

REPORT OF THE RELIGION AND MORALS COMMITTEE

Convener: Mr F R Daubney

INTRODUCTION

THE Synod's Religion and Morals Report of 1922 depicted a bleak trend in the spiritual and moral condition of the nation in the aftermath of World War I. Most, if not all, of these annual Reports in the near 100 years since then have, in various ways, depicted the same sorrowful trend of spiritual and moral decay, and this year is no exception. Had the Lord's people asked back then, as they surely did, concerning the state of their day: "Lord, how long?"; such is the spiritual and moral condition of the land today that the answer we might say was the same as that given to the Prophet: "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate" (Isaiah 6:11). Nevertheless, the Lord promised, despite their great provocations, to bring His people of old out of captivity, and so in due time Jacob did rejoice, and Israel was glad (Psalm 53:6); and so we believe it shall be again at the time that He has set: "Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come" (Psalm 102:13).

Having completed the *Statement of Differences* and the booklet on *Homosexuality*, the Committee published these in booklet form during the year. Much of the Committee's focus this year has been on combating the Scottish government's proposed RSHP (Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood) agenda, whereby they seek to impose an educational programme for students from pre-school to 18 years of age; which, from a moral perspective, contains extremely obnoxious and damaging components. Articles were submitted to the *Free Presbyterian Magazine* on this, and the related matter of obeying God rather than man. The public consultation on RSHP is due to begin after the writing of this Report, sometime in May.

Mr John Mason MSP was written to in order to acknowledge his tabling of a motion in the Scottish Parliament to restrict the lateness by which abortions can be carried out. Sadly he got support from only one other MSP, Jeremy Balfour.

RELIGION IN THE UK

Recent surveys like the British Social Attitudes (BSA) Survey July 2019 indicate significant decline in religious affiliation during the course of a generation. 52% say they do not belong to any religion, compared with 31% in 1983. This tracks an increase in atheism with a quarter stating "I do not believe in God", compared with just 10% 20 years ago.

The number of people identifying as Christian has fallen from 66% to 38% over the same period (a fall from 50% in 2008). Further, only 11% of those who say they are Christian attend church at least once a week (66% in the UK

never attend religious services, apart from special occasions such as weddings, funerals and baptisms). This religious decline in Britain is generational with each generation being less religious than their forebears. Two non-religious parents tend to have non-religious children, while two religious parents are only likely to see half of their children maintain the same faith. Muslims have increased from 1% in 1983 to 6% (the majority of the 9% of non-Christian religions).

“No religion” is not strictly speaking a reality. What we have as a nation is secular religion, where faith has become individualised and pushed out of public concerns. When we listen to the language of climate change activists and other campaigners it is clear that they have a religion. Ironically, it is based on categories of moral thought inherited in a distorted way from Christianity. Even atheists are not necessarily non-religious either. The “Understanding Unbelief” project at the University of Kent in the UK is conducting a survey of atheists and agnostics. Around three-quarters of atheists and nine out of ten agnostics are open to the existence of supernatural phenomena, including everything from astrology to supernatural beings and life after death.

Research for the Theos report, *The Spirit of Things Unseen* (2013), revealed that more than 60% of the non-religious believe that “there are things in life that we simply cannot explain through science or any other means.” Only 25% agreed that humans have no spiritual element. The rapid growth of mindfulness, yoga and other quasi-religious activities, indicate an interest in metaphysical matters.

There is a folk religion based on superstition. This is often on display at funerals in many churches as well as elsewhere. It is a religion that focuses on the self, pleasure and in some measure showing some kindness to others, but makes room for an idea of the after-life as pagan as anything heathen cultures have dreamed of. Too much of the deliberately ambiguous and vapid Christian message of many churches fits neatly with this folk religion. Many presentations of the gospel simply focus on human needs and fulfilment. What our confused nation desperately needs is the clarity of the biblical law and gospel. Does our heart not bleed for the poor, blind perishing idolater of our nation?

