CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

REPORT

OF THE

# COMMITTEE ON THE RESTATEMENT OF

# THE CHURCH'S FAITH

TO THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

MAY 1935

I.

IN its Report to the General Assembly of last year the Committee included the Draft of a Brief Statement of the Church's Faith, which it had been asked to prepare. The Assembly remitted this document to the Presbyteries of the Church, for their consideration, instructing the Presbyteries to send in their criticisms and suggestions to the Convener by 15th December 1934.

Sixty-one Presbyteries made returns, They had not been requested to express general approval or disapproval; but 34 Presbyteries, in point of fact, gave their general approval to the Draft, while 9 others took a line which might reasonably interpreted in the same sense. On the other hand, 16 Presbyteries

expressed disapproval more or less emphatically, while 2 others apparently agreed with them.

The detailed criticisms and suggestions sent in by the Presbyteries have boon most carefully examined. In virtually no case have they to do with the substance of the Draft. They are almost wholly either of a purely verbal nature or concerned with the order of the separate paragraphs; and it may be said with confidence that in all substantial respects the document, as it now stands, has received the approval of a large majority of the Presbyteries from which returns came.

In the Light of the opinions of the Presbyteries, thus elicited, the document has been submitted to further scrutiny and revision. Every effort has been made to attain clarity of language and the right ordering of the subject-matter, but no change of substance has been introduced.

The Committee now recommends that the Assembly should accept the ‘Short Statement of the Church's Faith,' as now presented, and commend it to the ministers and members of the Church as an outline of the main articles of Christian belief suitable for the instruction of learners and for the help and guidance of believers. The Committee also recommends that, for purposes of easy and immediate reference, the ‘Short Statement' should be printed annually in the Year-Book, as well as issued in pamphlet form.

II.

The Committee is of opinion that it is not advisable to proceed with the preparation of a Catechism based on the contents of the ‘Short Statement.' And this for two reasons: first, because the matter of the Statement does not easily lend itself to such a purpose; secondly, because the catechetical method has been almost entirely discarded in every sphere of education, and is not approved by the best educational opinion. The Committee, however, believes that it might greatly advance the education of

young people in the knowledge of Christian truth it pamphlet were prepared containing outline addresses meant to expound the main topics dealt with in the ‘Short Statement’, together with other kindred matter likely to promote the study of it in Bible Classes, Discussion Groups, and Fellowship meetings. The recommendation is therefore made that, the Committee on the Religious Instruction of Youth be asked to consider the preparation and issue of a pamphlet; on the lines just described.

H.R. MACKINTOSH, *Convener*.

J. HUTCHISON COCKBURN, *Secretary.*

**SHORT STATEMENT OF THE CHURCH’S FAITH**

THE PREAMBLE.

This Short Statement seeks to express in outline the main articles of the Church's Faith for the instruction of learners and for the help and guidance of believers.

The Church's Faith is the unchanging Gospel of God's holy love made manifest in Jesus Christ. It is declared in thc Scriptures by prophets and apostles, and is attested both in the creeds of the Universal Church and in the Confessions of the Church Reformed. From age to age it been handed down within the Church, and confirmed in the experience of believers. As God's revelation of His nature and. purpose, it is its own evidence and authority, and truth is known to believers through the testimony of the Holy Spirit.

The Church welcomes the knowledge brought to light by scientific inquiry into all the facts of nature and history in the assurance that all true understanding of these facts will serve to show forth the glory of God.

The Church has the right, as duty may require, to set forth the Faith in the form of confessional statements, but always with fidelity to the Scriptures and the testimony of the Universal Church. No such confessional statement can express the whole truth of God.

I. GOD.

There is one God, eternal and almighty, Creator and. Upholder of all things, Father of all men, only Ruler and Judge of the world; holy, righteous, wise, and loving, who will triumph in His glorious purpose over all evil.

II.THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

God so loved the world that He gave His only Son to be the Saviour of mankind. Who being the very Son of God,

for us men and for our salvation became man in Jesus Christ. In perfect obedience to the will of God and in love towards men He lived. on earth and died for our sins; by the power of God He was raised from the dead and is now exalted Lord over all, ever living to make intercession for us. He is present always with His people, and will come again to be the Judge of the living and the dead.

The Lord Jesus Christ has perfectly revealed the Father. and is the only Mediator between God and man. In Him, the incarnate Son, suffering for the sins of men and bearing their sorrows, God speaks to men His word of forgiveness and eternal life, and calls them to repentance, faith, and obedience.

By faith the Church of all ages confesses Him to be Lord, and worships Him together with the Father.

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT.

