

**THE CHURCH AND HUMAN
SEXUALITY**

A Report from the SAATC

April 1995

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Dear Friends

Our sexuality touches us at some of the deepest levels of our being and we find ourselves easily becoming sensitive when sexual matters are discussed. We have found this so in our own discussions in the fellowship of the Synod of Bishops, and we know that it is so in the church.

Consequently, as we are all aware that many issues related to human sexuality are being openly debated in the societies of Southern Africa, we have initiated a process of dialogue, teaching and reflection in the Province to help our people to live Christianly in this climate. Our Theological Commission has worked hard to produce the attached paper as a first step in considering these matters, and we now issue it from the Synod of Bishops for discussion in the church. Needless to say, not every bishop sees every part of it in the same way (and there are points over which we disagree). But we offer it as a broadly agreed place of departure for further learning together.

We are aware that many of the matters touched on here need further study and debate; we commit ourselves and our Theological Commission to that process. Indeed, groups are already at work developing further papers on abortion, homosexuality, medical-ethical issues and other related matters.

We invite the church at large to join us on that journey. If we are to learn together; it is vital that we listen to one another first.

God bless you

+ Desmond Cape Town, on behalf of the Synod of Bishops

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God - if there is this love among you, then all will know that you are my disciples."

THE CHURCH AND HUMAN SEXUALITY

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A. INTRODUCTION

1. The church in Southern Africa is part of society - a society which is experiencing extensive social and political change.
2. Alongside these are changes in people's sexual experience and understanding:
 - 2.1 Some believe that the church has failed to uphold its traditional teaching and values in the area of sexual morality, and would therefore want the church to provide absolute rules to overcome the confusion which they believe exists.
 - 2.2 Others are prepared to recognise the validity of the church's teaching, but in fact base their sexual behaviour on other approaches to Christian ethics, resulting in a tension between the church's teaching and their practice.
 - 2.3 Others find the church's teaching to be outdated and restrictive, so that they consider it irrelevant in determining their sexual behaviour. Consequently they act without any reference to the church's norms.

In spite of the greater openness to the discussion of sexual behaviour in contemporary society, the church has not presented its teaching with equal openness, neither has the church been consistent in its position.

3. Many issues of various kinds in sexual ethics confront the church today, such as abortion, in vitro fertilisation, surrogate motherhood, biomedical ethics, genetic engineering, homosexuality, bisexuality, sexual violence, prostitution, pornography, divorce and remarriage, the AIDS pandemic.

Also needing study are very important issues from our African roots, such as lobola , customary union and polygamy.

None of these issues can be discussed without an overall understanding of sexuality as intrinsic to human life and the salvation promised by the gospel. This report addresses only the broad issues of Christian sexual ethics. Further study on the above issues still has to be undertaken. Meanwhile some preliminary thoughts on homosexuality and on lobola are include at the end of section F below, and the issues raised by AIDS are discussed in the report prepared by Ronald Nicolson.

4. The church needs to help people understand human sexuality as a gift from God, designed to enrich life and to lead to a deepening of relationship. In this way it should help people make responsible and mature decisions about their behaviour.
5. The CPSA has to face the pastoral challenge which affects all its members. Traditional understandings of sexual ethics need to be re-examined in the light of
 - (i) new insights into the interpretation of the Bible;
 - (ii) evidence from the biological and human sciences; and
 - (iii) the contemporary context.

B. THE INTERPRETATION OF THE BIBLE

1. The Bible has its own Context

As human beings we are born into societies and cultures which influence the way we live and love. As Christians we seek to grow into full humanity as revealed in Jesus Christ. This growth requires us to grapple with the meaning and interpretation of scripture and to live it out in our context. The tension between the biblical witness and Christian experience in the very different situations of today poses the real question in interpretation.

2. The Biblical Witness

2.1 The Old Testament

Sex is good and for procreation

The stories of creation in Genesis 1 - 2 represent the goodness of all God's creation, and especially of Adam and Eve, the human family. "In the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gn 1 : 27) "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (v31) (cf Gn 5 : 1 - 2 "When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man (Hb Adam) when they were created" - RSV). Human sexuality, the difference between, and the complementary nature of, man and woman, as part of God's creation is very good. The command to multiply (Gn 1 : 28) was in itself an affirmation of the goodness of sex. The story of the disobedience of Eve and Adam (Gn 3) was not concerned with sexual sin, but simply with the universal human desire to be independent beings in control of their own destinies. .

