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**THE ORTHODOX PATRISTIC TEACHING
ON THE HUMAN EMBRYO AND THE
ETHICAL REPERCUSSIONS ON ABORTION
AND RELATED ISSUES**

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FR ANASTASIOS TELEVANTOS
submitting for the MA(Theology) qualification

**UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM
DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY**

1998



1 1 MAY 1999

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Declaration

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ABSTRACT

Abortion and related issues have caused a conflict between Medical progress and Religious ethics.

Historically, the life of the embryo was subordinated to the interest of the State in ancient Greece and of the father in ancient Rome (even though the Hippocratic oath was against abortion). It was Christianity that gave the foetus a high, independent, moral value.

Science has proved that new, human, biological life starts at conception.

Biblical, Anthropological evidence suggests that life is something sacred, for which God has an early interest.

Iconography and Liturgical hymnology provide evidence that human, ensouled life starts at conception.

The Holy Canons are strongly anti-abortion and strict not only towards women who perform abortion, but also towards anybody who helped them. Patristic writings themselves (notably St. Maximus the Confessor) emphasize that the body and soul are coeval at conception and that on Incarnation, Deity partook both body and soul simultaneously, at conception. The holy fathers were not always trying to fight abortion in their writings, but nevertheless an indirect negative stance may be extrapolated.

This trend is followed by most modern Orthodox and Catholic moralists (Protestants to a lesser extent). Non-Christian religious ethics generally condemn abortion - but often for different reasons, derived from their faith teaching.

There seem to be adverse psychological repercussions on the mother following abortion, while legalization on the issue follows the social trend and is therefore often in contradiction with the official teaching of the Church.

Finally, the need for a proper pastoral approach is emphasized, as the decision to abort is often induced by existing personal/social pressures, and also because the advent of biotechnology seems to challenge the anti-abortion teaching of the Orthodox Church, despite its promises to solve problems associated with human reproduction.

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Abbreviations

PG: J.P. Migne, Patrologia Graeca

ΒΕΠΕΣ: Βιβλιοθήκη Ἑλλήνων Πατέρων καὶ Ἐκκλησιαστικῶν Συγγραφέων

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

It is a well known historical fact that ethicists have always tried to set moral boundaries to scientific and in particular medical progress. One can see this as early as Plato's time when he noted¹:

"Science devoid of virtue is crookery and not wisdom".

Similarly, the recent great Albert Einstein fancily agrees:

"Religion without Science is blind
Science without Religion is bile".

The famous Indian leader and philosopher Mahatma Gandhi proclaimed² that:

"Among the seven blunders of the human world is Science without Humanity. Therefore this blunder must be transformed into wonder by ensuring that scientific progress is infused with a profound respect and even reverence for human life".

A contemporary ethicist³ emphasizes:

"Medicine is the most humane of sciences and the most scientific of humanities".

One can easily overthrow the argument that Science and Religion are distinct disciplines and they should therefore follow separate routes: human life is the



sum of many interactions - body/soul, materialistic/spiritual, personal/social, temporary/eternal, benefit/risk etc. This is why nobody disagrees with the legal control of nuclear weapons or with the measures proposed to prevent the impending ecological disaster.

People want principles in their lives⁴, particularly in issues like life and death or the setting up of families; otherwise society will break down.

All major problems may be seen to be ultimately theological⁵ and this is especially important since science solves some problems but creates others⁶ and bioethics is an example in which technology moves faster than philosophy⁷.

However, secular ethicists would challenge the above affirmations and indeed the real problem is that such issues are no longer clear⁸ unless one addresses to firm faith dogmatic principles (i-e. definite ethics require definite principles):

TABLE 1 ⁹		
Secular Humanism (Man is the measure of all things)		Christian Faith (Supernatural revelation is the measure of all things)
-God does not exist	1	-A personal God exists
-The Cosmos arose by chance and is a closed system self-explanatory	2	-Cosmos was created by God and is an open system not self-explanatory
-Jesus was only a man	3	-Jesus Christ is God
-There is no supernatural revelation, but only human thinking	4	-Supernatural revelation does exist
-Human destiny is oblivion (this earthly life is the only one that matters).	5	-Human destiny is eternal life with God (earthly life is temporary).

Having said this, however, it must be stressed that in the conscience of the Eastern Orthodox Church, Medicine is considered to be something more than an

ordinary profession. Since Christ is the Great Healer, it is often regarded to be analogous to His Priesthood. Many saints of the Orthodox Church were doctors e.g. St Panteleimon, St Luke etc.

In Sirach's Wisdom (38:1-7) one can read:

"You must honour the doctor for his services.... for he was created by the Lord... the doctor's science will raise his head and will be admired by the great of the earth, the Lord has made drugs from the earth and the decent Man will not despise them... and he has given Men Science so that His name is glorified in His wonders".

St John the Chrysostom¹⁰ recommends that we should accept the soul curing tribulations in our lives, allowed by God, as we accept the medicaments of a doctor to correct our bodily health.

One may also add that both Christianity and Medicine recognize the human being as a psychosomatic assembly and are therefore both interested in the health of the whole person¹¹.

St Anastasios the Sinaite¹² convincingly concludes this general introduction, when he insisted that:

"Orthodoxy is the true knowledge of the Creator and His Creatures, of every being as it actually is".

Historically¹³, abortion and infanticide were the most common techniques of birth control. Both of these practices were usually considered to be parental rights. The influential philosophers Plato and Aristotle approved of abortion, even demanded it in certain cases. Even though Plato believed that the unborn was a living being with a soul, in his ideal "Republic" he required abortion in women under the age of 20 or over 40¹⁴ and in cases of adultery, bigamy, incest and premarital sex. The rationale behind this seemingly arbitrary pronouncement is that for Plato, women bear children "to the State"¹³. The State's ideals, goals and needs take precedence over the life and rights of the unborn or newborn or their mothers. Plato's goal of developing the perfect state, necessitate a program of eugenics, in this utilitarian view of the individual; hence killing of unborn or newborn children who have a high risk of mental or physical deficiency must be encouraged by the state.

Aristotle had similar views. In addition, he believed that ensoulment takes place after 40 days of gestation in males and after 90 days in females. He also thought that the unborn was a living human being after this time of ensoulment¹⁶. Thus, Aristotle's overall preference was for early abortion which would not involve the killing of a human being, while at the same time would produce the finest individuals and hence the finest state.

The notions of Aristotle and Plato, though reflective of and influential in shaping the dominant mood of the Greco-Roman world, were not left unchallenged in ancient philosophy. The Pythagoreans, who believed in the transmigration of

souls, believed that ensoulment took place at conception and, therefore, that abortion was the taking of the human life. This influence is reflected in the famous Hippocratic Oath (400 B.C.)¹⁷:

- a) The regimen I shall adopt shall be for the benefit of the patients according to my ability and judgement and not their hurt or for any wrong.
- b) I will give no deadly drug to anybody though it be asked of me, nor will I counsel such.
- c) I will not aid a woman to procure abortion”.

The Stoics, who believed that everything should be done in harmony with rational nature, rejected infanticide as an unnatural practice. They also rejected abortion, even though they thought the foetus as part of its mother, becoming an individual only after birth.

Their philosophical enemies, the Epicureans, practised both infanticide and abortion. Opposition to abortion did come from other parts of the Graeco-Roman world. Abortion was often considered as act of murder, rendering the agent ritually impure. Greek and especially Roman law, however, viewed the foetus as a part of its mother, with no moral or legal rights¹⁸. Along with the woman herself, the foetus was technically the property of the father. Early in Roman history the father was free to force abortion at will, and an abortion chosen by a woman without her husband's approval was viewed as an offence against him. In neither case was the act of abortion seen as an injustice committed against the foetus or the woman. During the period of the Roman Empire, custom softened the father's power of life and death, but an abortion against the father's

will was still perceived as a crime against the father, family name, race and state - but not the foetus or the woman. Even when Rome enacted its first laws against abortion, the act was still not a crime against foetus or mother. Instead, abortion was a "scandalous" act being punished¹⁹.

Greek and Roman physicians were split into two or three camps regarding the issue of abortion. Some strictly interpreted the Hippocratic Oath and opposed abortion in all cases; most were willing to perform abortions when the life of the mother was in danger, while others did them for any reason.

It is interesting to comment on the attitude of the Jews at the time²⁰. They opposed abortion, except to save the life of the mother. In the Mishnah (Oholot 7:6), one can read that if a woman's life is endangered by the child she is carrying, it is permitted to abort the foetus in order to save her life. But once the greater part of the child has emerged from the womb, to destroy it would be an act of murder and it is not permitted to murder one human being in order to save another. Arguments against abortion, such as the ensoulment of the foetus, or that the foetus has potential life or, in favour of abortion, that a woman has a right to do what she wishes with her own body, are not found in the classical Jewish sources in which the question is discussed. The basic distinction is between the destruction of a life (a person) and that which is not life; the foetus in general was considered to have the moral or ontological status of "creation of God". This attitude may be seen as being especially remarkable, because

almost all Jewish authors agreed with Roman law in assigning to the foetus the legal status of being part of the mother, with few or no legal rights.

One may note Philo's views²¹, who indirectly condemned abortion when he discussed miscarriage caused by violence; he considered it a violation of the command against murder. Similarly, the historian Josephus²² wrote that he forbids abortion, which he equated with infanticide.

It can be seen therefore that the Pythagoreans, Stoics and Jews believed that the presence of a soul, the laws of nature or the image and work of God, respectively, made foetal life inviolable. Such views, however, were not shared by the majority, nor by the law. Instead, abortion was universally accepted to be the right of the father and/or State; it was not considered to be an act of violence committed against the foetus. The Christian Church was born into these background beliefs and values. As will be seen later in some detail, there was unanimous voice of early Christian writings condemning abortion. Some of these texts include the following:

-“Thou shalt not murder a child by abortion”, was a text that was contained in two early second-century guides to Christian life and worship²³.

-“The foetus in the womb... is an object of God's care” and “we say that women who induce abortions are murderers, and will have to account of it to God”, are two comments that reflect the position of Athenagoras, a great apologist of the late second century²⁴.

-The late second century theologian Tertullian wrote: "In our case, murder being once for all forbidden, we may not destroy the foetus in the womb. To hinder a birth is merely a speedier homicide"²⁵.

-"There are women who... (are) committing infanticide before they give birth to the infant", writes Minucius Felix in the early third century²⁶.

Three themes are repeated in the early Christian texts on the unborn and abortion:

(a) The unborn is the creation of God and therefore a human being, a person, a neighbour:

The "Didache" and the "Epistle of Barnabas" include their prohibition of abortion in a discussion of the practical meaning of the command to "love your neighbour as yourself". Thus, these two documents which adopt, yet radicalize, Jewish ethical traditions, view the foetus not a part of its mother, but as a child and neighbour.

At the end of the second century Clement of Alexandria developed the Stoic notion of conforming to the laws of nature. He argued that the unborn and newborn should not be killed because they are the "designs of providence". Athenagoras claimed that the foetus was "the object of God's care". At about the same time, Tertullian, who had considerable knowledge of legal matters, took Roman law to task concerning its view of the foetus, when he wrote²⁷ that the foetus is already a person, "while as yet the human being derives blood from

other parts of the (mothers') body for its sustenance". In other words, contrary to Roman and even Jewish law, Tertullian made the significant claim that dependence on the mother does not make the foetus merely a part of its mother. He appealed to the experience of pregnancy, to the Biblical references to God forming prophets in their mothers' wombs, and to the scriptural accounts of the prebirth activity of Jesus and John the Baptist in their mothers' wombs (Luke 1:41,46) as proofs of his belief in the personhood of the unborn²⁸.

The position of the earliest Christians, therefore was straightforward: All unborn foetuses are God's creatures and must be considered from a moral point of view to be true human beings, or "persons", whose deliberately induced death is murder.

(b) Since abortion is murder, the judgement of God falls of those guilty of abortion.

The conviction that abortion is murder, yielded the logical consequent belief, that the judgement of God falls on those guilty of abortion. They will suffer the consequences of their sin.

Thus, early Christian attitudes towards the unborn and abortion differed radically from prevailing pagan notions and practices. Christians rejected the Roman definition of the foetus as merely part of the mother's body under the father's power to keep or destroy. Their opposition to abortion developed in Jewish-

Christian communities where God's creative activity in the womb was respected and where social injustice and innocent bloodshed were abhorred. The Jewish perspective on the foetus and abortion became more radical and formed a new theological and ethical context in the early Christian church. The sacredness of unborn life took on a deeper meaning in the light of Christ; respect for the womb was increased because the early Christians believed in Jesus incarnation, conception, development in utero and birth.

(c) Opposition to abortion is part of a larger Christian ethic of non-violence and love

Consequent of the above developments, is that the anti-abortion stance of the Church was part of a holistic, consistent Christian ethic of love and non-violence. The life and teachings of Jesus encouraged them to avoid all forms of violence: killing in war, watching gladiator fights, exposing the newborn and aborting the unborn.

The foetus had a God-given right not to be killed, since for the Christians, its value grounded solely and completely in its relation to God-hence it had a God-given right to life, not to be killed²⁹.

In the Post-Constantinian church and throughout the following centuries of the Middle Ages, Christians continued to hold their belief in the sanctity of the unborn and opposed abortion. The great theologians and saints Basil,

Chrysostom and Ambrose not only eloquently expressed their opposition to abortion, but they also showed compassion and sensitivity to women who had aborted, offering them forgiveness and new life in Christ. As will be seen, the Orthodox church rejected the distinction between unformed, soulless embryo and a formed, ensouled one. In all cases abortion was considered as a murder. St Basil, in particular, rejected this distinction in 374 AD³⁰.

Augustine gave it a more serious consideration however, and his writings on the unborn had a great impact on subsequent centuries. Believing that sex is only for procreation³¹, not pleasure, Augustine condemned contraception, sterility, abortion and infanticide as damnable transgressions of the law of procreation. His views on the status of the embryo appear to have fluctuated throughout his lifetime³². Although he says that the unborn are "living", nourished by God, he also accepts the formed/unformed distinction. He argues that we can know with certainty that the soul is present in the unborn only after its formation. On the other hand he admitted the possibility that the unformed embryo is not human and that its abortion (miscarriage to be more precise) is not homicide (even though immoral). He was writing all this, when discussing the question of the resurrection of bodies of miscarried fetuses - which is why the question of formed/unformed is raised³³.

This tradition was endorsed by Thomas Aquinas and the accepted theological, legal and pastoral view of the Catholic Church, of the foetus and of abortion at the end of the Middle Ages may be summarized as follows³⁴:

- (a) The unborn receive their distinctively human souls, thereby becoming truly human at 40 (for males) or 80/90 (for females) days of gestation.
- (b) Induced abortion is homicide, if the foetus is formed and ensouled, and it is a serious, though lesser, sin if the foetus is not formed and ensouled.
- (c) Induced abortion is punishable by church law, with the required penance varying somewhat depending on the status of the foetus and local custom.
- (d) Therapeutic abortion may be permissible, if the foetus does not yet possess its soul.

These dominant views of the Catholic Church were only reversed in 1869, under growing scientific and philosophical emphasis on continuity in embryonic development (Pope Pius IX). This followed a corresponding movement in the church away from Aristotle, Augustine and Th. Aquinas and back to the earliest fathers' position on the human status of the foetus from conception. Consequently, the pope condemned all abortions and pronounced excommunication as the penalty for the participants.

It is of interest that the Orthodox Church maintained the original position throughout its history, influenced by its rigid Canon Law and the writings of St. Basil and St. Maximus the Confessor. Although much was written against

abortion, there were many cases in which the practice made its way early in the history of the church. Although at first the penalty for abortion was permanent excommunication, the standard penalty quickly (as early as St. Basil's time) became 10 years of penance (exclusion from holy communion). Penalties were sometimes given to physicians and other accomplices, too (see special chapter).

Protestant reformers, even though generally less vocal³⁶, generally echoed the established Christian regard and condemned abortion as a horrible act of homicide (Luther, Calvin, Melancthon). In this context Calvin wrote explicitly³⁶:

"If it seems more horrible to kill a man in his own house than in a field, it ought surely to be deemed more atrocious to destroy a foetus in the womb before it comes to light".

"M. Luther³⁷ also emphasized: "The foetus is wholly the work of God alone".

J. Weemse³⁸, an English preacher, referred to the womb as the workshop of God and to the unborn as creatures already in the image of God.

It is evident nowadays, that Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant theology is strongly anti-abortion; it was recently more vigorously sparked with the introduction of biotechniques (e.g. prenatal testing or test-tube babies). Various pro-life groups have been formed throughout the world. It is of interest that even though the issue of abortion is often in the forefront of election campaigns the practice continues to grow in numbers worldwide (60 million, Fig. 1)³⁹.

ABORTIONS AND BIRTH CONTROL

France 79%

Poland 75%

China 69%

India 28%

Indonesia 53%

Mexico 39%

U.S.A. 65%

NUMBER OF ABORTIONS / 1000 LIVING BIRTHS

Bulgaria	152	Canada	66
U.S.A	1158	New Zealand	7
France	171	Tunysia	16
Poland	141	India	346
Great Britain	137		

INDEX

Abortions legal ■

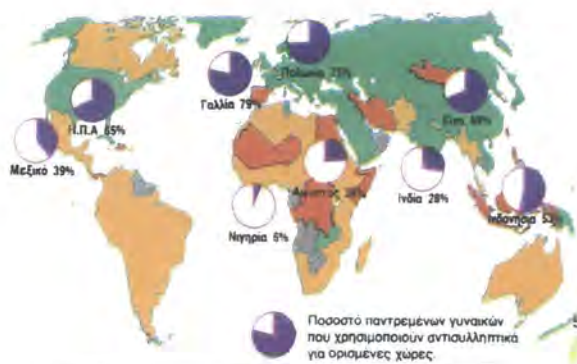
Abortions legal on medical reasons only ■

Abortions illegal ■

No information available ■

% refer to married women who use contraception

Fig 1



CHAPTER 1: NOTES/REFERENCES

1. Plato, in Menexenos 19, A 247.
 "Πᾶσα ἐπιστήμη χωριζομένη δικαιοσύνης καί τῆς ἄλλης ἀρετῆς, πανουργία ἀλλ' οὐ σοφία λέγεται"
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5. Bioethics and the Beginning of Life, Edited by R. Miller & B. Brubaker, published by Herald Press, Pennsylvania,1990, p.31.
6. Ibid, p.208
7. Ibid, p.66
8. Ibid, p.32
9. Wilkinson, J., "Does Science need Faith?", Journal of the CMF, July 1994, Vol. 40.3, No.159, p.10.
10. Migne, P.G. 49,251
 "Καί γάρ ὁ ἰατρός, οὐχ ὅταν εἰς παραδείσους καί λειμῶνας ἐξαγάγη τόν κάμνοντα θαυμαστός ἔστι μόνον... ἀλλά καί ὅταν ἄσιτον κελυῆ διαμένειν... καί ὅταν τέμνη, καί ὅταν καίη, καί ὅταν πικρά προσάγη φάρμακα ἰατρός ἔστιν ὁμοίως. Πῶς οὖν ἄσιτον ἐκείνον μεν τοσαῦτα ἐργαζομένον κακά ἰατρόν αὐτόν καλεῖν, τόν δέ Θεόν εἰ ποτέ ἐν τούτων ποιήσειεν, οἷον ἢ λιμόν ἢ θάνατον ἐπαγάγει βλασφημεῖν καί τῆς τοῦ παντός ἐκβάλλειν προνοίας. Καίτοι γε ὁ ἀληθῆς ἰατρός οὗτος μόνος ἔστι καί ψυχῶν καί σωμάτων".
11. Ἀρχιμ. Χρ. Ρουμελιώτη "Μοναχοί καί κληρικοί μέ Ἱατρική Ἐκπαίδευση", Κοινωνία (Communion), Ἔτος ΛΖ, Τ.3, 1994, σ.272-8.
12. "Ὁρθοδοξία ἐστίν ἡ ἀψευδής περί Θεοῦ καί κτίσεως ὑπόληψις, ἡ ἔννοια περί πάντων ἀληθῆς, ἡ δόξα τῶν ὄντων καθάπερ ἐστίν" (cited by the introductory leaflet of the III Orthodox Bioethics Conference, Limassol Cyprus 1997).
13. See reference 5, chap.8, p.124-143.
14. Plato, Republic, V460-462.
15. Ibid, V461
16. Aristotle, Politics, 7.41.10 (1335b)
17. R. Jones, Groundwork of Christian Ethics, Epworth Press 1984.
18. Justinian, Digest, 25.4.1.1.;35.2.9.1.;38.8.1.8
19. Justinian, Digest, 47.11.
20. L. Jacobs, The Jewish Religion: A companion Oxford University Press, 1995, p.11.
21. Philo, Special Laws 3. 108-109.
22. Josephus, Against Apion, 2.202
23. Didache 2.2 and the Epistle of Barnabas 19.5

24. Athenagoras, Plea, 35
25. Tertullian, Apology 9.6
26. Meneucius Felix, Octavius, 30.2
27. Tertullian, Apology 9.6
28. Tertullian, De Anima 25.3; 26. 4-5
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30. Basil, Letters, 188.2
31. E.g. Augustine, De nuptiis et concupiscentia 1. 15-17
32. G.G. Grisez, Abortion: The Myths, the Realities and the Arguments New York: Corpus, 1970, p. 145-148; M. Gorman, Abortion and the Early Church: Christian Jewish and Pagan Attitude in the Greco-Roman World, Downers Grove, Illinois: Internarsity Press, 1986, pp.70-72.
33. Augustine, Enchiridion, 23:85-86.
34. Bioethics and the beginning of life, Edited by R. Miller and B. Brubaker, Herald Press, Pensylvania, 1990, p.128.
35. Ibid p.137
36. J. Calvin, Commentary on Exodus ad loc.
37. M. Luther, Works, 45:333.
38. Augustine, Enchiridion, pp. 158-159.

CHAPTER 2: BASIC SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION

If one is to comment on the ethics of scientific developments, one must accurately know what happens technically. Very often lack or vagueness of precise scientific knowledge gives rise to misunderstandings or ethical misinterpretations. What is worse, when the true scientific facts are realized or when scientific technology changes, then this has an embarrassing effect on those who were in a hurry to comment favourably or adversely.

As can be seen from the diagrams¹ that follow, fertilization of the female ovum by the male sperm to form the zygote is completed in less than 24 hours.

After several divisions, the morula gradually moves down the female genital tract and is implanted in the uterus - (often unsuccessfully, resulting in spontaneous abortion). Organ differentiation starts early and it is evident that from the available information, that scientific facts indicate that human biological life begins at fertilization. The first cell (zygote) contains a completely distinct genetic structure (chromosomes) capable of rapidly initiating organ formation. Hence, the first cell(s) may be envisaged as human life with great potential² (Figs 2,3,4).

Abortion, then, at any stage of pregnancy, consists of interruption of human biological life, as evidenced by famous scholars like Prof. W.Bowes (Colorado), Prof. H. Gordon (Mayo Clinic), A. Liley (Father of Embryology)³.

“Each individual has a very neat beginning: at conception”.

Objection to the above statement, however, does exist, in that twinning can occur after a few days after conception, so that some have suggested⁴ that it is not until the formation of the primitive streak after 14 days of development of the embryo that one can discern with certainty, that a new living organism has been formed.

A plausible reply, however, does exist, in that the primitive streak is just an intermittent transient state and any stages before or after that are equally important for embryonic development. Twinning is something already potentially determined at conception and if more than one individual will be born, the more reason for early embryo protection (i.e. it is thought that conception includes twinning)⁵.

There are many methods of abortion e.g. by scalp and suction aspiration, drugs (salt poisoning/prostaglandin), hysterectomy etc. A recent innovation, the RU-486 pill (mofinestone), withers the developing embryo whilst being stalked and the ease of this method has caused the reaction of pro-life groups as it is feared that the ease of abortion, will encourage many women to proceed to this practice.

The fact that the fertilized ovum has a distinct genetic structure and the fact that life has recently being formed in the test-tube, by in vitro-fertilization - both of these suggest that the embryo is not just a piece of extra flesh of its mother, but a totally distinct being; the embryo is another body not an extension of its mother.

Finally, one must also mention the medical problems following abortion: haemorrhage, sterility, shock and even death.

The brief scientific documentation presented above generally suggests that abortion at any stage, consists of what is often a violent cessation of human biological life. It is of interest that the number of abortions has risen to 60 million worldwide accounting for 46% of total deaths in the U.S.A.