The Holy Spirit is the Lord and the Giver of Life. By the power of the Holy Spirit God has ever been present in the lives of men, seeking them for Himself, inspiring every right desire and every effort after truth and beauty. By the same power God brings them to Himself through Jesus Christ that they may acknowledge their sin, receive His forgiveness, and become His sons and heirs of eternal life. Through the grace of the Holy Spirit given by Christ the fellowship of the Church is created, and its members receive a new power to grow into likeness of their Lord, to overcome sin, to love one another, and to labour and pray for the triumph of His kingdom.

IV. THE HOLY TRINITY.

The Church, knowing God through Jesus Christ His Son, and through the working of His Spirit in the world and in the lives of believers, confesses and adores one God --- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

V. REVELATION AND THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

God is made known by His revelation of Himself, in nature, in conscience, and in history, so that never in any nation has He left Himself witness. In Jesus Christ, in whom His purpose of redemption is fulfilled, He has manifested Himself fully, so that in Christ men are brought face to face with the Father.

The Scriptures of the Old aud New Testaments contain the Word of God given by inspiration. They record, and bear witncss to, the unfolding of Ilis gracious purpose. They are given for the knowledge of His ways, for reconciliation with Him, and for life according to His will. For the understanding of the Holy Scriptures the Church welcomes every aid provided by linguistic, literary, and historical research. The authority of the Scriptures depends on their effectual truth made sure to faith by the Holy Spirit, not on their scientific or historical accuracy or their verbal inerrancy; and through them the same Spirit speaks to the Church, which acknowledges them as revealing the mind and will of God to every generation, and accepts them as the supreme rule of faith and life.

VI. CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

God has created all things by His holy, loving, and almighty power. As Creator He is above all His works and in them all, upholding them in being and guiding their course.

In His infinite wisdom God governs all things and overrules all events for perfectly wise and loving ends. He has every human life in His gracious and holy keeping.

VII. MAN AND SIN.

God created man a spiritual being in His own likeness, for fellowship with Him and obedience to His will, giving to him freedom and responsibility; and man's true nature and destiny are brought to light in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Sin, which disobedience to God's law of righteousness and love, corrupts the sinner's nature and brings him under God's

condemnation. All men are sinful, and by their sin alienated from God.

Owing to their sinfulness, shown in their choice of evil, men are unable to fulfil the Divine purpose for which they were created, except as they receive the forgiveness and mighty help of God in Christ.

The existence of sin is a mystery, and is contrary to the will of God.

VIII. SALVATION IN CHRIST.

God is love, and geeks to win all men to Himself, that they may be one with Hirn. By reason of their sin they have turned from communion with God; yet in Jesus Christ God has taken. upon Him to save by forgiving their sin freely and reconciling them to Himself.

This salvation the eternal Son of God has wrought by becoming in nature one with man, being tempted like man yet without sin, and by offering Himself willingly for sin in the death of the Cross. Therein He has shown the exceeding evil of sin, condemning it once for all, and has manifested His redeeming love to the uttermost.

Jesus Christ, whom God raised from the dead, by His Cross and Resurrection draws all men to Himself, intercedes continually for His people, and by the gift of His Spirit enables them to overcome sin. Through His wondrous grace, those who believe on Him learn increasingly to love what He loves and to do what, is pleasing to Him.

IX. THE CHURCH AND MINISTRY.

It is the revealed will of God that men through Jesus Christ should come into fellowship with Him and thereby with one another. This fellowship is embodied in the Catholic or Universal Church, which consists of all those, together with their children, who confess their faith in Christ and profess obedience to Him. The Lord Jesus Christ is the only Head of the Church, which is His Body, and to His will alone it is subject.

There are many branches of the Church, differing in doctrine, in tradition, and in circumstance; yet through the union of all its true members with Jesus Christ, the Church is one. The boundaries of the true Church cannot be determined by men, but are known to the Lord alone.

The vocation uf the Church is joyfully to boar witness to its Lord, to worship God in His Name, to build up its members in faith and righteousness and the spirit of unity, to proclaim His Gospel to the ends of the earth, to give loving service to mankind for His sake, and to watch and pray for the coming of His Kingdom.

The Lord has committed to the Church the gifts of the Holy Scriptures, the Sacraments of the Gospel, and the Christian Ministry. The Ministry is an office within the Church for the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the eare of souls, exercised by those who, obeying the call of Christ, are duly chosen and ordained thereto.

X. THE SACRAMENTS,

Sacraments arc holy ordinances appointed by Christ and. committed by Him to the Church as tokens and pledges of God's saving love declared in His Word, and as effectual means through which He imparts His grace. In observing them the Church confesses its Lord before men and is visiblydistinguished from the world. Their benefits are received by faith, and by them faith is quickened and confirmed. 