“He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?” (Isaiah 44:20).

Popery (Romanism)

The wicked spirit of Popery is essentially what could now be described as Arminianism, another abhorrent gospel (the root of which is in all of us naturally, involving a hatred of Christ), and was secretly working in Paul and John’s time (2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 1 John 4:3), and will continue to do so, sometimes overtly, and sometimes covertly, until it will be utterly destroyed, and all perpetual papists will be cast into hell. This devilish, delusional spirit is particularly evident in the declaration of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), where the Popish hierarchy viciously sought to choke the indispensable truths

retrieved at the Reformation by Martin Luther and others. In particular, it maliciously and vehemently attacked the doctrine of Justification by Faith.

In Canon 9 the document declares: “If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified, in such wise as to mean that nothing else is required to cooperate in order to the obtaining of the grace of justification, and that it is not in any way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will, let him be anathema”. The Council daringly so blasphemed the Reformers’ sound teaching on Justification as damnable heresy, and its advocates as accursed. In doing so they expose themselves as deluded, false dogmatists, spreading that which is expressly contrary to Scripture concerning this crucial matter of how a man may be right with God: “Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law, for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:16). The Council manifested in its pontification on Justification a strange blindness to the total depravity and utter inability of natural man, and the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, placed to the sinner’s account, and received by faith alone.

Popery is a naturally powerful and bitter enemy and adversary of Christ, and His dear ones, and is presently plaguing Scotland and the rest of the world. It is no church, rather a satanic sect, the house of the great whore, mother of fornication, and has wickedly sworn to destroy utterly the true church of Jesus Christ. In 2011 it boasted of 841,053 followers in Scotland (we have less than 1,000), and in late 2017 it had 15.9% of church attenders, exceeded only by the degenerate Church of Scotland with 24%. Additionally, Popery worldwide is recorded as having 1.33 billion followers, out of a total population of 6.6 billion. Also, it is estimated to have monetary wealth of between 10 and 15 billion pounds, wherewith to spread its soul-destroying heresy, and seek to eradicate the true church of Jesus Christ.

Mercifully, the Scriptures foretell and denounce a time of Divine judgment against Popery (presently very prevalent in Scotland and the rest of the world), when Satan will be bound for either a literal 1,000 years or a very long time (Revelation 20:2, 7). Then heaven, now largely shut, will be opened, and the Holy Ghost, presently almost completely departed, will return, and revive Scotland, and all other lands (Romans 11:12, 15, 17, 24, 25-28; Psalm 72:16-19; Jeremiah 31:34). The wonderful light of the gospel (a good report of Christ) will be welcomed everywhere; the glorious militant millennial church (ferverently desired by the truly godly in Scotland, and earnestly begged for at the throne of grace for more than 450 years, now lodged as a sweet fragrance in heaven, and as yet unanswered) will appear and flourish. It will be as life from the dead, and the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ will fill the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Islam

It has recently been reported that Christian belief has halved in Britain over the last 35 years with only one third of the population identifying itself as being Christian. This has been coupled with a rise in both atheism and Islam. Those identifying as Muslims increased from 1% in 1983, to 3% in 2008, and to 6% in 2018. Islam has become the second largest religion in Europe after Christianity, with this increase being primarily due to recent immigration. It is also the second largest religion in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. A survey conducted in 2016 found that Muslims made up 4.9% of the European population. It is expected that this will rise to 8% by 2030 and will be as high as 14% by 2050, depending on migration trends. The Muslim population of the UK is expected to rise to around 13 million by 2050. According to Deutsche Welle, 64% of Muslims in the UK identify themselves as being highly religious.

There has been a negative backlash towards the increased Muslim population. The Pew Research Centre reported in 2018 that most Europeans favoured restrictions on face-covering veils. An estimated 13 out of 15 favoured an outright ban as they perceive Islamic dress to be more about the ideology of Islamism than an actual religious symbol. This, in turn, seeks to extend the influence of Islam into the family, society and politics.

