



**Can a Christian agree with the “modern values” of Modernity about abortion and homosexuality?**

**Pot un cristià estar d'acord amb els “valors moderns” de la Modernitat sobre l'avortament i l'homosexualitat?**

**¿Puede un cristiano estar de acuerdo con los “valores modernos” de la Modernidad sobre el aborto y la homosexualidad?**

**Pode um cristão concordar com os “valores modernos” da Modernidade sobre o aborto e a homossexualidade?**

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**Abstract:** Today, many people insist that their body belongs to them and they are free to use it as they want. Some argue that homosexuality and abortion are morally reprehensible and other try to embody in a law their moral or immoral convictions. Christianity refuses sodomy and abortion. God forbids the killing of innocent human beings because we are made in his image. Moreover, according to the doctrine of the Orthodox Church, fetus is a perfect human being since its conception. As for homosexuality, God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve, or Eve and Mary. Of course, a very small percentage of homosexuals indicate a genetic basis for their homoerotic sexual orientation. Is homosexuality accepted by Christianity in this case? What do the Church Fathers believe about that? People who support abortions argue that it is up to the woman to decide whether it is right for her to have an abortion because it is her body. Some Christians believe that a woman has a right to a safe abortion, and that it shows compassion if the law allows this. Here is the mistake, our body does not belong to us, it is a creature of God, and we should pray for the miracle in any case. We are the directors of our body, not the masters. Roman Catholics and Orthodox Christian believe that abortion is morally wrong because of their belief that human life begins at conception. They may make an exception if an abortion is essential to save the life of the mother (the 'principle of double effect'), assuming all efforts have been made to save the fetus. So, the sin of wilfully aborting a child, except in those very rare situations where it may be necessary to save the life of the mother, is a sinful act, totally contrary to the will of God. Additionally, the homosexuality is condemned in the Bible and by Church Fathers. Is there a common place between traditional and modern values? How can religious people face these new “values”?

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**Keywords:** Sodomy – Abortion – Homosexuality – Church Fathers – Orthodoxy.

**Resumen:** Hoy en día, muchas personas insisten en que su cuerpo les pertenece y que son libres de utilizarlo como quieran. Algunos sostienen que la homosexualidad y el aborto son moralmente reprobables y otros intentan plasmar en una ley sus convicciones morales o inmorales. El cristianismo rechaza la sodomía y el aborto. Dios prohíbe matar a seres humanos inocentes porque estamos hechos a su imagen. Además, según la doctrina de la Iglesia Ortodoxa, el feto es un ser humano perfecto desde su concepción. En cuanto a la homosexualidad, Dios creó a Adán y Eva, no a Adán y Steve, ni a Eva y María. Por supuesto, un porcentaje muy pequeño de homosexuales indica una base genética para su orientación sexual homoerótica. ¿La homosexualidad es aceptada por el cristianismo en este caso? ¿Qué creen los Padres de la Iglesia al respecto? Las personas que apoyan el aborto argumentan que corresponde a la mujer decidir si es correcto abortar porque es su cuerpo. Algunos cristianos creen que una mujer tiene derecho a un aborto seguro y que demuestra compasión si la ley lo permite. Aquí está el error, nuestro cuerpo no nos pertenece, es una criatura de Dios y debemos orar por el milagro, en cualquier caso. Somos los directores de nuestro cuerpo, no los amos. Los católicos romanos y los cristianos ortodoxos creen que el aborto es moralmente incorrecto debido a su creencia de que la vida humana comienza en el momento de la concepción. Pueden hacer una excepción si el aborto es esencial para salvar la vida de la madre (el "principio de doble efecto"), suponiendo que se hayan hecho todos los esfuerzos posibles para salvar al feto. Así que el pecado de abortar voluntariamente a un niño, excepto en aquellas muy raras situaciones en las que puede ser necesario salvar la vida de la madre, es un acto pecaminoso, totalmente contrario a la voluntad de Dios. Además, la homosexualidad es condenada en la Biblia y por los Padres de la Iglesia. ¿Existe un lugar común entre los valores tradicionales y los modernos? ¿Cómo pueden las personas religiosas afrontar estos nuevos "valores"?

