

MARRIAGE, FAMILY, SEXUALITY

Statement of the Synod of the Reformed Church in Hungary

Budapest, 6 May 2004

I.

Based on the Holy Scripture¹ the Reformed Church in Hungary considers marriage, the lifelong alliance between a man and a woman, as the good order of creation of God.

Although the institution of marriage and the family today appears to be rattled, in accordance to the Biblical teachings underlying traditional understanding, we profess that marriage is the basis for family life which God may bless with children, by this bestowing the married couple with His blessing for the creation of 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 recognize that the diverse development of children is best secured in a harmonious family environment. As a result, the family is also the foundation for a whole and healthy social life.

II.

We profess that sin has completely corrupted human nature, and the relationship between man and woman is no exception. This could result in marriage falling into crisis, becoming a formality, or falling apart.

Although sexuality is a gift of God, it can become a tool of selfishness. Irresponsible relationships and the unrestricted practice of selfish desires may cause countless damage to individuals and communities (e.g. surgical abortion²).

This is why God regulates sexuality: "Thou shalt not commit adultery!"³ In the spirit of our confessional writings, we declare the positive message of this commandment, that we must lead a pure life in marriage as well. "Since both our body and soul are temples of the Holy

¹ Genesis 1:27, Genesis 2:24, Ephesians 5:32 cf. Calv. II. XXIX. 2.

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

³ Exodus 20:14

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.”⁴

Nowadays, also known as the era of the sexual revolution, Christians – with all people – are exposed to greater temptation than in the times when society itself judged those breaking the above commandment under more stringent standards.

We do not believe that humans of previous times were better, or that humans in our era are any more guilty, because as it is written in Scripture, “all have turned aside, together they have become worthless, there is no one who shows kindness, there is not even one.”⁵ 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 massive and unrestricted presentation and dissemination of the above adversely impacts the development of the personalities of our children, infecting public morals and becoming a source for numerous forms of crime.

In a spirit of repentance, we confess that not even our church has been able to make a strong moral stand in the world by demonstrating the virtues of purity and fidelity.

We regret and disapprove of the divorces which occur among the members and office bearers of our church⁶. Yet, in solidarity with all of our contemporaries, we proclaim the grace of God, the gospel of conversion and the chance for new beginnings, which we consider to be the only opportunity for moral renewal in 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 same-sex couples as equivalent to the institution of marriage.

We are aware that there are fellow human beings who are incapable of marriage according to the order of creation, as they are attracted to members of their own sex, be it a genetic or learned inclination or of their own volition.

We do not morally qualify this inclination. We receive these brothers and sisters with considerate pastoral care, and handle their profound human dilemma discreetly and with

⁴ Heid.Cat. Q/A 108/109

⁵ Romans 3:12

⁶ Resolution of Synod Court - J. No. 5/1985

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 and considered a sin equivalent to adultery⁷, our church is unable to accept such relations and cannot bless them.

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

For the sake of protecting marriage and family, it is the duty of our church to protest when legislation wishes to accord the partnership of same-sex couples as equivalent to marriage, thus enabling them to adopt children.

In this respect, we agree with the statement of the Hungarian Constitutional Court defending the values of marriage⁸ and the relevant provisions of the family rights law currently in force⁹.

IV.

The Synod of the Reformed Church in Hungary is aware that its statement differs from both the understanding of part of secular society and the opinions and convictions of some international churches. Nevertheless, in accordance with the confessional heritage of “reservation of a better instruction,” we formulate our statement with freedom of conscience bound to the Scripture, “We must obey God”¹⁰, rather than to the spirit of our time.

⁷ Leviticus 18:45, Romans 1:26

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

⁹ Section 10 of Act IV of 1952 on Marriage, Family and Guardianship

¹⁰ Acts 5:29