

Reformed Scottish Presbyterianism – Reunion in the 21st Century? An Answer to some Criticisms.

(Rev Kenneth Stewart, Glasgow Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland)*

What follows below is a personal response to two documents. Primarily, it is a response to the 'Statement of Differences' issued by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland Synod in 2012 in which the Free Presbyterian Church states where she stands in relation to the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

It also functions, however, as a response to a gracious criticism issued by the same church to a paper I wrote recently entitled 'Reformed Scottish Presbyterianism – Reunion in the 21st Century?'

While it may be a little awkward to respond to two papers at once, there is an obvious connection between them which makes it possible. The response to the paper on reunion is intended to highlight that there are 'differences' between the churches named in the paper which make reunion impractical. The 'Statement of Differences' is intended to highlight what these differences are in relation to the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

So, then, although I will be dealing mainly with the 'Statement of Differences', it makes sense to address the other document at various points as I go along.

And before interacting with the content of these two documents, I would like to thank most sincerely those who wrote the criticisms for the spirit in which they wrote and, indeed, for making the effort to respond at all.

Some Introductory Observations

Regarding the response to my paper on reunion, however, I think the intention of the paper was perhaps a little misunderstood if not altogether missed – which doesn't say much for me as its author!

For one thing, it was never my intention to present a full scriptural case for reunion. I wrote what I did on the assumption that the doctrine of the unity of the church was fully understood and fully accepted by all the parties concerned.

Neither was it my intention to imply that there are no grounds for the existing divisions – only that there are good grounds for re-examining them to ascertain their importance and relevance. Such a process of re-examination, honestly undertaken, should serve to highlight the reasons for *current* separation – as opposed to the reasons for *past* separation. These could be very different reasons.

And that is why it is important not to be enslaved to the past. Needless to say, such a process should also have at its heart a willingness to deal with these reasons and to heal the divisions as well.

The only reason for projecting possible outcomes in the paper was in order to try to get people to envisage where we could, with God's help, arrive – not the precise spiritual or procedural process by which we would arrive there. After all, if the vision of a possible reunification of the Scottish churches around the Westminster Standards is not even glimpsed, it will hardly be desired never mind fought or prayed for.

All I was advocating was that the churches which profess to hold to common doctrine, government and worship should consider such a conference imperative. After all, the issue of discipline – which is seen in the response to my paper as the probable stumbling block – is merely the enforcing of correct doctrine, worship and government. Therefore, it should come last in the process and, having reached that far, every effort ought to be made to secure agreement on it.

It is vital, then, to be clear that we are indeed one in doctrine, worship and government so that the issues of discipline can be uncovered and, hopefully, resolved.

My point, however, is that I doubt any of that can happen without such meetings as I advocated in the original paper: If supreme courts are going to write to each other, without meeting through appointed representatives in between, the process will be tedious in the extreme: on such a model of proceeding, a Synod would ask a question but would be unable to deal with an answer until the following Synod next year. However, at a properly constituted series of meetings between church representatives a question could be asked, a clarification sought, a difficulty dispensed with, a misconception removed – all in the space of a few minutes! When such progress could be made, it is difficult to understand such a reluctance to meet.

Indeed, the authors of the response seem to be saying that there is no point in meeting until the issues are resolved; my point is that we are in a place where meetings are required to resolve the issues!

In any case, I need to move on to more substantial matters.

Statement of Differences

For the benefit of those who may not know, it is the practice of the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, periodically and as the need arises, to issue a 'Statement of Differences'. These Statements are designed to state to her own people, as well as to others, the reasons for continuing in separation from other Presbyterian churches in Scotland.

This year, her Synod produced such a Statement in order to clarify her position regarding the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland. In it, she acknowledges that the two churches have existed in relative harmony and that they have shared a common commitment to the Scottish Reformation and, in particular, a common concern for the attainments of the Second Reformation –

attainments which, they acknowledge, were not properly protected by the Revolution Settlement of the Church of Scotland in 1690.