**Palabras-clave:** Sodomía – Aborto – Homosexualidad – Padres de la Iglesia – Ortodoxia.

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## Introduction

### Orthodoxy and the modern ideas about abortion and homosexuality

Our era is the age of Globalization.<sup>2</sup> The rapid growth of technology, by far the electronic revolution, and the rapid circulation of ideas and the effort of man in order not to feel a citizen of one country but of the world have as result a mixture in culture and ethical ideas. The Orthodox Church is called to face up the modern ideas about abortion and homosexuality. Orthodoxy loves any man, but it refuses and rejects sin. Everything which makes brings darkness to human nature is against the orders of God. Orthodox Christian should follow the teaching of Christ and the tradition of the Church which are against homosexuality and abortions.

### **I. Abortion is condemned in Orthodox teaching: Man has body and soul from the first second of his conception.**

Human life begins when the sperm fertilizes<sup>3</sup> the egg inside the fallopian tube. To put it simply: upon fertilization, the newly formed zygote has all the genetic information (DNA) required being a unique individual. At this stage, he or she is a human being, in every sense of the word. In Christian teaching, God created man according to His image and His likeness. Man was created as the crown of creation. The Son of God, Christ, assumed human nature and renovated it.

According to the Patristic teaching, at the time of the conception of any man, his soul and body are created at the same time. This teaching is based on the Christological doctrine of the incarnation of the Son and Word of God, “incarnated and humanized”<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> This paper is presented in International Symposium “Eternal Values and the Constantly Changing World” Tbilisi, Georgia February 15-18, 2023. Dedicated to the 45th Anniversary of the Enthronement and the 90th Anniversary of the Birth of His Holiness and Beatitude, Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, Archbishop of Mtskheta-Tbilisi and Metropolitan of Bichvinta and Tskhum-Abkhazia, Ilia II.

<sup>3</sup> Some people call this conception, but fertilization is the scientific term.

<sup>4</sup> ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA, *Preaching for the evangelism of our Most Holy Mother of God*, PG 28, 929D, transl. by ARTEMI Eirini.



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Saint Cyril of Alexandria emphatically notes that Christ was a perfect man, and a perfect God who had soul and body from the first second of His conception<sup>5</sup>. Gregory Nyssa explains that the formation of soul and body in human person takes place at the same time, wanting to emphasize the simultaneous creation of the psycho-somatic entity of the fetus<sup>6</sup>. The twofold united making of human being is also noted by many Church Fathers, such as Maximus the Confessor<sup>7</sup> John of Damascus<sup>8</sup>, the ecclesiastical writer Euthymius Zigavinus<sup>9</sup> and many others. Therefore, human life is sacred and for this reason any action against it, even if it concerns an unborn, uncompleted fetus - which, however, is a human being from the first second of its existence in the womb - is considered murder by the Orthodox Church.

Thus, the Church has always condemned abortion. The Fathers of the Eastern Orthodox Church always viewed abortion a grave sin and equated it with murder. Since our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, to kill an innocent human being is a crime, not only against that person, but also against the Holy Spirit, against God Himself. Thus, one cannot be a faithful Orthodox Christian and be “pro-choice” when it comes to abortion. One cannot profess belief in the One True God and the Divine sanctity of human life He established, while at the same time condoning a woman’s “right to choose” whether she is going to kill her unborn child.

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<sup>5</sup> CYRIL OF ALEXANDRIA, *The one is Christ*, Sources Chrétiennes 97, 728<sup>27</sup> (=PG 75, 1277D).

<sup>6</sup> GREGORY OF NYSSA, *Concerning Soul and resurrection*, PG 46, 125C.

<sup>7</sup> MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR, Theory in short text for those who say souls pre-exist or co-exist in bodies, PG 91, 1322D, 1324AB

<sup>8</sup> JOHN DAMASCENE, *Concerning the idioms of the two natures in one Christ our Lord, and also concerning two wills and actions and one hypostasis*, P.B. Kotter, Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos, vol. 4 [Patristische Texte und Studien 22. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1981]: 173-231, section 38<sup>14-15</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> EUTHYMIUS ZIGAVINUS, *Dogmatic Armor*, PG 130, 1009A.