Sex is to express love - and to be enjoyed

Human sexuality, however, is not simply a means for the reproduction of the species. It is also viewed as the means by which peoples love and knowledge of their partners are expressed. Thus the word *yadah* ('know') refers especially to knowledge gained by experience, and is regularly used of sexual intercourse, both with the man as subject (eg Gn 4: 1, 17, 25) and also with the woman as subject (Nm 31 : 17, 18, 35). The use of the word to refer to God's knowledge of his servants (2 Sm 7 : 20) or of Israel (Am 3: 2) not unnaturally

led to the understanding of the relationship between YHWH and Israel as being analogous to that between husband and wife. Similarly the Hebrew *'ahab* ('love') is used in the sense of affection towards another person, love for God, God's love for his people (individually and corporately as Israel) and for the expression of such love in sexual union (2 Sm 13 : 1, 15).

Sex is for faithfulness

The relationship between YHWH and Israel is constantly expressed in sexual images, of which the clearest example is provided in Hosea, where YHWH promises again to be the husband ('ish) of Israel instead of the be 'allm (2 : 16f), where it should be noticed that ba'al itself means 'husband'. Hence idolatry (which frequently involved ritual prostitution) is regularly described in sexual terms as fornication (Dt 31 : 16; Ezk 16 : 15). In this way the loving relationship which should have existed between YHWH and Israel had been broken by the infidelity of Israel. Now, since human beings have been made in the image of God their sexual relations should express the faithfulness of the partners to one another, and their unity with one another (Gn 2 : 24), just as YHWH by covenant was united with Israel.

Sex complements men and women

Nevertheless, although Genesis recognises the complementary nature of man and woman, the man came to be seen as the dominant partner. It was he who could divorce his wife (Dt 24 : 1 - 4), while the wife had no authority to divorce her husband. If a man committed adultery with a married woman, both partners were to be put to death (Lv 20: 10; Dt 22 : 22). For adultery was considered to be an act against one's neighbour (Lv 18 : 20), and therefore in the Decalogue the prohibition occurs between the prohibition of murder and of stealing (Ex 20 : 14; cf Dt 5 : 18).

Unfaithfulness

Adultery committed by a married woman was an act of infidelity and a breach of the exclusive relationship which should exist between husband and wife, and also a breach of the covenant between YHWH and his people. The case of fornication was rather different. Although writers strongly disapproved of it (PI' 29 : 3; 31 : 3), the Torah considered pre-marital virginity to be incumbent only on females. There is no indication in the Torah that males had to be virgins before marriage.

Homosexual practice

As in many ancient societies, homosexual practice seems to have been a regular part of human relationships in the early period of Israel's history. The event from which the practice gets the name of sodomy (Gn 19) refers not to sexual relations between consenting males but to homosexual rape. The same is true of the story in Judges 19. Deuteronomy 23 : 18 would seem to condemn not private homosexual acts but ritual prostitution, where "dog" presumably means a male prostitute (cf Rev 22 : 15). But though homosexual practice seems not to have been explicitly condemned before the Exile, it was later strongly and consistently condemned in every form (Lv 18 : 22; 20 : 13). The relationship between David and Jonathan, as recorded in 2 Samuel I : 26, is unique in describing the relationship between them in what may be erotic terms.

Generally speaking, the witness of the Old Testament recognises that human sexuality, a good gift of God, is to find fulfilment in a permanent heterosexual relationship (Gn 2 : 23 - 24). Though the primary purpose of intercourse is seen to be the procreation of children, it also expressed human love, intimacy and companionship.

It might perhaps be noted in passing that the Old Testament (and for that matter the New Testament too) has nothing to say about

2.2 The New Testament

The permanence of marriage

The theme of Genesis is emphasised by Jesus (Mk 10 : 2 - 12 par), whereby the permanence of the marriage relationship is upheld (In the Markan version, but not in Mt 19: 9 or in Lk 16 : 18, the woman is apparently considered to have an equal right with her husband to sue for divorce. This may represent a revaluing of the status of women, but may also simply reflect the Gentile context of Mark's gospel. The understanding of sexuality as intrinsic to the divine-human relationship is confirmed by the incarnation, the entrance of God into the human experience as a human being, the new Adam representing both male and female (Gen 5 : 2 and Gal 3 : 28), whereby men and women are affirmed as beings created with sexual instincts and affections.

Sex is a gift to be used responsibly

Marriage is considered to be an 'honourable estate' (Hb 13 : 14; cf I Tm 4 : 3 - 4), and (as in the Old Testament) is a description of the Lord's union with his people, especially in eschatological terms (Eph 5 : 21 - 33; Mt 22 : I - 12; 25 : I - 13; Rev 19 : 7 - 9). Human sexuality is part of human life, a gift of God, and therefore is to be properly used. No encouragement is given for permissiveness or promiscuity (e.g. Rm 13 : 13). As always, Jesus was concerned as much with the inward attitude and disposition as with the outward act of adultery (Mt 5:28). The Jewish stress on the sanctity of the family is continued in the teaching of Jesus and the writers of the New Testament, as is shown, for example, by Ephesians 5 : 3 - 4, 5: 21 - 6 : 4 and I Peter 3 : I - 7.