It was, of course, the failure to protect these attainments which led a covenanting remnant – consisting of several thousand men and women – to remain outside the newly re-settled Church of Scotland of 1690 and to continue in field meetings and conventicles until the coming of two Ministers made it possible for them to form the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

The Differences

When it comes to the differences between the churches, it is worthy of note that the Statement doesn't really highlight any. In fact, what the Statement appears to say is that the few differences which existed in the past seem to have disappeared when the Reformed Presbyterian Church adopted a new constitution in 2011.

However, instead of seeing this as a reason for the two churches to meet in conference with a view towards bringing the two churches into one – as the Reformed Presbyterian Church wished to do – it is seen rather as a reason for the Ministers and people of the Reformed Presbyterian Church simply to seek admission into the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland – presumably, on a one-by-one basis. To fail to do so, according to the Statement, would be to leave the Reformed Presbyterian Church open to the charge of schism – that is, unnecessarily dividing the visible church.

Indeed, according to the Statement, this charge (schism) could be levelled at the Reformed Presbyterian Church throughout her history - initially, because of her refusal to stay with the Church of Scotland when it was re-settled by the Government in the 1690 Revolution Settlement and, again, because of her failure to join the Free Church in 1843 when the creation of that church seemed to provide a church standing largely for what the Reformed Presbyterians had been standing for all along. The Free Presbyterian Statement praises the decision taken by the majority of Reformed Presbyterians to join the Free Church in 1876 as a 'correct' decision and one that left the minority who continued the Reformed Presbyterian Church, 'open to the charge of schismatic division'.

Again, according to the Statement, the Reformed Presbyterian Church adopted her new constitution in 2011 as a 'pragmatic' move - one designed to align the Reformed Presbyterian Church more closely with other conservative Presbyterian churches in Scotland. The better course of action, so they say, would have been to apply to another church already holding to the same principles.

Furthermore, the Statement goes as far as to say that by adopting the constitution in 2011, the Reformed Presbyterian Church could be seen as having become a new church altogether!

So, although no differences are brought out in the Statement, the fact that there are none has suddenly become the problem. So, how should the Reformed Presbyterian Church respond to all this?

Response

To begin with, we could acknowledge – with gratitude – that the tone of the Statement, like that of the response to the paper on reunion, sounds courteous and charitable. As such, it reflects the relationship in which these two bodies have co-existed for years.

We would also wish to say that we have no desire to quarrel with the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland: on the contrary, we think her stand in 1893, for the purity of doctrine in the church in Scotland, a noble one and rejoice that she has held to that position tenaciously over the years.

Significantly, in this respect, the same Synod of 2012 which produced the ‘Statement of Differences’ also had before it a request from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland to enter into dialogue to see what our differences were and whether they could be healed. While we would have preferred the full, frank and brotherly process of personal conference and interaction – for the reasons we outlined above - we are thankful for a Statement of Differences. In any case, our request indicates our heart towards that church.

Further, we would also wish to point out that we are not as interested in the past as we are in the future: our reason for writing to the other Presbyterian churches which share our commitment to the Westminster Standards was in order to bring about true reconciliation and healing and to find a way forward on strictly Biblical and Confessional grounds.

So, although we are willing to engage with the past and to clarify certain matters which arise from studying it, we would wish to state emphatically that we are looking to today and tomorrow rather than to yesterday. As this is of the utmost importance, more will be said on it as we go on.

We will look first at the charge of schism and then move on to the charge of pragmatism.

Schism

It is important to use the term ‘schism’ with clarity of meaning and always with restraint. It is often carelessly used as a simple substitute for ‘separation’ – which is not acceptable with respect to its usage in the Bible or indeed its usage in Scottish church history.

We believe, in common with the Reformers of the Second Scottish Reformation, that the term ‘*schismatics*’ should always be reserved for those who *are trying to shift the church away from Reformation attainments rather than for those who are fighting to preserve them*. The people who shift away from covenanted attainments are always the schismatics – supposing they constitute the vast majority and possess all the bricks and mortar belonging to a denomination. This position is easily defended but it is not necessary to do so here as I suspect it will be readily accepted by all parties involved – even if it is not always fully appreciated or properly applied in all cases.

Bearing this in mind, we will examine, first, the charge of schism against those Covenanters who chose to stay outside the church of the Revolution Settlement in 1690 and we can then move on to

the charge levelled against the minority of Reformed Presbyterians who refused to join the Free Church in the 1870's.