A 2013 study showed that Islamic fundamentalism was widespread in Europe. Religious fundamentalism is far more common among Muslims than Christians in Europe. Belgium, which has comparatively generous policies towards Muslims and immigrants, also had a relatively high level of fundamentalism. France and Germany which have restrictive policies had lower levels of fundamentalism.

The EU Counter-terrorism Co-ordinator stated in 2017 that there were more than 50,000 active radicals and jihadists in Europe. A jihadist is an Islamic militant. UK authorities have reported that 23,000 jihadists stay in this country, the highest number in Europe; about 3,000 of them are actively monitored with 500 being under constant supervision by MI5.

It has been recently reported by “Hope not Hate” that 35% of Britons believe Islam threatens the British way of life. 32% believe that there were “no-go areas” in Britain where sharia law dominated, and non-Muslims could not enter. The far-right seeks to tap into this and have moved their emphasis from anti-immigration to anti-Muslim. Many ordinary men and women may also become caught up in such movements as the English Defence League who use street protests to oppose the rise of Islamism, sharia law and Islamic extremism in the UK. We believe that the gospel is the only power that will take away the power of Islam.

Between 75% and 77% of Muslims living in the UK are of the Sunni sect, with between 5% and 8% being of the Shia sect. Sunni is “the larger of the two main branches of Islam, which differs from Shia in its understanding of the Sunna, its conception of religious leadership, and its acceptance of the first

three caliphs”. Shia is “one of the two main branches of Islam, followed by about a tenth of Muslims, especially in Iran, that rejects the first three Sunni caliphs and regards Ali, the fourth caliph, as Muhammad’s first true successor”. Most mosques are managed by men of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin.

Muslims are playing an increasingly prominent role in the political life of the UK, with a significant number having influential positions in the Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet. Most Muslims vote for the Labour party.

The interest shown in politics seems to conflict with the rising place given to sharia councils whose authority is taken as being greater and of a higher priority than the law of the land. The UK government between 2016 and 2018 investigated the sharia councils in England and Wales via an independent panel. The councils have no legal status and no legal jurisdiction within the UK and yet there are anywhere between 30 and 85 in existence.

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11).

Christian persecution and church growth in Iran

Christianity is officially a small minority religion in Iran, numbering between 100,000-200,000 Armenian and Assyrian Orthodox Christians of native birth. There are also a considerable number of Christian refugees from Iraq. The official figures, however, do not account for the underground Protestant Iranian church. Open Doors estimates the total Christian population of Iran to be about 800,000, which is about 1% of the total population of 82 million. From a few hundred Protestant Christians at the time of the revolution in 1979, the heavily persecuted underground church today is said to consist of hundreds of thousands of converts from Islam.

The Iranian regime considers the growth of Christianity to be one of a number of threats to its own existence, and has vigorously tried to suppress it. Building of churches has been forbidden since the revolution in 1979. Today there are only a few church buildings, mostly belonging to Orthodox sects. Holding of Christian worship in Farsi (Persian) is strictly forbidden, as are Protestant translations of the Bible in Farsi. In the past few years many hundreds of people have been arrested and many languish in prison. It is thought that most of these are house church leaders or those engaged in wider organisation or evangelists. Some of these have ended up in the notoriously abusive Evin Prison in Tehran, where those considered enemies of the state are normally imprisoned. Ordinary members of house churches, if exposed and arrested, are usually warned against proselytizing, and subsequently released if they agree to cease that activity. Suspected converts are also subject to monitoring of their electronic communications by the government. The danger of being reported mostly arises from neighbours, but sometimes from other

family members. Christian converts tend not to be charged with apostasy from Islam; it is rather the perceived political threat to the Iranian regime that seems mainly to motivate their persecution.