Adultery

It is of interest to note that frequently adultery and fornication are closely associated with the sin of *pleonexia* (Mk 7 : 22; I Cor 5 : 10, II; 6 : 10; Eph 4 : 19; 5 : 3, 5; Col 3 : 5; I Th 4:6), often rendered as 'greed'. Literally it means 'getting more' than is due to one. Fornication, as is expressed particularly clearly in 1 Thessalonians 4 : 3 - 8, is considered to be a misuse of one's sexuality for self-gratification (often at the expense of another), instead of recognising its God-given purpose in marriage.

Homosexual practice condemned

As is to be expected the moral teaching of the Old Testament is everywhere assumed and deepened for the Christian church. Homosexual practices appear to be condemned as

vehemently by Paul as by the Torah (Rm I : 26 - 27; I Cor 6 : 9, with an apparent reference to both the passive and active partners, *oute malakoi oute arsenokoitai*). Sexual promiscuity is everywhere condemned (Rm 13: 13; GI 5: 19; Eph 4: 19; Heb 13: 4; I Pt 4: 3; 2 Pt 2: 18; Jude 4).

The status of women

In the New Testament there are many signs of the greater respect now paid to women. They are joint-heirs (*sunkleronomoi*) of the grace of life (I Pt 3 : 7) and they share in the liturgical and active life of the church (Rm 16 : I - 4,6, 12; 1 Cor II : 5; Ac 18 : 26). In the gospels they were given a prominent place in the the ministry of Jesus, especially as the first witnesses of the risen Christ. The joint ministry of Priscilla (or Prisca) and Aquila, and possibly of Andronicus and Junia (or Julia) (Rm 16 : 7), is specially noteworthy as displaying the understanding of the complementarity of man and woman in the proclamation of the gospel as in the whole of life.

The woman's place

This view of the position of women affects the understanding of human sexuality, especially as there are passages in the New Testament where both the position of women in society and the value of sex seem to be questioned. It is of considerable moment that Paul's low esteem for marriage is reflected only in the Corinthian correspondence. Corinth, with its neighbouring sea-port, was renowned, even in the days of Paul, for the sexual adventures of its inhabitants, particularly in relation to the ritual prostitutes, both male and female, at the Temple of Aphrodite. Much of the language of Paul to do with fornication seems to be directed against this ritual prostitution, which symbolised the union of the participant with the heathen deity. So Christians, who are the body (or person) of Christ, are warned to use their own bodies in ways which befit their membership of Christ (I Cor 6: 12-20). As limbs of Christ (v15) they cannot be joined to a prostitute and so become one body (person) with her (v16) (and consequently, with the deity she represents). A similar view is expressed in the letters to Pergamum (Rev 2: 14) and Thyatira (Rev 2: 20 - 22). For Paul, "he who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit" (I Cor 6: 17), a view which is further developed in chapter 12 where Christians are called the body of Christ (vv13, 27).

Celibacy celebrated above marriage

Perhaps it was because of the situation at Corinth that Paul appears to have had a poor appreciation of marriage. He knew the strength of the sexual drive (I Cor 7 : 9), and for that reason recommended that people should marry (v2), even though he would have preferred them not to marry (v1). But he recognised the reality of the unity effected in marriage between husband and wife (vv3 - 5) so that each partner needs to acknowledge the claims of the other in sexual relations. This union is so close that an unbelieving husband "has been made holy (*hegiastai*, made one of God's family?) by his union with his wife (*en te gunaiki*)" and vice versa (I Cor 7 : 14). Paul confirmed the teaching of Jesus forbidding divorce (v10), and added regulations concerning doubtful cases. It is possible that his view of marriage was due to his own experience, but of this we know nothing. It is worth noting that he compared his care for the Thessalonians to that of a nurse (or, perhaps, a mother) nurturing her children (I Thess 2 : 7), and he spoke of Phoebe as being the benefactor (or possibly, the patroness) of himself and others. His views were certainly conditioned by his belief that the end of the

world was near at hand (vv29 - 31) and that therefore Christians should be striving to find the best way to please the Lord, without being distracted by the demands made on them by their marriage partners (vv32 - 35).

There is nevertheless a tendency in Paul's writings to consider the celibate state as preferable to marriage (1 Cor 7 : 1, 7). This is remarkable in view of the high regard in which marriage and the family were generally held by Jews, though it is only in the letters to the Corinthians that Paul expressed himself in these terms. Even the Pastoral epistles reprove heretics for demanding celibacy (1 Tm 4 : 3), and recommend younger widows to re-marry (1 Tm 5 : 14), in spite of 1 Corinthians 7 : 40, though the injunction that bishops and deacons should be husbands of one wife (1 Tm 3 : 2, 12) may refer to a ban on a second marriage after the death of the first spouse. Such a restriction certainly applied to bishops in the early church.

