



Position
of the New Apostolic Church
on certain issues
of sexual conduct



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Bearing in mind the various cultures in which the Church is active throughout the world, the Church leadership adopts positions on certain issues of sexual conduct within and outside of marriage in the following summarised form:

1. Core considerations on sexuality and how sexual conduct has developed in different eras and cultures

God's will on the role of sexuality in human partnership is described in the Bible:

- „Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply;..." (Genesis 1:28).
- "And the LORD God said, It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." (Genesis 2:18).
- "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24).

Leviticus 18 and 20 describe the kind of sexual conduct that God does not condone. He enjoins us to keep His ordinances.

The most important cultural values such as those enshrined in religion, morality, marriage, and family, which have developed through the centuries, regulate how human partnership is to be structured. They find different cultural expressions and are subject to constant change.

Beginning in the 9th century, the assertion that only church marriages should be accepted as valid became more and more intense. Prior to the Council of Trent (1545-63) the Church accepted several forms of partnership, providing they were permanent unions of a monogamous kind. With the statutory introduction of civil marriage (in Central Europe at the end of the 19th century) the church's blessing could no longer be obtained without a marriage certificate. Thus marriage was placed under the jurisdiction and protection of the state. Being subject to the state's authority, the churches concluded from this, among other things, that any cohabitation between a man and a woman without a marriage certificate under civil law was sinful.

2. Case for marriage and family

The New Apostolic Church has always emphasised the importance of the Church's wedding blessing, and has always counselled couples to receive it in direct connection with their civil marriage. The Church supports all endeavours of society to confer special protection on marriage and the family.

Marriage is the union of a man and a woman over the span of a lifetime, the latter having been confirmed by a public promise of fidelity (cf. Genesis 2: 24; Matthew



19:4.5; Ephesians 5:31). God's blessing is an important and valuable foundation for marriage and family. Seizing upon God's word and grace, praying together, and sharing the experience of faith all serve to strengthen the marital bond and bolster the family.

Spiritual shelter and sexual fulfilment are best experienced within the context of marriage. A good marriage can offer children the exemplary and constant conditions they need in order to take on responsibility in later life.

3. Sexuality and sin

The objective of our doctrinal teaching is to shed light on what, in the Church's view, does not conform to God's will. In so doing, we wish to help our brothers and sisters adjust their conduct accordingly.

Sin is anything that is opposed to the will of God and contrary to His nature. It does not fall to man himself to determine what is sinful. The sole determinant is God's will, as discerned from the Holy Scripture, or as revealed in timely manner by the Holy Spirit through the chief apostle and the apostolate – in the mind and spirit of Jesus Christ's gospel.

With each sin, man incurs guilt before God. The magnitude of a person's guilt before God depends on the degree of his personal accountability or blameworthiness. Sin itself cannot be subjectively evaluated: sin is and remains sin. In the domain of sexuality, sin may not be evaluated any differently than any other wrongful conduct. But this does not apply to the degree of guilt. God alone determines the magnitude of guilt an individual incurs with each and every sin.

For details on the relationship between "Sin and guilt" please consult point #5.

In the context of personal responsibility, each human being is fundamentally accountable in conscience to God, his fellow man, and himself for all his thoughts, words, and deeds. Each person is therefore also responsible for how he deals with his sexual disposition (cf. Romans 2: 11-16; Acts 24: 16).

Anyone suffering from self-reproach may nevertheless hope to find grace and comfort in Jesus, provided he fulfils the necessary requirements (cf. Matthew 11: 28).

4. Position on certain issues of sexual conduct

The position adopted below is based on the previous statements:



4.1 Premarital sexual intercourse and intimate caressing

The New Apostolic Church does not approve of premarital sexual intercourse, particularly when practised with frequently changing partners, with persons below the age of maturity, or to test sexual compatibility.