Due to intensity of persecution, extreme secrecy is required. House church services are not announced but organised privately, and may take place in an outdoor environment such as in a public park or garden as well as in homes. They are restricted to small groups of less than a dozen, and as they grow, will split into further groups. Adherents are encouraged to bring in friends and relations, but have to be wary as state agents seek to infiltrate them. Islam under the Ayatollahs has become a painful experience for the Iranian people, and the intimate connection it has with the dysfunctional and oppressive regime is harming it, to the potential benefit of other religions. Indeed, such is the disillusion with Islam, it is said that when one person in a family becomes Christian, other family members often follow. Nevertheless, in other cases, they are too frightened even to let their family members know that they have become Christian.

House churches have thus increased rapidly, at least in part because of personal contact with Muslims in the family or workplace. Each member or adherent is encouraged to bring the gospel to their fellows by distributing Bibles, by persuading others to join them, and to be an example to them in personal and moral conduct. Evangelizing is also undertaken amongst the dissolute members of society, such as drug addicts and prostitutes.

The development of the church in Iran is thus both constrained and greatly enabled by persecution. There are significant inherent dangers in the Iranian model of church development. The only way that it is in conformity to the true scriptural pattern is seen by the fact that it is oppressed and constrained in the way that it is. In addition, Pentecostalism and other introduced Western errors are widespread. Women are said to be the main leaders in church organising and in ministering, a situation which has arisen in part because women comprise the majority of the church, which may be because women in particular suffer in Islamic counties such as Iran. No doubt Western church influences also tend to lead Iranian Christians away from sound scriptural teaching in this and other matters.

Despite these problems the Scriptures in Farsi are continuing to be widely distributed, and there seems to be a genuine hunger for the gospel.

The Regulative Principle

The professing Christian Church believes in and holds to one of two Christian theological principles which dictates the form of worship that they follow.

The non-reformed part of the visible Church (Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists and many Independents and Baptists) tends to follow the Normative Principle of Worship, which teaches that “whatever is not prohibited in Scripture is permitted in worship”.

The reformed part of the visible Church (Presbyterians) tends to follow the Regulative Principle of Worship which teaches that “only those practices or

elements which are specifically commanded or modelled in Scripture are to be permitted in worship services". All other practices are prohibited in the worship by God. This is the biblical opinion: "What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Deuteronomy 12:32), "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20). Calvin summed up the principle in his work, *The Necessity of Reforming the Church*, when he said, "God disapproves of all modes of worship not expressly sanctioned by His Word".

The Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland has held firmly to the Regulative Principle since its inception in 1893. The form of worship practised within the bounds of the Church is therefore in clear obedience to God. The Church strictly excludes and fervently witnesses against disobedient practices in the worship of God. It endeavours to hold fast to the principle of *Sola Scriptura* in worship as well as in doctrine and practice.

It is difficult to comprehend why anyone who values the authority of Scripture and considers themselves to be a biblical Christian would not hold to the Regulative Principle, repeatedly confirmed by the Word of God itself as in the story of Cain (Genesis 4:3-8). Also in the building of the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:40), "look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount"; in the second commandment, Exodus 20:4-6; in the incident of the golden calf, Exodus 32; in the story of Nadab and Abihu who offered up "strange fire", Leviticus 10; in God's rejection of Saul's sacrifice, 1 Samuel 15:22, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams"; in Christ's rejection of the tradition of the elders Matthew 15:1-14; in Paul's admonition to the Churches in Colosse and Corinth to reject "will worship" or self-made religion, Colossians 2:16 and 1 Corinthians 14:27-32.

The Word of God identifies the various elements of ordinary public worship as defined by the Regulative Principle:

- Reading the Word, 1 Timothy 4:13;
- Preaching the Word, 2 Timothy 4:2;
- Singing the Word (the Psalms), Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16;
- Praying using the Word, Matthew 21:13;
- Sealing the Word in the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, Matthew 28:19, Acts 2:38-39, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Colossians 2:11-12.

The Confession of Faith also mentions oaths, vows, solemn fasts and thanksgiving.