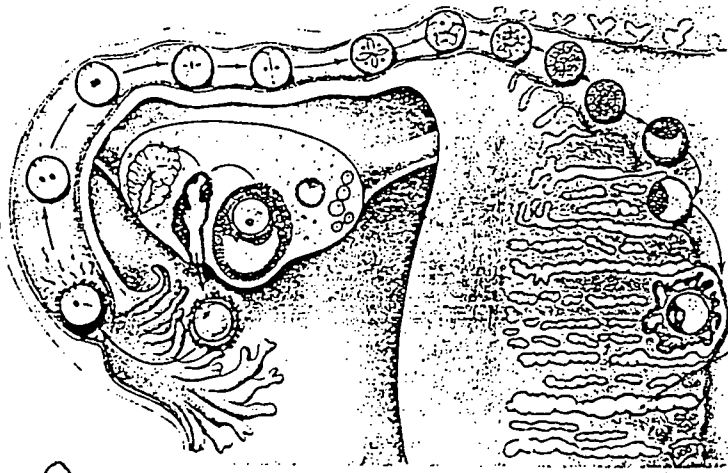


Figure 2 Diagrammatic representation of ovulation, fertilization, transport and implantation. (From Jeffcoate (1975), *Principles of Gynaecology*, 4th Edn)

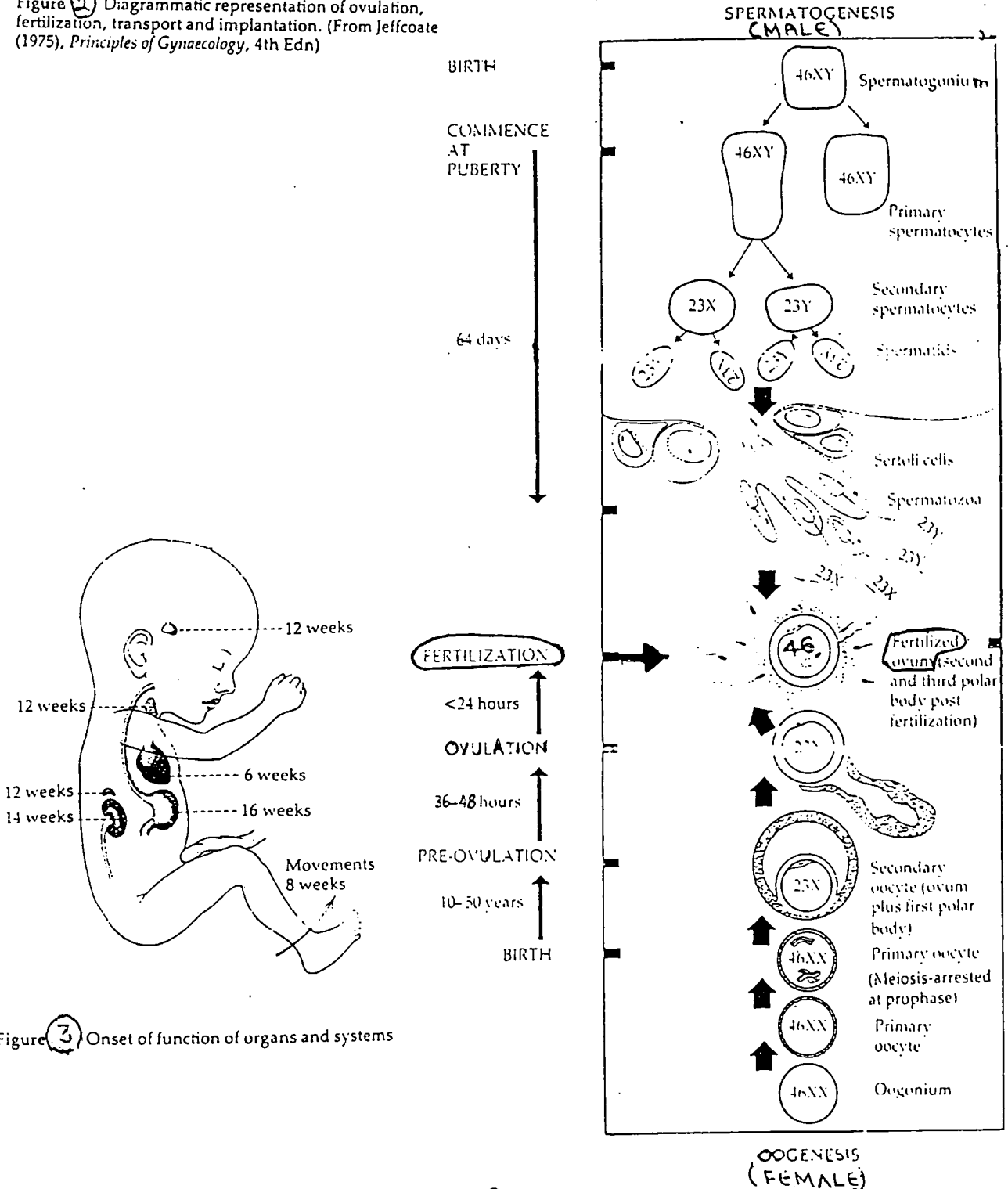


Figure 3 Onset of function of organs and systems

Figure 1 Gametogenesis. Diagrammatic comparison of the stages of oogenesis and spermatogenesis. Numbers refer to chromosomes

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CHAPTER 3: BIBLICAL DOGMATIC/ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES FOR THE ABORTION ISSUE

The Bible was the principal and basic source of reference for all patristic theological teaching. There is not much explicitly in the Bible about abortion, even though it is the case that both Jews and Christians differed from the people amongst whom they lived by their rejection of abortion, amongst other things. The Bible rather provides an understanding of what it is to be human, in terms of which abortion is clearly unacceptable. This includes the fact that according to the Bible, life is God given, not something over which human beings have any right to terminate; just as human beings cannot create life - they simply procreate, in this fulfilling God's will for mankind -, so they must regard it as a gift from God, who alone has the right to bring it to an earthly end.

According to the Orthodox Biblical Anthropology¹, Man was created by God composed of a body and a soul²:

“And the Lord God formed man of dust of the ground (material) and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (spiritual) and man became a living soul” (Gen 2:7).

Man was made in God's image and likeness, implying the ability to think, being autonomous, dominant and social belonging to His Image, while the possibility of moral likeness and theosis belonging to His Likeness:

“And God said, let us make man in our image after our likeness” (Gen 1:26).

One must also add, that when Man was created he was endowed with special gifts, such as potential immortality, potential sinlessness, potential harmony in himself, between God, between his neighbour; and potential lack of hardship and disease.

All these gifts were distorted after the Fall and Exile from Paradise and in consequence disease and death came into human life. This accounts for involuntary spontaneous abortion (10-15 per cent of all cases) i.e. natural evil is thus explained.

Similarly, induced abortion may be seen as part of induced evil arising from the distorted harmony between Man and himself, God and neighbour. The same argument applies to the succumbing to proceed to abortion under psychological or social pressure.

Abortion, at any stage of embryonic development, may be considered to be a murder, which is explicitly considered to be a grave sin.

“Thou shalt not Kill” (Mt 5:21) or “But the fearful... and murderers... shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire....” (Rev 21:8).

One must add that according to Biblical Ecclesiology and Soteriology, the sacrament of Baptism is a necessary pre-requisite for salvation:

"Go ye therefore.... baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Mt 28:19).

"Verily, verily... except a man be born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

Human embryos are not devoid of sin:

"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned (Rom5:12).

"Behold, I was shapened in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps 50:5)

The ethical consequence of this dogmatic stance is that abortion kills an unbaptized human being, jeopardising, thus, its eternal salvation.

Finally, Biblical eschatology promises total salvation (of body and soul), in eternal life, making earthly tribulations and afflictions (such as giving birth and taking care of a malformed baby), as means which lead to eternal life - if tolerated with patience:

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us" (Rom 8:18).

Having established the Biblical Anthropological context of the abortion issue, a careful look at the Holy Scriptures³ will reveal that in both the Old and the New Testament⁴, God may be envisaged as the Giver of Life, who has an early interest for life in the womb and an anti-abortion trend is clearly felt.

a) God as Life-Giver

Within this framework human procreation is viewed not only as a gift, but likewise as a command from the Creator who is portrayed as Creator of the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1) and carried through to the final chapters of Revelation (Rev 21:1-22:21) where God is depicted as Creator of a new heaven and a new earth-hence He is the Life-giver to all that lives. It, therefore, comes as no surprise, to see God concluding the creative activities of the sixth day, by instructing the created human beings to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen 1:28); a role marred by the original sin, which made the procreative process more difficult.

"I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing, in pain you shall bring forth children" (Gen 3:16).

Similarly, in a metaphorical way, Moses addressed the Israelites before crossing Jordan:

"You were unmindful of the Rock that begot you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth" (Deut 32:18).

Elsewhere, God is depicted as the one who bestows fertility on human beings, e.g. in Jacob's final testament to his twelve sons, He declares to Joseph that:

"God Almighty... will bless you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that crouches beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb". (Gen 49:25).

Throughout Deuteronomy, God is depicted as one who will reward the faithfulness of the Israelites with fertility for themselves, their livestock and the ground they till, e.g. in Deut 7:10-14:

"And because you hearken to these ordinances and keep and do them the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant... will bless you and multiply you; he will also bless the fruit of your body... there shall not be male or female barren among you or among your cattle".

Several events speak of God as one who has power to close and open the womb. When women are barren it is God who has brought this barrenness upon them, e.g. Sarah observes to her husband Abram:

"Behold now the Lord has prevented me from bearing children".
(Gen 16)

Similarly when Rachel demands that Jacob "give her children", he responds in anger:

"Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb? (Gen 30:1-2).

But if it is God who closes the womb, it is also God who opens it e.g. by "healing" the wife and female slaves of Abimelech, so that they bear children (Gen 20:17), the Lord "visits" Sarah and does to her as he had promised (Gen 21:1), God "grants prayers" (Gen 25:21), "remembers" women (Gen 30:22, Gen 29:32) and opens their wombs (Gen 29:31, 30:22). Likewise the women themselves give witness to the belief that it is God who has given them the children that they bear. e.g:

"I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord" (Cain, Gen 4:1).

"God has made laughter for me" (Isaac, Gen 21:6).

"God has judged me and has... given me a son" (Dan, Gen 30:6).

"May the Lord add to me another son (Joseph, Gen 30:24).

It also appears that God both wills and empowers human procreation, not only where it occurs in the natural course of human events, but also where it is humanly impossible e.g. Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18:13-14) and Zachariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:36-37). Integrally linked to the belief in God as Life-giver, is the corresponding belief in barrenness as a curse to the extent that it provides the primary backdrop against which God's life-giving powers become visible e.g. Sarah (Gen 11:30 and 16:1). Rebekah (Gen 25:21), Rachel (Gen 29:31 and 30:1), Elizabeth (Luke 1:7). However the situation can be reversed (in all the cases above) and the curse of barrenness ultimately gives way to the blessing of conception and childbearing (Isaac, Joseph, Samson and John the Baptist were all born to infertile couples):

"He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise the Lord! (Ps 113:9).

Similarly, barrenness stands paired with the ideas of sadness, mourning, loss and incompleteness and in contrast to ideas of joy, rejoicing, fulfillment and plenty e.g. Isa 54:1, Prov 30:15-16, Exod 23:25-26, Hos. 9:11-14, Job 3:1-10. Jer 20:14-18 etc.

One can also discern in the same context the Divine intervention when the fruit of the womb of Sarah and Rebekah was under threat: For they must become the mothers of His chosen people and it is of marked interest to read in the Mosaic Law, the rules and directions that guard the female fertility⁵.

In all of these, the role of God as Life-Giver who blesses the birth of a child is clearly shown.

b) Early Divine interest for life in the womb

Having established the biblical evidence for the direct and indirect Life-giving capacity of God, one can have a look at the pronounced interest that He shows for foetal life and His intimate involvement in the Process of conception and life creation within the womb.

"And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels..."
(Gen 25:23)

Or that of Samson's:

"But he said unto me Behold thou shalt conceive and bear a son; and now drink no wine nor strong drink, neither eat any unclean thing: for the child shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb to the day of his death." (Jud 13:7).

Similarly with St John the Baptist (Lk 1:15):

"For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord... and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb".

or most importantly in the Annuciation narration of our Lord (Mat 1:20):

"...Joseph...fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost".

or (LK 1:30-39) the angel talking to Mary:

"And behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb and bring forth a son and shalt call his name Jesus".

Interest for life in the womb takes several forms, e.g.:

"Did not he who made me in the womb make him?
And did not one fashion us in the Womb? (Job 31:15)

or in Ps 139:13:

“For thou didst form my inward parts thou didst knit me together
in my mother’s womb”

One can discern not only the intimate involvement of God in the initial creation of a new human being, but also in the development and bodily differentiation of the formed embryo.

In other cases names are given to individuals whilst they are yet in the womb or even before they are conceived:

“Listen to me...the Lord called me from the womb.
From the body of my mother he named my name” (Isa 49:1)

or even decides the lifespan of an individual whilst still within the womb:

“Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance;
in thy book were written, every one of them, the days that
were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them”
(Ps. 139:16)

and amazingly He announces the establishment of a covenant with an individual who has not yet been conceived:

“But I will establish my covenant with Isaac whom Sarah shall
bear to you at this season next year” (Gen 17:21).

Perhaps the most striking of the affirmations made for God’s early interest for life in the womb has to do with vocation selection e.g. Isaiah (Isa 49:5):

“And now the Lord says, who formed me from the womb to be his servant... that Israel might be gathered to him”

or Jeremiah (Jer 1:4-5):

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you and before you were born I consecrated you: I appointed you a prophet to the nations”

or St Paul (Gal 1:15):

“But when he who set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace”.

One can also see the importance of the relationship between the mother and the child within the womb e.g. to fulfill the Nazirite vow of her son in the womb the wife of Manoah herself from those things prohibited to a Nazirite (Judg 13:4-14).

Children within the womb give evidence of their personality e.g. in Gen 25:21-26 the narration talks about the interaction of Esau and Jacob (the latter taking his brother's heel) in Rebekah's womb, something that is paralleled in Hosea 12:2-3 as a sin compared to that of “striving with God” in his manhood. More importantly the leaping of St John the Baptist in Elizabeth's womb on greeting the newly pregnant Mary is clearly described as a Spirit-filled action (Luke 1:41) while Elizabeth welcomed her as the Mother of her Lord.

One can also see nine announcements of children born e.g. Isaac (Gen 17:1-21), Samson (Judg 13:2-25), Samuel (Sam 1:1-20), St John the Baptist (Luke 1:5-25) or even Jesus Himself (Matt 1:18-25). These birth predictions even though exhibiting certain differences, they reaffirm the role of God as Life-giver with early embryo interest.

In general, then, Scripture teaches that the embryo is God's work and that the development of the foetus is an object of His care (Ps 139:13-16, Eccles 11:5, Isah 49:1): God sees future potential in the first beginnings of life.

"God has not created death nor does He cherish when anyone alive perishes...death has intruded in the world through devil's hatred (Solomon's Wisdom 1:13 and 2:24).

All the above evidence, clearly shows God's interest in early life which leads one to accept that life resides in the womb.

c) Anti-abortion trend

All the previous evidence even though not explicit, is indirectly anti-abortion. But one can see direct scriptural evidence as well. The commandment "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex 20:13) makes no discernment as to the stage of human life: nor does Gen 9:6:

"If anyone sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has man been made".

Also in II Kings 8:12 we read:

“...Why weepeth my Lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel... and wilt dash their children and rip up their women and child”.

and in Amos 1:13: Thus says the Lord:

“For three transgressions of the Ammonites and for four I will not revoke the punishment; because they have ripped up women with child in Gilead...”

One can also note that St Paul uses the word “ἔκτρωμα” (aborted material) metaphorically, but even so it emphasizes the magnitude of the sin committed in literal practice.

“And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time”. (I Cor 15:8).

Special reference must be made to Exod 21:22-25 as it has caused many misinterpretations. The Septuagint text reads:

“When two men strive together and hurt a woman with a child so that her unformed fruit departs from her he shall be punished, according as the woman’s husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. And if the baby is formed then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth...”

The above is a free interpretative translation of the original Hebrew text⁶:

“when men strive together, and hurt a woman with child, so that there is a miscarriage and yet no harm follows, the one who hurt her shall be fined, according as the woman’s husband shall lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. If any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye...”

The quotation above has given rise to many different interpretations, not only between Catholic and Protestant scholars, but also among Orthodox Fathers themselves - in fact some by pass it altogether.

For instance Theodoret of Cyrus commenting on the particular verse and on the meaning of formed (ἔξεικονισμένον):

“The embryo is ensouled after the body is fully developed in the womb. Because the Creator molded Adam’s body before blowing in the soul. The Lawgiver orders that if a pregnant woman aborts during a fight, then this would be called a murder if the baby comes out formed (ἔξεικονισμένον), and that the guilty person be penalized in the same way (i.e. be killed). If the baby comes out not formed, then this should not be considered as a murder, because it was not aborted ensouled; instead the guilty man should be penalized as for causing damage⁷.

The same author repeats his assertion when writing his views on the nature of man:

“...the body was formed from earth and water and the other elements and the soul, which had not pre-existed, was sent to it after the moulding of former. Because, it says, that God

a living breath, and man became a living soul ... the baby (of a pregnant woman) is first formed⁸ (and moulded) in the womb and is ensouled after this”.

One may note that the comments above seem to suggest the Biblical evidence points to the fact to that ensoulment takes place after the moulding of the body. If one assumes some basic medical knowledge at the time, then ensoulment was meant to take place after the third month of gestation (when the body parts are clearly distinguished).

As far as the creation story is concerned, one cannot exclude the simultaneous moulding of the body from earth and the breath of life (ensoulment) taking place simultaneously; the holy author probably wanted to emphasize the composite nature of Man. In addition the creation story “and God created Man” (Gen 1, 26-27) does not contradict the detailed account of the second chapter; instead it may be considered to emphasize the composite nature of man, created in the image of God-something that rather leads to the acceptance of the simultaneous creation of both soul and body of the first human being.

As far as the second part is concerned, one may note that the Orthodox church never accepted the distinction “ἐξεικονισμένον καί μὴ ἐξεικονισμένον”. As will be seen later in some detail, St. Basil in particular stressed that:

“there is no fine distinction between formed and unformed (i.e. embryo)”.

The fact, also that even though the Holy Bible teaches indirectly that the soul leaves the body on biological death¹⁰, one should expect some indication of what happens as to the entrance of the soul in the body. The general lack of such indication may be considered to point to the simultaneous union of body and soul, at the conception of the body despite some points already mentioned which are not fully clear.

Additional indirect evidence that the body and the soul are coeval at conception comes from the general teaching of the Bible on the composite nature of Man, something that seems not to be limited for the born human being, but also for the embryo.

If one considers LK 1,41 and 44, then it is quite evident that the “leaping in joy” of St. John the Baptist whilst still in the womb, on the visit of the Mother of God, was the result of the work of the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit immediately afterwards illuminated the mind of Elizabeth: “And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit”. As Zigavenos¹¹ points out: “the baby leaped feeling the salvation of Man and being happy about it”. Theophylactus of Bulgaria also adds that¹²:

“If the baby had not leaped she would not have prophesised”.

Origen¹³ seems to agree with the above when noting that on meeting the mother of God:

“Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit due to her son. The mother was not filled with the Holy Spirit first; but after the

filling of John, the mother (who contained the filled one) was also filled with the Holy Spirit”.

Since it is plausible to assume that the gift of prophecy only acts through a full psychosomatic union, then, one may extrapolate and deduce that what Elizabeth contained was in fact a perfect, psychosomatic human being.

Returning to the controversial Old Testament verse Ex. 21,22-25, one may read the very plausible interpretation of the late church Canon specialist Fr E. Theodoropoulos, which seems to reconcile the various views and in addition takes into account the particular specific context of the verse in question¹⁴:

“Theodoret of Cyrus believed that human ensoulment occurs after the 4th month of gestation (PG Migne 80,272 and 83,941). The Second Canon of St Basil which was confirmed by the Quinisext Synod is contrary to the above and makes no distinction of formed or unformed baby. The 3rd Ecumenical Council talks about ensoulment on immediate conception. A compromise to the various interpretations give on the Exodus quotation is that the penalty refers to the guilty man and not the gestation stage itself. A man will be penalized more strictly if the baby is formed, while if unformed, this would not cause abdomen enlargement, hence the guilty man would not have realized she was pregnant. Evidence for this, is the penalty ordered by Moses in Exodus 21:29, by which the owner of a bull who has been warned of the offensive acts of his animal, will be penalized by death if the bull kills someone, while he will only be fined if no warning was made. In other words Moses’ distinction of the guilty man’s penalty does not refer to the development stage of the embryo, but rather to the willing or unwilling murder and of the apparent or non-apparent pregnancy state”.

Before concluding the chapter on the Biblical evidence on abortion one must also bear in mind Christ’s general affirmations.

"I am the Ressurrection and the Life" (John 11:25)

"I am the way, the truth and the Life" (John 14:6)

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world... having predestinated us into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ..." (Eph. 1:4-5).

Also if one follows Christ, one must imitate His Life as husband to Church, Father to child, Healer to the ill and it is the sick and not those in good health that are in need of a physician (Luke 5:31) - certainly all these qualities are incompatible with abortion.

Even the handicapped are not without God's sovereign will and purpose (Ex 4:11). He has a special concern for the handicapped (Lev 19:14 and Deut 27:18). Therefore to deny the handicapped the possibility of life is to violate the spirit of God's law.

In Psalms 50:5 one reads:

"Before I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me".

The capacity of the conceived child to bear what the holy fathers interpreted as the inherited ancestral sin, indirectly points out that human life (ensouled - since sin can only be attributed to a full psychosomatic human being) starts at conception.

This may be seen as a negative evidence, but nevertheless indirectly indicative, for the initiation of the human life.

Conclusively, the Biblical evidence suggests that one may clearly realize God's great interest in the creation and development of human life and that He is the one who bestows fertility; all these suggest an overwhelmingly direct pro-life stance and an indirect anti-abortion attitude.

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CHAPTER 4: THE ISSUE OF ABORTION IN LITURGICAL TEXTS, HYMNOLOGY AND ICONOGRAPHY

Liturgical Hymnology and Iconography are not used in an abstract way in the Orthodox Church. Instead they may be envisaged as being militant, since they not only help the faithful to pray but they are the instillation and overall expression of the Orthodox Dogma and Ethics. As such, one would expect to obtain a clear insight on the issue of life and abortion on their careful examination.

a) Pro-Life Feastdays¹

On the 25th of March the Orthodox Church celebrates the great feast-day of the Annunciation, which commemorates not only the Angel Gabriel's announcement that the Blessed Virgin Mary would bear the Messiah, but it also commemorates His Conception in her womb. The main hymn of the day ("Apolytikion") clearly explains that what the Theotokos carried in her womb was not merely "a mass of tissue", but rather a person - the Saviour of the world:

"Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of eternal mystery! The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin as Gabriel announces the coming of grace".

A hymn from the service of the Great Compline for this feast, also teaches us that life begins as the moment of conception:

"... Oh marvel! God had come among men; He who cannot be contained is contained in a womb; the Timeless One enters time... for God empties Himself, takes flesh and is fashioned as a creature when the angel tells the pure Virgin of conception".

The Saviour of all is "fashioned as a Creature" at the very moment of conception; when the Angel Gabriel announces the joyous news to the Theotokos. The Theotokion hymn of the First Tone for Sundays echoes a similar teaching:³

"As Gabriel cried unto you, O Virgin, Hail! - with that cry the Lord of all became incarnate in you, o holy ark as spoke the righteous David. You were revealed as more spacious than the heavens since you bore your Creator. Therefore glory to Him who abode in you! Glory to Him who came from you! Glory to Him who through your birth-giving has set us free.

These centuries-old hymns, clearly indicate that the beginning of our salvation did not begin when Jesus was born or when the foetus became "viable" in the womb, but our salvation began at the very moment of His Conception.

So do two other minor feasts, that mark the conception of the Theotokos by St. Ann (December 9) and the conception of St. John the Baptist by St. Elizabeth (September 23), for the former (Vespers hymn):⁴

"Behold! The promises of the Prophets are realized for the Holy Mountain is planted in the womb, the Divine Ladder is set up, the great Throne of the King is ready, the place for the passage of the Lord is prepared...".

The "Kontakion"⁵ hymn for this same feast proclaims:

"Today the universe celebrates the conception of Ann which is caused by God...".

For the latter:⁶

"Rejoice, O barren one, who had not given birth; for behold you have clearly conceived the one who is the dawn of the Sun who was about to illuminate the whole universe, blighted with blindness. Shout in joy Zacharias crying in favour; truly the one to be born is a Prophet of the High!"

i.e. St. John the Baptist is considered a full person though in formation, while yet in the womb of his mother.⁷ It is important to note in the previous hymn, that the conception of the Theotokos by St. Ann was "caused by God"; therefore any conception may be envisaged to be under the same Divine providence. Just as Joachim and Anna were not aware of God's plan for salvation when they miraculously conceived the Theotokos, so today we cannot know what God had planned for all those millions who have been destroyed by abortion.

b) Sacraments and Services

Having a look at the Marriage sacramental service⁸ one can also notice several times the prayer that wishes couple the enjoyment of the blessing of children and child birth as a necessary constituent of marital christian life (but again as a divine gift):

“... for the granting of fruit of the womb...”
 “... for the enjoyment of having sons and daughters”.

It is also of great interest to have a look at the baptismal⁹ and pre-baptismal services. In the prayers read to the mother on entering the church after 40 days¹⁰ of delivery:

“... bless, sanctify, enlighten... the newborn child for it is You that has produced it and showed it the visible light...”.

In the baptismal service itself we repeatedly read in the exorcisms and the sacrament itself, that it is God Who has called the child to the great grace of Baptism.