If a couple has the firm intention to get married in the foreseeable future and if they adhere to the Biblical tenets of a serious commitment, sustained fidelity, genuine love, and mutual support (Genesis 2: 24; Matthew 19:4.5; Ephesians 5:31), then premarital sexual intercourse is not considered to be sinful. Nevertheless, the New Apostolic Church counsels couples, even in this case, to forego premarital sexual intercourse, which shall be reserved for marriage.

The New Apostolic Church does not approve of intimate caressing (for sexual satisfaction) with frequently changing partners and persons below the age of maturity.

4.2 Heterosexual life partnerships outside of marriage (concubinage)

The New Apostolic Church does not approve of such marriage-like intimate cohabitation at a single address without marriage and without a Church blessing. The Church counsels couples to get married and points to the meaningfulness of the wedding blessing. "Trial-run marriage" is not acceptable.

If a couple has the firm intention to get married in the foreseeable future and if they adhere to the Biblical tenets of a serious commitment, sustained fidelity, genuine love, and mutual support (Genesis 2: 24; Matthew 19:4.5; Ephesians 5:31), then sexual intercourse is not considered to be sinful.

Brothers and sisters cohabitating outside of marriage are barred from discharging ministerial and teaching activities, since they are not in a position to function as good examples.

4.3 Adultery

The Bible designates adultery as sin, in unmistakable terms (Exodus 20: 14 and 17; Matthew 5: 27-28; cf. on this point also John 8: 3-11).

Special guidelines apply to ministers and teachers in this connection.

4.4 Homosexuality

On the grounds of Biblical tenets and Christian tradition, the New Apostolic Church deems practised homosexuality to be unacceptable.

It is solely for God to determine whether, and to what extent, a person who is absolutely confirmed in his or her homosexual disposition, acquires guilt before God through the practice of his or her homosexuality.



In this regard, it should be expressly stated that sexual disposition has no relevance in the pastoral care of our brothers and sisters.

Brothers and sisters who are practising homosexuals, or living in a homosexual partnership, are barred from discharging ministerial and teaching duties in our Church.

4.5 Masturbation

Masturbation is not sinful.

5. Distinction between guilt and sin

In the "Position of the New Apostolic Church on certain issues of sexual conduct" a distinction is made between guilt and sin. This distinction has not yet been incorporated into our Church's doctrine. An in-depth study, which provides a comprehensive analysis of sin in light of Biblical witness, will be published in the near future however.

The following summary of the distinction between guilt and sin will help readers gain a better understanding of the relevant passages set out in this statement of position:

- The terms *guilt* and *sin* both appear in the Bible. Sometimes they are used synonymously, but sometimes they have different meanings. The distinction between the two emerges most clearly from the words of God's Son, when He defended His disciples who – in the Pharisees' eyes – had broken the Law and so committed a sin: "Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath (i.e. sin by breaking the third commandment!), and are blameless?" (Matthew 12:5).
- Sin is anything that is opposed to the will of God and contrary to His nature. When man infringes against God's declared will, he sins. This cannot be relativised. But we can readily imagine that God "peers behind the scenes", when several people apparently commit the same misdemeanour (i.e. sin), and appraises their deeds differently. Thus the degree of each sinner's accountability before God may differ, even if each commits the very same sin.
- Although an individual always incurs guilt before God by sinning, the magnitude of his guilt may be greater or smaller depending on the degree of his personal accountability or blameworthiness.
- Therefore guilt, in this sense, comes to bear when God, in His righteousness, reproaches the sinner for his misdeed, since the sinner bears responsibility for his sin.
- God alone determines the scale or magnitude of guilt. Each sinner's individual situation has a bearing on what can be held against him. Here God, in His omniscience, love, and compassion, will take due account of all the circumstances in which the sin is committed. Thus we may assume that God, in ap-



praising a person's sins, will take into account certain influences to which the sinner was exposed. Some examples include:

- general circumstances of life
- social structure
- laws of the land
- emergencies
- pathological predispositions

All these considerations lead to the conclusion that guilt, as opposed to sin, is relative. In certain cases, the degree of guilt associated with a sin can be next to none.

Zürich, January 2005