God has not left His church free to invent her own worship. God has given specific guidance as to how He is to be worshipped. In practice this means exclusive psalmody, no musical instruments and no Christian festivals. Everything must be done "decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Without the Regulative Principle we would find ourselves at the mercy of the particular whim that a leader of worship might adopt. It is sad to observe previously reformed Protestant churches in our land loosening their attachment to the Regulative Principle.

Four reasons can be given for adopting the Regulative Principle in worship:

1. To promote true reformation and return the Church to its Biblical origins;
2. To promote true Christian unity;
3. To secure Christian liberty for all believers;
4. To honour God with submission to His authority.

“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19).

Breakdown of family life and discipline of children

From biblical times and through to the twentieth century, the family unit was always held to be a man and his wife with their children. The Scriptures are very clear on this. Genesis 2:24 tells us of Adam’s relationship to Eve, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”. Also, the man must provide for his family: “But if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel” (1 Timothy 5:8). This family unit should be a loving bond between father and mother and children.

In Deuteronomy chapter 6, we are told that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and might, and that these words which are in our hearts we should teach our children diligently. Family worship is cohesive, the cementing of a bond between man and wife, parents and children; the raising of children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. It used to be said, “the family that prays together stays together”. To a God-fearing family the Lord was always “in straits a present aid”, to those who called upon His name. In this day and age we are far more mobile. Extended families more frequently live far apart and can no longer give support to each other as in the past. When difficulties developed there was often a family member to help you through. In particular the help of a loving, prayerful, mother at home was of inestimable value to children.

For many years there has been an increasing secularisation, a moving away from any form of religious practice. Any thought of a family praying together is now regarded as quaint and old-fashioned, at best. Church attendance has fallen away considerably to the point where only a minority of the population

attend a church of any kind. There is now a more selfish approach to others and a more grasping attitude to our “rights”.

Even little children in schools are told that they have rights which their parents must not infringe. Smacking as a form of discipline is now illegal in Scotland and other intrusions into family life are constantly endeavoured by government. Children are taught many things which conflict with so much that a Christian family holds dear. Secular friends and the atheistic ideas which are so prevalent today inevitably influence young minds. All of which begins to chip away at relationships in the home between parents and children, which, sadly, on occasions, results in a complete breakdown.

These changes of beliefs and attitudes in society have consequences. Attitudes towards marriage vows are taken much less seriously and the notion that marriage is for life is little regarded. If marriage vows are not regarded as being made in the eyes of God, then sincere endeavours to honour them may not be made. The easing of the divorce laws has made it much simpler to end a marriage, but statistics show that the rate of divorce has been falling in recent years. Even so, currently the number of marriages ending in divorce is 42%, which is shockingly high. The reasons put forward for the falling numbers are that many people are cohabiting before getting married and therefore more likely to know each other better. People are now older when they get married and so have a more mature approach to marriage. There are no statistics for those who cohabit and then separate. It is difficult to speculate but one would expect that this would be higher than the figures for divorce.

The biblical family unit is the safe and loving environment for the raising of children. “Those from broken families are more likely to suffer from behavioural problems, under achieve at school, become sexually active, become pregnant, smoke, drink, do drugs, and when adults experience poverty” (Rodgers & Pryor, Joseph Rowntree Organisation).

The secularisation of society, the lack of religion in the home, same sex “marriage”, civil partnerships and cohabiting, are all contributing to the breakdown of the family life required and provided for by our God and Creator.

Sanctity of life

When a society begins to disregard those parts of the Moral Law, a departure which even the natural conscience knows to be wrong, then it is far on indeed in its departure from God. The old world was far gone in apostacy from God prior to the flood when the sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not kill”, was disregarded to the extent that “the earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence” (Genesis 6:11). It is alarming to observe the same trend in the United Kingdom, and Scotland in particular. Not to mention the slaughter of unborn infants in the womb, as often noted in these reports (and which reached a record high of 200,000 abortions in the UK in 2018), there is evidence on every hand that the sixth commandment is being increasingly trampled on in our society.