The unambiguous evidence from the church prayers, however, comes from the service that takes place when a woman willingly or even unwillingly aborts a child:

“...Forgive and grant grace o Lord to your servant who today has willingly or unwillingly committed murder and aborted her conceived child...”¹¹

As will be seen later, the woman who has aborted, even unwillingly, is “penalized” with a year abstinence from Holy Communion, for was she careful to do what ought to be done or not, had she read or asked as to what should have been done to avoid unwilling abortion? ¹²

Once again then we see that the patristic thought expressed in the liturgical texts and prayers clearly show a pro-life and an anti-abortion position.

c) Iconography

The Orthodox patristic thought is also expressed in Church Iconography. Even though such information is scanty, nevertheless what has been gathered can be considered as convincing.

In Fig. 5¹³ one sees a Norgovod Russian icon of the 15th century depicting the conception of St. John the Baptist who is shown as a full grown individual at the moment of his conception. In Fig. 6¹⁴ the 14th century fresco from the Holy Cross church in Pelendri village, Cyprus, reminds us of the meeting of Theotokos and Elizabeth after the Annunciation. A feature of dogmatic importance, is that both Christ and St. John the Baptist are painted as embryos with the latter bowing (leaping with joy) before the former. The visit of the Mother of God immediately after the angelic salutation provides us with a characteristic scriptural example where the patristic position on the embryo ensoulment is clearly depicted both from the point of view of Orthodox Anthropology and from the point of view of Orthodox Christology: both the embryo-Christ and the embryo - St. John the Baptist, are full psychosomatic beings.

In Fig. 7¹⁵ the 12th century icon from the Tetriakof art-gallery in Moscow, one can see that on Annunciation, there was concurrent Conception and Incarnation of

the Logos. The assumption of the human nature takes place instantly and simultaneously, with the initial moment of his conception - "ἐξ ἄκρας συλλήψεως". According to the Christological dogma of the Orthodox Church, whatever is valid for the human nature of Christ (exceptions are His virgin conception and sinlessness) - exactly the same is valid for each human being.

Since, then, our Lord, from the moment of His Conception, became instantly a full human being (psychosomatic), the same happens with every human being and hence abortion at any stage is a murder. In Fig. 8¹⁶ one can see Jesus blessing a child. -the "least brothers of Jesus" - from the 11th century Dionysiou monastery (Holy Mountain, codex No 587) while in the modern icon¹⁷ of S. Choriatelli (Fig. 9) Jesus points with His right hand to an aborted embryo while holding his soul with His left hand. Both of these, indicate the prolife and anti-abortion feeling of the Church Fathers to small children, as indirectly does the Fresco in Figs. 10 & 11, which vividly depicts the infanticide of the 2,000 children by Herod (from the Transfiguration Monastery in Meteora, 1552 AD).

Also the very meaningful modern icon¹⁸ (Fig.12) of C. Vrousgos shows in its top left half Christ and His Church who protect and bless the Family. To this belong the blessed multi-children family the Unmarried Mother, who has undertaken the responsibility of motherhood and raised her cross but also the Mother who has aborted, but repented. In the second top right part the new Herod, ABORTION - like a contemporary queen with snake hair and baby head on her crown and a bloody death sickle as her scepter. She calls on the representative Women

categories impersonating hardheartness, indifference and frivolity, to offer their embryos, which are trampled under her feet. On her right an abortionist doctor with the money shown in his pocket, kills the embryo which is voraciously devoured by a dragon, while the Angel cries, turning his face away.

The two lively presentations in Xiropotamou monastery (Mt Athos 1783) from Revelation (12:2-6) may be seen as symbolizing¹⁹ the terrible threat, (Fig. 13 & 14) a dragon with 7 heads and open mouths which are about to devour her offspring and the woman itself:

“And she, being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered, and there appeared another wonder in heaven: and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars and heaven and behold a great red dragon stood before the woman, which was ready to be delivered for, to devour her child as soon as it was born. And she brought forth a man child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne, and the woman fled...”.

As a general conclusion then the Orthodox Patristic prolife and anti-abortion stance is clearly indicated in its expression in worship hymnology, feasts and Iconography. It is particularly important to note that through Hymnology more than anything else, one may infer that ensouled life starts at conception.



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7





Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

Fig. 11





Fig. 12

Fig. 13



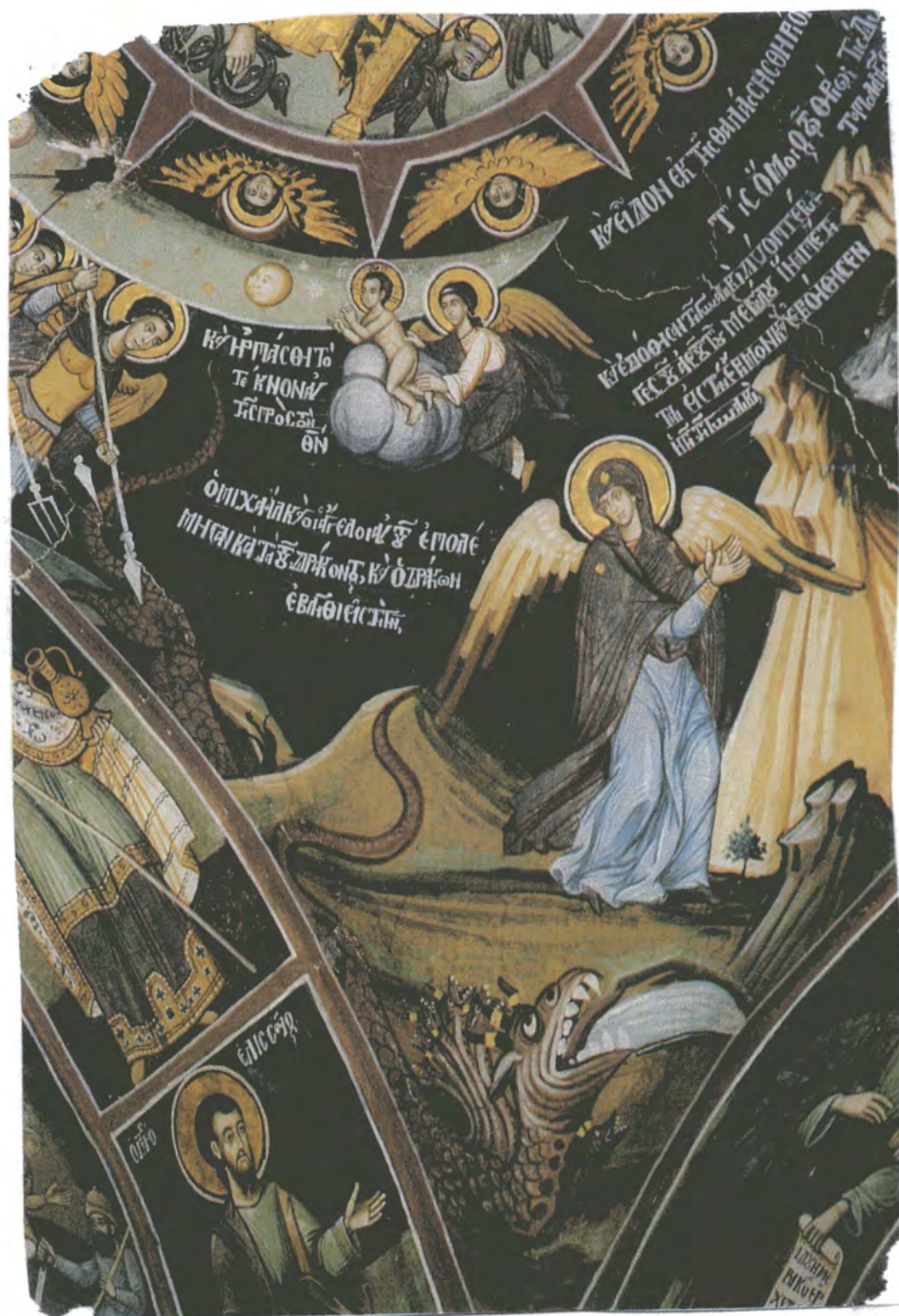


Fig. 14

Fig. 15



CHAPTER 4: NOTES / REFERENCES

- 1) Harakas, S. and Pehanich, E. What the Orthodox church Says About Abortion, Pamphlet of the Light and Life Publishing Company, Minneapolis, USA, 1986.
- 2) “Σήμερα τῆς σωτηρίας ἡμῶν τό κεφάλαιον καί τοῦ ἀπ’ αἰῶνος Μυστηρίου ἡ φανέρωσις ὁ Υἱός τοῦ Θεοῦ Υἱός τῆς Παρθένου γίνεται καί Γαβριήλ τήν χάριν εὐαγγελίζεται...”
- 3) “Τοῦ Γαβριήλ φθεγξαμένου σοι Παρθένε τό Χαῖρε, σὺν τῇ φωνῇ ἔσαρκουτο ὁ τῶν ὅλων Δεσπότης , ἐν σοί τῇ ἁγία Κιβωτῶ ὡς ἔφη ὁ δίκαιος Δαυῖδ, ἐδειχθης πλατυτέρα τῶν οὐρανῶν βαστάσασα τόν Κτίστην σου. Δόξα τῷ ἐνοικήσαντι ἐν σοί, δόξα τῷ προελθόντι ἐκ σοῦ, δόξα τῷ ἐλευθερώσαντι ἡμᾶς διὰ τοῦ τόκου σου”.
- 4) “Τῶν Προφητῶν αἱ προρρήσεις ἐκπληροῦνται ”Ορος γάρ τό ἅγιον λάβοσιν ἴδρυται·Κλίμαξ ἡ θεία φυτεῦται·θρόνος ὁ μέγας, τοῦ Βασιλέως προετοιμάζεται. Τόπος εὐτρεπίζεται ὁ Θεοβάδιτος·Βάτος ἡ ἄφλεκτος ἄρχεται, ἀναβλαστάνειν ἡ Μυροθήκη τοῦ ἁγιάσματος, ἡδὴ πηγάζει τῆς στείρωσεως, τοὺς ποταμούς ἀναστέλλουσα τῆς Θεόφρονος Ἄννης ἣν ἐν πίστει μακαρίσωμεν”.
- 5) “Ἐορτάζει σήμερον ἡ οἰκουμένη τήν τῆς Ἄννης σύλληψιν γεγεννημένη ἐν Θεῷ καί γάρ αὐτὴ ἀπεκύησε, τήν ὑπὲρ λόγον, τόν Λόγον Κυήσασαν”.
- 6) “Apolytikion Hymn” - “Ἡ πρώην οὐ τίκτουσα, στείρα εὐφράνθητι ἰδοὺ γάρ συνέλαβες, Ἡλίου λύχνου σαφῶς, φωτίζειν τόν μέλλοντα, πάσαν τήν Οἰκουμένην ἀβλεψίαν Νοσοῦσαν· Χόρευε Ζαχαρία ἐκβοῶν παρρησία Προφήτης τοῦ Ὑψίστου ἐστίν, ὁ μέλλων τίκτεσθαι”.
- 7) The Doxastikon Hymn of the Vespers is similar:

“...today it is conceived... and behold his incarnation begins... let's be glad for his glorious conception...”

8) From the Small Euchologion of the Orthodox Church p.90-111.

9) Ibid p. 59-86.

10) Ibid p.57-58.

11) “Αὐτός τήν παρούσαν δούλην σου...τήν σήμερον ἐν ἁμαρτίαις εἰς φόνον περιπεσοῦσαν, ἐκουσίως ἢ ἀκουσίως καί τό ἐν αὐτῇ συλληφθέν ἀπεβαλομένην ἐλέησον”.

and

“...:Επίβλεψον ἐξ οὐρανοῦ...καί συγχώρησον τῇ δούλῃ σου ταύτῃ, τῇ ἐν ἁμαρτίαις φόνῳ περιπεσοῦσῃ ἐκουσίως ἢ ἀκουσίως, καί τό ἐν αὐτῇ συλληφθέν ἀπεβαλομένη...”

12) (Περιοδικόν “Πολύτεκνη Οἰκογένεια” - Ἀθήνα (Personal collection).

- 13) Ο ΖΩΟΠΟΙΟΣ ΣΤΑΥΡΟΣ [The Life Giving Cross]
 'Έκδοση Ι. Μ. Σταυροβουνίου, Τεύχος 81, 82, 83, σ.213
- 14) Ibid, p.221.
- 15) Ibid, p.232-3.
- 16) Ibid., p.236.
- 17) Ibid., p.240.
- 18) Πολύτεκνη Οικογένεια, ΠΕΦΙΠ, Τεύχος 61, Άθήνα, Μάρτιος 1994.
- 19) Congourdeau, M.H. L'embryon est-il une personne? Communio, No IX. Novembre-December, 1984.
 & Maxime le Confesseur et l'humanite de l' embryon. "La Politique de la Mystique".
(Τό έμβρυο είναι πρόσωπο: 'Ο Άγ. Μάξιμος ό Όμολογητής και ή Άνθρώπινη Φύση τοῦ Έμβρύου.
 'Έκδοση 'Εκκλησιαστικοῦ 'Ιδρύματος Παιδαγωγικῶν και Κοινωνικῶν ἐφαρμογῶν, "Ο Εὐαγγελιστής Μάρκος", Θέρμη, Θεσσαλονίκη, 1991).

CHAPTER 5: PATRISTIC CANONS ON ABORTION

The Church Canons¹ provide us with the most concise clear-cut information on the controversy over abortion.

It must be emphasized that even though the Holy Canons seem to have a legal approach, they are however of a pastoral nature and an expression of the love of the Church towards the sinner, since they not only help him to realize the seriousness of the sin, but they also provide the method for reconciliation and the repartaking of the grace of God that leads to salvation.

The Apostolic Fathers were the voices of the Church in the first two centuries of its existence and were taught either directly by the Apostles or by their disciples. They produced the first judgments on abortion which appear in the "Didache"²:

"Do not murder; do not commit adultery; do not steal; do not practice magic; do not go in for sorcery; do not murder a child by abortion or kill a newborn infant".

and in the Epistle of Barnabas³ which like the former gave absolute strictures against abortion:

"You shall love your neighbour more than your own life, you shall not slay the child by abortion. You shall not kill that which has already been generated".

St. Basil the Great (AD 330-378) was among those who was particularly interested in the issue - he writes in⁴ his second of 92 Canons:

“A woman who aborts deliberately is liable to trial as a murderess. Any fine distinction as to its being formed or unformed is not admissible amongst us. For here justice is provided not only for the infant to be born, but also for the woman who has plotted against her own self, for in most cases the women die in the course of such operations. In addition to this, the destruction of the embryo constitutes another murder in the opinion of those who dare to do these things. It is appropriate that their penance is not extended until their death, but to admit them at the end of the moderated period of ten years, without specifying a definite time, but adjusting the cure to the manner of penitence.”

Zonaras' interpretation of the canon emphasizes that the penance includes not only the deliberate killing of the child (formed or unformed - ἐξαικονισμένον or not) but the endangering of the life of the another as well. He also suggests that the ten year penance is only an indicator which may be adjusted according to the repentance shown.

Balsamon⁶ agrees with the interpretation above in that not only those who use abortifacient drugs are liable to this penance, but also those who provide them; he also disagrees with those that say that they should only be liable to a penance similar to involuntary murder, for the reasons given above. St. Nicodimos⁷ the Hagiorite follows the same trend:

“Any woman who deliberately puts to death the child, wherewith she is pregnant, by means of herbs or poisonous drugs or by lifting weights too heavy for her etc., may be considered to be a murderess. With the Christians there is no difference as there

used to be with the Jews (if the child, which the woman expels dead is still unformed, like a piece of meat, or is formed as a foetus, having the features and members of a human being all entire), since in this manner of abortion not only does the embryo in the womb die, but most times also the woman pregnant with it also dies along with the embryo; so that those who do this are sentenced as murderers for the two murders whether they be men or women. St. Basil the Great, further comments that as regards a murderer, anyone who kills an imperfect and unformed embryo, because although not yet a complete human being, it is nevertheless destined to be perfected in the future, according to the indispensable sequence of the laws of nature.”

The 8th Canon of St Basil is⁸ of similar content:

“Any man who uses an axe against his own spouse in a fit of anger, he is murderer... the same may be said of women who bring about a miscarriage by giving drugs for this purpose and the women who take abortifacient poisons; they too are murderesses”.

In his 33th Canon he even emphasizes that:

“As for any woman who conceives and brings forth on the way and fails to take any further care of the newborn, let her be liable to the penalty provided for a murder.”

In accordance with the above one reads in his 52th Cannon:

“As concerns a woman who fails to take due care of her offspring when she gives birth to a child in the street or on the road, if though able to save it, she treated contemptuously or scornfully either thinking that she could thus cover up her sin, or entertaining a literally brutal and inhuman view of the matter, let her be judged as if held for murder. But if she was unable to give the child proper attention and protection, and the offspring

died in consequence of lack of care and of needments the mother is pardonable”.

St. Nicodimos finds concord between the last two canons:

“... if a woman brings forth a child in the street and is able to suscite the child but lets it die, either in order to conceal her sin, after conceiving it as a result of harlotry or of adultery, or brutally and inhumanly treats her child with contempt, she is to be condemned as a murderess. Or even if the child does not die, but someone else who has found it, takes it and takes care of it, again the mother of it shall be condemned as a murderess, according to Zonaras, because she abandoned it out of careless negligence, and so far as she was concerned, left it to die. If, however, she had no means of taking care of it owing to want and destitution of the necessaries, and the baby died as a result of this circumstance, its mother is deserving a pardon (see also Ap.C. LXVI).”

The 21st Canon of the Regional Council of Ancyra (AD 314) further stresses:

“Regarding women who become prostitutes and kill their babies and who make it their business to concoct abortives, the former rule barred them for life from communion and they are left without recourse. But having found a more lenient alternative, we have fixed the penalty at ten years, in accordance with the fixed decrees”.

The interpretation of St. Nicodimos, Zonaras and Balsamon seems to converge:

“Regarding all women who commit fornication with men secretly and conceive, but kill the embryos within their belly, or lift weight exceeding their strength, or drink certain drugs abortive of embryos - such women had already been denied communion until their death by another Canon preceding the present one; but the present Canon, which the father of the present Council have decreed in a spirit of greater leniency,

prohibits them from communing for only ten years, which is the sentence specified also by C.II of Basil”.

St. John the Faster (AD 582-595) has left us with several canons which deal directly or indirectly with the issue of abortion. In his 21st of 35 Canons he writes:

“As for women who destroy embryos professionally and those who give or take poison with the object of aborting babies and dropping them prematurely, we prescribe the rule that they be treated economically upto five or even three years at most”.

St Nicodemus' interpretation of this canon¹⁴, explains that those women who deliberately put to death the embryos in their womb abstain from Holy Communion for three to five years. Likewise, also, those women who give herbs or other manufactured articles to pregnant women in order to enable them to expel babies that are immature and dead (see also Ap.c. LXVI and c.XCI of the 6th E.C.C.).

It is noteworthy to add¹⁵ that:

“...in a manuscript codex containing the Canons of the Faster we discovered also in this in accordance with the present Canon, that women employ such herbs in various ways: some drink or eat them in order never to become pregnant; others kill the babies when they conceive them or are about to give birth (which is a worse sin than the first); others, again, commit a murder every month with such herbs which is the worst sin of all. Therefore women who do this are excluded from Communion for three years and have to perform a hundred metanies and xerophagy daily...”.

The same holy father, further stresses in his 22nd:

“A woman who involuntarily has expelled her baby through miscarriage, receives her penance for a year”.¹⁶

St. Nicodimos¹⁷ interprets this canon in a simple way:

“... But any woman who, being pregnant, has expelled her baby unintentionally (as a result of some accidental circumstance) is punished by the present canon not to commune for a year”.

In the same manuscript codex containing the Canons of the Faster one reads:

...for this reason pregnant women ought to exercise great care not to lift any (heavy) weight (and especially when the embryo is seven or eight months old), to eat whenever they smell the odour of food or anything else and to be on their guard against everything that would cause them a burden and annoyance. It is equally important that men, when their wives conceive, ought not to sleep with them nor have sexual intercourse with them any longer, nor strike them or cause them any other pain and annoyance, because all these things may cause their wives to miscarry, in which the poor husbands become murderers. Wherefore all priests that are married or expect to get married if they do any of these things and their wives miscarries, those who are priests already are to be deposed but those who were going to become priests are barred from the priesthood on account of the murder they committed...¹⁸.

Two other canons of the same saint provide indirect anti-abortion stance (23th¹⁹ and 24th²⁰ respectively):

“A woman on the other hand who overlies her baby-and smothers it, is deemed to deserve Communion after three years if she abstains from meat on the expressed days and from

cheese and sedulously performs the rest of the requirements. Though, if this happened as a result of the indolence or intemperance of the parents, it is very much like voluntary murder; but if resulted from a plot of the adversary, the matter deserves a pardon. Nevertheless even this latter case needs moderate penances for the abandonment was due to other misdemeanors”.

and

“When an unbaptized child dies owing to negligence on the part of its own parents, the parents are to be excluded from communion for three years and obliged to get along with xerophagy during this time and to propitiate the Deity on bent knees, with protracted weeping and alms, proportionated to their ability, while doing every day forty metanies”.

St. Nicodemus interpretation similarly discerns that²¹:

“... if the event of lethal overlying took place as a result of negligence or intemperance (overeating, overdrinking or any other licentious appetite of the parents), it is very much like voluntary murder. But if it resulted from a plot and action on the part of the Devil, the thing deserves to be pardoned, although even in this case it deserves moderate penances and a canon, since the abandonment on the part of God which befell them, occurred on account of other former, present or future sins of theirs”.

If one extrapolates from the two canons above, to include the embryo (which is unbaptized-whether lost voluntarily or not) then an indirect anti-abortion stance is deduced.

Using the same reasoning the 26th Canon²² is indirectly additive to the above:

“Women who expose their babies at the entrance to churches, are chastised as murderesses, even though some persons picking them up take care of them”.

The 91st Canon²³ of the 6th Ecumenical Council (AD 691-692) is even stricter (in concordance with Ancyra can.XXI and Basil’s can.II).

“As for women who furnish drugs for the purpose of procuring abortion and those who take foetus - killing poisons, they are made subject to the penalty prescribed for murderers”.

i.e. aiding abortion is an equally serious offence as performing it.

The 6th Canon of the Noeoesarea Regional Council (AD 315)²⁴ gives indirect evidence as the exclusiveness and independence of the developing embryo as well as its respect for the lack of will and consciousness:

“As concerning a woman who is gravid, we decree that she ought to be illuminated (baptized) whenever she so wishes. For in this case there is no intercommunion of the woman with the child, owing to the fact that every person possesses a will of his own which is shown in connection with his confession of faith”.

In the long interpretation of this canon, one can see that it proves the patristic belief that the embryo formed into shape in the womb, is not a part of the pregnant woman - not only because it has a rational soul, but a body and movement of its own.

Finally, apart from these canons there are several other rules which bring about earthly penalties in this world, for those who commit abortion, e.g. that of Leo the Wise which says²⁵:

“A man can divorce his wife if she voluntarily aborts his offspring”.

or St. Photius the Great who adds²⁶:

“She who deliberately aborts may be exiled for a while” or else
“she who aborts for the sake of money must be strictly fined”.

As may be realized, the holy canons seem to converge on the fact that abortion is a very serious transgression, for which a long and arduous penance is required. They also suggest that not only the women who abort commit a murder, but also anyone who helps them to do it. As the holy canons have a pastoral therapeutic role (even though at first sight they may be regarded to be legal), one may clearly discern the strong inclination of the holy fathers to use “οικονομία” i.e. adjust the mode of penance according to the repentance shown and the circumstances that led to this sinful practice.

Two other topics are worthy of consideration. The first one is the one that arises from the comparison of St. Basil's Canons. In his second one he equates abortion with murder. However, the penance decreed for abortion is half that for wilful murder (canon 56:20 years), and the same as that for manslaughter

(Canon 57:10 years). The apparent contradiction may be clarified if one studies carefully all the canons of the holy father which deal with killing:

Canon 2: Deliberate abortion is equated with murder for not only the baby is killed but often the mother dies, too. Abstinence from Holy Communion for 10 years.

Canon 8: Involuntary killing includes anything where there is no initial motive to kill, but a human person dies or killing at war for self-defence. On the other hand if a man uses an axe against his wife in a fit of anger a woman who uses drugs to gain the affection of a man - but the latter dies and a woman who uses abortifacients poisons - all these are to be considered as voluntary murderesses.

Canon 11: Beating someone which results in injury is not a murder. If the one beaten dies then this may be classified as an involuntary murder (11 years excommunication).

Canon 13: Concerns killing at war, and suggest that this may be pardonable (since fighting may in defence of sobriety and piety) - or 3 years abstinence from Holy Communion on the ground that they are not clean handed.

Canon 33: Punishes as a murderer a woman on the road who gives birth to a baby but lets it die to negligence.

Canon 43: This considers a murderer someone who gives a lethal blow to his neighbour whether he started the fights or was defending himself. (No details of the penance are suggested).

Canon 54: Allows the spiritual father to adjust the penance for involuntary manslaughter according to the peculiarities of attending circumstances.

Canon 55: Suggests abstinence from Holy Communion for 3 years to laymen who kill robbers who attack them.

Canon 56: Voluntary killing involves exclusion from Holy Communion for 20 years (even if and provided he has repented).

Canon 57: Involuntary killing involves a 10 year abstinence from the Holy Sacraments.