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## II. Homosexuality, Transgenderism and Orthodox Christian Teaching<sup>10</sup>

John the evangelist wrote in his epistle “let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love”<sup>11</sup>. God’s love was revealed in the anthropological ordering of creation. The creation of the first people, Adam and Eve show two modes of being: male and female<sup>12</sup>. These two sexes were created to be united with each other<sup>13</sup> as the Persons of the Holy Trinity. So, Christian anthropology reveals the male as the only appropriate complement for the female and the female only for the male which involves moral boundaries of the sexual dimension of male and female intercommunion<sup>14</sup>. Homosexuality and adultery are condemned because they are sexual actions of immorality that are not included in the marriage<sup>15</sup>.

The Christian Church has adopted a crystal opinion of a distinct intolerance against homosexuality since the early days of its existence. It lists homosexuality besides fornication, adultery, abortion and abusive sexual behaviour as immoral and inappropriate forms of behaviour in and of themselves, and also because they attack the institution of marriage and the family. Homosexual behaviour is a sin and is condemned by the Scripture and the Church Fathers. Many of them and many of Church Writers spoke against the immorality of homosexuality. Eusebius of Caesarea supported that the homosexuality of men and women and homosexual marriage are condemned by God. All these who are homosexuals should be in continuous

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<sup>10</sup> ARTEMI Eirini, “Vicious and Good/Virtuous Relationships in the Teachings of the Church Fathers”, post-doc thesis, *European Scientific Journal (ESJ)*, 18(13).1, p. 1-29, esp. p. 20-22.

<sup>11</sup> 1 JN 4:7-8.

<sup>12</sup> GEN. 1:27, “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”.

<sup>13</sup> GEN. 2:18 “Then the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him”.

<sup>14</sup> GEN. 2: 24. “A man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh”.

<sup>15</sup> IBID.



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repentance as the adulterers<sup>16</sup>. The same opinion is expressed by Basilus of Caesarea<sup>17</sup>. Based on biblical teaching<sup>18</sup>, Augustine of Hippo (c. 424) in his Epistle 211 contains the phrase “Cum directione hominum et odio vitiorum”<sup>19</sup>, which is translated as “With a love for mankind and hatred of sins”. Augustine was categorical in the combat against sodomy and similar vices.<sup>20</sup>

Generally, according to Orthodoxy, homosexuality and transgenderism are against the morality of Christ and biblical teaching. God created only two genders, male and female that they were given the ability to reproduce and assist in the creation of further human beings<sup>21</sup>. Sexual acts should take place between man and woman who are joined in the mystery or sacrament of marriage. All other sexual acts are thought of as fornication and are forbidden. But the worst of all is homosexuality and transgenderism, which are completely against the nature of the created man and woman.

Paul decried the sin of male homosexuality and underlines:

...and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>16</sup> EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA, *The proof of the Gospel*, 4, 10, PG 22, 276C.

<sup>17</sup> BASILIUS OF CAESAREA, *To Amphilocheus. About canons, Epistle 217*, 62, PG 32, 800A.

<sup>18</sup> There are a few biblical passages similar to this phrase. In Jude, the writer emphasizes that Christians should be known for their mercy and hatred of the effects of sin. Jude 23: “Save others by snatching them out of the fire; and have mercy on still others with fear, hating even the tunic defiled by their bodies”. Also, similar meaning with the phrase of Augustine can be found in biblical texts, Romans 12:9-10 “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor”; Psalm 137:9: “Blessed shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock”.

<sup>19</sup> AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *Epistle 211*, 11, PL 33, 962.

<sup>20</sup> ROM. 1:26. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO, *Confessions*, 3,8, PL 32, 689-690.

<sup>21</sup> GEN. 1:26-28.

<sup>22</sup> ROM 1: 27.