For instance, the lenient sentences for murderers and their early release removes the deterrent which a genuine life sentence would provide in the absence of capital punishment, the only scriptural sentence for murder. This development is not new. But a new low was reached by the judicial system in 2019 when a woman previously jailed for the murder of her husband was acquitted on grounds which amounted to her murder being justified by the emotional abuse to which she was subjected. The murder was viewed instead as manslaughter, but because she had served sufficient time in prison for that crime (according to the judge), she was set free. While acknowledging the difficulty of dealing with such abuse, to hold that a brutal attack, which did not stop till her husband was dead, is not murder, is to set a new moral standard more akin to the revenge cultures of the third world than that previously upheld in the developed world. Is it any wonder that murders and violent assaults are a daily occurrence in our land? In London alone over 130 people were murdered on its streets last year, most being the victims of savage knife attacks.

Another aspect is the disregard to one's own life shown by those who indulge in excessive alcohol indulgence and in drug abuse. The number of drug-related deaths in Scotland soared by 27% over the past year to reach a level which puts the country on a par in terms of the fatality rate per capita with the United States. The death rate is now more than three times that of England and Wales and is higher than any other EU country. Suicides are increasingly common, especially among our young people. The World Health Organisation reports that, worldwide, suicide is the second largest cause of death among young people, after road accidents. Scotland again has a higher rate than the rest of the UK. Dr Kennedy's long-since-uttered prediction that, as a result of the rejection of the gospel in church and state, suicides and sudden deaths would increase, especially among young men, is being fulfilled before our eyes. Truly, sin is destructive of the good of mankind, and a nation which turns its back on Christ brings upon itself a whirlwind of sorrow and death. "Do thyself no harm" is the voice of the sixth commandment to those who are destroying their bodies, and their precious souls in the process.

How great is the need that the Prince of life and peace would be held up in the preaching of the Word throughout our land as the only remedy to the awful destructive power of sin. Only as His kingdom advances and Satan's kingdom is destroyed, will men beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks.

Scottish Parliament – intolerance of Christian principles and political correctness

On Thursday 6th February 2020 the Scottish government was rocked by the revelation that the Finance Secretary, Derek MacKay, just hours before being due to announce his financial statement to Parliament, was guilty of inappropriate behaviour as reported in the Scottish *Sun* newspaper and was

forced to resign. He had sent 270 messages of a suggestive nature to a 16-year-old youth, and also dozens of unwanted messages to a party activist over a four-year period. MacKay had declared himself to be a sodomite in 2013. “The sinners’ hands do make the snares wherewith themselves are caught” (Psalm 9:16, metrical)

The First Minister wants immigration control to be passed from London to Edinburgh, asserting that: “We are an ageing population and need foreign workers”. Of course we are because of the 1967 Abortion Act which allows the murdering in the womb of 25% of unborn children, tens of thousands of whom would now be in the workforce. Pharaoh and Herod are noted in Scripture for infamy in drowning all new-born male babies in the Nile and for slaying all males in Bethlehem under two years of age.

On 3rd October 2019 a ban on smacking children by their parents became law under The Children (Equal Protection from Assault) (Scotland) Bill, which is contrary to the Word of God. Also the proposed changes to the RSHP (Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood) Statutory Guidance issued by the Scottish government may direct many teachers in State schools to teach unchristian and indeed unnatural and vile material. “On each side walk the wicked, when vile men are high in place” (Psalm 12:8, metrical).

There are many of these at this time, and women too. What need there is for praying without ceasing. “Do thou, O God, arise and plead the cause that is thine own” (Psalm 74:22, metrical).

LGBT in schools

Twenty years ago Clause 2a (Section 28 in England), which prohibited the promotion of homosexuality in schools, was repealed as one of the first legislative actions of the new Scottish Parliament. In February 2020 a primary school in Paisley invited the local SNP MP and an explicit adult drag performer to speak to four- and five-year-olds about the effects of Clause 2a. Thankfully there was outrage leading to an apology but the incident is by no means isolated. It illustrates just how far the promotion of LGBT lifestyles in schools is going. Most secondary schools have LGBT posters all over the walls of their corridors and clubs dedicated to encouraging children to explore “their sexual orientation”.