2.3 Later Developments

"Celibate for the kingdom"

There were a number of reasons why the church later exalted the celibate over the married state. Not only were the reservations of Paul respected, but the words attributed to Jesus in Matthew 19 : 12 seemed to say that those who abstained from sexual intercourse for the sake of the kingdom of heaven were in a superior position.

In spite of this later development the New Testament reflects the Old Testament view of sexuality as one of God's many good gifts to human beings, which is meant to find its fulfilment in a permanent relationship of Christian marriage and to be the means of procreating children. The words of Jesus in Mark 10 : 3 - 9 (= Mt 19 : 4 - 8) would seem to show (as in the Old Testament) that sexual intercourse in marriage was an expression of love and unity between the partners as well as being a means of procreation.

3. Love and Righteousness as Central Themes in the Biblical Witness

In view of the vast difference between the situation of the first century and that of today, care must be taken to interpret scripture in accordance with its main themes and principles rather than by a literal acceptance of specific texts. Though our experience and context condition our view of scripture, we must ensure that neither should determine our interpretation. Our own experience can be the starting-point for a re-evaluation of sexual ethics only when we are able to show how changing attitudes reflect a deeper love both for God and for other people. Such an ethic cannot be based merely on the depth of love and commitment between two people, but must also reflect the responsible position of individuals within the broader community and help others acknowledge and reflect both God's love for his world and our love and respect for human beings.

3.1 Now, these two themes are reflected throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament God's love for his people is described as his *hesed*, his loving-kindness, his mercy and steadfast love, which is so reliable that it merges into his faithfulness, both in his

promises and towards his people. God is one who can be trusted so that he is called "the God of Amen (faithfulness)" (Is 65: 16). This love and mercy of God is to be shown by those who belong to him, his people. Those who practise *hesed* are called *hasidim*, the pious ones (Mi 7 : 2; 1 Sam 2 : 9), who show mercy and love to others, and who especially express their love for God by their careful observance of the Torah. In other words, the faithfulness, love and mercy of YHWH are to be reflected in the life of his people, and especially by their devotion to him.

3.2 In the New Testament the theme of God's steadfast love is continued, and finds its supreme expression in the person and work of Jesus. So the statement "God is love" (1 Jn 4 : 8) is directly followed by the reference to the manifestation of God's love in Jesus. In the New Testament two words, love (Greek *agape*) and grace (*charis*), reproduce the meaning of the Old Testament *hesed*, and stress the initiative of God in his dealings with human beings. "Love consists in this, not that *we* have come to love God, but that *he* has loved us and has sent his Son as an expiation for our sins" (1 Jn 4: 10). God is faithful to his promises, as now declared in Jesus (1 Cor 1:9).

3.3 As in the Old Testament the love and grace of God shown to human beings calls for a response from them, especially in relation to God's love shown in Jesus Christ. Both testaments therefore reflect the primacy the commandment to love God (Dt 6 : 4; Mk 12 : 29 - 30) because of his love to human beings, shown both in the giving of the Torah and in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

3.4 The second Constant theme of the Bible is that of righteousness, justice, holiness, in the sense that people are called to find their right position in life by their obedience to, and faith in God.

3.4.1 In the Old Testament this was expressed by the people's obedience to the Torah. The Hebrew word was *zedeq*, which referred not only to the righteousness of God and the righteousness required from human beings, but also to God's active work in bringing people in a right relation with himself.

3.4.2 In the New Testament the righteousness of God describes God's action of reconciling the world to God in and through Jesus Christ, so that those who are "in Christ" are to display the same kind of right conduct in their lives. This quality is to be reflected in the life of God's people, so that the theme of *zedeq* regulates behaviour in the community. Jesus, by his life of obedience to God, exemplifies the response which God wills all human beings to make. Those who are united with Christ are then just, or righteous, because they have taken upon themselves, through the grace of God, the qualities of justice and righteousness displayed in Jesus. The theme of justice or righteousness is reflected in the second of the two commandments summarizing the law and the prophets - "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Mk 12: 31; Lev 19: 18).

4. Keeping love and Righteousness in Balance

Any interpretation of scripture for today which neglects either of these two themes will be wide of the mark. Sin is primarily alienation from God. Too often in the past sexual

transgressions have been put first in the categorization of sins, whereas only when sexual behaviour disrupts relationships with others, with self and with God does it lead to alienation, often giving rise to harmful or violent sexual acts.