It is quite obvious that St. Basil's Canons do take into account the motives and particular circumstances of killing. Even though all cases are called murders, nevertheless the penance is not the same each time; since, as mentioned, the holy canons are pastoral and not legal the mode of penance is adjusted accordingly each time. For instance abortion is called a murder but the penance for it is similar for manslaughter and involuntary killing. This may be considered to mean that one deals with a less serious offence than wilful murder (which requires 20 years of exclusion from the holy sacraments). On the other hand, however, abortion clearly involves killing and the penance for it (10 years) is only decreed for similar very serious sins like adultery, grave robbing etc.

The author would like to add his opinion at this point, to suggest that:

- a. Manslaughter is a murder as any other and so is abortion. However, the scientific and social views at the time were not so clear as to the state of the embryo and this could have been taken into account before the decreeing of the specific penance.

- b. One may add that for wilful murder there is always a sinful motive: hatred towards another human being. In the case of abortion it is quite unlikely that there is such a feeling towards the foetus; instead there is fear of medical, social, financial or other repercussions on the birth of another child. In most cases the decision for abortion is a very painful one.

Another problem that arises from a careful study of the holy canons is the case of miscarriage. The 22nd canon of St. John the faster suggests abstinence from Holy Communion for a year. Some scholars regard this as a remedy-whether because of ritual purity, or for what one might call pastoral reasons, specifically to provide a way of expressing grief. In addition to this one may take into account the following points:

- a. Miscarriage (which is in many times totally unintentional and therefore guiltless) may be considered to be one manifestation of natural evil in the world following the exile from Paradise (as is the case of many other diseases).
- b. Very often miscarriage is not totally guiltless: the woman could be lifting too heavy weights, getting upset too easily or running carelessly (or nowadays driving carelessly) etc.
- c. Requiring penance for miscarriage (which is involuntary) surely emphasizes the need for avoiding voluntary abortion.
- d. As mentioned in the last chapter, when a woman loses a baby through miscarriage the priest reads a prayer from the Euchologion that twice, clearly,

mentions the word "murder" in it - something that further stresses the fact that miscarriage may not be considered to be totally guiltless. St. Nikodimos further suggests that this may be due to other sins which cause the lifting of the grace of God.

Conclusively, then, one can discern a clear anti-abortion stance of the Holy canons whether the practice is done or aided deliberately or involuntarily. They definitely call abortion a murder, even though, admittedly, the penance is not as strict as for a homicide.

CHAPTER 5: NOTES/REFERENCES

1. References to the Holy Canons were translated from G. Rallis-M. Botlis Compilation of the Holy Canons, Printed in Athens 1859 and reprinted in 1966.
(Γ. Ράλλη, Μ. Πότλη) Σύνταγμα Θείων καί Ἱερῶν Κανόνων, Ἀθήνα 1859, Ἀνατύπωσις 1966)
2. Didache, II.2
3. Epistle of Barnabas, XIX.5
4. Rallis-Botlis op.cit., Vol Δ, p.96
“Ἡ φθείρασα κατ’ ἐπιτήδευσιν, φόνου δίκη ὑπέχει ἀκριβολογία δέ ἐκμεμορφωμένου καί ἀνεξεικονίστου παρ’ ἡμῖν οὐκ ἐστίν· ἐνταῦθα γάρ ἐκδικεῖται οὐ μόνον τό γεννηθησόμενον, ἀλλά καί αὐτή ἡ ἑαυτή ἐπιβουλεύασα, διότι ὡς ἐπὶ τό πολύ ἐναποθνήσκουσι ταῖς τοιαύταις ἐπιχειρήσεσιν αἱ γυναῖκες. Πρόσεστι δέ τούτω καί ἡ φθορά τοῦ ἐμβρύου, ἕτερος φόνος κατά γε τήν ἐπίνοιαν τῶν ταῦτα τολμώντων. Δεῖ μέντοι μή μέχρι τῆς ἐξόδου παρατείνειν αὐτῶν τήν ἐξομολόγησιν, ἀλλά δέχεσθαι μέν μετά το μέτρον τῶν δέκα ἐτῶν ὀρίζειν δε μή χρόνω, ἀλλά τρόπῳ τῆς μετανοίας τήν θεραπείαν”.
5. Ibid., p.96
6. Ibid, p.97
7. St. Nicodemos and Agapius, The Rudder (Pedalion) of the Orthodox Catholic Church (The compilation of the Holy Canons, translated by D. Cummings), p.789.
8. Rallis-Botlis op. cit. Vol Δ, p.112
“Ὁ ἀξινη παρά τόν θυμόν κατά τῆς ἑαυτοῦ γαμετῆς χρησάμενος, φονεύς ἐστί ... καί αἱ τοίνυν τά ἀμβλωθρίδια διδοῦσαι φάρμακα, φονεύτριαι εἰσὶ καί αὐταί, καί αἱ δεχόμενοι τά ἐμβρυοκτόνα δηλητήρια...”.
9. Rallis-Boltis op.cit. Vol Δ, p.175
“Ἡ γυνή, ἡ διὰ τῆς ὁδοῦ κυήσασα, καί ἀμελήσασα τοῦ κυήματος, τῷ τοῦ φόνου, ἐγκλήματος ὑποκείσθω”.
10. Rallis-Botlis op.cit. Vol. Δ. p.207
“Ἡ τοῦ κυήματος κατά τήν ὁδόν ἀμελήσασα, εἰ μέν δυναμένη περισώσασθαι κατεφρόνησεν ἢ συγκαλύψειν ἐντεῦθεν τήν ἁμαρτίαν νομίζουσα, ἢ ὅλως θηριῶδες καί ἀπανθρώπων λογισμῶ χρησαμένη, ὡς ἐπὶ φόνῳ κρινέσθω εἰ δέ οὐκ ἡδυνήθη περιστεῖλαι, καί δι’ ἐρημίαν καί ἀπορίαν τῶν ἀναγκαίων διεφθάρη τό γεννηθέν, συγγνωστή ἡ μήτηρ”.
11. St. Nicodemus op. cit. p.817.
12. Rallis-Botlis op. cit. Vol. Γ, p.63
“Περί τῶν γυναικῶν τῶν ἐκπορνεουσῶν καί ἀναιρουσῶν τά γεννώμενα καί σπουδαζουσων φθόρια ποιεῖν, ὁ μέν τά γεννώμενα και σπουδαζουσων φθόρια ποιεῖν, ὁ μέν πρότερος ὅρος μέχρις ἐξόδου ἐκώλυσε καί τούτω συντίθενται. Φιλανθρωπότερον δέ τι ἐωρόντες, ὠρίσαμεν δεκαετῆ χρόνον, κατά τούς βαθμούς τούς ὠρισμένους πληρῶσαι”.
13. Rallis-Botlis op cit., Vol. Δ., p.443.

- “Τάς φθειρούσας τά ἔμβρυα κατ’ ἐπιτήδευσιν καί τās διδούσας καί τās λαμβανούσας φάρμακα ὡστε ἀμβλωθρίσαι καί ἄωρα τά βρέφη ἐκπεσεῖν, ἡμεῖς μέχρι τῶν πέντε ἢ τριῶν τό πλεῖον, οἰκονομεῖσθαι ταύτας ὀριζόμεθα”.
14. St. Nicodemus, op.cit., p.944.
15. Ibid, p.945
16. Rallis-Botlis op. cit., vol. Δ, p.443.
“Ἡ ἀκουσίως τό βρέφος ἀποβαλοῦσα, εἰς ἔτος τῆς ἐπιτίμησιν δέχεται”.
17. St. Nicodemus, op.cit. p.945.
18. Ibid, p.945.
19. Rallis-Botlis, op.cit, Vol. Δ. P.443.
“Ἡ δέ ἐν τῷ βρέφει ἐπικοιμωμένη καί ἀποπνίξασα μετά ἐτη γ’ τῆς Κοινωνίας ἀξιοῦται, κρεῶν ρηταῖς ἡμέραις ἀπεχομένη καί τυροῦ καί τά λοιπά ἐμπόνως ἐπιτελοῦσα. Καί εἰ μὲν ἐκ ραθυμίας ἢ ἀκρασίας τῶν γονέων τοῦτο συνέβη φόνω ἐκουσίως παρείκασται· εἰ δε ἐξ ἐπιβουλῆς τοῦ ἀντικειμένου, συγνώμης τό πράγμα ἄξιον πλήν καί τοῦτο δεῖται μετρίων ἐπιτιμίων. Δι’ ἑτέρα, γάρ πταισμάτα ἢ ἐγκατάλειψις αὕτη γέγονεν”.
20. Rallis-Botlis op.cit, vol. Δ. P.443.
“Παιδίον ἀβαπτίστου ἀποθανόντος τῇ τῶν οἰκείων γονέων ἀμελεία εἰς γ’ ἔτη οἱ γονεῖς τῆς Κοινωνίας ἐκβάλλονται, ξηροφαγοῦντες ἐν αὐτοῖς καί γονάτων κλίσεσιν τό θεῖον ἐξιλεούμενοι, κλαυθμῶ τε καί τῇ κατὰ δύναμιν ἐλεημοσύνη, ποιῶντες καί καθ’ ἑκάστην μετανοίας μ”.
21. St. Nicodemus, op.cit., p.945.
22. “Τάς ἐκτιθεμένας τά οἰκεία βρέφη πρός ταῖς εἰσόδοις τῶν Ἐκκλησιῶν, ὡς φονευρίας ὁ νόμος κολάζει, κἄν τινες ἀνελόμενοι ταῦτα περιποιήσωνται”.
23. Rallis-Botlis, op.cit, Vol. B, p.518
“Τάς τά ἀμβλωθρίδια διδούσας φάρμακα καί τās δεχομένας τά ἔμβρυοκτόνα δηλητήρια, τοῦ φονέως ἐπιτιμῖω καθυποβάλλομεν”.
24. Rallis-Botlis, op.cit, Vol. Γ. p.79.
“Περί κυοφορούσης, ὅτι δεῖ φωτίζεσθαι ὅποτε βούλεται· οὐδέν γαρ ἐν τούτῳ κοινωνεῖ ἢ τίκτουσα τῷ τικτομένῳ· δια τό ἑκάστου ἰδίαν τήν προαίρεσιν τήν ἐπί τῇ ὁμολογία δείκνυσθαι”.
25. Leo’s law 31 cited in D. Panagopoulos. Avoiding child-birth deadly sin.p.69, N. Panagopoulos publications, Athens.
(Νεαρά Λέοντος λα’ ἀναφερόμενη στόν Δ. Παναγοπούλου Θανάσιμον Ἀμάρτημα ἢ Ἀποφυγή τῆς Τεκνογονίας, Ἀθήνα, σ.69.
“Ἄδειαν δίδωσι τῷ ἀνδρί διασπᾶν τόν μετά γυναικός αὐτοῦ γάμον, ἐξεπίτηδες ἀμβλωσκούσης τήν ἐκείνου σποράν”.
26. Photius the Great, cited as above p.69 (47 Book, 11th title, 4th chapter)
“Ἡ ἐπί χρήμασιν ἐκτρώσασα κεφαλικῶς τιμωρεῖται”.

CHAPTER 6 THE ISSUE OF ABORTION IN THE LIGHT OF PATRISTIC WRITINGS

As has been seen, the patristic thought which was based on Biblical perspectives and expressed itself in Church worship and canons, clearly follows a great respect towards human life with an obvious emphasis on the point that human ensouled life starts at conception. An anti-abortion trend is thus directly or indirectly discerned.

It must therefore be of no surprise that a similar motif prevails in the patristic writings themselves. The holy fathers rarely discuss the abortion issue as such and they only seem to write when an opposing philosophy or a Church crisis seems to intrude. Their stance on abortion and the theological status of the embryo can only be indirectly derived, but is nevertheless quite explicit.

a) Life is derived from God who co-operates with humans for the creation of new life.

The above Biblical assertion is closely followed in the patristic writings e.g. St. Maximus the Confessor¹:

“Life is basically the One who said “I am the Life”.

Similarly St. Athanasius the Great²:

"Whatever comes from nothing into life and remains in life, this is due solely to the steady and irrevocable paternal goodness of God, which is full of love and philanthropic will".

and St. Gregory of Nyssa concisely completes³:

"Whatever is outside Being, does not exist".

Even though God is the absolute source of life, He nevertheless requires the human co-operation for the creation of new life.

"To give birth derives from the above - from Divine Providence - and neither female nature nor intercourse nor anything else, is self-sufficient for this to happen".

St. John the Chrysostom notes; while St. Clement of Alexandria emphasizes³:

For this Man becomes in the image of God, in that he co-operates in the birth of a human being".

However this co-operation of God and Man immediately poses the problem of life transmission, life initiation and ensoulment point in time.

b) Initiation of human ensouled life

If one approaches the problem from the point of view of Orthodox Patristic Christology, one can derive from the event of Annunciation that the conception and Incarnation of Jesus Christ happened simultaneously. The partaking of His human nature (body and soul) occurs at exactly the moment of His conception - "εξ άκρας συλλήψεως" - noted particularly by St. John the Damascene⁶:

"As soon as the Incarnation took place, then at the same time the Word God partook flesh, the flesh became reasonable and mental, the World God partook the reasonable and mental (intellectual) flesh (i.e. all these took place simultaneously at conception - Incarnation of the Word God).

Talking on the feast of Annunciation St. Sophrony, Patriarch of Jerusalem, repeats the same assertion; while clarifying the same event St. Maximus the Confessor points out⁷:

"The Son and Word of God with His holy and seedless conception showed that as soon as He partook flesh, He partook a soul as well simultaneously; and neither (body or soul) existed earlier than the other - but immediately together, they both came into existence exactly at the moment of conception".

Extrapolating from the patristic assertion above, that our Lord Jesus Christ, on being Incarnated, He truly partook the human nature and became perfectly

human, one can derive that for this reason and as a perfect human being, He went through all stages of human development (conception, birth, childhood, adulthood) with the sole exceptions that:

- a) His conception was seedless (without a man's sperm) but through the Holy Spirit and Virgin Mary and
- b) His total sinlessness.

Exactly the same things (apart from a and b above) are valid for any human being, like Christ who became a fully perfect human being at the moment of conception (with body and soul). Every other human, then, is a fully perfect human being, with flesh and soul at the moment of conception.

This Christological teaching of our church, that any human being is composed of a totally full psychosomatic combination from the moment of conception, is confirmed by the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th Ecumenical Synods⁸. He is of the same substance as us, according to His humanity (3rd Ecumenical Council)⁹ and "in all, just as we are, without sin"¹⁰.

One can cite a number of other extracts from patristic writings that clearly confirm that Christ was a full psychosomatic unity in the womb, from the very moment of conception.

St. Cyril of Alexandria (5th century), writing against Nestorius (who taught that the Virgin gave birth to a "mere human being" (ψιλόν ἄνθρωπον). - i.e. devoid of His deity, emphasizes¹¹:

“The Holy Virgin did not give birth to a mere human being on which the Word descended; but the union took place in the womb and was familiarized with His own conceived flesh”.

St. John the Damascene agrees:

“... (because) the human nature of Christ did not come into existence before and became like us and for us afterwards; But it always existed both (Divine and human) from the very initial beginning, having (the flesh) in the Word the existence from immediate conception...”.

and¹³

“Truly the flesh combined with the Word God from immediate existence”.

The Holy Father further comments on the event of the Annunciation¹⁴:

“The Holy Spirit descended on the Holy Virgin after her consent... and then she was overshadowed by the Almighty God’s wisdom and power, the Son of God... and combined to form with her pure and clean blood ensouled flesh with a reasonable and mental (intellectual) soul...”.

St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite impressed¹⁵ by the seedless conception of our Lord,

exclaims:

“As many theologians say, these things happened simultaneously: hypostatic union, partaking, union, conception, information, deification...”.

Similarly, St. Maximus the Confessor writing to Thalassius (the Libyan):⁷

“Some have said that the souls exist earlier than the body, while others that the bodies exist earlier than souls. Both however are proved wrong by the mystery of Christ who was united on conception with the flesh and a reasonable soul and this (according to St Gregory the Theologian) proved that, the body and soul were formed simultaneously - neither of the two came first - but both came together at conception”.

St. John the Chrysostom, in no less wonder for the inconceivable mystery of the holy incarnation of the Son and Word God, enquires and provides the answer as well¹⁶:

“How does the Word God become human? He is gestated in the woman’s womb, grows little by little and follows the developmental stages of my human age. Who grows? The economy not the divinity; the form of the servant not the form of the Lord; the Human flesh not His substance. He grows little by little, makes company with humans”.

St. Nicodemus the Hagiorite, anticipating a query that might arise, as to how all these unique and mysterious things took place, which are inconceivable to the limited human intellect, notes¹⁷:

“I think that this contradiction can be compromised, if we envisage the newly formed divine baby being shaped in its bodyparts in the Virgin’s womb: the bodyparts thus formed, did not grow immediately, for the Virgin’s belly would be expanded quickly and the baby would have been born immediately - something not right. Instead the shaped bodyparts grew little by little until the baby was born in 9 months”.

But if this is still difficult to be realized, the same saint continues¹⁸:

"Nobody can understand or describe the order of things as to how the union, partaking and the rest took place, except for the one who performed the mystery".

Conclusively, since the New Adam (Christ) is the Archetype¹⁹ of any human being and since He was an ensouled human being as well as God from immediate conception, life starts at conception, according to patristic Christology.

A similar deduction follows the patristic Anthropological approach, St. Gregory of Nyssa insisted²⁰: "Both the soul and the body had the same start of being", and: "The soul's energies are manifested as the body develops²¹".

He also emphasizes²²:

"Since Man is a unity composed of a soul and a body - these two components must have a common origin (starting point). We must not place the creation of one earlier than the other... for man would be in conflict with himself if divided in time".

St. Gregory the Theologian²³ fully agrees with the above:

"The soul is perfect even when it dwells in the embryo. It cannot however manifest its full energies: ... at the beginning (in the embryo) it is silent... and as Man develops his full power. Wisdom, prudence and virtue overflows...".

St. Basil the Great, a doctor himself, who spent a lot of time commenting on the embryo and abortion, discussing the words... "be fruitful and multiply..." (Gen 1:28), he remarks:

"Growth is double - that of the body and that of the soul. But while the growth of the body is that observed, the growth of the soul is the gradual training to perfection"²⁴.

St. Athanasius²⁴ the Great takes a natural analogy:

"Like the fire which is born on collision of a stone and of the iron, in the same way with the mixing of man and woman there is formed - with God's command - body and soul",

and he expands:

"A human being is naturally discerned by a reasonable soul and a perceptible body both necessary for its being and natural law of existence: they both had a common origin in the womb and thus coming in life they work for the composition of one animal".

The writer of "The Ladder", St. John the Sinaite interpreting and summarizing the general church belief on the time of the ensoulment²⁷ of the embryo says:

"I believe that the soul exists neither before nor after the body, but on the birth of the body the soul is simultaneously built; hence, the one who kills the embryo is a murderer, for it is ensouled at conception: and the soul acts in relation to the flesh: as the body grows it shows its own energies".

This finds St. John the Damascene²⁸ in full agreement:

“The body and soul are created at the same moment not the one earlier than the other, as Origen falsely believes”.

St. Anastasios²⁹ the Sinaite is also quite explicit:

“As Man co-operating with God sows in the womb not an unsouled or a semi-human, but a perfect, ensouled, whole human being. Neither the body exists earlier than the soul, nor the soul earlier than the body”.

St. Maximus the Confessor was the Church Father who has left us the most complete treatise on “embryonic theology”³⁰. Most of his writings on the subject were a direct or indirect attempt to combat the various philosophical errors circulating at the time, and not to discuss the abortion issue as such. One such approach, was that of Origen, which was condemned by the fifth Ecumenical Council in Constantinople (555 AD). Following many of Plato’s ideas, he insisted that the souls were firstly created; after the Fall, they “drop” and combine with the bodies that are formed in the maternal womb. In addition he thought that the body of Jesus was first formed in the bosom of the holy Virgin and the Word God and His already pre-existing soul were united in one in Him afterwards on His conception³¹.

Another approach, was that of the Stoics. It was promoted by Tertullian’s “traducianismus”, who declared that in Adam, all souls were created, dwelt in the sperm and thus passed from generation to generation: i.e. parents are

responsible for the formation of body and soul. In this view God's intervention is totally lost.

Yet another approach was the Aristotelian one, which considered the Soul to be able to enter the body only when the embryo was developed to some stage, and had a specific organised shape. As the female body was thought to be formed of an imperfect material, shaped with more difficulty, Aristotle believed that ensoulment in males occurred after 40 days of conception and in females after 80 days of conception. This view influenced Thomas Aquinas' views on human ensoulment.

In reply to the above, we have already noted St. Gregory of Nyssa's view on the simultaneous creation of body and soul at conception and St. Maximus the Confessor's which goes further on the same line, improving on St. Gregory's view by totally discarding all Stoic remnants. St. Maximus makes a special examination on the issue of delayed ensoulment (40 days) and proves that the formation of a human organism requires the initial presence of a soul.

The holy father Maximus insists, instead, on the simultaneous creation of soul and body; their bond is substantial and non-accidental³².

"As mentioned above, since the body and the soul are parts of the human being, and if the constituent parts are necessary when referring to something (because it is the

whole that contains the full meaning), and if the things that are mentioned as "reference" are found everywhere in perfect co-ordination - according to their creation, and because the constituent parts fulfill the whole particular form when they unite, and the only thing that divides them is the thought that seeks to penetrate in the substance of each being - then it is impossible for the soul and the body, being parts of the human being, to exist chronologically before or after the other, because the reason (of the human being) for which each of these exists and refers to, will be destroyed".

Another argument was that, if the soul and body were not created simultaneously with an infrangible body, then, nothing prevents to change partners - which in turn will lead to the replacement of the resurrection dogma with that of the reincarnation (metempsychosis)³³:

"If there was a particular form of the soul before the body or of body separated from the soul, and if each of these two fulfills a third form with the union (synthesis) of the soul and the body or of the body and the soul, this would happen either with an action or a natural disposition.

If it is with a natural disposition, it is obvious that this will always be produced according with this natural disposition; in other words the soul will never cease to pass from body to body (metasomatousthai) nor would the body to pass from soul to soul (metempsychousthai). But, in my opinion, the integration of the whole according to a specific form is neither done by an existing action nor by the natural capacity of the parts, but by the simultaneous functional creation of the whole form".

However, an objection may arise: when the human entity dissolves, the two (soul and body) are separated and the soul continues to live without the body.

The holy father replies once again in a very philosophical way³⁴:

"After the death of the body, the soul is no longer called soul in an absolute way, but the soul of a human being - of a specific human being. For it still dominates after the body, like its whole form of the human subject, with which it is both related and constitutes a part of it.

The same will leave the body, which is mortal according to nature, but which does not live alone, according to its creation. After its separation from the soul it is not simply called a body but the body of a human being, the specific human being, even though the latter may have been destroyed and its constituent parts spread apart. As a result, it contains the human subject (as does its whole being) to which it is both connected and forms a part. In both cases, this relation is conceived, inevitably, like one of constituent parts of the whole - which is the human hypostasis. It, also, points out to the simultaneous creation of its parts and their mutual difference in essence, without in any way harming the reasons (logoi) which belonged to them essentially. It is, therefore, impossible for someone to find or say something non-relative for the body or the soul. As a result, the one for which each is the counter-part, is at the same a product of this "counter-part".

In reply to the Aristotelian temptation, which suggested a kind of successive births, St. Maximus improved on the comments of St. Gregory of Nyssa by drawing a parallel between the creation of Adam and the Incarnation of the Word. He wrote against those who saw a distinction between genesis and generation, a temporal difference in the creation of the soul (created first) and the body (begotten later). He was also writing against those who used the concept of simultaneousness as a pretext to say that the soul is begotten like the body (Tertullian's heresy of traducianismus).

The holy father thought that the soul comes into existence by the divine incomprehensible breath, while the body is made from material (sperm) that proceeds and is supplied by another body. Both, however, take place at the moment of conception³⁵:

“The genesis of the soul... is not effected by the “ὑποκείμενη ὕλη”, underlying matter, like the body does, but from the will of God who vitally breathes in it, in an inexplicable and unknown way, that only its Creator knows.

The soul, which comes into existence at the moment of conception, simultaneously with the body, is destined to complete a unique human being, and the body which originates from underlying matter that comes from another body at the moment of conception, accepting at the same time with the soul, the formation (synthesis) which makes them a unique hypostasis (εἶδος).

It must therefore be distinguished in the thought, that at the moment of conception, there is on the one hand the vital breathing and the Holy Spirit for the intellectual part of the soul, and on the other hand the production of flesh (σάρκωσις) - like the Fathers say.”

The creation of Adam included the modelling of earthly material into a body and the living breath which was obtained when the soul was given to him. Something similar took place on the Incarnation of the New Adam³⁶:

“The Lord accepted the vital breathing or the inspiration according to His humanity, that is to say the intellectual soul, along with the completely pure body that He received from the Virgin, at the moment of His conception in a simultaneous impulse that we had never imagined before nor after the conception”.

Hence, the holy father concludes:

"When we follow the median route, seen us the royal one by our fathers, then we say that there is no pre-existence or post-existence of the soul or the body, but rather a co-existence, we guard against the pitfalls of both sides".