1690 and the Church of Scotland

It has to be said at the outset that all the Presbyterian churches descending from the Revolution Settlement of 1690 (including the Free Presbyterian Church) fail to consider the dubious morality involved in Ministers and Elders - who had sworn in covenant to God – so capitulating as to accept the terms of that Settlement in 1690. Sometimes, there is a sense of unease on the part of Free Presbyterians in speaking of it but, for others, it is a forgotten issue and either quite casually justified or completely ignored.

The fact is that the terms of the Settlement represented the last in a series of attempts to encourage exhausted Covenanters to forget the attainments of the Second Reformation which they were sworn to protect before God. In the years prior to the Settlement, during the 'Killing Times', the King had changed his approach towards the Covenanters by beginning to use a carrot as well as a stick: Instead of relying merely on aggression, he offered a series of 'indulgences' with a view to enticing covenanting Minister back into their charges and enticing their people back from their field meetings and into their churches.

These successive indulgences – each one more tempting than the one before – were designed to split the Covenanters and were successful in doing so: with each indulgence, an increasing number of Presbyterian Ministers, weary and exhausted, accepted the King's offer, gave up the struggle and accepted their former charges on clearly compromised terms – to the dismay of the rest of their brethren who found their own situation worsening with increasing persecution just as that of their former brethren became more comfortable.

The final Revolution Settlement of 1690, while it granted much of what the Covenanters were fighting for, fell woefully short. It was certainly designed to put a final end to the Covenanting struggle – but only on terms favourable to the King. After all, King William was no more a friend of Presbyterian government and worship than the Stewart Kings were!

This was reflected in the Settlement. For example: the National Covenants were not endorsed; all the Acts of the Church of Scotland during the Second Reformation (1638-1649) – *by which she accepted all the Westminster Standards as part of the 'covenanted uniformity'* – were declared null and void; Prelacy was to be established in England and landowners were to retain a say in the election of Ministers. However, what was offered was enough to persuade the majority of the weary Covenanters to give up – *but whether they could really be justified morally and spiritually in doing so is another matter altogether.*

After all, the spirit of the new Revolution Church of 1690, now suddenly crammed full of Moderates, was plain enough for all to see, especially during the process of accepting the last three Covenanting Ministers to give up the struggle into the church – a process in which the three men concerned were quite deliberately humiliated by the Assembly. This church immediately prostrated itself before the King: it would only meet and disband at his command and plunged into the deadening reign of

Moderatism and a spiritual declension which barely managed a whimper 20 years later at the passing of the Patronage Act of 1712.

She remained largely moribund until a reviving of the Covenanter spirit produced the Erskine Secession of 1733, the Disruption of 1843 and the revivals which accompanied these events.

All this was foreseen by the remnant of the Covenanters as being the inevitable fruit of the acceptance of the Revolution Settlement in 1690 by the majority of Scottish Presbyterians.

The Free Presbyterian Church is descended from the church of the Revolution Settlement and has tended to justify that Settlement – albeit through gritted teeth – *but it should go without saying that it is never a good reason to justify past ecclesiastical decisions simply because they happen to be a part of the church heritage to which we belong.* The early Free Church and the early Free Presbyterian Church have struggled to hide their embarrassment at the terms of the Revolution Settlement and there is little point in failing to acknowledge that fact – *does every decision a church make in its past have to be defended?*

The fact is – as early Free Presbyterians knew deep down – that the spirit of the Disruption, and indeed of 1892, is *the spirit of the Covenanters who would NOT accept the Revolution Settlement of 1690 – not the spirit of those who compromised their covenantal commitments by accepting it in the first place!*

The Free Presbyterian Church is, in spirit, the child of the Second Reformation Church of the 1640's – not the child of the Revolution church of 1690.

1843 and the Free Church

Second, as to the decision by the minority of the Reformed Presbyterian Church not to join the Free Church in 1876, we confess to being rather puzzled as to why the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland would see this decision as a wrong one. Would the Free Presbyterian Church herself join a church which had just legislated to move away from purity of worship – the Free Church had legislated for the singing of hymns in 1873 – and which was giving every sign of making the doctrine of the atonement and the establishment principle open questions?

