

The Rev. Wayne A. Smith, B.A., B.D. (*Chairman of the Delegation representing the Presbyterian Church in Canada*): Mr. Chairman, honourable senators, and members of the House of Commons, we wish to extend our sincere thanks for this invitation to appear before you this afternoon.

In the month of November you had read into the record a resolution passed by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada reflecting the attitude of our denomination to the grounds for divorce in Canada. At that time you seemed to think that perhaps the Presbyterian Church would make no further submissions. On our part, we felt we should explain our position a little more in terms of the document you have before you containing supportive reasons why we thought the ground should be broadened to some extent, and since your committee has graciously invited us to speak to you this afternoon we are prepared to do so.

We did not prepare a lengthy brief because we knew that other denominations had made representations to you. The United Church of Canada had submitted to you a document of considerable length, and having seen press reports of it, which we read in detail, we felt, as the first press reports came through, that we were in agreement with that document and so we did not think it worth while to repeat.

We did deem it necessary, however, to give supportive reasons for the position which we have taken and which appears in the brief that is in your hands.

Ours basically is a theological paper. It does not go into the legal aspects of the subject, or make specific recommendations; it simply points out the theological principles involved, as we in our communion understand them.

It is noteworthy that the Presbyterian Church has had as its doctrine for three hundred years that the grounds of divorce are adultery plus wilful desertion of such a kind as cannot be remedied by the Church or the Civil Magistrate; and our Church has now recognized that the grounds of divorce dictated by our doctrine are broader than the grounds now appearing in the Statutes of the Dominion of Canada.

We have been able to secure acceptance in our Church of the position we have tried to state in this brief. We think this is notable because our Church has been regarded traditionally as conservative on theological and moral issues; but there does seem to be a real temper in our Church which corresponds to a great extent to this submission and, I am sure, many others of the submissions your committee has received over the past few months.

What we desire to do is to make two points: first of all that there are other things besides adultery that kill marriage; there is wilful desertion, according to our doctrine. Our doctrine is based primarily on the Scriptures, and supportively on the Westminster Confession of Faith; and it is the Westminster Confession of Faith that gives the two grounds of adultery and wilful desertion.

The second of the two points I have mentioned is that our Church is not in favour of easy divorce. We believe that society as a whole and the Christian Church in particular have a responsibility to safeguard the institution of marriage, and as well the souls of the people who are involved in the breakdown of marriage, and those of their children.

We feel that the Church as a whole and society as a whole ought to be doing all it can to preserve the institution of marriage, and all the benefits that flow from it, and those are the two points which we desire to make. Would it be your wish that I should now read the brief, Mr. Chairman?

The CO-CHAIRMAN (*Senator Roebuck*): Yes, Mr. Smith, if you please.