- 4.1 A Christian sexual ethic of love arises from faith's perception of God's ways with humankind in divine creativity and reconciliation, and in his action by which he sustains and liberates human beings so that they may live with justice and integrity.
- 4.2 A sexual ethic centred in love needs to express mutual commitment between the partners, and to be liberating, enriching, honest, faithful, personally and socially responsible, lifegiving and joyous.
- 4.3 Love involves an attitude towards the other partner in which the happiness and welfare of the other is of prime importance, and which is expressed in appropriate acts. In view of the frequent distortion of sexuality by abusive power both within and outside marriage, a Christian sexual ethic is committed to the liberation of sexual expression as mutual enrichment rather than as dominance and submission.

5. Implications

Arising from these principles the following considerations need to be kept in mind when interpreting scripture for today:-

- 5.1 The value of human sexuality is to be seen as part of the creation of man and woman in the image of God.
- 5.2 Because sexuality is good, sex in marriage is meant to express and strengthen the love between husband and wife. In this way it may be seen as analogous to the loving relation between God and human beings. Human sexuality is meant to be enjoyed, as well as being the means of procreation.
- 5.3 The church continues to honour those called to consecrated celibacy, which does not deny the reality of their sexuality, but is a personal call to union with Christ in community, and a sign of the devotion owed to Christ by all Christians. It is also a sign of their availability for ministry, and of the coming kingdom.
- 5.4 As with all God's gifts, sexual intercourse is subject to God's will as declared in scripture, and therefore finds its ideal expression only in a permanent relationship of Christian marriage.
- 5.5 As Jesus had compassion on all people, so Christians need to show deep understanding of, and compassion for, those who are unable or unwilling to live in this way.

C. EVIDENCE FROM BIOLOGICAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

1. In addition to serious reflection on the interpretation of the Bible, insights from biological and human sciences need to be taken seriously.
 - 1.1 Modern biological knowledge has undercut some long-held sexual assumptions, as, for example, that the male sperm was the sole life-carrying agent in reproduction. Studies of animal sexual behaviour have challenged certain assumptions of what is "natural" and "unnatural". For example, masturbation and homosexual activity occur in many higher forms of animal life.
 - 1.2 Historians have shown the extent to which the understandings of sexuality and sexual ethics, and the resulting behaviour, have been conditioned by historical circumstances.
 - 1.3 Cross-cultural anthropological studies have revealed wide variations in sexual norms, such as the practice of premarital sex and open homosexual activity in many societies.
 - 1.4 Modern psychological insights have revealed the centrality of human sexuality to individual emotional development, well-being and creativity.
2. All these influences, among others, present a challenge to the church to reconsider its stand on sexual ethics, and to review its traditional teaching.

D. THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

1. We live in a complex situation with a variety of world views. As the result of many different factors today (such as television programmes, situations of poverty and unemployment, improved methods of contraception) a variety of sexual attitudes exists. A recent survey among students at a South African university found that 35% of first-year students, and between 65% and 73% of third year students, had had experience of sexual intercourse. A large proportion of these had religious convictions. The situation is not likely to be much different among those who have not had a university education. It is in this situation that the church has to witness.
2. This variety in sexual attitudes is not confined to South. Africa, but is a world-wide phenomenon. The situation in Britain is described in *Issues in Human Sexuality: A statement by the House of Bishops 01' the General Synod 01' the Church 01' England* (Church House Publishing: 1991) pages 19 - 20:

For a growing number (of persons) their first experience of full intercourse will come soon after puberty, both in a desire to experiment and also in a process of self-discovery through sharing oneself with another. Later on sexual relations may be seen as a source of pleasure and satisfaction which is right for people to enjoy, and those who want to enjoy it together are considered entitled to do so. For others there has to be personal friendship and loyalty, including fidelity for the time of the relationship, but with no requirement of permanence, which may or may not come later A couple

may be lovers, and share much of their lives, but not live together Others will live exactly as if married, but refuse to enter into the formal and public marriage relationship. Another couple may agree on a trial marriage, regarding actual marriage and possible parenthood as something which should not be undertaken without some assurance that the parties are compatible. Another couple may be quite clear that they intend to marry, but housing problems or other constraints seem to make that impracticable for the present. On a rather different spectrum there are lovers who may sustain a faithful relationship for years, but for reasons ranging from careers to bad personal experiences in the past cannot bring themselves to marry, or lovers who find themselves thrown together in situations of loneliness, stress or danger, and in even a short relationship find the human support they need. In all these instances, and many more ... , a proportion between physical intimacy and personal commitment is always present but varying widely from case to case.

