

Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

Public Questions, Religion & Morals Committee

A Response to the Saint Margaret Declaration

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

Introduction (a)

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

Response:

The Primacy of Truth

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

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

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

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

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

Introduction (b)

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

Response:

How Rome views Ecumenism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Introduction (c)

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

Response:

(i) Why the Reformation was Needed

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Protestant-Catholic Reformation?, p. 11.

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

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

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

(ii) The Legal and Constitutional Position

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So help me God.”

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

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

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

(iii) Sectarianism as seen by Rome

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

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

Source: ‘Pope Benedict XVI Addresses the Bishops of Scotland’. Article dated 14 March 2010.

Retrieved October 7, 2022 from:

<http://thepapalvisit.org.uk/2010/03/14/pope-benedict-xvi-addresses-the-bishops-of-scotland>

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

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

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

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

“A shared faith” (a)

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

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

the Son and of the Holy Spirit.]

Response:

(i) The historic Protestant view of the Roman Church

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

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

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

(ii) The Place of Baptism

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

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

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

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

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

“Although it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.” (Ch. 27:5)

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

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

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

“A shared faith” (b)

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

(i) The Papacy

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

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

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

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

Source: Retrieved October 7, 2022 from:

http://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.html

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

“There is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ: nor can the Pope of Rome in any sense be head thereof; but is that antichrist, that man of sin, and son of perdition, that exalteth himself in the church against Christ, and all that is called God.” (Ch. 25:6).

This teaching of the Confession is based especially on 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4: “*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the*

son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”

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

“A shared faith” (c)

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

Response:

(ii) The Scriptures

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

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

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

Source: Retrieved October 7, 2022 from:

https://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.html

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

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

The fundamental importance of Scripture is recognised by at least some in the Church of Scotland. In 2014 the group ‘Covenant Fellowship Scotland’ was formed within the Church. Its Vision Statement says:

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

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

“A shared faith” (d)

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

Response:

The Doctrine of Justification

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

The Canons of the Roman Catholic Council of Trent state:

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

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

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

“Q. 33. *What is justification?*”

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

This is not to mention the grievous errors of the mass, auricular confession, the worship of images, clerical celibacy and purgatory, all of which are affirmed by the Roman Catholic Church today. These errors have

actually been added to since the Reformation, with the dogmas of the Immaculate Conception (1854), Papal Infallibility (1870) and the Assumption of Mary (1950).

“Our common home”

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

Response:

The meaning of the term ‘saint’

Lorraine Boettner (1901-1990) wrote:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Past divisions”

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

Response:

The martyrs of the Scottish Reformation

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

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

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

“Challenges which remain”

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

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

Response:

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

(i) Rome claims to be the true Church

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

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

Dominus Iesus, IV, 17. Retrieved October 7, 2022 from:

http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000806_dominus-iesus_en.html

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

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

Source: ‘Do Protestants have reason to fear Catholicism’s resurgence?’ Retrieved October 7, 2022 from:

<https://www.scotsman.com/news/do-protestants-have-reason-to-fear-catholicism-s-resurgence-1-1073968>

(ii) Why unity with Rome is impossible for Protestants

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

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

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

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

“Looking towards the future”

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

May there be an ever more united Christian voice in the land, informed always by the charity and love of Christ and our call to participate in the mission of God. May we contribute to the good of society, while humbly learning from others and from our own mistakes. May our theological reflections and initiatives together thrive; and may our pilgrimage together in our dear land of Scotland bear much fruit to the good of all, and to the greater glory of God.”]

Response:

The Roman Catholic idea of unity

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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