

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH REFORMATION SOCIETY

The Society has very grave concerns about this bill, and particularly the lack of protection for religious debate.

The Scottish Reformation Society is an evangelical Protestant society that has been in existence for 170 years. Its purpose is to promote Protestantism and the Scottish Reformation, and to oppose whatever is opposed to these, particularly Roman Catholicism and secularism. Over the decades there have been some robust exchanges of opinion. The Society is probably not prominent enough now for Roman Catholics to bother to use hate-crime legislation against it (as one Arab told my father when he was in the Middle East in the 1960s, and enquired why no attempt had been made to assassinate him: “you were not worth the price of a grenade”), but perhaps I am underestimating the antagonism of some. But I am certainly fearful that militant secularists would use the proposed legislation to silence adverse criticism. There seems to be no limit to the ruthlessness of some of these activists. They would jump at the opportunity of making trouble for a Christian organisation. If ordinary calm, gracious religious debate and witness is to continue without police and court interference, this bill urgently needs some safeguards added to it.

Scottish Reformation Society
July 2020