3. The Description of these attitudes in Britain can be paralleled by the situation in Southern Africa, which has been exacerbated by the social upheavals caused by years of apartheid and the system of migrant labour.
4. A further mark of the contemporary scene is the significant rise of women's consciousness which has challenged the double standards common in Christian sexual tradition as dominated by heterosexual males

E. THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH

1. Just as the church has interpreted scripture to address the issues of racism, apartheid, economic injustice and sexism, so a similar approach must be followed with regard to issues of human sexuality. The church has the duty to help people find true freedom by a growth in relationships, and to help them deal with the experience of sexual pain and violence both within and outside marriage.
2. The church believes that the commitment entailed in sexual intimacy should find its full and proper expression in lifelong marriage, the purpose of which is succinctly described in the Preface to Christian Marriage in An Anglican Prayer Book 1989 (page 458):-

Marriage is given that the couple may know each other in mutual love and find in each other the lifelong companionship and support which is God's intention for them. In marriage God's gifts of sex and affection find their true and lasting expression in an indissoluble relationship. In the security of this relationship, children are born and brought up in the love and fear of God, being entrusted by him as a sacred charge to their parents.

3. This represents the ideal situation in which the couple can grow and realize their full personhood in mutual love, and so grow to maturity. By their life together under God they bear witness to his love declared in Jesus Christ, and are enabled not only to be a witness to the meaning of human sexuality but also to help build up the life of the community.

4. Spirituality is not opposed to, but includes, our human sexuality, so that salvation entails the process of recovering sexual wholeness, including growth in bodily self acceptance and in the capacity for sensuousness. The awakening of the self to its destiny as an embodiment of divine love is intrinsic to the life of the Spirit. Sexuality is therefore to be expressed in ways conforming to the Christian gospel of love, with the recognition of the equal value and dignity of men and women, so that acts of sexual violence within or outside marriage can never be condoned. The mere gratification of lust without regard for the other person is an abuse of the gift of God.
5. There are many who believe that ways in which sexuality has been understood by the church pervade, for good or for ill, all theology and ethics. So it is argued that they influence ways of worship, and attitudes to sacramental life, pastoral care and interpretations of social and moral issues. In view of this the church has a special responsibility to help recover the sense of sexual wholeness.
6. In view of the theological understanding of human sexuality as a gift of God to enable people to attain to a fuller humanity in relationship with others, the parish church has as great a responsibility to teach its members about sexuality frankly and openly as it has to teach other aspects of the faith.
7. In every parish, teaching on sexuality should not only form part of marriage preparation, but also be a regular component in preparation classes for confirmation candidates and for parents bringing children for baptism. From time to time sermons should be devoted to issues of sexuality, and its place and significance in the Christian life.
8. Such teaching should be given by those who have some understanding not only of the nature of sexuality, but also, and especially, of the theological issues involved. It needs to refer to the intrinsic value of our bodies and emotions, and to draw attention to the relation between what the Bible calls living according to the Spirit and living according to the flesh (Rom 8:1-17).
 - 8.1 The difference between the two ways of life is that the latter understands that human life is simply a matter of following one's own instinctive selfish desires, as though this life is all that matters, and that each person is responsible for attaining his or her own ends without regard to others. Life according to the Spirit is not in any way a denial of the worth of our bodies and our natural and instinctive desires. Life according to the Spirit recognizes that the life of each person is closely bound up with that of others, and that therefore each person's life is to find its full expression in the loving and responsible use of the instincts and desires which God has given to human beings for the good of all.
 - 8.2 Life according to the Spirit is life after the pattern of Jesus Christ under the direction of the Holy Spirit of God.
9. It is necessary to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate feelings of guilt in sexual behaviour. Teaching which does not take into account modern views of human

sexuality and of the scriptural evidence may do more harm than good in causing wrong feelings of guilt among those who fail to live up to the standards demanded. Authentic guilt should be felt by those who recognize that they have deliberately acted against the principles of love and justice as enunciated above.

10. Teaching must refer especially to ways of sexual intimacy as expressions of love and of self-discovery in discovering the other. Above all else, it must stress the *mutual* commitment of both partners to each other and the need to avoid any sense of domination of one partner by the other. Ethical judgements about sexual behaviour must be consistent with those about racism, sexism and other sins.
11. Those who teach about sexuality should themselves receive help from the Province or the Diocese to guide them in their teaching.

