violence of the Islamists. The large majority of French jihadists are second generation Muslims who, unlike their parents, speak French. They have grown up with little or no contact with mosques or Muslim organisations, and before their

conversion drank, took drugs and had girlfriends. They are estranged from their parents and don't know where to fit in. They are disenchanted and because of their Muslim background are easily radicalised.

There is a portion of the Quran which reads, "But when these months prohibited (for fighting), are over, slay the idolaters where so ever you find them, and take them captive or besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every likely place. But if they repent and fulfil their devotional obligations and pay zakat, then let them go their way, for God is forgiving and kind." (Zakat means that which purifies. It is a form of almsgiving which, by Quranic ranking, is next in importance to prayer.)

Donald Holbrook, at the Centre of the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, notes that the Islamists cherry pick the first part, "slay the idolaters", but fail to quote and discuss the limiting factors, "but if they repent", and in so doing are shamelessly selective in order to serve their propaganda objectives. Osama bin Laden made use of this verse in the same way for his own purposes. However, it should be noted that there are other verses in the Quran which quite clearly encourage violence against the "infidel".

Islamists argue that Western policies and society are actively anti-Islamic, equivalent to waging a war against Islam. They argue that this is aggression and justifies "defensive jihad", which is an obligation on all Muslims. Using the word "defensive" makes Islamists appear the victim rather than the aggressor. As a consequence, the struggle has a high priority for all devout Muslims.

Martin Kramer, an American-Israeli scholar, has said with regard to suicide terrorism, "the only way to apply a brake to suicide terrorism is to undermine its moral logic by encouraging Muslims to see its incompatibility with their own values". That may have some truth in it, but it is a secular view. The gospel of Christ is the only real and lasting way of stopping such dreadful violence.

With Daesh (ISIS) now on the retreat in the Middle East there is the real fear that its supporters will disperse across Europe and elsewhere. They have already begun a campaign in India against the Hindus. In recent months Paris, Brussels, Berlin and Istanbul, have all suffered atrocities at the hands of Daesh. This perverse "holy" war is set to come to the UK where it is expected that they will attempt to regroup.

The dreadful treatment by Daesh of those who profess the name of Christ is well known to us all and has been highlighted in previous annual Reports. This persecution continues wherever Daesh casts its evil net.

We pray that the Lord will cause the downfall of all who would seek to perpetuate such wicked violence. "For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter" (Romans 8:36).

### ***Brexit***

Much anxiety, debate and feverish speculation has accompanied the Brexit process thus far. Brexit has also exposed the fragility of the European project. Those who have hailed the EU as a miracle of political determination and

human achievement are in despair. Their vision of a superstate seems an impossible dream. Brexit has punctured the belief that so-called progressive politics will prevail and that nations and cultures must merge to ensure a future of global peace and prosperity. With European national elections expected this year there is much in Europe that looks particularly precarious. Some commentators predict the collapse of the EU itself. Whether or not that will be the case, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that, not just across Europe but across the Middle East, we are in a time of breaking of nations and institutions (Jeremiah 51:20). The Lord is calling powerfully in His Providence to look to Him alone and not the arm of flesh, yet none seem to be heeding the call.

During the referendum campaign, it was interesting to find a number of references to the Reformation's break with the Roman Catholic political and ecclesiastical system. Even Roman Catholic commentators have noted that the EU project belongs to the same era as Vatican II. Both were part of a Romanist globalisation agenda which is now being further adapted by the current papacy. We are thankful for the deliverance from the yoke of the European Union, which this church has consistently protested against as a threat to our Protestant constitution and biblical morality.

We hear of many different types of Brexit which signal different visions of a future Britain. Yet we never hear of a solution which will seek to glorify God and honour His Word first and foremost. Until we pursue such a course, even our very blessings and claimed victories will fail. "Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it" (Haggai 1:9).

### ***Blurring of gender distinctions***

Gender was the first distinguishing characteristic of our race. Confusing it, as many actively do today, is to attempt to overthrow the wisdom of God. In this age of practical atheism, plausible human wisdom prevails in public policy and education. It is argued by "liberal" propagandists that as some children are born gender-confused, they must have inalienable rights to persist in that state. A very, very small percentage of people are indeed born with a gender abnormality, having both male and female parts (hermaphrodite). The cause of this and all confusion in the world is that sin has entered in. Historically these children have been brought up as male or female, according to the decision of their parents. This is undoubtedly a sensitive and difficult subject, but not more so than a large number of other medical conditions, genetic and otherwise, that some parents have to deal with. Moreover, modern science and medicine help parents in such cases to make the best choice.