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In the 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians, the apostle adds:

Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality ... will inherit the kingdom of God.<sup>23</sup>

Homosexuality is one of the passions that every Christian should struggle against it. Persons who participated in homosexual or homoerotic relations were completely maleficent to John Chrysostom.<sup>24</sup> Every homosexual act is intrinsically evil. In his fourth homily on Romans, Chrysostom argues that homosexual acts are worse than murder and so degrading that they constitute a kind of punishment, and that enjoyment of such acts makes them worse,

...for suppose I were to see a person running naked, with his body all besmeared with mire, and yet not covering himself, but exulting in it, I should not rejoice with him, but should rather bewail that he did not even perceive that he was doing shamefully. Nothing can there be more worthless than a man who has pandered himself. For not the soul only, but the body also of one who hath been so treated, is disgraced, and deserves to be driven out everywhere.<sup>25</sup>

According to the Church Father homosexuality is worse than prostitution<sup>26</sup>. The same opinions with Chrysostom were expressed by his contemporary pagan rhetor Libanius<sup>27</sup>.

Besides homosexuality, transgenderism, the deconstruction of biological sexual identity is condemned by the Orthodoxy. Undoubtedly, there are very few cases of ambiguous genitalia or persons with a disparity between their chromosomes and the

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<sup>23</sup> 1 COR. 6: 9-10

<sup>24</sup> GEN. 4:10; GEN. 18:20-21; GEN 19:8-9; EX. 22:21-23; DEUT. 24:14-15.

<sup>25</sup> JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, *Homilies on Romans epistle*, 4, PG 60, 418B, 419C.

<sup>26</sup> IBID., PG 60, 419C.

<sup>27</sup> LIBANIUS, *Orations* 28.8-11; 39.5-6; 53.6; 61.23. GREENBERG D. F. and BYSTRYN M. H., "Christian Intolerance of Homosexuality", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 88, No. 3 (Nov., 1982), 515-548, esp. 524.



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outward structure of their bodies. Generally, the characteristics of a male's or female's physical body are not irrelevant to the personal identity of each two genders. Throughout human history, the social roles of the two genders have been changed, but the physical distinctions between the anatomy of men and women have remained, based on biological sexual identity.

Although homosexuality is condemned by the Orthodox Church, homosexuals are not rejected by the Orthodoxy. Some men refuse to be part of the Orthodox Church and follow the path away from the orders of God. Some others recognize their passion and fight against this sinful addiction. In this perspective, Christians should truly compassionate people who struggle with gender identity without encouraging them to adopt self-definitions that ignore the physical realities of human personhood and to have homosexual relations.

There are many examples of devout people who were homosexuals as Seraphim of Rose, but when they became Christians, they struggled against the passions of homosexuality and transgenderism and managed to gain sanctification. These people were healed in the Church, because of their hard struggle against their sexual passions, a homosexual orientation can be cured and homosexual actions can cease. In this way, they have redeemed sinners. They are human beings who have gotten rid of every carnal sickness and sin, delivered from the devil and death by God's grace through faith in Jesus by the Holy Spirit's power: "and such were some of you"<sup>28</sup>

The Orthodox Church doesn't exclude anyone, because it is a community of sinners who struggle with their passions and try hard to become saints, with the grace of God, to become members of the Kingdom of God. Of course, it does not bless the sin of homosexuality, which is opposite to its teachings about humanity and sexuality.

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<sup>28</sup> 1 COR. 6:10.





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## Conclusions

The ethics of the Orthodox Church has its source to the teaching of Christ, incarnate God. It protects and honour human life and it does not agree with many secular ideas which are against the dignity of human life. These modern views support abortions and homosexuality. They try to present these sins as something which is natural and right of any woman and man to do whatever they want their own body and nature. Orthodoxy rejects homosexuality and opposes abortions as immoral and sinful.

To sum up the Orthodox theology does not leave any room for the homosexual act to be justified, much more to be accepted as a natural weakness and not be considered a sin, a failure from the original destiny of man which is “in likeness”. Moreover, Christian ethics from apostolic era until today equated abortion with murder. Man's origin and mission testify that his life is of inestimable value and must be fully respected. The life of the unborn child is not any woman's property but a gift from God. So, killing a baby is a double sin because it contradicts God's creative action and destroys the image of God to the unborn baby. For the Orthodox Church, man, from the first moment of his conception, is part of the perspective of eternity. According to Christian Ethics the fetus has the right to life and to eternity.

The Orthodox Church does not change its views about ethical subjects because its beliefs are based on God's teaching and revelation and not to secular opinions. The latter are changed in every period of human life.

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