F. SPECIFIC ISSUES FOR MINISTRY

1. Teaching for young children, young adults and parents

- 1.1 Young persons, especially teenagers, should be taught about sexuality in ways which explain that the Christian teaching on sexual relationships leads to a fuller and more valuable lifestyle, and is not meant to be merely restrictive. Such teaching should also be part of confirmation preparation.
- 1.2 The ideal of Christian marriage should be attractively set before them.
- 1.3 The option of celibacy as a vocation from God should be explained and explored, so that they may make a free and conscious decision for marriage or celibacy.
- 1.4 They need to be helped to develop their moral sense, both about sexual behaviour and in other spheres.
- 1.5 Reference should be made to AIDS and ways of avoiding it, and to ways of behaving towards those known to be HIV positive.
- 1.6 Reference should be made to the practice of masturbation in a way which would diminish or remove the sense of guilt which is often associated with it.
- 1.7 Parents need assistance so that they may better understand their children's sexual development and be ready to speak about sexuality openly and frankly.

2. Single Life

Single persons, whether always single, divorced or widowed, who are not living with a partner, often experience marginalization in church and society. The value and integrity of those living a single Christian lifestyle should be affirmed. Their needs and gifts should be recognized on an equal basis with those of families. Attention

should be given to ensuring that they are welcomed and included in the social and pastoral activities of the church. (See the chapter on "Singleness" in *Living in covenant with God and one another: Study guide on sexuality and human relations* ed. Robin Smith; WCC; 1990.)

3. The strengthening of married life

- 3.1 The traditional practice of engagement is strongly recommended as a way in which couples come to know each other.
- 3.2 Careful preparation is needed of couples coming to be married or re-married, especially after divorce.
- 3.3 The service for the renewal of marriage vows should be widely used.
- 3.4 Married couples should be encouraged to worship and work together in the life of the church.

4. Living together

Christian marriage represents the ideal situation in which the couple can grow and realize their full personhood in mutual love, and so grow to maturity. By their life together under God they bear witness to his love declared in Jesus Christ, and are enabled not only to bear witness to the meaning of human sexuality, but also to help build up the life of the community. In order to help couples attain this ideal, and in view of the existing variety of sexual attitudes, we recommend that:

- 4.1 a man and a woman living together without being formally married should be freely offered pastoral care, among other things to help them recognize that the full expression of their sexuality is ideally to be found in lifelong union. The growth of real companionship and mutual trust also requires the covenant and promises of marriage. Such couples should be encouraged to be married with the blessing of the church and in accordance with the law of the land;
- 4.2 pastoral discipline in such cases should be exercised with sensitivity and discretion according to the circumstances of each case;
- 4.3 children of unmarried couples should not be refused baptism, but should be baptized after instruction has been given to the parents (or single parent), in accordance with the provisions of Canon 35.4.

5. Sexuality in traditional African understanding

In African society sexuality has traditionally been considered a gift whose main goal is procreation and the continuance of the lineage. Since every male had an obligation to marry and contribute to the ongoing life of the family/clan, subtle and overt

pressures were put on those young men who delayed marriage, or on the older men who shirked this responsibility altogether.

From the age of puberty girls were prepared for marriage, and the rites of passage emphasized the importance of fertility in marriage. Childlessness in a marriage was considered, and is still considered particularly in some rural societies today, to be a disaster, a sign of the lineage spirits' displeasure.

5.1 Lobola

5.1.1 Marriage is a contract between two families or clans and their respective ancestries. The various procedures which have to be followed indicate that the relationship that is being formed is taken very seriously, since it is a coming together of two lineages or communities, and not simply of the bride and the groom. This union of two families and clans with their ancestries is signified by the exchange of gifts. Cattle as the possession of lineage spirits are an appropriate gift to the bride's people, because they are a token of the acceptance of the bride by the old people as a rightful wife through whose progeny the lineage will continue.

5.1.2 *Lobola* therefore was, and still is, a mechanism through which two families accept one another's bona fides. Arising from this is the expectation that a couple will have children to carry forward the lineage of the clan and family. A couple who are unable to have children, according to the traditional understanding of African society, may be given children from families of other members of the clan. This explains the reticence of Africans to patronise adoption agencies, since Africans adopt within the family. Family hood is always extended in African society. Having children of one's own is desirable, but it does not become a condition for keeping the marriage together.

5.1.3 *Lobola* also confers dignity upon the bride as it entitles her to assume her rightful status amongst her in-laws. The church can play a constructive pastoral role in encouraging this view of *lobola*, while care should be taken to prevent the system of *lobola* being abused for monetary purposes.

5.2 The contemporary situation

The real problem lies in the area of sexuality. This is particularly so in a typical African society known as the location or township. Many young people's sexual education and experience come through rape, magazines, television and cinema, as well as experiments in sexual intercourse. There is virtually no preparation for sex, and inadequate preparation for marriage, so that young people are simply left to their own devices.