The majority of present-day gender confusion, however, arises, not for biological reasons, but through immorality, whereby a "transgender" person chooses to change their birth sex. Sometimes they seek medical help to effect their choice. Usually they obtain help from governments in some way or other to further their desires. Government agents seem increasingly willing to help



in their ever more militant zeal to defy the “bigots” that reprove immoral behaviour. What was once abnormal and abhorrent behaviour is now not only accepted but actively encouraged and promoted – there is no moral compass, desires are considered paramount; and O how awfully foolish and God-provoking are those desires! Gender theory has become the exploration of what man can create in defiance of God, and the consequence, as might be expected, is ever increasing confusion and darkness.

In some places there has been a fight back. In some US states, legislators have moved to reassert biological fact in law, requiring authorities to limit public bathroom facilities to birth gender. But in all too many other places there is only increasing confusion. For example, Glasgow council require all new primary school facilities to have shared unisex toilet facilities. A Council manager was reported in the *Glasgow Herald* as saying this “assists in the LGBT agenda”.

The root of this horrible development, like many other evils such as Nazism, is the infidelity and rationalism of the 19th century which undermined biblical teaching. One consequence of this was the movement for women’s rights. Although the first fruits of this movement were reasonable – such as the provision of universal female education, and granting of the vote – the long-term fruit has been the development of the perverse “equality” movement. With considerable prescience R. L. Dabney foresaw, as far back as 1872, some of the ill consequences. He wrote: “It may be inferred again that the present movement for women’s rights will certainly prevail from the history of its only opponent, Northern conservatism. This is a party which never conserves anything. Its history has been that it demurs to each aggression of the progressive party, and aims to save its credit by a respectable amount of growling, but always acquiesces at last in the innovation. What was the resisted novelty of yesterday is today one of the accepted principles of conservatism; it is now conservative only in effecting to resist the next innovation, which will tomorrow be forced upon its timidity. . . .” He went on to write of the ultimate absurdities that this “rights” process would inevitably give rise to. Well, today we have the absurdity of gender theory as the fruit of this movement. If American conservatives have allowed it to happen by compromising with the progressive ideology, today they are virtually the only powerful political entity which offers any resistance at all to the LGBT agenda. Their counterparts in Britain and other western countries have fully embraced it. In Britain the BBC seems to be the chief instrument in promoting this sad state of affairs, by virtue of all too pervasive influence.

Historically the equality agenda was energised by the just emancipation of slaves and other social improvements during the 19th century. As is his usual practice, Satan stirred up men to go from righteous beginnings to unrighteous extremes, in this case through the equality agenda. There now exists a danger of the pendulum, having moved so far to one extreme, being driven hard by Satan to another extreme through the ascendancy of reactionary forces on the far right against political correctness. Some of these groups have no more

regard for the Word of God or moral compass than their opponents, and may end up having even less tolerance for their opponents.

Whatever happens in the world, the church's whole duty in regard to gender is to hold fast to the teaching of Scripture. In so doing we will be kept from the confusions of the world. There is a real risk of compromising over time with the ideology of the world, just as the compromising political conservative has enabled the equality agenda. There are a number of ways in which we might be drifting away from sound biblical practice.

We ought to maintain a clear distinction between men and women in appearance. One of the main ways that gender has been confounded is the blurring of distinctiveness in dress between men and women. This is happening concurrently with an ever increasing licentiousness in dress, particularly amongst young women. At the other extreme, some Islamic sects are requiring women to be entirely veiled. These extremes are ferociously defended by progressive ideology as the right of freedom of expression. Veiled women are in fact a serious departure from the biblical and reasonable requirement of maintaining gender distinction and modesty. Let us not be promoters of that which God hates by compromise with it.

We ought also to maintain gender distinction in functional roles in society. The issue of vocational choice amongst young people is more difficult to determine from Scripture, and one that we are not inclined to be overly prescriptive about. However, the competition between men and women for the same jobs manifestly serves to weaken the principle of gender distinction, and therefore we ought to encourage young men and women into different roles as far as possible, guided by biblical example. The increasingly prevalent practice of mothers of young children going out to work to further their careers is contrary to Scripture.