The Reformed Presbyterians who joined the Free Church in 1876 joined a church which was already constitutionally and spiritually in decline and, significantly, those who joined had no influence whatsoever in arresting that decline – a decline which culminated, as Free Presbyterians well know, in the events of 1892 and 1900.

As far as we know, not one ex-Reformed Presbyterian stood either with the Free Presbyterian men in 1892 or with the Free Church continuing minority in 1900. If the Free Presbyterian Church today refused to join such a church, would she be deemed schismatic? We think not.

As I asserted above, we believe that the term '*schismatics*' should always be reserved for those who *are trying to shift the church away from Reformation attainments rather than for those who are fighting to preserve them.* Bearing this in mind, then, it is quite plain that the decision of the remnant Covenanters not to acquiesce in the Revolution Settlement was taken on the ground of an

oath sworn to God, covenants solemnly and publically signed and an earnest desire to be *absolutely faithful to Reformation attainments*.

This being so, it is more than a little unfortunate to begin to describe those who could not see their way to acquiescing to the terms of the Revolution Settlement – a decision which, by the way, involved huge personal cost to themselves – as ‘schismatic’. We would think that the Free Presbyterian Church (a church which has to endure the same charge all the time - and for much the same reason) should avoid applying this term to those who bled on the moors of Scotland and who felt that the new settlement of the church did not sufficiently protect the attainment of the Scottish Reformation.

And, instead of blaming the Reformed Presbyterian Church for division, consider the following:

Would it not have helped to heal Presbyterian Scotland, and eliminate many divisions, if the Erskines, and the other men of the Secession in 1733, had thrown in their lot with the remaining Covenanters?

And would it not have done the same had the Free Church taken a similar decision in 1843 rather than go on to perpetuate a shadow establishment?

And would it not have helped Presbyterian union had the fathers of the Free Presbyterian Church looked around in 1893 and identified themselves with the existing Reformed Presbyterian Church rather than strike out on their own?

In other words, why keep charging the previously existing body with the schism?

Pragmatism

As to the charge that the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland is virtually a new church since adopting the constitutional document in 2011, there is so much misunderstanding at this point in the Statement that it only serves to demonstrate the need for meetings rather than ‘Statements’ – or, at least, it demonstrates the need for forwarding the Statements to the other churches concerned prior to releasing them as a Synod for public consumption. This is particularly the case when there is no way to reach Free Presbyterian people in order to correct false impressions!

Sadly, at this point, the ‘Statement of Differences’ descends out of the realm of observable facts and statements and into the realm of imputing motive.

Context

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland had, for many years prior to 2011, been aware of the need to update her Testimony. The Testimony made the on-going revision and updating of itself a requirement upon the church but no such revision was undertaken throughout the whole of the 20th century. In more recent years, the difficulty involved in maintaining the very existence of the

Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland, coupled with the demands on time and strength on the part of the few office-bearers who were left, meant that little attention was given to the matter.

However, with the controversy which arose in the Free Church of Scotland in connection with ordination vows in 2010, there was a new realisation of the need to examine the constitutional position of the church so as to ensure the proper safeguarding of its doctrine, worship and government. This led to the discovery of a certain weakness which required addressing as a matter of urgency.

Problem

The problem was as follows: In the realm of doctrine, the vows which bound church officers to their office in the church required a commitment only to the Bible and to the Testimony.

As a result, it was evident that the main subordinate standards of the church (the Westminster Documents) were only safeguarded insofar as they were safeguarded by the Testimony. The Testimony, however, states of itself (correctly) that it is *'uninspired, imperfect and variable'* and necessarily *'progressive'* in its nature (see Testimony, chapter 15, paragraph 4). Further, while it states that the church is not at liberty to allow *'important truths'* to drop from the Testimony, it also states that the church is *'not pledged to defend every sentiment or expression'* to be found in the Covenants, Confession of Faith, Larger and Shorter Catechisms, Form of Church Government, Directory of Worship and Testimonies of the Martyrs (see Testimony, chapter 15, paragraph 5).