St. Maximus opposed with even greater energy those who believed in the pre-existence of the souls and stressed that this doctrine opens the doors to all dualist deviations. The great danger of the soul pre-existence theory is that³⁸:

"If we say that the souls exist before the bodies and the bodies have been found as a refuge for the souls, due to a mistake that existed before the bodies, then we put the mistake as the sole foundation of the important, great act of the creation of the observed things (through this mistake God became acquainted through a silent proclamation). This mistake, which would force God to create something that would not satisfy Him, against His plan, from which He would not have any reason (λόγος) of origin - centuries ago, hidden with the other reasons (λόγοι)... As a result, whatever is or will be in some way, has been (the result) of God's will; conceived and made - known in advance according to its essence... Each of the beings has been wisely created and projected into being at the predetermined moment convenient to each".

This post-existence theory (of the body) imposes to God³⁹:

"As a result, either, then, God created the human bodies willingly, according to a plan, and (these bodies) develop according to this plan without ever being reborn from non-existence; or God might have not done them according to a plan, and against His will, forced to create beings with no obvious reasons. But God was constrained (ἐτυραννήσθη), if the least he was constrained and if it is permitted for someone to think that God had acted against his plan, something that He did not want it to be so. And that the one that who was constrained was God, if He was forced to

create things against His plan doomed to be destroyed (the bodies in the origenistic theory)? Those who nourish inside them these thoughts, how do they dare say it! Because, either they would say that God has acted in this way, and that is a great blasphemy-attributing to God the necessity to do something against His plan; or they would say that it is not God, and they would convince themselves to introduce another principle, like the Manicheans have done so. Because it is exactly the same characteristic of the two antagonistic principles, like the pre-existence dogma”.

In addition, St. Maximus invoked the bodily Ascension of Christ and the promise of the resurrection of the bodies as additional arguments against his adversaries⁴⁰:

“Those who are insolent and bold... on the point of only thinking that the bodies slide to non-existence one day, according to those who name the progress of the rational beings, they believe that the Lord Himself and the God of all things, is now and for ever with one body, He... who conducts all beings to their proper glory?”...

...”For if that pleased Him to be so, He would perform it to Himself first and then the other things, for which He has submitted Himself for us, in His charity. How, then, if we support whatever they say, can we believe that whoever is united with God is also saved, as the Holy Teacher says?
... The body was also united with the soul and became one in the God word; then the body will also be saved along with the soul”.

The holy father also wrote against those who misunderstood Ex.21:22 (formed/unformed baby)⁴¹; this gave rise to the theory of tardive ensoulment of the embryo, (following Aristotle’s view) which influenced eg. Theodoret of Cyrus⁴². Others, like Philoxenus of Mabboug⁴³ and Severus of Antioch⁴⁴, proceeded further, to include Christ’s Incarnation in their theory. (They thought

that it was something that took place in stages. Since Adam's body they imagined, was created first and then received the divine inspiration (soul), this, then, must have taken place in the case of Christ).

St. Maximus put forward another hypothesis, as illustrated by his argumentation below⁴⁵:

"It is easy for everybody to say that the souls exist after the bodies; but it is very difficult and arduous for one to support what he says with reasoning... Effectively, what is projected to us as the motif for the human generation, is totally inanimate and also deprived of any vital force (he doesn't talk here about the semen but about the product of conception - for St. Maximus had made his proofs of non-traducianismus). Because whatever is totally deprived from a soul of some kind, is also deprived of every vital energy. And it is obviously dead whatever is totally deprived of a soul, power and vital energy hidden in the soul. And if it is considered to be dead it neither feeds, nor believes and it would totally cease to exist and would not be able to stay without being scattered and dispersed".

The holy father illustrated his proposal by using the example of wound healing; this is possible in the case of living flesh, not a dead one. He writes⁴⁶:

"And how is it that the one which is by nature susceptible to dispersion and dissolution, will be maintained, if someone does not suppose it as a basis, a kind of vital property already present, capable of naturally assembling around it and solidly attaching that which is divided, due to which it possesses the being and is made from the power that fabricates everything in wisdom? The soul is what truly retains the existence of the body after its birth and one can justly say that it is this which contains the principle of existence. As a result, with the separation (of the soul from

the body) the body dissolves - and it absolutely co-exists (with the soul) at the moment of conception”.

St. Maximus also took into consideration the objection of antiquity, that even though a soul (or a vital principle) is necessary for the development of the embryo, this does not necessarily mean, that this must be a reasonable soul.

He envisages philosophically⁴⁷:

“If, being in difficulty, you say that what is planned to constitute a human being is not totally dead, but it somehow participates in a vital power, then, a soul will certainly have (this capacity) to a greater extent - being part of this power, because without a soul it would never know that there is life (“a form of life” - εἶδος ζωής);... but if you suppose that what is projected has life at the moment of conception, you would only manifest a property of whichever soul, a property which on the one hand maintains the substance in which it can be found, and on the other hand it delimits the difference with the one that it is not the same (we would talk of a principle of individualization). And if pushed by the force (to find) the truth of a convenient opinion, you accept that the embryo has a soul, what kind of a soul... is it?

Since you affirm that it only has a nutritive and augmentative soul, it is evident, according to your thinking, that the body which is nourished and thinks must belong to a plant and not a human being. Hence, after a lot of reflection, I cannot understand how can a human being be the father of a plant, which according to nature does not totally hold its being from a human being. And if you do not attribute to the embryo a sensitive soul, this seems to possess at the moment of conception the soul of a horse or of a cow or some other earthly or aerial animal, and the human being would not be, according to nature, the father of a human being, but according to you, at the moment of its first constitution (i.e at conception) it would be the father of a plant or an earthly animal.

Do you know of anything more stupid or more folly? What is more serious it would appear here an extreme division between the divine wisdom and (divine) power.

Because all beings, whatever they are, have their perfection by their proper "reason" ("λόγος") before their genesis, in the foreknowledge of God; it is evident that when they were created according to their "reason" (λόγος), they would be potentially perfect at the same time they come into existence, at the same act of their creation.

But if the beings have their perfection in the foreknowledge (of God) and if through their coming into existence were imperfect, then they would not be those that were known before but others; or even better, one clearly perceives the weakness of their creator, who knew them beforehand, according to His foreknowledge, but was unable, at the moment of their genesis, to put the beings into action (κατ' ἐνέργειαν) as they were in their substance (κατ' οὐσίαν).

A last objection was presented by the followers of delayed animation, which suggested that the creation of a reasonable and intellectual soul cannot take place in a dirty, carnal generation. St Maximus did not hesitate to reverse this proposition and proves to be in contrast with the dogma of creation and Incarnation⁴⁸:

"If.... You say that it is not just for that, which is the image of God (i.e. the intellectual soul) to come into existence at the same time as the flow of the sperm and the great satisfaction (that accompanies it) and that it is more convenient to say that it (the soul) is infused forty days after the conception, (then) you only bring a clear accusation against the Creator of Nature.... Because if marriage is dirty, then the law of natural generation would also be something bad, and if this law of natural generation is an evil, then, obviously, the one who created nature and gave the law of generation must be accused".

In addition, since the soul coexists with the impurity of the generation, why not use the logic to say: in what way is the body of the child more clean after forty days of conception, since before that the mother cannot enter the church⁴⁹:

“One may suppose that until the purification period is over, what is born has no logical and intellectual soul, but, as I have said above, that of a plant or animal without logic”.

After these developments, St. Maximus concentrated on the heart of the problem: the Christological question. In other words, his philosophical thinking has repercussions from the Dogma of the Incarnation of the Word. If the human beings are deprived of a soul at the moment of conception, that implies that on the Incarnation of the Word⁵⁰:

“...He became a man deprived of a soul and a spirit at the moment of conception, and dwelled in this way for forty days whereas our holy fathers and teachers have precisely claimed that, at the time that the Word God was conceived, the Lord was united with flesh, with no delay, by means of a reasonable soul, and not by means of a souless (body), destined to receive a reasonable soul, and that He would absolutely not assume an inanimated body, nor a non-intellectual or non-reasonable soul; but He was united, unspeakably, according to the hypostasis, a complete nature which was composed of a reasonable soul at the same time as the body.

It is for this reason that, overall, I embrace with force the doctrine of coexistence, and firmly send back the followers of each of the two positions with the contrary reasoning, having related the irrefutable teaching of the creator even with nature, through the mystery of His Incarnation, Him who truly became a man and confirmed in Himself the nature which He brought His perfection, the existence according to the generation simultaneous with the coming into being, and who innovated the only innovation of nature, I want to say the conception with the seed and the birth through the corruption, that nature has acquired after the Fall...”.

On going to Africa, St. Maximus found another peril: the monophysitic teaching of Severos of Antioch, who used the term “composite nature”: Body and soul

unite to form a third nature composed of the first two. Attempting to defend the union without confusion in the two natures of Christ, according to the Chalcedonian definition, the holy father rediscovered the simultaneous animation of the embryo.

Writing to John Cubicularius in Constantinople, he refuses to accept the position of Severos; For him the term "composite nature" is only appropriate for the human nature which consists of a soul and a body, which come into existence simultaneously and one cannot exist as part of the whole - the same cannot be said, as Severos thought, about the two natures of Christ on Incarnation since only one of these (the Divine) exists in all eternity⁵¹:

"Every composite nature in itself and in its component parts has the (latter) coming into being simultaneously, because they are conducted from non-being into being... This is the case of Man and all the other composite natures. The soul dominates the body without wanting it, and it is also dominated by it (i.e the body); it (the soul) gives it life without having deciding it, simply by the very fact of its existence into it; and it naturally takes part in its passions and pains, with the capacity that it possesses to accept what is found in it. And if some relinquish the principal, true dogmas of the Church on the soul issue, monstrously thinking "Greekwise" i.e. that the soul pre-exists its body, or "Jewishwise" i.e., that the soul exists after its body... then, they oppose this reasoning".

The holy father returns to this distinction in yet another one of his letters⁵²:

"First of all, every composite nature has its own component parts joining in a non-deliberate way. Then, these parts are concurrent between themselves (and the composite nature)

and they coexist in their coming into being, none of the two parties pre-existing into time with each other”

This is not the case with Christ: His two natures were not contemporary, for the Deity of the Word always existed, while the humanity of Christ came into existence at the moment of Incarnation. In addition the union of these two natures was voluntary and deliberate. Instead, there is a composite hypostasis (human/divine), since each guards its physical properties.

In addition, in his letter 15 to Cosmas of Alexandria, the holy father insisted on a total connection of the issue with the Christological debate. He wrote against monophysitism⁵³:

“Both (the soul and the body) come into being the one with each other under the relation of the unique hypostasis (person), which is accomplished by the union of the two: because none can exist separately from the other before their destined composition to create a (specific) figure (εἶδος). They are simultaneously created effectively at the same time of the realization of the figure of their composition”.

Thus a human person (πρόσωπον) begins at the moment of conception, as the two component parts, soul and body, simultaneously come into existence.

If one is to make a critical summary of the sharp, philosophical thinking of St. Maximus, then the following comments may be included.

This holy father anticipated that the issue of the initiation of human life mobilizes the whole Orthodox theology. He developed a synthetic approach in which he discerned that the pre-or post-existence of a soul are two different sides of the same error. If we start by considering the soul, the two theories are not excluding one another, for the procreated, pre-existing (προϋπαρξίς) soul can unite with the body at any moment even after 40 days. In both cases, however, the body is underestimated. It is better, the Holy Father continues, to revoke the erroneous beliefs, by starting with the body and its position in the creative plan of God. The Manichaean temptation implied that, if the creation of the body was consequent of the Fall, the body would not have been in the original plan of creation, and hence God was obliged to do things he initially did not want to do! In other words, the Origenistic outline: Soul Creation, Fall, Soul Descent into bodies, Return at the end of time to the original bodiless state - is incompatible with the Orthodox Christian scheme: of simultaneous spiritual and bodily Creation, Fall, and Redemption through Incarnation of the Word, Passion, Death, Resurrection, Ascension into heaven and Glorification, where He sits with His body, at the right hand of the Father.

The post-existence (μεθϋπαρξίς) theory again relegates the body to a lower level, allowing 40 days for the soul to enter into it and therefore the creation of the body is "dirty" since it is carnal (but this also applies to its Creator as well).

"If the natural law of the creation of the body is evil, then it is the Creator of nature that is accused, who gave to it the law of nature".

In contrast to this, St. Maximus confirms the positive character of the Creation of the body. Soul pre-existence disregards the great act of visible creation through which God is silently manifested. In other words the body is good; the natural law of the Creator that perpetuates it is also good and the soul is not defiled from it. In any case, in what way would it be more defiled after 40 days?

Considering the Platonic approach, St. Maximus suggests that there is another inherent temptation lurking in the minds of the followers of both theories, i.e. of the pre-existence (προϋπαρξίς) or post-existence (μεθυπάρξεως) of souls: God had created a good body but inferior to the soul. He also insists that any theory, chronologically separating the creation of the soul from that of the body inevitably implies that the soul is superior to the body. However, it is the human being that is superior, as composed of a body and a soul. Hence, he enquires about what the embryo is, if ensoulment takes place after 40 days? What is this body which is not fully human? How can it grow without a soul? If it is just a premordial animal-like "soul", what exactly is it?

A human being can only contain a human being in the womb. Therefore, a human being cannot start its life as a plant or animal, and then be transformed into a human being. Even the purely bodily development (from the initial cell to the fully developed body with a human shape) is unthinkable without a forming origin and only a human soul can shape a human body.

For those who believed the theory of "Tardive ensoulment", and that (following Aristotle) "the soul is the shape of the body", whatever has no shape has no soul. Instead St. Maximus reverses the propositions:

"The soul is the shape of the body, hence whatever has no soul cannot accept a human shape".

Conclusively then, according to the Holy Father, we must accept from the beginning of the procedure the presence of the human soul, without which the procedure cannot exist.

The reason for which the soul cannot be superior to the body, neither the body to the soul, is that neither the body nor the soul cannot exist without one another. Only a complete psychosomatic human whole can exist. Hence the two must come into being simultaneously and form together the human being. Similarly in death, this indissoluble union separates body from soul, which is thus extracted it is not just any one soul, but the soul of the specific body, for which it sighs and longs until the Common Resurrection. The Anthropological testimony of St. Maximus, then, is that this hypostatic union is necessary to take place at conception, at which it is present not just as a human being, but as a specific human being, a unique person according to the will of God.

The Holy Father finally concludes, that this is exactly what took place with Christ, who on His Incarnation He received a body which was not souless but endowed with a reasonable soul.

c) Anti-abortion trend in patristic writings

The prolife writings mentioned above, as well as the direct or indirect patristic Christological and Anthropological evidence on the ensoulment of human life at conception, clearly indicate that abortion, at any stage of embryonic development, is simply homicide. We have already noted this in the writings of St. John the Sinaite, but he was just one of the many fathers who commented on the issue.

Tertullian⁵⁴ was quite explicit:

"To prevent birth is anticipated murder; it makes little difference whether one destroys a life already born or does away with it in its nascent stage. The one who will be a man is already one".

St. Basil the Great⁵⁵ also suggested that an adulterous woman who performs abortion commits something worse than murder, because she does not even allow the baby's birth. Athenagoras (AD 177)⁵⁶ stressed that those who use abortive sorceries (ἀμβλωθρίδια) can be considered as murderers and are of the same magnitude of sinfulness with those that leave their born children unattended to die.

The Epistle to Diognetus⁵⁷ describing the remarkable behaviour of the early Christians, mentions among other things, that these people are distinguished by the fact, that even though they get married like everybody else, and give birth to children, they never dispose of those who are born to them.

St. Basil the Great also notes, that abortion should be considered as double murder, because it takes place intentionally by those who perform it⁵⁸.

St. Epiphanius⁵⁹ indirectly comments on St. Paul's use of the word "ἐκτρωμα" to describe his sinfulness and thus to show the abominable degree of evil hiding behind the practice of abortion.

St. John the Chrysostom⁶⁰, the father who interpreted St. Paul's letters more elaborately than anyone else, follows the same trend on this matter.

Conclusively, then, the patristic writings follow the general anti-abortion trend already noted previously. Respect for life originates from the fact that it is derived from God, who nevertheless co-operates with humans for the creation of new life. Furthermore, even though the holy fathers do not always discuss the abortion issue as such they provide an indirect stance, when on combating erroneous beliefs and philosophies they discuss the fact that the body and soul are coeval, and Christology (particularly Incarnation).

CHAPTER 6: NOTES/REFERENCES

1. Ἁγ. Μαξίμου τοῦ Ὁμολογητοῦ 400 Κεφάλαια περὶ Ἀγάπης [400 chapters on Love], (II 93), PG 1016C
 “Ζωὴ δὲ κυρίως ἐστὶν ὁ εἰπών: ἐγὼ εἰμί ἢ ζωὴ”
2. Μητροπολίτη Περιστερίου Ζαφείρη, Χρ., “Ὁ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ πηγὴ τῆς Ζωῆς, κατὰ τὸν Μέγα Ἀθανάσιον [The Word of God is the source of Life], Ἀθήνα, 1984 (Ἀνάτυπον ἐκ τοῦ περιοδικοῦ ΘΕΟΛΟΓΙΑ).
3. Ἁγ. Γρηγορίου Νύσσης, Εἰς τὸν Ἐκκλησιαστήν [On Ecclesiasticus] PG44, 725A.
 “Τό γάρ ἔξω τοῦ ὄντος ἐν τῷ εἶναι οὐκ ἐστὶν”
4. Ἁγ. Ἰωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου, Ὁμιλῖαι εἰς Γένεσιν [Talks on Genesis], XII,4, PG53, 102-105.
 “Τό τεκεῖν ἄνωθεν ἔχει τὴν ἀρχήν, ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ προνοίας καὶ οὔτε γυναικός φύσις, οὔτε συνουσία, οὔτε ἄλλο οὐδὲν αὐτάρκες πρὸς τοῦτο ἐστὶν”.
5. Κλήμεντος Ἀλεξανδρείας, Παιδαγωγός [Paedagogus], II, X ΒΕΠΕΣ 7, 168, 36-37.
 “Κατὰ τοῦτο εἰκὼν ἄνθρωπος γίνεται τοῦ Θεοῦ, καθ’ ὃ εἰς γένεσιν ἀνθρώπου, ἄνθρωπος συνεργεῖ”.
6. Ἁγ. Ἰωάννη Δαμασκηνοῦ, Ἐκδοσις ἀκριβῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Πίστεως, [Accurate Edition of the Orthodox Faith], Γ,2, PG94 985D-988A.
 “Ἄμα σὰρξ, ἄμα Θεοῦ Λόγου σὰρξ, ἄμα σὰρξ ἔμψυχος λογικὴ τε καὶ νοερά, ἄμα Θεοῦ Λόγου σὰρξ ἔμψυχος λογικὴ τε καὶ νοερά”.
7. Ἁγ. Μαξίμου τοῦ Ὁμολογητοῦ, Πρὸς θαλάσσιον [To Thalassius], PG91, 1324.
 “Καὶ γὰρ ὁ Υἱὸς καὶ Λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐνωθεὶς κατὰ τὴν σύλληψιν τῇ σαρκὶ διὰ μέσης νοεράς-ἔδειξεν ὅτι ἄμα σῶμα καὶ ψυχὴ ἐν τοῦ ἐτέρου μὴ προτερεύον, ἀλλ’ ἄμα κατ’ ἀμφω κατὰ τὴν σύλληψιν”.
8. Καρμίρη, Ι., Τὰ Δόγματα καὶ Συμβολικὰ μνημεῖα τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας [The Dogmas and Symbolic Monuments of the Orthodox Church], Ἀθήναι, 1960 Τόμος α΄, σ.154-155, 175, 207, 223.
9. “Ὁμοούσιος ἡμῖν κατὰ τὴν ἀνθρωπότητα”.
10. “Κατὰ πάντα ὅμοιος ἡμῖν ἄνευ ἁμαρτίας”.
11. Κυρίλλου Ἀλεξανδρείας, 4η ἐπιστολὴ πρὸς Νεστόριον [4th Epistle to Nestorius], PG77, 45D-48A.

“Οὐ γὰρ πρῶτον ἄνθρωπος ἐγεννήθη κοινός ἐκ τῆς ἁγίας παρθένου εἶθ’ οὕτω καταπεφοίτηεν ἐπ’ αὐτόν ὁ Λόγος ἀλλ’ ἐξ αὐτῆς μήτρας ἐνωθεὶς, ὑπομῆναι λέγεται γέννησιν σαρκική, ὡς τῆς ἰδίας σαρκὸς τὴν γέννησιν οἰκειούμενος”.

12. Ἁγ. Ἰωάννου Δαμασκηνοῦ, Ἐκδοσις Ἀκριβῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Πίστewς, [Accurate edition of the Orthodox Faith], III 12, PG94, 1032C.

“Οὔτε (γάρ) γενόμενος πρότερον, καθ’ ἡμᾶς ὕστερον γέγονεν ὑπέρ ἡμᾶς ἀλλ’ αἰεὶ ἐκ πρώτης ὑπάρξεως ἄμφω ὑπῆρξε, διὰ τό ἐξ ἄκρας συλλήψεως ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ Λόγω τὴν ὑπαρξιν ἐσχηκέναι”.

13. Ibid., II22, PG94, 1088A

“Ἀληθῶς ἠνώθη τῷ Θεῷ Λόγω ἡ σὰρξ ἐξ ἄκρας ὑπάρξεως”.

14. Ibid., PG94 985 B-C.

“Μετά οὖν τὴν συγκατάθεσιν τῆς ἁγίας Παρθένου, Πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐπῆλθεν ἐπ’ αὐτήν... καί τότε επεσκίασεν δύναμις, ὁ Ὑῖός τοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ τῷ Πατρὶ Ὅμοούσιος οἰονεὶ Θεῖος σπῆρος καί συνέπηξεν ἑαυτῷ ἐκ τῶν ἀγνῶν καί καθαρωτάτων αὐτῆς αἱμάτων, σάρκα ἐψυχωμένην, ψυχὴ λογικὴ τε καί νοερά”.

15. Ἁγ. Νικόδημος ὁ Ἀγιορείτης, Ἐορτοδρόμιον, [Interpretation of the canons dedicated to the Lord and the Holy Virgin], Βενετία 1836, σ. 220.

“Ὡς λέγουσι πολλοὶ Θεολόγοι, ἅμα ταῦτα ἐγένοντο ὑποστατικὴ ἔνωσις, πρόσληψις, σύμπηξις, σύλληψις, εἰδοποίησις, Θέωσις...”.

16. Ἁγ. Ἰωάννη Χρυσοστόμου, Εὐτρόπιος (Eutropius), PG52, 405-6

“Καί πῶς (ὁ Θεός Λόγος) γίνεται ἄνθρωπος: Εἰς μήτραν κυοφορεῖται, αὖξεται κατὰ μικρόν καί ἔρχεται τὴν ὁδὸν τῆς ἡλικίας τῆς ἐμῆς. Τίς; Ἡ οἰκονομία οὐχ ἡ Θεότης ἢ τοῦ δούλου μορφὴ, οὐχ ἡ τοῦ Δεσπότη ἢ σὰρξ ἐμὴ οὐχ ἡ οὐσία ἐκείνου αὖξεται κατὰ μικρόν, καί μίγνυται ἀνθρώποις”.

17. Ἁγ. Νικοδήμου Ἀγιορείτου, Ἐορτοδρόμιον [Talks on Feasts] σ.221.

“Ἡ ἐναντιοφάνεια αὕτη κατὰ τό ἐμοὶ δοκοῦν συμβιβάζεται ἐάν νοήσωμεν ὅτι εὐθύς μὲν ἐξεικονίσθη κατὰ τὰ μέλη τό Θεοῦπόστατον βρέφος ἐν τῇ κοιλία τῆς Παρθένου οὐχὶ δε καί τὰ ἐξεικονισθέντα μέλη αὐξήθησαν παρευθύς καί ἐγιναν τέλεια, ὡς τὰ τοῦ ἑννεα-μηνιαίου βρέφους - ἄλλως εὐθύς ἤθελε γεννηθῆ τό βρέφος τό ὅποιον ἦτον ἀπρεπές. Ὀλίγον κατ’ ὀλίγον λοιπόν αὖξαναν τὰ ἐξεικονισθέντα μέλη, ἕως ὅτου ἐγινε τό βρέφος ἑννέα μηνῶν καί ἐγεννήθη...”.

18. Ibid.

“Οὐδείς δύναται νοῆσαι ἢ εἰπεῖν τήν τάξιν γιά τό πῶς ἔγινε ἡ καθ’ ὑπόθεσιν ἔνωσις πρόσληψις... ἔκτός ὃ ὁ μόνος ὃ τό Μυστήριον τοῦτο ἐνεργήσας...”.

19. Καβάσιλα, Ν., Περί τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ ζωῆς, [On the life in Christ], PG 150, 681AB.

20. Ἁγ. Γρηγορίου Νύσσης, Περί Ψυχῆς καί Ἀναστάσεως [On the soul and Resurrection], PG46, 125C.

“...μίαν καί τήν αὐτήν ψυχῆς τε καί σώματος ἀρχήν τῆς συστάσεως...”.

21. Ἁγ. Γρηγορίου Νύσσης, Περί κατασκευῆς ἀνθρώπου [On the making of Man], PG44 233D-237.

