

# MARRIAGE, FAMILY, SEXUALITY

## Opinion of the Synod of the Reformed Church in Hungary

/Budapest, 6 May 2004/

### I.

Based on the Holy Scripture<sup>1</sup> the Reformed Church in Hungary considers marriage, as the lifelong alliance between a man and a woman, as the creation of God.

Although the institution of marriage and the family today appears shaken, in accordance with the Biblical declaration underlying the traditional understanding we profess that marriage is the basis for family life, which God may bless with children, thus according the married couple His blessing for creating life.

This Biblical order is reinforced by the experience that the love between two people can be consummated in a permanent, monogamous marriage. This creates emotional, legal and financial security for both the parents and their children.

We know that the diverse development of children is most stimulated in a harmonious family environment. As a result, the family is the foundation for complete and healthy social life.

### II.

We profess that sin has damaged the whole of human nature, and the relationship between men and women is no exception. This could result in marriage falling into a crisis, becoming formal, collapsing.

Although sexuality remains the gift of God, it can become a tool of selfishness. Irresponsible relations and the uninhibited intensification of selfish desires cause innumerable damage to individuals and communities (e.g. surgical abortion<sup>2</sup>).

This is why God regulates sexuality: “Thou shalt not commit adultery!”<sup>3</sup> In the spirit of our doctrinal standard we profess the positive content of this commandment, that we must lead a clean life in marriage too. “Since both our body and soul are temples of the Holy Ghost, God commands us to preserve them pure and holy. He forbids therefore all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires and whatever can entice men thereto.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Gen 1,27; Gen 2,24; Ep 5:32 cf. Calv.II. XXIX.2.

<sup>2</sup> Opinion of Reformed Church Synod on protecting foetal life – Ref.Ch. Jul-Aug 1992. p.182.

<sup>3</sup> Exo 20,14

<sup>4</sup> Heid.Cat. Q/A 108/109

In this day and age, which is also labelled the era of the sexual revolution, Christians – along with all people – are exposed to greater temptation than in the times when society itself judged those infringing the above commandment under more stringent standards.

We do not believe that human beings of previous ages were better, or that humans in our era are any more guilty, because as stated by Scripture “all have turned aside, together they have become worthless, there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one”.<sup>5</sup> Yet we still have a duty to draw the attention of our church and our people to current sins such as uninhibited sexual life, pornography, prostitution and any other form of sexual exploitation, along with the irresponsible handling of the consequences.

The mass and unrestricted presentation and dissemination of the above impacts adversely on the development of our children’s personalities in particular, infecting public morals and constituting the basis for numerous forms of crime.

We profess with repentance that not even our church has been able to make a sufficiently strong moral stand in the world advocating the virtues of purity and loyalty.

We regret and disapprove of the divorces which occur among the members and office bearers of our church<sup>6</sup>. Yet, showing solidarity for all of our contemporaries, we preach the grace of God, the gospel of conversion and the chance to begin again, which we consider to be the only opportunity for moral renewal of both our individual and community lives.

### III.

It is with this disposition that we touch upon the phenomenon that wishes to designate life companions of different sexes and long-term relationships of single-sex couples as equivalent to the institution of marriage.

We are aware that there are fellow beings who are incapable of marriage as it was originally envisaged as they are attracted to their own sex, be it an inherited inclination or of their own volition.

We do not morally qualify this inclination. We accept these brothers tactfully and considerately and handle their profound human feelings discreetly and with understanding. It is our duty to defend them against all forms of discrimination that violate their human dignity.

However, since homosexual practice is condemned by both the Old and the New Testament, which consider it to be a sin equivalent to adultery<sup>7</sup>, our church is unable to accept such relations and cannot bless them.

It follows that living or spreading such a lifestyle is incompatible with the vocation of a minister and teacher of religion, as well the training for such callings and all types of service within the church.

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<sup>5</sup> Romans 3,12

<sup>6</sup> Resolution of Synod Court – J. No. 5/1985.

<sup>7</sup> Lev 18;45. Rom 1,26

For the sake of protecting marriage and the family, our church also feels duty bound to protest if legislation wishes to accord the coexistence of homophile couples the same value as marriage, thus enabling them to adopt children.

In this respect we agree with the opinion of the Hungarian Constitutional Court defending the values of marriage<sup>8</sup> and the relevant provisions of the family rights law currently in force<sup>9</sup>.

#### IV.

The Synod of the Reformed Church in Hungary is aware that its opinion differs from both the understanding of part of secular society, and the opinions and convictions of some foreign churches. Nevertheless, in accordance with the faith of teaching until better understanding we furnish our opinion with the freedom of conscience under Scripture: “we must obey God”<sup>10</sup>, rather than the spirit of the age.

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<sup>8</sup> Resolution 14/1995 (III. 13.) of Constitution Court, Hungarian Gazette 1995/20 (III.13.)

<sup>9</sup> Section 10 of Act IV of 1952 on Marriage, Family and Guardianship.

<sup>10</sup> Acts 5,29