Men, in general, ought to exercise rule. This is commanded both in the Church and in the family; and in regards to the State and the workplace there is no biblical basis to argue that the same rule ought not to apply. It may be that in times when the cause of God is very low that women are raised up to rule; as indeed in recent times we have had two female Prime Ministers in the UK who have seemed as fit as any of their male colleagues to rule, but we should be very wary of normalising these exceptions by making this our own accustomed practice. It is not the natural ability of men and women to undertake a vocation, but what God requires of us, that ought to be our main consideration.

Another biblical principle concerning gender is that women ought not to be oppressed by men as, for example, they are in some cultures, particularly in Muslim countries, where they are often physically oppressed and denied rightful privileges. Let us bear in mind that it was past denial of the rightful privileges of African slaves that gave rise to the equality movement; and if we are careful to avoid unbiblical denial of rights, we are opposing the unbiblical extremes and confusion that we are faced with in our generation. The right balance between extremes is exactly the scriptural position.

Are our standards indeed slipping in regard to biblical principles of gender distinction? If we would measure ourselves relative to the world today, we might take comfort that the answer is No. If, however, we consider our standards in comparison to previous generations of godly men and women, then Yes they are slipping. Even if our practice is only where the world was fifty or even one hundred years ago, if we are heading in the same direction, we are in danger of an unbiblical practice of blurring gender distinction.

### ***Marriage***

“Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:4-6).

This is the divine mandate for marriage but in the last 60 years God’s institution has been under attack, especially by way of legislation. It was discovered that two people living together in an unmarried state could both claim tax relief on their mortgage, while married couples could not. As a result some, for financial reasons, choose not to marry.

Also, in cases where one partner in a marriage owns the home and, even after a short period of time, the couple divorce, legislation allows the other partner to claim half the value of the property. This gives some a further reason not to marry.

Because of declining morals in the 1960s and 1970s many couples were divorced, Parliament having passed legislation to make it easier and quicker to break up the marriage. This trend has continued with more couples living together in an unmarried state or living together with possibly a marriage to follow at a later date. It is quite common to see in death notices “A – – – , partner of B – – – ”, with even children’s names listed thereafter.

If this wasn’t bad enough for the morals of the nation, rulers have now passed laws allowing same sex couples to “marry”, which is totally contrary to Scripture.

“Shall of iniquity the throne  
Have fellowship with Thee,  
Which mischief, cunningly contriv’d  
Doth by a law decree?”  
(Psalm 94:20)

### ***The breakdown of family life***

Couples not being married or being divorced are, of course, major factors in the breakdown of family life.

Another reason is both parents going out to work full-time and for long hours leaving children in the care of others or without adequate supervision, contrary to Scripture which teaches that it is a mother’s duty and privilege to

raise up her own children. The most stable families are those where the mother is at home devotedly looking after the children.

Another cause of breakdown is family violence, often fuelled by the drinking of alcohol. Other families are troubled by drug addiction in one or both parents or even in the children. In days gone by families would eat together and enter into profitable discussions but now much time is spent watching the TV or using laptop computers in their bedrooms.

Families also used to go to church together and have family worship morning and evening; sadly these practices have been largely forsaken.

These are just some examples of the reasons behind family breakdown in our day; there are many others. We believe things will not improve until there is a return to the Scriptures and a true revival of religion nationwide. What a need there is for praying without ceasing to the God of our fathers.

“Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear” (Isaiah 59:1).

### ***Sport, the new religion?***

The human obsession with sport dates back to Roman times, if not earlier. One Roman writer said that his compatriots were interested in only two things: bread and circuses (i.e. sport). The main chariot-racing arena in Rome, the Circus Maximus, could seat a quarter of a million people at a time when the entire population of the city was only about a million; and by the reign of the Emperor Claudius, 93 days in the year were public holidays devoted to chariot racing.

In Britain, the rise of professional sport dates from the urbanization and wealth of the nineteenth century. Professional sport rapidly became commercialized, and the process steadily advanced during the twentieth century. The first UK Minister of Sport was appointed in 1962, and the current UK sports budget is £350 million. In 2012 the cost of the London Olympic Games was £9 billion and the majority of people in the country considered the money to have been well spent. Of recent years the London Marathon (which, like most of these races, is always run on the Sabbath) has attracted nearly forty thousand participants, while the “Great Scottish Run” in Glasgow has involved nearly thirty thousand.