22. Ibid.

“Ἄλλ’ ἑνός ὄντος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, τοῦ διά ψυχῆς τε καί σώματος συνεστηκότος, μίαν αὐτοῦ καί κοινήν τῆς συστάσεως τήν ἀρχήν ὑποτίθεσθαι, ὡς ἂν μή αὐτός ἑαυτόν προγενέστερος τε καί νεώτερος γένοιτο, τοῦ μὲν σωματικοῦ προτερεύοντος ἐν αὐτῷ τοῦ δέ ἑτέρου ἐφυστερίζοντος· ἀλλά τῇ μὲν προγνωστικῇ τοῦ Θεοῦ δυνάμει ἅπαν προῦφεστάνει τό ἀνθρώπινον πλήρωμα λέγειν, συμμαρτυρούσης εἰς τοῦτο τῆς προφητείας αὐτῶν ἐν δέ τῇ καθ’ ἕκαστον δημιουργία μή προτιθέναι τοῦ ἑτέρου τό ἕτερον, μήτε πρό τοῦ σώματος τήν ψυχὴν, μήτε τό ἔμπαλιν, ὡς ἂν μή στασιάζοι πρὸς ἑαυτόν ὃ ἀνθρωπος τῇ κατὰ τόν χρόνον διαφορᾷ μεριζόμενος”.

23. Ἁγ. Γρηγορίου τοῦ Θεολόγου, Περί Ψυχῆς [On the Soul], PG37, σ.453-454.

“Ἔστιν οὖν ψυχὴ τελεία καί γάρ οὐσα ἐν ἐμβρύω. Οὐ δύναται ἔτι φανερωῖσαι τήν ἐνέργειαν αὐτῆς. Ἐν ἀρχῇ (ἐν ἐμβρύω) ἐν σιωπῇ ἔστι. Ἐστέρον ὀλοκληρουμένη, δύναμιν, σοφίαν, σύνεσιν, ἀρετὴν ἐκχέει”.

24. α) Μεγ. Βασιλείου, Περί τῆς τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου Κατασκευῆς, [On the Composition of Man], PG30, 41D.

“...αὐξηση ψυχῆς... ἢ διά τῶν μαθημάτων εἰς τελείωσιν προσθήκη”.

b) One could add in the line of patristic extracts for the Christological evidence the opinion of Nemesius of Emesa cited in Vol IV. Edited by W. Telfer, SCM Press Ltd, London, p.298-301.

“The soul is united with the body and yet remains distinct from it but it modifies in whatever it swells - analogous to the



Word that mingles with the body and soul and yet remains throughout unmixed, unconfused, uncorrupted, untransformed”.

25. Ψευδο-Αθανασίου, Πρός Ἀντίοχον Ἀρχοντα, Ἐρωταποκρίσεις. [To Antiochus], ΒΕΠ, 35, 104, 620-23.

“Ὡσπερ τοῦ λίθου καί τοῦ σιδήρου συγκρουομένων ἐκ τῶν ἀμφοτέρων τίκεται τό πῦρ· οὕτω καί ἐπί τῆς τοῦ ἀνδρός καί γυναικός συμπλοκῆς συνίσταται θεοῦ κελεύσει σῶμα καί ψυχή”.

26. Μεγ. Ἀθανασίου, Περί τοῦ κατά τόν κοινόν Ἀνθρωπον Ὑποδείγματος. [On the Model of Common Human], PG26 1233 AB.

“Ἀνθρωπος μεν γαρ ἐκ ψυχῆς νοητῆς καί σώματος αἰσθητόν ζῶον γνωρίζεται εἰκότως, διά τό μηδέτερον χωρίς τοῦ ἑτέρου προάγουσαν ἔχειν ὑπόστασιν, μηδέ σώζειν τόν ὅρον τῆς φύσεως, κατά τοῦτο μέν ἀρχήν τοῦ εἶναι λαβόντα ἐκ γαστρού, και οὕτως εἰς τόν βίον ἐρχόμενα, ἑνός δέ ζώου σύστασιν ἐργαζόμενα”.

27. Ἀγ. Ἰωάννου τοῦ Σιναΐτου, Ἡ Κλίμαξ [The Ladder], ἐκδόσεις Α. Παπαδημητρίου, Ἀθῆναι 1970, σ.36.

“Τήν ψυχὴν ὡς οἶμαι λέγει οὔτε γάρ προϋφίσταται τοῦ σώματος οὔτε μεθυφίσταται ἀλλ' ἅμα τῇ τούτονγενέσει κτίζεται καί αὐτή ὅθεν φονεύς καί ὁ τό ἔμβρυον ἀπεστακῶς ἐπεὶ ἐν τῇ συλλήψει ἐψυχῶται· τοσοῦτον δε ἡ ψυχὴ ἐνεργεῖ τότε, ὅσον καί ἡ σὰρξ κατ' αὐξήσιν γάρ τήν τοῦ σώματος καί αὐτή τὰς οἰκείας ἐνεργείας διαδεικνυσι”.

28. Ἀγ. Ἰωάννου τοῦ Δαμασκηνοῦ, “Ἐκδοσις Ἀκριβῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Πίστεως [Exact edition of the Orthodox Faith], II, PG94, 921.

“Ἄμα δέ τό σῶμα καί ἡ ψυχὴ πέπλαται, οὐ τό μέν πρότερον τό δέ ὕστερον κατά τοῦ Ὀριγένους ληρήματα”.

29. Ἀναστασίου τοῦ Σιναΐτου, Ἐρωτήσεις [Questions], PG89, 724 C-D.

“...σπεῖρει ἐν μήτρα οὐκ ἄψυχον ἢ ἡμιάνθρωπον, ἀλλά τέλειον ἐρχόμενον, ἔμψυχον ἄνθρωπον. Οὔτε γάρ σῶμα πρό τῆς ψυχῆς ὑφίστατο, οὔτε ψυχὴ πρό τοῦ σώματος”.

30. a) M.H. Congourdeau, L' embryon est-il une personne? *Communio*, no IXC, Novembre-December, 1984, p.103-116.

b) Maxime le Confesseur, et l' humanite de l' embryon, "La politique de la Mystique", Hommage a' Mgr Maxime Charles, Criterion, Paris, 1984, p.163-171 (Translated in Greek by C. Gabrielides).

Τό ἔμβρυο εἶναι πρόσωπο; Ὁ Ἁγ. Μάξιμος ὁ Ὁμολογητής καί ἡ ἀνθρώπινη φύση τοῦ ἐμβρύου.

Edited by the Church Institution "Ο ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΣΤΗΣ ΜΑΡΚΟΣ", Θέρμη, Θεσσαλονίκη 1994.

c) M.H. Congourdeau, L' animation de l' embryon humain chez Maxime le Confesseur, Nouvelle Revue Theologique, (Belgium), No5, 1989, p.693-709.

d) Most texts have been paraphrased in the translations that follow, so that the right meaning is conveyed.

e) Most writings cited come from Ambigua II, 7 CPG 91, 1068-1101 - Versus Origen and Ambigua II, 42 CPG91, 1321-1345 - Incarnation simultaneous Co-existence of body/soul).

f) St. Maximus draws a lot from Aristotle's logic and writings, even though he overthrows the latter's arguments in the end (Aristotle: De Anima 412 a-b and 766 a-b
Politique 1335b

cited by M.H. Congourdeau, Entre Science et philosophie: Petite histoire de l' embryon in Ethique, Winter 1992, No3, p.27-28)

31. PG17, 603-8

32. PG91, 1100 C6-D2

“Εἶ γάρ ἀνθρώπου μέρη, καθὼς προαποδέδοται, τό σῶμα καί ἡ ψυχὴ τυγχάνουσι, τα μέρη τήν εἰς τό πρός τι ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἀναφορὰν δέχεται (ὅλον γάρ ἔχει πάντως κατηγορούμενου), τὰ δέ οὕτω λεγόμενα πρός τι τῶν ἅμα πάντη τε καί πάντως κατά την γένεσιν ἐστίν, ὡς μέρη εἶδος ὅλον τῆ συνόδῳ ἀποτελοῦντα, ἐπινοία μόνη τῆ πρός διάγνωσιν τοῦ τί κατ' οὐσίαν ἕκαστον ἀλλήλων διαιρούμενα - ψυχὴν ἄρα καί σῶμα, ὡς μέρη ἀνθρώπου, ἀλλήλων προϋπάρχειν χρονικῶς ἢ μεθυπάρχειν ἀμήχανον, ἐπεὶ ὁ τοῦ πρός τι οὕτω λεγόμενος λυθήσεται λόγος.”

33. PG91, 1100 D2 - 1101 A6

“Καί πάλιν· Εἶ γάρ καθ' αὐτό εἶδος πρό τοῦ σώματος ἐστίν ἡ ψυχὴ ἢ τό σῶμα, εἶδος δέ ἄλλο τούτων ἑκάτερον κατά τήν ψυχῆς πρός τό σῶμα σύνθεσιν, ἢ σώματος πρός ψυχὴν, ἀποτελεῖ, ἢ πάσχοντα, πεπόνθασιν εἰς ὅπερ οὐκ ἦν ἐξιστάμενα, καί φθείρεται, εἰ δέ πεφυκότα, αἰεὶ τοῦτο διά τό πεφυκός ἐργάσεται δηλονότι, καί οὐδέποτε παύσεται ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ μετενσωματοῦσθαι, οὐδέ τοῦ μετεμψυχοῦσθαι τό σῶμα. Ἄλλ' οὐκ ἐστίν, ὡς οἶμαι, τοῦ πάθους ἢ τῆς τῶν μερῶν φυσικῆς δυνάμεως κατά την πρός θάτερον θατέρου σύνοδον

ἄνευ φθορᾶς ἐξ εἶδους εἰς εἶδους μεταβάλλειν τό οἰονοῦν εἶδος.

34. PG91, 1101 A10-C7

“Εἰ δέ ὅτι μετά τόν θάνατον καί τήν λύσιν τοῦ σώματος ἔστιν ἡ ψυχή καί υφέστηκε φήσουσι καί πρό τοῦ σώματος εἶναι αὐτήν δύνασθαι καί ὑφεσάναί, οὐκ ἔστοχασμένως, ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ, ὁ λόγος αὐτοῖς προέρχεται. Οὐχ ὁ αὐτός γάρ γενέσεως καί οὐσίας λόγος. Ὁ μὲν γάρ τοῦ πότε καί ποῦ εἶναι καί πρός τί ἐστίν, ὁ δέ τοῦ εἶναι καί τί καί πῶς εἶναι ἐστί δηλωτικός. Εἰ δέ τοῦτο, ἐστί μὲν αἰεὶ μετά τό γενέσθαι διά τήν οὐσίαν ἡ ψυχή, οὐκ ἄφετος δέ διά τήν γένεσιν, ἀλλά μετά τῆς σχέσεως τοῦ πότε καί ποῦ καί πρός τί. Οὐχ ἀπλῶς γάρ λέγεται ψυχή μετά τόν τοῦ σώματος θάνατον ἡ ψυχή, ἀλλά ἀνθρώπου ψυχή, καί τοῦ τινός ἀνθρώπου ψυχή. Ἐχει γάρ καί μετά τό σῶμα ὡς εἶδος αὐτῆς τό ὅλον κατά τήν σχέσιν ὡς μέρους κατηγορούμενον τό ἀνθρώπινον. Ὡσαύτως δέ καί τό σῶμα, θνητόν μὲν διά τήν φύσιν, οὐκ ἄφετον δέ διά τήν γένεσιν. Οὐ γάρ ἀπλῶς λέγεται σῶμα μετά τόν χωρισμόν τῆς ψυχῆς τό σῶμα ἀλλ’ ἀνθρώπου σῶμα καί τοῦ τινός ἀνθρώπου σῶμα, κἂν εἰ φθείρεται καί εἰς τά ἐξ ὧν ἐστίν ἀναλύεσθαι στοιχεῖα πέφυκεν. Ἐχει γάρ καί οὕτως ὡς εἶδος τό ὅλον αὐτοῦ κατά τήν σχέσιν ὡς μέρους κατηγορούμενον τό ἀνθρώπινον. Ἐπ’ ἀμφοῖν τοιγαροῦν ἡ σχέσις, ψυχῆς λέγω καί σώματος, ὡς καί ὅλου εἶδους ἀνθρωπίνου μερῶν ἀναφαιρέτως νοουμένη, παρίστησι καί τήν ἅμα τούτων γένεσιν, καί τήν κατ’ οὐσίαν πρός ἀλλήλα διαφοράν ἀποδείκνυσιν, οὐδέν καθ’ οἰονδήποτε τρόπο τοῦς κατ’ οὐσίαν αὐτοῖς ἐμπεφυκότας παραβλάπτουσα λόγους. Οὐκ ἔστιν οὖν ὅπως σῶμα δυνατόν ἢ ψυχὴν εὔρειν ἢ λέγειν ἀσχετον. Θατέρω γάρ ἅμα συνεισάγεται τό τινός εἶναι θάτερον ὥστε εἰ προϋπάρχει θατέρου θάτερον, ὡς τινός προσυπακουστέον”.

35. PG 91, 1324 C1-D3

“Ψυχῆς μὲν οὖν γένεσις, ὡς φησιν ἐμφαντικῶς ὁ διδάσκαλος, ἐξ ὑποκειμένης ὕλης οὐ γίνεται, καθάπερ τά σώματα, ἀλλά τῷ βουλήματι τοῦ θεοῦ διά τῆς ζωτικῆς ἐμπνεύσεως ἀρρήτως τε καί ἀγνώστως, ὡς οἶδε μόνος ὁ ταύτης δημιουργός. Ἡ ψυχή τό εἶναι λαμβάνουσα κατά τήν σύλληψιν ἅμα τῷ σώματι πρός ἑνός ἀνθρώπου συμπλήρωσιν ἄγεται, τό δέ σῶμα ἐκ τῆς ὑποκειμένης ὕλης τοῦ ἑτέρου δηλαδή γίνεται σώματος κατά τήν σύλληψιν, ἅμα τῇ ψυχῇ τήν τοῦ ἑνός εἶδους εἶναι σύν αὐτῇ δεχόμενον συνθεσιν. Ὅπερ ἀλλαχοῦ τρανότερον ἐμφαίνων φησὶν ὁ διδάσκαλος. Κατά τήν διπλήν τοῦ

ἔμφυσηματος δύναμιν τό μὲν ζωτικόν ἔμφύσημα καί τό Πνεῦμα τό ἅγιον τῆ νοερᾶ τῆς ψυχῆς οὐσία τήν δέ σάρκωσιν καί τήν πνοήν τῆ φύσει τοῦ σώματος, καθώς οἱ Πατέρες φασί. Καί ἡ τοῦ προπάτορος Ἀδάμ μυστικῶς παρήχθη γενέσεις, ἕτερον τῆς ψυχῆς ἔχουσα τόν τε τοῦ εἶναι λόγον καί τόν τοῦ γενέσθαι τρόπον, καί ἕτερον δηλαδή τοῦ σώματος, ὡς τό θεῖον ἡμᾶς μεγαλοφυῶς ἔμυσταγωγῆσε γράμμα, μή συγχωροῦν τήν ψυχὴν καί τό σῶμα καθ' ἓνα καί τόν αὐτόν τρόπον τῆς γενέσεως ἀλλήλοις συμπεσόντα φυρῆναι κατά τήν φύσιν καί τόν ἑκάστου τῆς οὐσίας λόγον ἀγνοηθῆναι, καί τόν τῆς γενέσεως τρόπον”.

36. PG91, 1325C 7-11

“Εἰληφέναι τόν Κύριον τό ζωτικόν πνεῦμα, ἦτοι ἔμφύσημα κατά τό ἀνθρώπινον αὐτοῦ, λέγω δέ τήν νοεράν ψυχὴν μετά τοῦ σώματος τοῦ ἐκ τῆς ἀχράντου Παρθένου καί οὐ μετά τήν σύλληψιν, ὁ διδάσκαλος διορίζεται”.

37. PG91, 1325 D 4-7

“Τινές μὲν γάρ φασιν, ὡς ἤδη προλαβὼν ἔφην, προϋπάρχειν τῶν σωμάτων τὰς ψυχάς, τινές δέ τό ἐναντίον, τῶν ψυχῶν προϋπάρχειν τὰ σώματα. Ἐμεῖς δέ τήν μέσην ὁδὸν ὡς βασιλικὴν κατά τούς πατέρας ἡμῶν ὀδεύοντες οὔτε προϋπαρξιν οὔτε μεθὑπαρξιν ψυχῆς ἢ σώματος, συνύπαρξιν δέ μᾶλλον φαμέν, τὰς εφ' ἑκάτερα φυλαττόμενοι ἐγκλίσεις”.

38. PG 91, 1328 A - B6

“Οὐ πλέον φοβεῖσθαι οὐδέν ἐστι φοβερώτερον, μήπως προϋπάρχειν λέγοντες τῶν σωμάτων τὰς ψυχάς, καί τιμωρίας ἔνεκεν τῶν ψυχῶν ἐφευρέσθαι τὰ σώματα, διὰ τήν προγεγεννημένην τῶν ἀσωμάτων κακίαν, τῆς τῶν ὀρωμένων ἐκπρεπous μεγαουργίας, δι' ἧς ὁ Θεός γινώσκειται σιωπῆ κηρυττόμενος, αἰτίαν εἰκότως εἶναι μόνην ὑποτιθέμεθα τήν κακίαν, ἀνάγκην ἐπάγουσαν τῷ Θεῷ παρά πρόθεσιν ἣν οὐκ εὐδόκησεν οὐσίαν δημιουργῆσαι, ἧς τυχόν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς οὐδέ τόν λόγον ἔχει πρό τῶν αἰώνων μετά τῶν ἄλλων ἀπόκρυφον. Τῶν γάρ παρά πρόθεσιν γινομένων λέγειν τόν Θεόν ἔχειν τούς τῆς οὐσιώσεως λόγους, οὐ μοι δοκεῖ συνετῆς διανοίας εἶναι, καί ὅπως οὐκ εὐ συνησθημένης Θεοῦ μεγαλειότητος, τοῦ ἀπαθοῦς καί μόνου ἀληθοῦς καί μηδέν ἔχοντος καθόλου κατά τούς ἐν αὐτῷ προόντας τῶν ὄντων λόγους πρόσφατον, καί μάλιστα παρά πρόθεσιν. Πάντα γάρ αὐτῷ τὰ ὅπως οὐκ ὄντα ἢ γενησόμενα κατά τήν οὐσίαν προτεθέληταί τε καί

προεννενόηται, καί προέγνωσται ἕκαστον δέ τῶν ὄντων κατὰ τόν εὐθετον καί ἐπιτήδειον καιρόν οὐσιοῖ καί ὑφίστησι”.

39. PG91, 1329 A1 - 1332 B3

“Πάντων οὖν τῶν κατ’ οὐσίαν ὑπαρκτικῶς ὄντων τε καί ἔσομένων, ἢ γενομένων, ἢ γενησομένων ἢ φαινομένων, ἢ φανησομένων, ἐν τῷ Θεῷ προϋπάρχουσι παγίως ὄντες οἱ λόγοι, καθ’ οὓς καί εισί τά πάντα καί γεγόνασι καί διαμένουσιν αἰεὶ τοῖς ἑαυτῶν κατὰ πρόθεσιν λόγοις, διὰ κινήσεως φυσικῆς ἐγγίζοντα καί πρὸς τό εἶναι μᾶλλον συνεχόμενα, κατὰ τὴν ποιάν τε καί ποσὴν τῆς προαιρέσεως κίνησιν τε και ροπήν, τό εὖ δι’ ἀρετήν καί τὴν πρὸς τόν λόγον καθ’ ὃν ἐστὶν εὐθυπορίαν, ἢ τό φεῦ εἶναι διὰ κακίαν καί τὴν παρά τόν λόγον καθ’ ὃν ἐστὶ κίνησιν λαμβάνοντα καί συντόμως εἰπεῖν κατὰ τὴν ἕξιν ἢ τὴν στέρησιν τῆς αὐτῶν κατὰ φύσιν μεθεκτικῆς δυνάμεως τοῦ παντελῶς ἀμεθέκτου κατὰ φύσιν ὑπάρχοντος, καί πάσιν ἀπλῶς ἑαυτόν ἀξίοις τε καί ἀναξίοις ὅλον κατὰ χάριν δι’ ἀπειρον ἀγαθότητα παρέχοντος, καί τὴν τοῦ αἰεὶ εἶναι καθὼς ἕκαστος ὑφ’ ἑαυτοῦ διατέθεται τε καί ἐστὶ διαμονὴν ἐμποιῆσοντος. Οἷς ἢ τοῦ κυρίως ὄντος καί εὖ ὄντος καί αἰεὶ ὄντος ἀνάλογος μέθεξις ἢ ἀμεθεξία, τιμωρίας τῶν μετασχεῖν μὴ δυναμένων καί ἀπολαύσεως τῶν μετασχεῖν δυναμένων, ἐπίτασις ἐστὶ καί ἐπαύξησης. Οὐδέν γάρ τό παράπαν ἐστὶ τῶν ὄντων οὐ μὴ παρά τῷ Θεῷ πάντως ὁ λόγος προένεστιν. Ἐν δέ παρά τῷ Θεῷ προϋπάρχουσιν ὄντες τῆς οὐσίας οἱ λόγοι, τούτων δηλαδὴ κατὰ πρόθεσιν θεῖαν πάντως ἐστὶν ἢ γένεσις. Ἐν δέ κατὰ πρόθεσιν θεῖαν ἐστὶν ἢ γένεσις, τούτων ἢ κατ’ οὐσίαν ὑπαρξίς μένει πρὸς τό μὴ ὄν ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄντος ἀμεταχώρητος. Ἐν δέ πρὸς τό μὴ ὄν ἀμεταχώρητος ἐστήκεν ὑπαρξίς, τούτων οἱ λόγοι τυγχάνουσι μόνιμοί τε και βᾶσιμοι, μόνην ἔχοντες ἀρχὴν τοῦ εἶναι τὴν σοφίαν, ἐξ ἧς και δι’ ἣν ὑπάρχουσι, καί ὑφ’ ἧς τὴν πρὸς τό εἶναι δύνασθαι παγίως δύναμιν ἔχουσιν. Ἐν δέ οἱ λόγοι μονίμως ὑπάρχουσι παρά τῷ Θεῷ - καί ἢ περὶ αὐτούς τοῦ πεπιοηκότος τά πάντα Θεοῦ πρόθεσις παντάπασιν οὐ περιεῖληπται πέρασιν, οὔτε μὲν τὴν ἐκ μεταβολῆς ἀλλοίωσιν ἐπιδέχεται τοῖς ὑποκειμένοις συμμεταπίπτουσα, τούτων ἀναμφηρίστως αἱ ὑπαρξεις σαφῶς εἰσὶν ἀδιάφθοροι. Ἡ γάρ οὖν κατὰ πρόθεσιν θέλων πεποίηκεν ὁ Θεός τά ἀνθρώπινα σώματα καί μένει δι’ αὐτόν πρὸς τό μὴ ὄν ἀμετάπτωτα παντελῶς, αἰεὶ θέλοντα εἶναι τό σύν λόγῳ καί σοφία κατὰ πρόθεσιν οὐ πεποίηκε, καί μὴ θέλων ἐτυραννήθη, κατὰ βίαν ἀγόμενος πρὸς γένεσιν, ὧν τούς λόγους ἔχων οὐ πέφανται. Καί εἰ μὲν τυραννηθεῖς παρά πρόθεσιν ἦλθε ποιῆσαι μὴ θέλων τά σώματα, λόγος δηλονότι καί σοφία τῆς τούτων γενέσεως οὐδαμῶς δηλονότι καί σοφία τῆς τούτων γενέσεως οὐδαμῶς καθηγήσατο. Τό γάρ

πρόθεσιν θεϊαν γινόμενον, λόγου καί σοφίας παντελῶς ἐστερηταί τε καί ἡλλοτριῶται. Τό δέ λόγου καί σοφίας παντελῶς ἐστερημένον μόνον ἐστί τό κακόν, οὐ τό εἶναι χαρακτηρίζει ἢ ἀνυπαρξία, οὐτινος ποιητήν τόν Θεόν μήτε ἐννοεῖν ἡμῖν γένοιτο πῶποτε, μήτιγε δη λέγειν ἀναφανδόν, καί πιστεύειν ὀλεθρίως τολμᾶν. Τίς δέ ὁ τυραννήσας τόν Θεόν, εἴπερ τετυράννηται, καί θέμις ὄλως εἰπεῖν ποιῆσαι παρά πρόθεσιν ὁ μή βεβούληται; Καί πῶς ὁ τυραννηθεῖς ἐστί Θεός, πρὸς ἀνάγκης ὑφιστῶν παρά πρόθεσιν ἐπ' ἀπωλεία γένεσιν πραγμάτων; Οἱ ταύτην περιέποντες τήν δόξαν λέγειν τολμάτωσαν. *Ἡ γάρ ἂν τόν Θεόν ταῦτα πεποικέναι φαῖεν, καί τά μέγιστα βλασφημήσαιεν, πρόθεσιν ἢ μή πεποικέναι, καί ἔξ ἀνάγκης ἄλλην Μανιχαϊκῶς τήν ταῦτα ποιοῦσαν τῶν δύο ἀρχάς ἀλλήλαις ἀντιπαρεξαγόντων τό τῆς προϋπάρξεως δόγμα”.