5.3 Customary union

Care should be taken to distinguish between the various ways in which this description is used. In colonial days it was a blanket term to denote African marriages which complied with the requirements neither of the civil law nor of the Christian church. This created confusion between cohabitation and marriages properly contracted but not registered. The church should therefore be aware that it is addressing two very different problems or

challenges. On the one hand there are many people who, for one reason or another, form families without a proper foundation. On the other hand there are couples whose marriages have been properly negotiated in the customary way, but have not been registered or blessed in church. In this latter case the church should encourage the couples to have their marriage blessed and legally recognized.

5.4 Polygamy

The recommendations of the Lambeth Conference 1988 (Resolution 26) are such as ought to be accepted by the CPSA:

This Conference upholds monogamy as God's plan, and as the ideal relationship of love between husband and wife; nevertheless recommends that a polygamist who responds to the Gospel and wishes to join the Anglican Church may be baptized and confirmed with his believing wives and children on the following conditions:

- (1) that the polygamist shall promise not to marry again as long as any of his wives at the time of his conversion are alive;
- (2) that the receiving of such a polygamist has the consent of the local Anglican community;
- (3) that such a polygamist shall not be compelled to put away any of his wives, on account of the social deprivation they would suffer; .
- (4) and recommends that provinces where the Churches face problems of polygamy are encouraged to share information of their pastoral approach to Christians who become polygamists so that the most appropriate way of disciplining and pastoring them can be found, and that the ACC be requested to facilitate the sharing of that information.

6. Sexual promiscuity

Sexual promiscuity (i.e, casual sexual intercourse with several partners) should be regarded in a different light from the situations described above, and should be seen as a misunderstanding of the meaning of sexuality and a hindrance to the development of full human personality. In conformity with the biblical teaching the church continues to consider sexual promiscuity as being opposed to God's will for human beings.

7. Homosexuality

This is one of the pressing subjects for further study and discussion by the Southern African Anglican Theological Commission. A preliminary response would focus on three areas:

- 7.1 An examination of the findings of modern medical, behavioural and social scientific investigations into the origin of homosexuality. The two poles around which research revolves are:

7.1.1 the theory that sexual orientation is inborn, natural in a scientific sense, perhaps even genetic (the essentialist position);

7.1.2 the theory that human beings construct their sexuality, and that sexual orientation is a product of social environment (the constructionist position).

Neither of these two lines of scientific research is condemnatory of homosexuality, and gay people are themselves somewhat divided on the issue, though perhaps a majority would favour the first theory.

7.2 Good theology begins with real people in relationship with God, so that the church needs to listen to the experiences of homosexuals. In a heterosexual society their experience is one of almost overwhelming prejudice and hostility. Often the church has been in the vanguard of moral condemnation, so that many homosexual Christians have been forced either to hide their orientation or to leave the church. It must be stressed that the Church makes a distinction between homosexual orientation and homosexual practices.

7.3 The witness of the Bible and the Christian tradition needs to be explored afresh in the light of new understandings of homosexuality. The key to a fresh approach will be found in the themes of God's love and compassion (hesed), and of righteousness (B.3-4 above). The starting-point should be the loving and caring practice of Jesus himself with his concern to build community by reconciling to God and each other those whom the world has condemned.

G. GUIDELINES FOR CHANGE AND PASTORAL CARE

1. Regular teaching should be given on human sexuality as being a gift from God, intended to bring joyful satisfaction, and involving the responsibility to show to the other partner a commitment in kindness, fidelity and love. This teaching needs to be constantly reviewed in clergy schools.
2. Clergy and other counsellors should be provided with some helpful books or other teaching which will explain more fully the principles adopted in this report. Bishops have a special responsibility for giving the clergy such help.
3. As in all situations of counselling, clergy and other counsellors must accept people as they are, called to reflect the full image of God, in order to lead them to accept the value of Christian sexual behaviour.
4. In pre-marital counselling clergy and other counsellors need to be aware of the high level of sexual experience among most members of their congregations, and to allay feelings of guilt which may arise, while explaining the meaning and responsibility of Christian sexual ethics.

5. Clergy who follow a particular principle in interpreting scripture and theology should avoid imposing their principle on those whom they counsel, and should be ready to listen to other ways of understanding sexuality.
6. At least from time to time clergy should consult with other professional counsellors so that they may better understand the complexity of sexuality, and share their own insights and problems with them.
7. Clergy and other counsellors need to take seriously feelings of guilt among those who have not been living according to the Christian understanding of sexuality, and to deal with them. The practice of sacramental confession can be commended as a way both for removing guilt and for receiving counsel and advice.
8. Clergy and other counsellors need to be sensitive to sexual abuse within marriage and the family. Every attempt should be made to refer victims of sexual violence to the appropriate agency.
9. Clergy and other counsellors should ensure that in matters of discipline they have a consistent approach to all ethical issues, and that they do not treat sexual issues on a different basis from their treatment of other ethical problems.

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