

In presenting the Report I want to focus on the future.

Rev Colin Macleod will do the same, in seconding.

Communications technology rapidly changing. What of the future?

Highlight Transhumanism Paper, and summarise: Transhumanism is a modern movement whose goal is to modify our humanity through technological innovation, in order to enhance and augment our human powers. Proponents regard our present bodies and minds as unacceptably limited, and long to transcend their present condition - to achieve longevity, boost intellectual powers, upgrade performance, maybe even to the point where man becomes posthuman. It's a very appealing philosophy, with pervasive influence. The Paper is a description and response to it. I hope that it will stimulate you all to think about how you relate to technology, and to consider the impact it has on your humanity and relationship with Jesus.

Let me focus on something I say little about in the Paper: Our use of IT = e-mail, video games, endless TV channels, mobile, texting, internet, Facebook, Twitter, etc.

arguably modifying what it means to be human

increasingly ubiquitous - invades every space in our lives if we let it

So information comes streaming at us

it is instantaneous

it has multiple sources

it is amoral (all is equal)

Only limit on our ability to interact is found in our brain. So we speak of info overload, too many choices, too much distraction.

We hear information technologies are reducing our attention span, 'infantilising the brain', even lowering intelligence. Others argue the opposite: IQ + innovation are growing, and focused achievers are still with us.

But 3 things Christians need to be aware of and determined to counteract:

ubiquitous IT bypasses our ability to learn. It prevents us creating a context for information, precludes deep reflection and bypasses the effort that used to be required to obtain information. Thus long term memory suffers.

it affects moral compass. If our torrent of electronic experiences does not allow adequate time for reflection on situations where a value judgement needs to be made and empathy to others shown, then our sense of right and wrong will remain stunted. For proof see how much less inhibited many people are online, or our Cn kids often are on Facebook. This is not to mention the sewerage system of IT - porn, gambling and other addictions; suicide sites etc..

creates distraction, wastes time. Technology's appetite for your time is insatiable.

This is all very relevant to the work of this Committee: The Record, Free, Bookshop, website.

There is no doubt that ubiquitous IT impacts our spiritual lives. Communication with man is impacting on communication with God. God doesn't use Twitter, Facebook, texting. We need to give God time for prayer and meditation - focus, concentration, uninterrupted.

That takes time, commitment and discipline.

Steven Pinker the Harvard Psychology Prof. says: "Yes, the constant arrival of information packets can be distracting or addictive, especially to people with attention deficit disorder. But distraction is not a new phenomenon. The solution is not to bemoan technology but to develop strategies of self-control, as we do with every other temptation in life. Turn off e-mail or Twitter when you work, put away your Blackberry at dinner time, ask your spouse to call you to bed at a designated hour."

If Pinker, an atheist, speaks in this way, how much more do Cns need to think about self-control in relation to IT.

To know God we must go into the closet, as Jesus said, and leave our technology where it cannot be accessed.

We must seek His face, not simply pray a few hyperlinks for God to access.

We must meditate on His word, which means thinking deeply and protractedly, not snatching a verse for the day from an iPhone app.

We must wait on God and be conscious of the Spirit testifying with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Else we may be e-mailing and texting our way into a post-Cn future.

Let me cover a few things from the Report now:

Website. It is our shop window, and like all shop windows the display needs changed regularly. This is a demanding task, and thanks are due to Iver for keeping this fresh. However he has limited time, and the full potential of the website remains to be realised. We no longer have a Communications Officer to perform this task. The Committee is always open to offers of help from competent individuals, but it may be time for the Committee, HMB, IMB which all have an interest in the website to pool their resources. Colin will say more.

Media Officer. Again, our thanks to Iver for undertaking this challenging role. Note what is said in the Report about public perception. You know the slogan Think Bike. I cycle a lot. Hope car drivers are thinking bike. In our relation to the world we must Think Lost - think about the lost. All it takes is 1 careless driver and I'm in the ditch. All it takes is one careless letter to the press, public spat, and the public turn from the Church, her gospel and her Ct. If only the ditch was the worst place that might leave them. Before you go public, Think Lost. That will make Iver's job a lot more straightforward.

Free. It is a joy to work with Chris Nicolson. She is cheerful, winsome in manner, passionate about our young people. We owe her an ongoing debt. We will have opportunity to continue in gratitude as we're recommending she be reappointed for a further 5 years. In the production of Free, Chris has a dream team around her, as you can read in the Report, and we affirm her conviction that Free is in God's hands and He is using it.

However, as the number of young people in society falls, and their use of printed material diminishes, circulation is falling. The Committee is concerned about this and invites you to think how you may help Chris: suggest contributors, contribute yourself, suggest how to get YPs interacting with material that is spiritually beneficial, help with wider distribution and marketing.

Bottom line is that if we're not educating our young, someone else is. The Report highlights especially how teaching on human sexuality, which may be at variance with Christ's teaching, is imparted in our secondary and primary schools. However, concerned parents can have a say in how their children are educated in this area of sexuality, and the Paper by Murdo Macleod, former Western Isles Director of Ed, explains how to make our influence felt at various levels. He may say more about that himself, but please read his Paper, and make it available in your congregations to parents.

Record. During my 4 years on the Committee we've had at the helm of the Record a man who truly thinks about the lost sheep. A man who has his finger on the spiritual pulse of Scotland; who understands culture, politics and the atheist mind,

who is articulate and stimulating, and who has been prepared to pour an extraordinary amount of energy into the magazine....

developing it from 24 to 32 pages

bringing in a constellation of new contributors

building a great production team

steering us through the turbulent waters of Church and State.

We owe him a great debt. I know he would have liked to take the Record further. Time forbad. It was a shock to the Committee to receive his resignation early this year. However he has the CC's full support in his decision as we recognise God's calling on him to develop St Peter's, and to expand Solas CPC - ministries for which God has supremely anointed him, and which God honours with converts. Thank you David, and may God continue to own your work in future.

The process the CC has followed to find a successor to David is outlined in the Report. Suffice to say that the outcome is an unequivocal recommendation that Rev Dr Malcolm Maclean take the baton of editorship from David and run with it.

He was nominated by all 8 Presbyteries, and if the Deliverance to this Report is passed, without amendments proposing other names, then Malcolm will automatically be the choice of the GA.

Can I say briefly what it was about Malcolm that convinced the interviewing panel to back him as candidate for editor? He is/has...

prolific writer - books, chapters, magazine articles, blogs etc.

appropriate vision to satisfy core readership and potential readers

huge network of contacts, within and outwith Ch, from which to commission articles

through employment with CFP, has full range of skills required, time management, teamwork, negotiating contracts, IT

Gavino Fioretti helping in Greyfriars congregation, to ease his workload

is interested in taking on the post, though only for 1 term of 7 years.

On this basis the Committee gladly recommend him to the Assembly.

As for the King James Version anniversary, please note the 2 conferences being organised. I'm sure that you are looking forward to Dr Fergus Macdonald's address, and I express the gratitude of the Committee to Dr Macdonald in anticipation.

All that remains is for me to thank Malcolm Maclean personally for his leadership of the Committee over the past 3 years. I have enjoyed working with him immensely, and learned much. Also to record my deep thankfulness for one catch the Committee made, the appointment of Heather Akroyd. She has proved worth her weight in gold. She is the best kept secret in the Free Church, and has basically run the Committee with watertight efficiency since coming to post.

Thank you for this opportunity to report on the Committee's work.