The curriculum is, of course, not free from this influence. In England and Wales there is no right of withdrawal from relationships education. Many believe that it will be compulsory for schools to teach about sexual orientation and gender identities from September 2020. The government has clarified: “Although there is no requirement to teach about LGBT relationships in primary schools, primary schools are strongly encouraged to cover LGBT content, and for all levels of the curriculum from early years to senior phase”. The reality is that some schools will take this as an indication of what a good school inspection will require. They may also use it to veto parental objections. Church of England and other “faith schools” are set to teach this. Stonewall recently celebrated this with the comment: “A lot of faith schools are really

stepping up and sending an inclusive message”. They also said, “This will be a landmark moment – a whole generation will attend schools that not only accept LGBT people and same-sex relationships, but also celebrate and offer support on the issues that young LGBT people face”. Indeed government documents state their expectation that “headteachers and senior school staff demonstrate strong leadership in promoting LGBTI awareness and inclusion in schools to deliver long term societal change”.

The greatest wholesale reversal of Clause 2a is the initiative in Scotland to embed LGBT education in all areas of the curriculum. Thankfully progress with implementing this has been slower than anticipated. But it is a wholesale systematic implementation in all areas of the education system. It is nothing less than a re-education of everyone involved in it. Qualifications and course specifications, teacher training and professional learning, leadership and parental involvement are all areas to be “transformed”. School inspectors are to use LGBT prompt questions during standard school inspections. Recommendations are now expected to be delivered by the end of March 2021. Yet already resources for LGBT education are being made available to schools recommending ways of delivering the curriculum to achieve their goals. The inclusion of LGBT content in every subject is not statutory or mandatory. Teachers, headteachers and other professional educational practitioners must decide about the implementation of it. However, it is hard to see how any headteacher can avoid it, given that school inspections will involve a key focus on it.

The fearful wickedness of exposing children to such poisonous abomination might be described in terms of Psalm 64:5-6: “They encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily. . . . They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search.” Yet we pray that the Lord will yet “make their own tongue to fall upon themselves” (Psalm 64:8).

Transgender Movement

The Transgender Movement has made astonishing progress in Britain in the last year. The idea is now established in the minds of many that a person may simply declare what sex he is (whether male, female, or some imaginary alternative) and that the rest of the world has to accept his claim. If he claims to be a woman, there is no need for “gender re-assignment surgery” or legal recognition of his claim; it is enough for these people that such a claim has been made. A girl at school may decide that she is a boy one day (and use the boys’ toilets), a girl the next day, and “non-binary” the third. Such behaviour has an obvious appeal for attention-seeking and manipulative children.

Those who refuse to play along with this nonsense are said to be showing hatred (“transphobia”), and there is no need for an actual incident to arise; it is enough simply to mention that one would not join the pretence – perhaps in answer to a question – and one may thereupon be branded as transphobic and lose one’s job, or be rejected for employment. Several such cases have arisen, and the jobs that people are losing may have very little to do with transgender issues.

The delusion is not confined to a “lunatic fringe”. An employment judge has ruled that the view that a man cannot become a biological woman is “not worthy of respect in democratic society”. An MP, who is a member of the shadow cabinet, declared in a TV interview that “children are born without sex [i.e. neither boys nor girls]”. Another Labour MP, who at the time of writing is a contender for the leadership of the party, has pledged to expel all party members who have expressed “transphobic” views. The Humberside police warned a man, who had tweeted against transgenderism, that he faced potential prosecution if he continued to do so. He subsequently won a High Court case against them, but how much this will restrain the police, particularly in Scotland, remains to be seen.

One area of concern is the children with “gender dysphoria” who are being encouraged to take puberty-blocking drugs, and even to have irreversible operations at very early ages. An organisation called Mermaids is promoting this, and the coffee chain Starbucks is raising money in support. It seems likely that there will be many court cases arising out of this child abuse (which is what it really is) in years to come.