While these statements are correct, there were two obvious dangers. First, there was the danger arising from a failure to define which truths may be considered *'important'*. A second danger lay in the possibility of interpreting these statements in such a way as to teach that *unimportant* truths may be dropped from the testimony and, further, *that these unimportant truths may be found within the Confession itself*. Such an interpretation would remove the necessity of defending these Confessional truths or even allow for them being disregarded altogether – neither of which possibilities were envisaged by those who wrote the Testimony.

Clearly, then, it could be argued that the Testimony was failing effectively to safeguard the Westminster Standards which, along with the Covenants which produced them, are the *primary concern of the Reformed Presbyterian Church*.

Solution

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland concluded that the correct way to proceed was to adopt a formal constitution which would make its position clear to those inside and outside the church. Further, this constitution would specify what kind of change was permissible in the belief and practice of the church and in what way such change could lawfully be effected.

First, it was decided to separate the more essential part of the Testimony – that is, the Westminster Standards as adopted by the Church of Scotland as part of the covenanted uniformity in the 1640's – from the rest of the Testimony. These Westminster Standards would constitute the core part of the

constitution to be known as the Basis of Faith and Practice and would form the substance of the doctrinal vow taken by church office-bearers. This would more effectively safeguard the Westminster Standards, make the doctrinal position of the church more explicit and would also serve to highlight our position as a church bound to the attainments of the covenanted Second Reformation.

Second, in order to safeguard the remainder of the Testimony – which was not deemed essential in the same way but formed, nonetheless, part of what was pledged by the officers of the church – it was decided to proceed as follows:

Some of the material would be adopted into the constitution and would require ‘approval’ and ‘maintaining’ in the vows – which was, after all, what was required for the Testimony in the first place. This material would be subject to alteration and amendment as deemed necessary according to the laws of the constitution and as was permitted by the Testimony itself.

The remaining material, not suitable for inclusion in a constitution as such, would be reproduced in a more contemporary form – again, as the Testimony itself required (chapter 15, paragraph 4) – in the form of formal Statements or Deliverances by the Presbytery.

Outcome

By adopting this constitution, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland has made its message clearer to the church and to the world. While laying aside its Testimony, as a document, it has nonetheless preserved its substance – albeit in a different form. It has merely reorganised its constitution – it has not abandoned it. In doing so, it has more effectively secured the place of the Confessional Standards in the constitution of the church – as the covenanted Reformation pledged us to do – and more effectively bound her officers to the doctrine they teach.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church and Reunion

By undertaking this process, the Reformed Presbyterian Church has made it explicit that her constitution is just that of the Church of Scotland after the Second Reformation and prior to the Revolution Settlement. After all, she exists to protect and promote the attainments of the Church of Scotland *up to and including the Second Reformation* – which involves the National Covenants and all the Acts of the free Assemblies in the 1640’s. *Decisions and deliverances on other questions subsequent to that do not necessarily have the same standing and are not part of her constitution.* The production of the new constitution makes that more clear.

In producing such a constitution, the RP church did indeed intend to produce ‘*a standard around which all who agree may gather*’ – not, however, in the sense that all would necessarily have to join the Reformed Presbyterian Church, but in the sense that all the Scottish Reformed and Presbyterian Churches in agreement with it could gather around it, or around something akin to it, as a standard

for any new or existing church. It was not meant to reflect adversely on any other church standard – it is a positive statement rather than a negative one.

As to it being the duty of the Reformed Presbyterian Church to enter the Free Presbyterian Church, we wish to make the following plain.

First, we have made an approach to see whether a meeting is possible to see whether some kind of union is possible. We have been supplied with a ‘Statement of Differences’ and, although disappointed that the request for a meeting was not taken up, we will doubtless try again.

Second, while we have no inherent objection to joining any church sharing our constitution, it is a little galling for the oldest of the four psalm singing Confessional churches in Scotland to be told constantly that she is the one in schism – particularly when she appears to be the ones most intent on trying to heal the divisions! – and that she must join one of the others.

Although the Reformed Presbyterian Church only formed its first separate Presbytery when it was able to do so in 1743, she is manifestly in direct lineal descent from the Reformed Church of Scotland. That is beyond question. To say, then, that it is the *duty* of such a church to enter a church dating only from 1892 is strange to say the least: It may *wish* to do so and may indeed *apply* to do so, but to say it has that *duty* to do so is, as I say, rather strange. As we indicated earlier, it is arguable that the Free Presbyterian fathers should have looked around and allied themselves with the already existing Reformed Presbyterian Church!