Tho Sacraments of the New Testament are Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

In the Sacrament of Baptism by water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, the grace ofGod as cleansing from sin and imparting now life is visibly set forth and bestowed upon believers and upon their children, according to His promise. Baptism is the ordinance of admission to membership of the Church.

In the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, or Holy Communion,

bread and wine are given and received in thankful remembrance of Christ and His sacrifice upon the Cross, in faith in His real presence, and in joyful hope of His coming in glory. Therein Christ's gift of Himself and all His benefits is visibly set forth and bestowed upon believers, in such wise that they have communion with Him and with all the faithful of God.

XI. REPENTANCE AND FAITH.

All who hear the Gospel are called to repent and believe. In repentance and faith—wrought in their hearts by the Word and the Holy Spirit—believers accept the judgment of God and embrace the gift of salvation offered in Christ, In repentance they turn from sin to God with shame and sorrow of heart, and with the purpose of obedience to His will; in faith they apprehend and rest upon His forgiving love set forth in Christ. Thus, by penitent faith alone, and not because of good works or holiness on their part, they are received into sonship and peace with God and made heirs of eternal life.

XII. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

All who receive the Gospel are enabled in the strength of God to live in fellowship with Him as His children, to obey the law of Christ, to grow in knowledge of God's love, and to trust His fatherly care in every trial and perplexity, thereby in their whole life showing themselves thankful to Him for all His gifts.

They are called to abide within the fellowship of the Church, to maintain its peace and unity, and to give diligent heed to worship, prayer, the hearing of the Word, and the Sacraments. They are Likewise called to live as those who belong to the Kingdom of God, and to seek His righteousness both in individual and social life, serving their fellow men in love for Christ's sake, relieving distress, combating ignorance, pride and covetousness, vice and disease, and every social injustice and public wrong, and striving that the will of God for the wellbeing and peace of men should be done over all the earth.



XIII. CHRISTIAN HOPE.

The Gospel of Christ, crucified, risen. and exalted, bears promise of the ultimate triumph of good and of the everlasting blessedness of those who accept the mercy of God.

All souls are, after death, in the just and compassionate keeping of Almighty God.

God, who alone can read the heart, will judge all men by Jesus Christ, the Son of Man. Wickedness will not go unpunished, and those who reject the mercy of God will receive condemnation.

Those who accept His mercy live eternally in perfect fellowship with God and with one another, and joyfully serve Him in obedience and love, being made like to the Lord Jesus Christ. They see God face to face, and in the communion of saints are partakers with the Church on earth in all its labours and prayers

At the. last, Jesus Christ shall be manifested in the fulness of His power great glory. The whole creation of God shall be redeemed from all evil. The eternal purpose of God shall be accomplished, His Kingdom shall come in its fulness, and He Himself shall be all in all.

These things, as all else in the Christian Faith, the Church holds in reverent submission to the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit, Who is truth; and it will ever humbly seek of Him enlightenment and grace both to unlearn error and also more fully to learn the mind and will of God, to Whom be glory for ever and ever.

PROPOSED DELIVERANCE.

1. The General Assembly receive the Report, and thank the Committee, especially the Convener and the Secretary.

2, The General Assembly accept the ‘Short Statement of the Church's Faith’, as given in the Report, and commend it to the ministers and members of the Church as an outline of the main articles of Christian belief suitable for the instruction of learners and for the help and guidance of believers.

1. The General Assembly enjoin the Publications Commnittee to print the 'Short Statement' annually in the Year-Book, and also to issue it in leaflet form. The General Assemblv also enjoin the Committee on the Religious Instruction of Youth to consider the preparation and issue of a pamphlet expository of the 'Short Statement’, on the lines recommended in the Report.
2. The General Assembly discharge the Committee.

FINAL DELIVERANCE OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1, The General Assembly receive the Report, and thank the Committee, especially the Convener and the Secretary.

1. The General Assembly cordially commend the 'Short Statement of the Church's Faith’, as givcn in the Report, to the ministers and members of the Church as an outline of the main articles of Christian belief suitable for the instruction of learners and for the help and guidance of believers.
2. The General Assembly enjoin the Publications Committee to print the ‘Short Statement’ in the next Year-Book, and also to issue it in leaflet form. The General Assembly also enjoin the Committee on the Religious Instruction of Youth to consider the preparation and issue of a pamphlet expository of the 'Short Statement’, on the lines recommended in the Report.
3. The General Assembly discharge the Committee.

Certified a true Copy.

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