Another group that is suffering as a result is the radical feminists. After behaving in a highly intolerant and unreasonable manner themselves for a long time, they are now receiving a taste of their own medicine; and it is hard not to feel somewhat sorry for them. Those who refuse to accept “trans-women” (i.e. men pretending to be women) are vilified, especially online, as TERFs (trans-exclusionary radical feminists), and are “no-platformed” when they try to address meetings, and face extreme abuse and expulsion from organisations such as Stonewall. One woman who has been vilified in this way is the billionaire, J K Rowling.

There have been a number of cases, both in Britain and the US, of women being assaulted by “trans-women” (i.e. men) in prison, and one female inmate is seeking a judicial review of UK government policy on allowing transgender men to share women’s prisons. Many public authorities and some schools in Britain have introduced “gender-neutral” toilets, and there are reports of women and schoolgirls preferring to suffer discomfort rather than face the fear, unpleasantness, or embarrassment of using these places. Transgender men are increasingly prominent in women’s sport, including the vociferous “Rachel McKinnon” (formerly Rhys McKinnon, and now Veronica Ivy) who has become a women’s world cycling champion. One TERF commented pertinently: “He didn’t just want to be an ordinary woman; he had to be a special woman. How typically masculine”.

CONCLUSION

It is manifest from this Report that the present generation is one that overwhelmingly disdains the Law of God. It is no surprise, therefore, that we are under the manifest and sore judgement of God at this time. The Psalmist said concerning the degenerate in his day: “Rivers of waters run down mine

eyes, because they keep not thy law” (Psalm 119:136). It would be good to be affected likewise when we read of the grievous matters covered in this Report, and on what, in general, we read and hear in the news from day to day, which evidences the declining religion and morals of our generation. It ought too to be a matter of great thankfulness that we have in God’s Word, a sure guide in all these matters – “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105).

SABBATH OBSERVANCE COMMITTEE’S REPORT

Convener: Rev R MacLeod

WE are the poorer for the loss of Rev Bruce Jardine, who ceased to be a member and Convener of this Committee at the last Synod. His indefatigable labours, in defence of “the Day that the Lord hath made”, were largely set at naught by a Sabbath breaking world. But another Day is on the wing. The Day of Judgment will arouse the slumbering consciences of those who set at naught the warnings of God’s witnesses. The Committee was further weakened by the death of its Speaker, Rev Angus Smith, on 27th August 2019. Though the work done in connection with the Sabbath Observance Committee attracts no fame in this world, Mr Smith’s protest at the commencement of commercial Sabbath sailings across the strait of Kyleakin between Skye and the mainland of Scotland will be remembered as long as there is a Sabbath kept in the Highlands.

By a motion passed at our Synod in May 2018, an Assistant Speaker for this Committee was appointed. At its meeting the following October, the Committee agreed that the assistant speaker should liaise with our local ministers and interim moderators to arrange public meetings. With the co-operation of the local FP minister, talks on the Sabbath were delivered in Halkirk, Portree, Bonar Bridge and Inverness. While visiting our congregation in Chesley Ontario, the assistant speaker was asked to give the annual lecture to the Canadian Lord’s Day Society in that province. As far as the assistant speaker is concerned, this has been a most rewarding part of the Committee’s activity. However, the Committee is somewhat disappointed at the relative lack of interest in this part of our work. Whether such addresses should be followed by a session with the local minister and members of the committee inviting questions from the audience, is as yet undecided.

The Committee meets twice between each annual Synod. At our meeting in October 2019, it was agreed to write to our ministers who have a responsibility for Free Presbyterian charges in the UK, and to offer the Committee’s co-operation by raising a witness against instances of Sabbath desecration in their locality. Our letter suggested that it may be of some value to the local witness, if the Committee added its dissenting voice to theirs. The Committee thought that this part of its work would be more focused if we addressed recent