40. PG91, 1332 D7 - 1333 A & 1333 D5 - 1336 A6

“καί εἰς ἀεὶ πιστεύοντες διαμένομεν - τίς οὕτως τολμηρός ἐστί καί αὐθάδης, καί πρὸς τά δῆλά τε καί προφανῆ μάχεσθαι μόνον εἰδῶς προπετῶς, ὥστε κἂν ψιλῶς ἐνθυμηθῆναι πάροδον τήν εἰς τό μή ὄν ἔξειν ποτέ τά σώματα, κατά τήν εἰς τό τέλειον, ὡς ἐκεῖνοι φασί, τῶν λογικῶν προκοπήν, τόν Κύριον αὐτόν καί Θεόν τῶν ὅλων πιστεύων μετά σώματος εἶναι νυν τε καί εἰς ἀεὶ, τόν καί τοῖς ἄλλοις τήν τοῦ προκόπτειν δύνασθαι παρεχόμενον δύναμιν, καί πάντας πρὸς τήν οἰκείαν δόξαν.

Εἰ γάρ φίλον ἦν αὐτῷ καί τοῦτο γενέσθαι, πρῶτος ἂν αὐτός ἐν ἑαυτῷ προενηργεῖ καί τοῦτο μετά τῶν λοιπῶν, οἱ ἑαυτόν δι' ἡμᾶς ὡς φιλόανθρωπος ὑποθεῖς καθ' ἡμᾶς ἐτελείωσεν, εἰς τό ἡμᾶς μετά τῶν ἄλλων εἰς τοῦτο πιστεύοντας ἐλπίζειν. Πῶς δέ, εἴπερ ἀνασχοίμεθα τοῦτο λεγόντων αὐτῶν, κατά τόν ἅγιον τοῦτον δάσκαλον πιστεύσομεν ὅτι τό ἐνωθέν τῷ Θεῷ σώζεται; Ὅ γάρ, φησί πρὸς Κληδόνιον γράφων, ἦνωται τῷ Θεῷ, τοῦτο καί σώζεται. Ἠνώθη δέ τῷ Θεῷ Λόγω μετά τῆς ψυχῆς καί τό σῶμα. Ἄρα μετά τῆς ψυχῆς καί τό σῶμα σωθήσεται”.

41. PG91, 1340D

42. Theodoret de Cyr: Therapeutique des maladies helleniques, V52, Edit., P. Cavinet Coll. 5C, 57 I. p. 243.

43. Philoxenos de Mabboug, Bibliotheca Orientalis II (1721) 159, cited by M.H. Congourdeau L' animation de l' embryon humain chez Maxime le Confesseur, Nouvelle Revue Theologique 111 (1989) pp. 673-709, p.702.

44. Cited by Meyendorff, J., Le Christ dans a theologie byzantine, Paris 1969, p.69-89.

45. PG91, 1336 C - 1337 D 2

Τό μεθυπάρχειν τῶν σωμάτων τὰς ψυχὰς, ὡς οὗτοι, λέγειν εὐκόλον καί τοῦ βουλομένου παντός, τό δέ λόγῳ συστήσασθαι τό λεγόμενον πάνυ δύσκολου καί ἐργῶδες, καί οὔποτε ράστην ἔχον τῆς σπουδῆς τήν ἀπόδειξιν. Εἰ γάρ τό καταβαλλόμενον καθ' ὑμᾶς εἰς πρόφασιν τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης γενέσεως παντάπασιν ἐστίν ἄψυχον, καί ζωτικῆς δηλονότι δυνάμεως πάντηκαθέστηκεν ἄμοιρον. Τό γάρ ψυχῆς παντελῶς τῆς οἴασου ἔστερημένον καί πάσης ζωτικῆς ἐνεργείας ἐστίν ἔρημον. Εἰ δέ ψυχῆς καί τῆς κατ' αὐτήν ζωτικῆς δυνάμεως τε καί ἐνεργείας παντελῶς καθέστηκεν ἄμοιρον, δηλονότι νεκρόν τυγχάνει εἰ δέ νεκρόν αὐτόν ὑποτιθέμεθα εἶναι, οὔτε τρέφεται οὔτε αὐξεται οὐδ' ὄλως ὑποστήσασθαι δυνήσεται, καί μῆναι παντελῶς ἀσκέδαστόν τε καί ἀδιάχυτον.

46. PG91 1337 A6 - B3

Πῶς δέ καί στήσεται τό φύσει σκεδαστόν τε καί εὐδιάλυτον, μή οἰονεῖ θεμελίου τρόπον κατ' ἐπίνοιαν προὑποκειμένης τινός ζωτικῆς δυνάμεως, περί ἑαυτήν φυσικῶς συγκρινούσης τε καί διασφιγγούσης τό σκεδαννύμενον, ἐν ἧ τό εἶναι τε καί εἰδοποιεῖσθαι παρά τῆς τὰ ὅλα σοφῶς τεχνιτευσούσης δυνάμεως ἔχειν ἔλαχεν; Ἐν ᾧ γάρ ἂν πράγματι μετά τό τεχθῆναι περίεστιν ἀληθῶς τό εἶναι τῷ σώματι, ἐν ἐκείνῳ πάντως δικαίως ἂν λέγοιτο ἔχειν καί τήν ἀρχήν τῆς ὑπάρξεως. Οὗτινος γάρ τῷ χωρισμῷ διαλύεσθαι πέφυκε τό σῶμα, τοῦ δηλαδή τῆς υπάρξει κατά τήν γένεσιν εὐλόγως ἂν πάντως καί συνυφέστηκεν.

47. 1337 B4 - 1340 A

“Εἰ δέ τούτοις στενοχωρούμενοι τοῖς λογισμοῖς, ᾧ οὗτοι, φατέ μή νεκρόν εἶναι παντάπασιν τό καταβαλλόμενον εἰς πρόφασιν τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης συστάσεως, ζωτικῆς δέ τινος κἂν ποσῶς μετέχειν δυνάμεως, ὡς ψυχὴν ἔχον δηλονότι τῆς τοιαύτης μετέχει δυνάμεως (χωρίς γάρ ψυχῆς εἶδος ζωῆς οὐκ ἂν εἴη πῶποτε καθάπαξ ἐν τοῖς ὑπό φύσιν ἀναγομένοις καί τῆς οὐρανοῦ δῆλον αεικινήτου περιφορᾶς ἐντός διειλημένοις, ἀεὶ δέ ζωῆς εἶδος ἄνευ ψυχῆς τό παράπαν οὐκ ἔστι κατά τήν

λογικὴν ἀκολουθίαν), οἷον δ' ἂν ὑποτίθεσθε ζωῆς εἶδος τὸ καταβαλλόμενον ἔχειν κατὰ τὴν σύλληψιν, ψυχὴν ἔχειν τὸ ἔμβρυον βίαις πρὸς τὸ δέον ὑπὸ τῆς ἀληθείας ὠθοῦμενοι λέγετε, τίνα τε καὶ ὁποῖαν ταύτην, καὶ πῶς θεωρουμένην ἢ λεγομένην ὑμᾶς λέγειν ἐστὶν ἀκόλουθόν τε καὶ πρόσφορον. Καὶ εἰ μὲν μόνην τὴν θρεπτικὴν τε καὶ αὐξητικὴν ἔχειν αὐτὸ διαβεβαιουῖσθε ψυχὴν, φυτοῦ τινος δηλονότι καὶ οὐκ ἀνθρώπου τῷ λόγῳ τούτῳ καθ' ὑμᾶς τὸ τρεφόμενον καὶ αὐξόμενον ἔσται σῶμα. Καὶ πῶς τοῦ φυτοῦ πατήρ ὁ ἀνθρώπος παντελῶς τὸ εἶναι κατὰ φύσιν οὐκ ἔχοντος. Εἰ δὲ τὴν αἰσθητικὴν μόνην τῷ φύσιν οὐκ ἔχοντος. Εἰ δὲ τὴν αἰσθητικὴν μόνην τῷ ἐμβρύῳ προσνέμετε ψυχὴν, ἵππου πάντως ἢ βοός ἢ ἐτέρου τινός τῶν χερσαίων ἢ ἐναερίων ζώων ψυχὴν ἔχων δειχθήσεται κατὰ τὴν σύλληψιν τὸ ἔμβρυον, καὶ πατήρ οὐκ ἔσται κατὰ φύσιν ἀνθρώπου καθ' ὑμᾶς ὁ ἀνθρώπος, κατὰ τὴν πρώτην σύστασιν ἀλλὰ φυτοῦ τινος, καθὼς ἔφην, ἢ ζώου τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς. Οὐ τί γένοιτ' ἂν ἀτοπώτερον ἢ φρενοβλαβέστερον; Τὸ γὰρ μὴ συνυπάρχειν διαβεβαιουῖσθαι τῇ πρώτῃ συστάσει τῶν ὄντων κατὰ τὴν ἐκάστου φυσικὴν διαφορὰν ἀπαραλείπτως τοὺς οἰκείους τῆς ὑπάρξεως ὀρισμούς, φύρειν ἐστὶν εἰς ἀλλήλα τὰ πάντα, καὶ μηδὲν εἶναι κυρίως τῶν ὄντων ὅπερ ἐστὶ τε καὶ λέγεται διασχυρίζεσθαι. Καὶ τὸ δὴ μείζον κακόν, διαβολὴν τῆς θείας σοφίας τε καὶ δυνάμεως ἀρίδηλον ἔχον μεγίστην πάντως δειχθήσεται. Εἰ γὰρ πάντα τὰ ὄπωσοῦν ὄντα πρὸ γενέσεως αὐτῶν κατὰ τὴν πρόγνωσιν τοῦ Θεοῦ τῷ οἰκείῳ λόγῳ τὸ τέλειον ἔχει, δηλονότι καὶ ἅμα τῷ εἶναι κατὰ τὸν ἴδιον λόγον πρὸς γένεσιν παραγόμενα ἀπαραλείπτως αὐτῇ τῇ ἐνεργείᾳ τὸ τέλειον ἔξει. Εἰ δὲ τὸ μὲν τέλειον κατὰ τὴν πρόγνωσιν ἔχει τὰ ὄντα, κατὰ δὲ τὴν εἰς τὸ εἶναι παραγωγὴν τε καὶ γένεσιν τὸ ἀτελές, ἢ οὐκ αὐτὰ ἐκεῖνα ἔσται τὰ προγνωσθέντα, ἀλλ' καθ' ἑτέρων ἑτέρα, ἢ τοῦ δημιουργοῦ πρόδηλος ἀσθένεια τοῦτο ἂν εἴη καὶ σαφές, μὴ δυνηθέντος κατὰ τὴν πρόγνωσιν τὸ προγνωσθέν ἀθρώως ἅμα τῇ γενέσει κατὰ τὴν οὐσίαν, παραστῆσαι πληρέστατον”.

48. PG91, 1340 B

“Εἰ δὲ τούτους ὑφορώμενοι τοὺς ἐλέγχους ἐπ' ἐκεῖνο καταφύγοιτε τελευταῖον, φάσκοντες μὴ δίκαιον εἶναι τὸ κατ' εἰκόνα Θεοῦ καὶ θεῖον (οὕτω τὴν νοεράν καλοῦντες ψυχὴν) ρεύσει καὶ ἡδονῇ ῥυτπαρά συνυπάρχειν, μετὰ δὲ τὰς τεσσαράκοντα τῆς συλλήψεως ἡμέρας ἐπεισκρίνεσθαι λέγειν εὐσχημονέστερον οἰεσθαι δεῖν, τὸν τῆς φύσεως δημιουργὸν σαφῶς αἰτιώμενοι φανήσεσθε, καὶ τὸν ἐντεῦθεν τῆς βλάσφημίας ἀναφαινόμενον εἰκότως ὑπέχοντες φοβερόν δειχθήσεσθε κίνδυνον. Εἰ γὰρ κακός ὁ γάμος, δηλονότι καὶ ὁ

κατά φύσιν τῆς γενέσεως νόμος εἰ δέ κακός ὁ τοιοῦτος τῆς
κατά φύσιν γενέσεως νόμος, ὁ τὴν φύσιν δηλονότι
πτεποικῶς καὶ δούς αὐτῇ νόμον γενέσεως, δικαίως ἂν καθ'
ἡμᾶς αἰτιαθῆσεται”;

49. PG91, 1340 C 14 - D4

“Ὡς λοιπόν μέχρι τῆς τῶν ἡμερῶν τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ
συμπληρώσεως μή ἔχειν τό τικτόμενον τὴν λογικὴν τε καὶ
νοεράν ψυχὴν κατὰ τὸν εἰκόνα λόγον ὑπνοοεῖν, ἀλλὰ τινος,
ὡς ἔφην μικρῶ πρόσθεν, φυτοῦ ἢ ζώου ἀλόγου τῶν ἐν τοῖς
οὔσι διειλημμένων”.

50. PG91, 1341 A - C2

“καὶ Θεόν λέγειν, εἶπερ ἀληθῶς καθ' ἡμᾶς γενέσθαι
κατηξίωσεν ἄνθρωπος χωρὶς ἁμαρτίας, κατὰ τὴν σύλληψιν
ἀψυχον καὶ ἄνουν ἄνθρωπον γεγονέναι, καὶ τὰς
τεσσαράκοντα ἡμέρας οὕτως ἔχοντα μεμενηκέναι τῶν ἁγίων
Πατέρων ἡμῶν καὶ διδασκάλων διαρρηδὴν βοώντων, μάλλον
δε τῆς δι' αὐτῶν λαλούσης τε καὶ λαλουμένης ἀληθείας, ἅμα
τῇ καθόδῳ τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου κατὰ τὴν σύλληψιν ἀχρόνως διὰ
μέσης ψυχῆς λογικῆς ἐνωθῆναι σαρκί τὸν Κύριον αὐτόν καὶ
Θεόν Λόγον, ἀλλ' οὐ διὰ μέσης σαρκὸς ἀψύχου λογικῆς
ψυχῆς προσδέξασθαι προσγινομένην καὶ οὐκ ἀψυχον σῶμα
παντελῶς ἢ ἄνουν ψυχὴν καὶ ἄλογον ἀνειληφέναι ἀλλὰ
τελείαν ἀνελλιπῶς τὴν φύσιν τὴν ἐκ ψυχῆς λογικῆς ἅμα καὶ
σώματος συνισταμένην ἑαυτῷ καθ' ὑπόστασιν ἀρρήτως
ἐνωῶσαι. Διό μάλιστα περιέχομαι τοῦ τῆς συνυπάρξεως
λόγου, τοὺς ἐφ' ἑκάτερα δι' ἐναντίας ὄντας ἀλλήλοις τε καὶ τῇ
μεσότητι προσφυῶς ἀποπεμπτόμενος αὐτόν τὸν τῆς φύσεως
ποιητὴν ἔχων τῷ καθ' ἑαυτόν μυστηρίῳ τῆς ενσωματώσεως
τοῦ τοιοῦτου λόγου συνήγορόν τε καὶ διδάσκαλον
ἀπαραλόγιστον, τὸν γενόμενον ἀληθῶς ἄνθρωπον καὶ τὴν
φύσιν τελείως ἔχουσαν ἅμα τῷ εἶναι κατὰ τὴν γένεσιν
ὑφίστασθαι δι' ἑαυτοῦ βεβαιωσάμενον, καὶ μόνην
καινοτομήσαντα τὴν καινοτομίαν τῆς φύσεως, λέγω δὲ τὴν
διὰ σποράς σύλληψιν καὶ τὴν διὰ φθοράς γέννησιν ἄσπερ ἢ
φύσις μετὰ τὴν παράβασιν ἐπεσπάσατο”.

51. PG 91, 488 D - 489 A 7

“Ὅτι ἀσεβές ἐστὶ τό λέγειν μίαν σύνθετον φύσιν τὸν Χριστόν,
καὶ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ μαχόμενον.
Πᾶσα γὰρ σύνθετος φύσις, ἑαυτῇ τε καὶ ἀλλήλοις κατ' αὐτὴν
τὴν εἰς τό εἶναι γένεσιν ἔχουσα τὰ ἴδια μέρη ὁμόχρονα, καὶ ἐκ
τοῦ μή ὄντος εἰς τό εἶναι, καὶ εἰς συμπλήρωσιν τῆς τοῦ παντός

διακοσμήσεως, παρά τῆς τό πᾶν συστησαμένης, καί εἰς τό εἶναι συνεχούσης δυνάμεως παρηγμένα, ἀλλήλοις εἰκότως ἐξ' ἀνάγκης τά ἴδια μέρη περιεχόμενα κέκτηται ὡς ἐπί τε τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἔχει καί τῶν ἄλλων ὅσα συνθέτου εἶναι ἔλαχον φύσεως. Τῆς ψυχῆς ἀκουσίως τε κρατούσης τό σῶμα, καί ὑπ' αὐτοῦ κρατουμένης, καί ζωὴν ἀπροαιρέτως αὐτῷ, κατ' αὐτό μόνον τό ἐν αὐτῷ εἶναι παρεχούσης καί πάθους καί ἄλγους φυσικῶς μεταλαμβανούσης διά τήν ἐγκειμένην αὐτῇ τούτων δεκτικὴν δυνάμιν· κἂν εἰ τά μάλιστα τινες τῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν ἀληθῶν περὶ ψυχῆς δογμάτων ἀποσφαλέντες, προϋπάρχειν Ἑλληνικῶς, ἢ μεθυπάρχειν Ἰουδαϊκῶς τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος τὴν ψυχὴν τερατευόμενοι, καί ἀρχὴν οὐ καλὴν οὐδέ θεοφιλῆ, τῆς τῶν ὄρατῶν δημιουργίας προκαθηγεῖσθαι ὑποτιθέμενοι ἀντιπαθῶς πρὸς τόν τοιοῦτον διάκεινται λόγον”.

52. PG91, 516 D 14-517 A 6.

“Περὶ συνθέτου φύσεως ἀκριβέστερον, καί τοῦ κατ' αὐτὴν λόγου· καί ὡς ἀσεβουσιν οἱ λέγοντες τόν Χριστόν μίαν σύνθετον φύσιν.

Πάσα γάρ σύνθετος φύσις, πρῶτον μὲν ἀπροαίρετον ἔχει τὴν πρὸς ἀλλήλα τῶν μερῶν κατὰ τὴν σύνθεσιν σύνοδον.

Ἐπειτα δὲ καί ἀλλήλοις ὁμόχρονα τά μέρη, καί ἑαυτῇ κέκτηται κατὰ τὴν εἰς τό εἶναι γένεσιν συνυπάρχοντα, μηδετέρου μέρους θατέρου χρονικῶς προϋπάρχοντος”.

53. PG91, 552 D5 - 13

“Ἄμφω γὰρ ἀλλήλοις ταυτόν ψυχὴ τε καί σῶμα, τῷ λόγῳ τῆς καθ' ἑνώσειν ἐξ' αὐτῶν συμπληρουμένης μιᾶς ὑποστάσεως ὅτι μὴ καθ' αὐτά τούτων ἑκάτερον ὑπέστη θατέρου κεχωρισμένον, πρὸ τῆς ἐξ αὐτῶν εἰς γένεσιν εἴδους συνθέσεως. Ἄμα γάρ γέγεσις, ἄμα σύνθεσις, ἄμα καί ἢ κατὰ σύνθεσιν ἐξ αὐτῶν τοῦ εἴδους συμπλήρωσις. Ἐτεροουσία δὲ τῷ λόγῳ τῆς πρὸς ἀλλήλα φυσικῆς ἑτερότητος”.

54. Tertullian Apologeticum IX.8. PL 371-2.

55. PG 31, 1324

“Οἱ τὰς τοῖς ἀμβλωθριδίῳ χρωμένας ἀνδροφονεῖν τε καί λόγον ὑφέξειν τῆς ἐξαμβλώσεως τῷ Θεῷ φαμέν κατὰ ποῖον ἀνδροφονοῦμεν λόγον· οὐ γάρ τοῦ αὐτοῦ νομίζειν μὲν καί τό κατὰ γαστρός ζῶον εἶναι καί διὰ τοῦτο αὐτοῦ μέλειν τῷ Θεῷ καί τά παρεληλυθότα εἰς τόν βίον φονεύειν καί μὴ ἐκτιθέσθαι μὲν τό τραφέν ἀναιρεῖν ἀλλ' ἑσμέν πάντα πανταχοῦ ὅμοιοι καί ἴσοι δουλεύοντες τῷ λόγῳ καί οὐ κρατοῦντες αὐτοῦ”.

56. Patrum Apostolicum Opera (Lipsiae 1920) 80, B2, 253,7.

“Γαμοῦσιν ὡς πάντες, τεκνογονοῦσι ἀλλ’ οὐ ρίπτωσι τὰ γεννώμενα”

(Cited by N.T. Μπουγάτσος. (Κοινωνική Διδασκαλία Ἑλλήνων Πατέρων). [Texts of the Social Teaching of Greek Fathers]. Ἐκδοση Ἀποστολικῆς Διακονίας τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος. σ.98, Ἄρ. 62.

57. See reference 50 (PG 91, 1341A-C2)

58. Ancoratus

Panarion Adversus haereses 1.409.20

21

1.423.7

8

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59. St. John Chrysostom (on I Corinthians)

a) 026.42.14

15

b) 156.61.89.5

6

c) 156.61.328.57

58

} From Patristic
Thesaurus
(TLG)

CHAPTER 7: MODERN ORTHODOX MORALISTS

As is evident from the earlier chapters, despite the lack of an explicit lead from the Bible, the Christian tradition has always been fundamentally opposed to abortion. However, until recently it was not a matter much discussed, as it was taken for granted by Christians and a Christian society that abortion was wrong. In recent years, however, the situation has changed, partly because of the ebbing of Christian faith and the growth of secularism in the West (a secularism that has spread to all countries where there is any significant Orthodox presence, save, perhaps, for some African countries), and partly because of the advances in modern medical techniques, and a consequent, and ill-thought-out, tendency to do what is medically possible rather than what is morally desirable partly, too, because of changes in the place of women in the modern world, with much greater freedom for them to live their own lives than hitherto, and the rise of 'feminism'. Orthodox theologians are faced with very different social conventions from in earlier centuries, ones that reflect little of Christian ideals, and also a much less clearcut Christian witness against abortion, at least on the part of many Protestants, and even within the Roman Catholic world, though the official teaching of the Church is clear, there are those who call it in question (though much less so than in the case of the Roman Catholic teaching on contraception), and much evidence that Roman Catholic women ignore the official teaching and resort to abortion for the same reasons as many other modern women. In this context, Orthodox theologians have to face the

challenge of stating the teaching of the Church both accurately and in such a way as to make its underlying principles clear.

It is rather unfortunate to observe some non-academic, 'slogan' approach to achieve motivation of all those involved in the abortion practice, but it seems that the pressure to abort (whether medical, social or financial) cannot be otherwise easily averted.

E. Lekkas¹, for example, does not accept the argument that since abortions are performed anyway, they should be legalized, for in this case one could use the same reasoning to legalize theft, drugs and other crimes. He also believes that the ease of abortion in our days, does not expose a woman any less to the danger of being blackmailed, for men would now have an escape route from responsibility in case of promiscuous sexual relations. In his appendix, he includes the Archdiocesan Encyclical of the Orthodox Church of Greece in 1937, which clearly condemns abortion.

Fr D. Aerakis² uses harsh language to wake up what he thinks as public hypocrisy. He compares the victims of AIDS and crime with the victims of abortion and concludes that while the former percentage is far lower than the latter, there is, however, a great public uproar for the former while the same people do not seem to care about the latter.

On a more philosophical tone, S. Photiou³ lecturer of Cyprus University, points out that a newly conceived baby is regarded as a problem and is killed, when a relation between a man and a woman cannot exceed the limits of selfishness. Abortion means death and consolidation of death, while Church means life and the strengthening of life. He also quotes P. Nellas' words, that if Hitler was considered paranoid for murdering thousands of Jews, contemporary society cannot be considered to be sober, if it tolerates the murdering of millions of children every year. Why also - he continues - is there such an uproar for criminals convicted to death, if so many innocent children are killed all the time? He concludes: Abortion is the worst decline of the feminist movement.

The renowned specialist on Orthodox Canon Law, Fr. E. Theodoropoulos⁴, goes even further to suggest that abortion is not acceptable even in the case of a rape, because no baby should pay the penalty that ought to be paid by the rapist. If the woman keeps the baby, she will receive the reward of a "martyr of conscience". In addition, he suggests, that there maybe a slight excuse if both mother and child in gestation are in danger, but often - he continues - prayer and/or medicine proves the malprediction mistaken and both are saved.

S. Michaelides, the Cypriot president of the "Society for the protection of the unborn child⁵", reminds us that from Antiquity to Auschwitz, there were always people who managed to convince themselves, that it is just and legal to kill those who do not meet their requirements for the value of human life. He also uses Dr O'Callaghan's view, that abortion does not cure any classified disease. In

addition, he writes against the arguments for abortion, i.e. against the euphemism "termination of pregnancy", or against the claim that a woman has the right to do what she likes with her body (since the baby is a different entity altogether). He also emphasizes that abortion is not a question of personal choice and that legalizing abortion will not reduce the number of non-specialist back-street abortions, especially among the poor. In any case, it is humans that are killed - often with serious complications to the health of the mother. He also rejects the accusation towards the Church, that it talks about the issue in a dogmatic way, since many non-christian scientists agree fully. In addition he endorses the opinion that rape pregnancies are rare and one must not use violence to alleviate a violent crime. The consequences of legalization will not be favourable for:

- a) The law itself will be self-contradictory.
- b) The unity of the family will be undermined.
- c) Youth will be encouraged to be irresponsible.
- d) Embryos will be exploited.
- e) Abortions will increase.
- f) The public conscience will be blunted.
- g) Legalization of abortion will lead to legalization of euthanasia.