A great variety of professional sports are now presented to the public who follow them either in person at the stadium or via radio and television. The atmosphere at these sporting events is the very essence of worldliness, whether it is horse racing at Ascot, tennis at Wimbledon, or the numerous professional rugby and football matches across the country each week. It is customary for drunkenness, revelling, foul language and aggressive and violent behaviour to accompany these events. Football especially is an idol to many who follow their teams with the fervour of religious devotees, with many fans travelling for hours to spectate for an hour and a half at the matches each week. The individual players are also idolised and, in effect, are given the adulation and adoration which belongs to God alone. Those who follow these sports on radio

or television, though not by personal attendance at the stadium, are just as caught up in the worldliness and fervour of those who are present. Over the years more and more of the major events across many of these sports are being held on Sabbath, so that they contribute in no little way to the increased Sabbath desecration and desertion of church-going in our land. In addition, there is an increasing tendency for people to engage in non-professional sports in an obsessive way, whereby too much of their free time and energy are channelled into these pastimes, some of which may well be lawful in moderation. Some would argue that Paul's references to the ancient Olympics show scriptural support for professional sport. Clearly, Paul draws his illustrations from the whole field of common life without giving any support to these practices themselves. Indeed it is known from early Church history that the Christian church studiously avoided the sports and spectacles of the Roman amphitheatre. When the Apostle Paul became a man, he "put away childish things" (1 Corinthians 13:11), but there is no sign at present of the adults in Britain putting away their childish preoccupation with sport.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The Committee has been kept busy during the past year revising the "Statement of Differences". Our thanks are again due to Reverend D. W. B. Somerset for the work that he has put into producing this document for presentation to Synod 2017. Thanks are also due to those who contributed comments.

The Convener wrote a letter of protest to the Rev. Kelvin Holdsworth, of St. Mary's Episcopal Cathedral in Glasgow, following the reading of a portion from the Quran during the public worship of God. What aggravated the situation was that the portion read specifically denied the divinity of the Saviour. As far as the Convener is aware no apology was ever made by Mr. Holdsworth for this blasphemous desecration of the Lord's worship in His own house, and certainly no reply to the letter of protest was received.

There is a move to bring in "Time For Inclusive Education" (TIE) to schools in Scotland. The purpose of TIE is to introduce homosexual, bisexual and transgender teaching under the pretext of stopping the bullying of some pupils. Their aim is that homosexuality would be taught along with other relationships contrary to the Word of God. It is expected that it will be brought forward under a private member's bill. The Committee intends to be proactive in countering it, and encourages the people of the Church in Scotland to write to their MSP.

Our generation is in great need of an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to bring us to repentance. May this report give some indication of how great our need is of praying the Most High, "To these long desolations / Thy feet lift, do not tarry" (Psalm 74:3, metrical).

## SABBATH OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE'S REPORT

Convener: Rev. J. B. Jardine

BEARING in mind the importance of maintaining the Fourth Commandment of God's holy law as preserved for us in Exodus 20:8-11, we, as a Synod-appointed Committee, would crave the prayerful support of the Church as a whole in bearing witness to the importance of Sabbath observance. This is never more important than in these latter days in which we see such a disregard for the Lord's Day right across the board of public life, including in the majority of the visible Church itself. Sabbath breaking has long since ceased to be construed as being a sin, while "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans 8:22).

The Sabbath Observance Committee continues to monitor unnecessary Sabbath activity and, again, a number of organisations and individuals in the public arena have been contacted regarding the matter. As usual, in the vast majority of cases, the response cannot be described as being in any way encouraging, as testified by the following items of correspondence during the past year:

### *Royalty*

The following members of the Royal Household were written to regarding breaches in Sabbath observance having taken place during the year 2016. Replies, from their respective representatives, although courteous, were short and generally indifferent.

The Queen .....	Reply received
The Prince of Wales .....	Reply received
The Duke & Duchess of Cambridge .....	Reply received
Prince Harry .....	Reply received
The Duke of Kent.....	Reply received
Princess Alexandra .....	Reply received
The Princess Royal.....	No response
The Duke of York.....	No response
The Earl & Countess of Wessex.....	No response

In the reply received from the Queen, it was stated that the Committee's letter was being forwarded to the Archbishop of Canterbury so that he be made aware of our approach to Her Majesty concerning Sabbath observance or the absence thereof. Needless to say, no communication was ever received from the Archbishop.

Her Majesty was, in her reply, most appreciative of the good wishes expressed to her on the occasion of her ninetieth birthday last year.

### *Sport*

The England and Wales Cricket Board .....	No response
British Cycling .....	No response