However, while it is important to know where we came from, we strongly feel that what ultimately matters is *what we are now* and such discussions don’t really lead us anywhere – they sound to the world like point scoring and we end up living in the past, failing to deal with the present and unable to look to the future.

And is this not the real problem? This is, in fact, the very reason why the Reformed Presbyterian Church wrote to the other three existing Presbyterian churches which profess commitment to Westminster doctrine, government and worship – just to see whether it is possible, by the grace of God, to cease the fragmentation and regroup around the attainments of the Second Reformation. Of course, if what the authors of the response to the paper on reunion say regarding subscription in the APC is true, it may be the case that the number of churches involved reduces from four to three. We do not care for names or labels: we wish to see the Scottish church re-gather around Westminster doctrine, government and worship. There is neither time nor appetite to play ecclesiastical games – not that we are accusing the Free Presbyterian Church of doing that – but it will get us all nowhere if we all adopt the position ‘you should join us but we won’t join you’. *Why, all being well, and with the grace of God, can we not all join one another instead?*

As to the claim made in the response to the paper on reunion to the effect that ‘the stand in 1893 is in fact a Reformation attainment from which it would be a great sin to decline’ I think a clarification is required although, in this case, it is probably not too important.

The language of ‘attainment’ – like the language of schism – needs to be used with care. I think it is wrong to describe 1893 as an ‘attainment’. It is, rather, the protection of previous attainments. There was no attaining to a new understanding of doctrine or an articulation of it in creedal form at the time. 1893 was simply a laudable preservation of an attainment already arrived at and, certainly,

the Free Presbyterian church was right to fight for these past attainments and we could well agree that she should in no way consider a reunion which did not conserve them.

Conclusion

So, then, it is not fair to say, as the Statement does, that *'the constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland has however been considerably altered in the past year and has been all but stripped of its previously distinctive elements'*.

Neither is it true to say that *'this action seems, in part, to have been carried out for pragmatic reasons rather than from conviction or deeply held principle'*.

Again, it is not true to say that the present RP church *'has only really come into its present separate existence a little more than a year ago'*.

And, finally, it is not true to say that, in this process, the RP church *'deliberately aligned'* itself to any other body.

The Statement closes with a confident assertion of the Free Presbyterian position – and we would stress that we rejoice in her testimony – but is the Free Presbyterian Church sure of her claim to be adhering strictly to Second Reformation attainments in practice as well as profession? And is she sure that her claim to be the rightful (sole?) heir of the 1560 Church of Scotland is as strong as her claim to be the (sole?) heir of 1843?

We wish the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland well but we also wish, and reiterate our request, that she would appoint a committee to meet with brethren of a common stock who only wish to meet with them to see whether it may be possible, through the grace of God, to reunify the broken fragments of a national and covenanted church.

Nothing said in either the Statement of Differences or in the response to the paper on reunion would seem to justify failing to meet at this level. After all, our forefathers spent months and years in conference to draw up the Westminster symbols of union in the 1640's. Could we not invest a little time and energy into the same pursuit of union ourselves? If we were not in agreement over our Confession, I would readily understand a reluctance to meet. The same would hold true if we were not agreed on Worship or Government. But, if it is the case that we are truly at one on these, then, surely, there is a pressing obligation lying upon us to see whether any outstanding issues can be resolved.

If we fail, and if there were to be good reasons for that failure, so be it – but at least we can say before God that, for ourselves and for our children and for the sake of the peace and prosperity of His house, we did our duty and tried.

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*My own paper can be accessed at <http://www.thepsalmssung.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Reformed-Scottish-Presbyterianism-Reunion-in-the-21st-Century.pdf> and the response to it by the Free Presbyterian Church can be accessed at http://www.fpchurch.org.uk/documents/Reformed_Scottish_Presbyterianism_A_Response.pdf

This response is, as the title says, a personal response and although it may sometimes appear to speak for the RP church it would only claim to do so in a general sense – it has not been issued by the RP church.