Dr S. Kyriakides⁶, the leading anti-abortion gynaecologist in Cyprus, ironically comments on the fact, that no abortions are performed during the Holy Week (before Easter).

Bishop Meletios of Nicopolis (Greece) ⁷ is also ironical at the practice of the following scheme:

- a) If the moral health of the mother/family is in danger, then kill the baby.
- b) If the bodily or mental health of the mother is in danger, then kill the baby.
- c) If the bodily health of the baby is in danger, then kill the baby.

He is also amazed at the observed practice, by which a whole medical struggle may take place to save a premature baby and another to kill a normal baby of the same age in the womb - the sole criterion being the subjective wishes and judgement of the doctor and mother.

Fr S. Harakas (U.S.A) ⁸, on a rather more theological note points out that the Incarnation of the Logos has for all eternity sanctified all human life in both its physical and spiritual aspects.

The Archbishop of Cyprus Chrysostom in a message read in a recent Thalassaemia Conference in Cyprus, stated that the teaching of the Church of Cyprus is in clear contradiction with abortion. Even if prenatal testing proves a blood abnormality, the removal of life is not a way to solve any problem.

Dr E. Galti⁹ (Geneticist) emphasizes that before anybody comments on the abortion issue, one must study the meaning of justice, goodness, importance of good and hierarchy in ethical values.

The holy Fr Porphyrios of Greece⁹, spoke repeatedly against abortion, and even insisted, that the embryo begins to be influenced in its behaviour from the moment of conception (e.g. smoking mothers cause excited baby delivery).

The late Fr G. Paraskevopoulos¹⁰, on a more practical approach, suggests that the cause of wars and evil in the world is primarily due to the many abortions. Being harsh, he even goes on to say, that hordes are morally preferable to women who performed abortions. He also remarks that the Sacred Canons of the Church are strict on abortion, performed as a result of relations outside marriage. Therefore, one can imagine the seriousness of the offence if it is done within marriage. The pious father affirms in addition that according to a Church tradition based on revelations granted to saints:

“The unbaptized children, like those who have been aborted, do not move to a place of spiritual rest like the saints and the faithful who are saved. Instead, they find themselves in a dark place, where they neither rest, nor are they penalised but remain blind until the Second Coming of Christ, for they were not illuminated. However in the Final Judgement they will be saved”.

He even uses an example from the Meat-Fare Sunday Matins "they will not be rejoicing nor go to hell" ¹¹. This according to the late Elder makes the conscience of parents rebel even after confession of their sin.

In special edition on abortions by the Stavrovouni monastery¹², Fr Savvas Stavrovouniotes emphasizes, that abortion at any stage of pregnancy, is nothing but pre-planned murder and it is something usually done, because simply babies are often thought to cause problems to our vanity, voluptuousness and greediness.

A relevant leaflet in the U.S.A., ¹³ compares among other things the hypocritical outrage about possible extinction of whales with the silent tolerance of the millions of abortions performed every year. The leaflet culminates with F. Dostoyevsky's words: "If God is absent, everything is permitted".

Fr J. Breck¹⁴ (U.S.A.) points out that a remarkable 98% proceed to abortion for non-medical reasons.

Bishop Chrysostom of Peristeri (Athens) ¹⁵ believes that the true reasons for abortion are the lack of patience, sacrifice and faith, trust on God, and especially to sexual promiscuity and to the habit of subduing the body to the individual's selfishness. Among other things, he stresses that abortion is a blasphemy against the procreation plan of God. He finally points out that the criteria for legalizing abortions must not be monetary interests nor the number of abortions

done after all problems will perpetuate even after legalization: in Poland for example the number rose by one and a half times after legalization of abortions.

As M. Tsolakis summarized emphatically, in an anti-abortion rally in May 1986 in Athens¹⁶:

“When a woman denies maternity, when expecting to be a mother she commits a double crime:

- a) She kills in the worst way whatever she must love most.
- b) She abolishes the nicest thing that a human soul may manifest: the true mother”.

This, finally, is in full agreement with G. Mantzarides¹⁷ view:

“The embryo does not belong to the parents who gave birth to it and no medical, social, financial or psychological reason justifies abortion. An exception is the case of the mother whose life is in danger, but then again the counselling of medical and spiritual experts may solve the problem. In all cases abortion is simply a murder”.

Bishop of Diokleia Kallistos Ware¹⁸ (Lecturer in the University of Oxford) is quite stern on the abortion issue:

“Abortion is unambiguously condemned in Orthodox moral teaching. We do not have the right to destroy human life”.

P. Bushunow¹⁸, in the U.S.A goes a step further, to advise women that they should not accept even testing done for the purposes of identifying an abnormal child, with the expectation of performing abortion, if a problem is detected.

Since, he insists, abortion is unacceptable, nothing that may lead to it must be accepted.

Fr John Meyendorff²⁰, the late renowned Russian theologian in the U.S.A., expresses his views in a very comprehensive way:

Following Scripture, Orthodox canon law formally identifies abortion with murder and requires the excommunication of all those involved: "Those who give drugs procuring abortion and those who receive poisons to kill the foetus are subjected to the penalty of murder" (Sixth Ecumenical Council, canon 91).

In his canon 2 dealing with abortion, St. Basil the Great specifically excludes any consideration which would allow abortion at an early period of pregnancy. "She who purposely destroys the foetus shall suffer the punishment of murder, and we pay no attention to the distinction as to whether the foetus was formed or unformed".

The penitential discipline of the early Church required that "murderers" be admitted to a reconciliation with the Church and to Holy Communion only at their deathbed, if at that time they repented. However, exceptions were admitted. The council of Ancyra specifically allows some exceptions for those involved in abortion: "Concerning women who commit fornication and destroy that which they have conceived or who are employed in making drugs for abortion, a former decree excluded them until the hour of death and to this some have assented. Nevertheless, being desirous to use somewhat greater leniency, we have ordained that they fulfill ten years (of penance)...." (canon 21).

In order to understand fully the position of the Orthodox Church on the issue of abortion, one can also refer to the solemn celebration by the Church of such feasts as the Conception of St. John the Baptist (Sept. 24), the Conception of the Theotokos (Dec. 8) and indeed the Feast of the Annunciation (March 25), when Christ Himself was conceived in the womb of the Virgin. The celebration of these Feasts clearly implies that human life - and in those cases, the life of John, of the Theotokos, and of Jesus, as Man - begins at the moment of

conception and not at a later moment, when, supposedly, the foetus becomes "viable".

If one remains in the Biblical and Christian perspective, there is no way of avoiding the fact that abortion is an interruption of human life. It can in no way be justified by the arguments which are usually accepted in our permissive and secularized society: the physical or psychological discomfort of the mother, over-population, financial hardships, social insecurity, etc. These are indeed evils which need to be cured, but the cure cannot be achieved by killing innocent victims who possess a full potential for a normal human life. If abortion is accepted, as a normal procedure in facing the ills of society, there is strictly no reason why killing could not be accepted as a "solution" (Hitler's "final solution" of the Jewish problem!) in other situations, particularly in illness and old age. If the "terminally" sick (and old people are generally all "terminal") were put quietly to death, what a psychological relief for those psychologically and materially responsible for their continued existence! But what a horrible and totally unhuman perspective for society! And it is quite frightening to discover how close to its realization we already are.

For Christians, killing is always evil in whatever circumstances it occurs, killing at war not excluded. St. Basil the Great requires that soldiers who have been directly involved in killing in war do penance for three years (canon 13). However, by not condoning total pacificism (though admitting it sometimes), the Church recognized that killing at war is not fully identical to murder since it occurs (at least, in principle) to save other lives. Other instances, when a killing occurs for the defence of innocent life, this cannot be seen, strictly speaking, as murder. However, the attitude of St. Basil towards the soldiers indicates that even in these cases, killing is evil, even if possibly a lesser evil than a passive acceptance of violence by others. By analogy, one may consider that in the extreme (and very rare) case when the interruption of the life of the foetus is the only means of saving the life of the mother, it may also be considered a "lesser evil". However, in those cases, the horrible responsibility for the decision is to be taken with fully awareness of the fact that killing remains killing.

So Orthodox Christians do possess a clear guidance of their Church in this fateful issue, as far as their own personal and family responsibilities are concerned. They will also certainly oppose legislation liberalizing abortion, since this legislation is a clear sign of dehumanization and cynicism in our society.

They will remember, however, that a morally valid stand against abortion implies an especially responsible care for the millions of miserable, hungry, uneducated and unwanted children that come into the world without assurance of a decent life."

A last word on the views of contemporary Orthodox Ethicists is extracted by the leaflet published by the Cyprus Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child from which the photographs that follow have been borrowed. From this pamphlet one gets the message that abortion is by no means just another form of contraception; that often an unwanted child during pregnancy becomes wanted after delivery; and that legalizing abortion for the sake of the bodily or the mental health of the mother in effect opens the door to the free practice of abortion, due to the ambiguity of the wording of the law.

In the photographs that follow at the end of the chapter one can see a baby in the womb after 2 months of pregnancy (Fig. 16) while in fig. 17, 18, 19 one can see aborted children by poisonous salts, surgery of vacuum absorption at 2-4 months.

There are several points on which the various scholars seem to agree. First of all there is clear condemnation of the practice of abortion, which is in clear contradiction with Orthodox ethics and sociology.

The hypocritical social behaviour which seems to be sensitive to minor problems and neglects the abortion issue, was also considered to be morally self-contradictory.

It is quite obvious that abortion is only the tip of the iceberg; the root of the problem seems to be found in human selfishness, sexual promiscuity and the decline of ethical conscience. Statistical evidence for this comes from the fact that the great proportion of abortions are performed for non-medical reasons.

There also seems to be frustration over the inadequacy of legislation; it does not seem to improve or control the generally accepted non-satisfactory social trend on the issue.

It is accepted-though strangely not emphasized by everybody - that the situation where the life of the mother is in danger poses a serious ethical dilemma. Some consider abortion in this case as the lesser evil. Others point out that medical advancements, prayer and spiritual counselling often overcomes the problem and no abortion is performed.

A stricter stance, even though more lenient towards the aborting mother, it nevertheless considers the mother who sacrifices her life so that the baby is born alive, as a new martyr of conscience.

Finally the author would like to endorse Fr J. Meyendorff's concluding remark, that a true anti-abortionist is the one who not only fights against the observed practice but also takes into practical consideration the social problems that indirectly promote it.

Conclusively, it is evident that there is a flourishing modern theological literature that follows the patristic anti-abortion motif. Special cases should be encourage special pastoral approach but practically all the moralists agree that the loose social trend on the issue, (which in turn influences legal decisions) should not influence the anti-abortion stance of the Church.



Fig. 16



Fig. 17

Fig. 18



Fig. 19



Fig. 20

MADHAUSEN 1945 cf(!) CANADA MATERNITY HOSPITAL 1990



CHAPTER 7: NOTES/REFERENCES

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CHAPTER 8: PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL ASPECTS AND CONSEQUENCES

Since human beings are psychosomatic entities and society is composed of such psychosomatic entities, one can expect that the patristic views on abortion will point to and must be reflected in psychological and social repercussions. Any such observation would help to consolidate a proper general and complete attitude towards the abortion issue.

Indeed, apart from long-term physical complications usually afflicting the reproductive system (miscarriages, sterility, cancer etc) particularly in teenagers and in women who abort during their first pregnancy¹, medical studies have shown that abortion clearly appears to be one of the major factors leading to²:

- a) Adolescent and later suicide⁴.
- b) Alcoholism and drug addiction⁴.
- c) Child abuse³.
- d) Sexual disfunction⁵.
- e) Sexual promiscuity⁵.
- f) Marital disruption⁵.
- g) Post abortion stress syndrome⁴.

The chances for developing psychological complications are increased by a number of risk factors such as family problems, cultural hostility to abortion etc.

There seem to be several phases in the development of these complications⁴:

- a. An immediate psychological reaction of relief; termination of pregnancy means that life can continue as before.
- b. This is followed by distress which lasts for several months and found by some workers to occur in up to eighty per cent of women. Among women who have had abortion for eugenic reasons the distress lasts much longer.
- c. This chronic distress becomes depressive illness in fifteen per cent of the cases. Symptoms include insomnia, nightmares, panic, anxiety, blame directed at the partner and suicidal tendency - the latter observed in more than half of the cases⁵. In a three year study in the Cincinnati area, Ohio, U.S.A among five thousand six hundred and twenty (5.620) women who committed suicide, a third included women who had aborted⁵.
- d. Some time after the abortion there is reactivated mourning, with symptoms as above but occurring whenever there is a pregnancy related event, eg friends having babies or at times of political debate about abortion.

Treatment depends on the phase: support and counselling are appropriate to distress, while anti-depressants are required when depressive illness has supervened.

Regarding the question of the justification to proceed to abortion in case the mother is mentally problematic, one may note two major approaches. One is strongly pro-abortion and often requests legalization in such cases. It is of interest that in California where more than sixty thousand abortions⁵ were performed in 1970, the vast majority (ninety eight per cent) were said to be done to alleviate mental disturbances. In the same year in the New York area only two per cent of the total number of abortions were reported as being done for mental health reasons; the only difference was that the law in California required such a subterfuge. The meaning of all this, as the antiabortion group suggests, is that mental health problems seem rarely to be valid reasons for abortion. The World Health Organisation (WHO) statement⁵ in 1970 is in agreement with this observation:

“Serious mental disorders arise more often in women with previous mental problems. Thus the very women for whom legal abortion is considered justified on psychiatric grounds, are the ones who have the highest risk of post-abortion psychiatric disorders.”

F. Ayd medical editor and national known psychiatrist is also quite explicit⁵:

“True psychiatric reasons for abortion have become practically non-existent. Modern psychiatric therapy has made it possible to carry a mentally ill woman to term”.

In yet another medical study among three⁵ thousand women who aborted produced the result that virtually all regretted it.

Dr S. Kaliafas (Greece), extrapolating from G. Jung's analysis, believes that children that are not allowed to be born, do not even allow the subconscious of their mother to calm down⁶. His colleague Dr C. Kriaras, has noticed that women⁷ with multiple abortions often suffer from problems of female identity, unstable personalities and prove themselves erratic mothers and wives.

In addition, one must not forget that conscience problems are faced⁸ by all involved in an abortion: nurses, doctors, mothers, fathers, relatives, law makers, journalists etc.

Ethnographic shrinkage is one of the major social repercussions. In Greece where an estimated 400,000 abortions seem to take place every year, there is twenty one per cent of elderly people in the population-something that causes a great number of interlocking social and economic problems.

Similarly in the U.S.A \$112 billion⁹ were need to cover the public expenses for persons over 65 years old - representing 25 percent of the national budget. Due to the low fertility rates and the rise in the number of abortions (1.6 million/year) this figure has increased in 1997 to \$635 billion, which represents 40 percent of the national budget (since the proportion of younger people is thus decreased in relation to that of older people).

Teen age pregnancies seem to cause social problems of their own, as they either abort or rely on social services and stop education¹⁰. Pro-abortion sociologists would nevertheless argue that abortion may relieve future social problems such as handicapped care, unmarried young mothers etc.

An apparent fact must be added, namely that the relaxation of the severity of the abortion issue may lead to the increase of euthanasia cases⁵, since in both cases there is an unwanted burden with no capacity for a conscious reaction.

If keeping God's commandments promises to bring grace and peace of mind and their transgression leads to psychological and physical problems, then it is quite obvious that abortion may be regarded as an example which quantitatively and qualitatively proves this belief - as the recorded evidence shows. In addition, the theological arguments mentioned in the previous chapters seem to have practical consequences on human behaviour.

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CHAPTER 9: THE NON-ORTHODOX AND NON-CHRISTIAN VIEWS

Even though the present thesis is meant to discuss the Orthodox attitude towards abortion and the moral importance of the embryo, it would be of interest to briefly comment on the non-Orthodox and non-Christian views, as it would help to realize the general context of views on the issue. This is certainly important as Orthodox often live in pluralistic societies, amongst people of different religious beliefs - and as it may occur, are influenced by non-Orthodox morality.

a) The Roman Catholic View

As has been mentioned previously. Thomas Aquinas' views of tardive animation (40 days in boys and 80 days in girls) have been recently reviewed by the Roman Catholic Church in the light of recent re-examination of patristic and scientific data¹.

It is now generally accepted that the Roman Catholic line, as expressed by the Vatican, is strongly anti-abortionist:

“...the embryo is the life not of a potential human being, but of a human being with potential”.²

The Pope's Encyclical in Spain on 2/11/82 clearly stated that abortion is murder³.

The Catholic Truth Society⁴ has issued several booklets on this topic:

"It is remarkable that while anti-war protests are raising their voices more and more, the number of abortions is also increasing... Freedom of opinion in a pluralistic society is not a pretext for attacking the right to life of others... Biblical and patristic quotations clearly show God as the protector of life and one must not forget that eternal life will depend upon whatever one does with his life on earth... Christians must combat abortion..."

Similarly a joint statement of the Catholic Archbishops in U.K.,⁵ suggested in several statements that:

"It is an issue of basic human rights and dignity to provide for the disadvantaged and protect the innocent against attack... Each of the unborn is a unique human individual from the time of conception... Abortion is often an unfair discrimination: even the handicapped are entitled to live... In the case of rape, the woman can first try "washing off" the womb, but if pregnancy occurs, the baby must not be killed for the father's fault". In the case where the mother's life is in danger, the decision will be according to her conscience... There must be positive responsibilities from Christians and society; for standing against abortion is a stand for humanity... Unmarried mothers must be helped. Commitment, against abortion calls nurses, teachers etc to be involved one must be ready to answer to God's enquiry: "In as much as you defended the least of these, you defended me".

Pope John Paul II, in an address on the issue, included the following relevant statements⁶:

"Medical Ethics have always been defined since Hippocrates, by respect and protection of the human being. Man is redeemed by Christ and called to an eternal destiny. Therefore we must safeguard life, dignity and freedom at all costs (as the World Medical Association General Assembly in Geneva declared in 1948). Abortion is no different from euthanasia".

Following the 2nd Vatican Council, which requested "respect for life", the Society of the Roman Catholic Hospitals in the U.S.A. and Canada declared⁷:

"Every unborn child must be regarded as a human person, with all rights of a human person from the moment of conception".

In the Pope's Encyclical "Humanae Vitae" (1968) one can find in addition the following paragraph⁸:

"The conjugal Act by nature is designed for the procreation of offspring and therefore it is immoral anything that contradicts it".

R. McCormick⁹ (a Catholic theologian) points out that:

"...there are 1,000,000 abortions performed each year in the U.S.A. while there were only 50,000 Americans killed in Vietnam".

T. Shannon even though strongly anti-abortionist, entertains certain philosophical doubts as to whether animation takes place at the moment of fertilization¹⁰:

"Pro-abortion assertions are in fact self-contradictory:

- a) Abortion restrictions represent a war of men against women with the intention of keeping them under reproductive pressure - but women are themselves divided.
- b) Abortion should not be promoted as a primary means of birth control but as a back-up to contraceptive failure- but 40 per cent repeat abortions.
- c) Abortion would diminish the dependence of women on men giving them full control over their reproduction - but it has given more choice to men as well, to abandon women.
- d) Give freedom of choice, women will make free choices - but why do psychological and social problems follow abortion and there are also more abortions in low waged families (i.e. what kind of freedom is this?).
- e) Women must have a right to choose whatever they want - but many moral problems follow; comparable is the right of free speech (unless you insult others).

The moment of conception cannot be the point of ensoulment, for biologically it takes a day to be completed, while implantation in the uterus takes place after about a week. Singleness and individuality are also lost when twinning or recombination take place. In addition 55 per cent of fertilized ova are miscarried due to hormonal or structural reasons etc) -hence, the question what is the meaning of creation, if so many ensouled fertilized ova are lost? Also why is a soul needed for a fertilized egg to develop?"

If one is to give a reply to the assertions made above, the following points could be included:

- a) This is purely philosophical and not theological or patristic thinking.
- b) The percentage quoted for miscarriages is too high (others quote 10 per cent only).
- c) Conception does not necessarily mean the union of ovum and sperm but could also include the formation of another initiator cell in the case of twin formation.
- d) There is absolutely no scientific and especially patristic evidence that ensoulment occurs on implantation.
- e) Loss of fertilized ova is the outcome of the Fall (natural evil).
- f) Since ethical dilemmas are sited post-conceptionally, why worry about stages of ensoulment at conception?

In a similar way A. Sutton¹¹ defends the Pope's statement that life starts at conception, against critics who noted that ensoulment does not take place at fertilization since it takes 24-48 hrs for it to be completed.

"Since from the time of spermatozoan penetration the two gametes act together to exclude other spermatozoa by building the genome of the conceptus, there is every reason to regard life as starting at spermatozoan penetration. Also, if fertilization is unsuccessful and a hydatid-form mole develops, this does not mean that life does not start at fertilization".

Dr and Mrs J. Wilkie, the world anti-abortion leaders¹², compare slavery to abortion:

TABLE 3

SLAVERY 1857	ABORTION 1973
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Voted for 75 per cent -Black = non-person -Property to owner -Choose to buy-sell-kill -Anti-slavery laws should not impose morality on slave owner -Slavery is legal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Voted for 75 per cent -Unborn = non-person -Property to owner (mother) -Choose to keep or kill -Pro-lifers should not impose morality on Mother -Abortion is legal

In the case of a rape:

"One must take into account that: It is only 1 per cent successful; "half" the baby belongs to her, not the rapist, trauma has already occurred; if treated early with hormones fertilization may not occur (but what happens if implantation is prevented?) and in any case why kill the baby as a penalty for a twisted father? The same arguments go for assault or incest"

Finally in the Cairo Conference¹⁴ on overpopulation in 1994, the Catholic speakers emphasized that abortion cannot be used as a means of contraception and family planning, while Baroness Chalker pointed out that Africa is not overpopulated and if resources were properly used it could support a twenty fold population.

Conclusively, then the Catholic position is quite clear: both the official Catholic representatives and Catholic scholars follow the pro-life Orthodox Patristic teaching. In practice, however, members of the Catholic church seem to ignore this prohibition, as the vast number of abortions show in eg Brazil (10 million/year) Poland etc.

b) The Protestant View

Even though there is a great number of protestant denominations, one realizes that there is a broad pro-life agreement among them.

If one takes as an example the Evangelical Christian Medical Fellowship General Committee announcements, the sovereignty of God in human reproduction is emphasized along with the stewardship of doctors and the sanctity of human life¹⁵. The group also rejects the assertion that abortion is the choice of the least evil, because one should follow the example of Christ, whose

faithful witness was often disarming or refuting the world's agenda, shining as light in the darkness¹⁶.

The moment of conception is important¹⁷:

"A new unique and completed identity, to which nothing is to be added for the next 70-80 yrs".

Young people exposed to media that persuade them of the normality of sexual encounters, abort half the children conceived and tragically, the younger the girl, the greater are the risks both for immediate (bleeding, infection) and long-term (miscarriage, subfertility etc) medical side-effects. Returning to the Evangelical Church one can read P. Saunder's explicit arguments¹⁸:

"Christians agree that the incidence of unwanted pregnancy is a symptom of the disregard of the Christian teaching on sexual purity and parental responsibility.

However there are several areas of disagreement:

a) Is the foetus fully human?

Scriptural evidence points out that life starts at conception. In addition the weak must not be satisfied for the benefit of the strong but "vice versa". Jesus warned about his impartiality on wealth, sex, race, social standing, age, the poor, widows, orphans, aliens, handicapped, slaves and the elderly.

b) Is abortion murder?

Yes because it is intentional killing which is ubiquitously condemned in the Bible.

c) Is abortion the lesser of two evils?

The Bible says, it is justified to deceive an evil person to protect innocent lives (i.e. higher command is first in the case of conflict of principles), but this is not the case in abortion or even in rape, or malformed child - since one may use medicine, financial aid or adoption.

d) Can we impose our moral standards on others?

What about theft or murder? In any case it is not a question whether to impose morality but to help not to sin.

e) Is it not wrong to judge others? Why not tolerate mutually exclusive views?

Paul condemned heresy and immorality and criticism in the spirit of love challenges the wrong behavior, ignorance and blunted conscience of others”.

Another protestant group, the Anabaptists, renowned for the strict moral principles in the U.S.A.¹⁹, strongly agree with the Biblical and patristic pro-life, anti-abortion stance.

They admit:

“Although Protestants have been less vocal than Catholics about the morality of abortion, the Church as a whole has historically condemned abortion. There is need, however, for communal co-operation for proper choices to be made by mothers”.

However as protestant dogma is not always clear and the lack of authoritative tradition allows freedom of expression of personal opinion, it is not surprising to read views like:

“Life begins at first breath; therefore abortion is no crime”.
(Evangelical Scholar)²⁰

or

“Anencephalic foetuses should be aborted, only because they will never be able to love God, neighbour, or self”²¹.

It seems that: “many Protestants admit abortion in some circumstances. The difference between Catholics and Protestants is perhaps less clearcut in reality,

for Catholics have a clear teaching office, which is unambiguously opposed to abortion, whereas Protestants, because of the importance to them of conscience in moral matters, have no such clear teaching office. It seems that in countries that allow abortion there is not much difference between recourse to abortion by Catholic or Protestant women; if anything, devout Protestants are almost as likely to reject abortion as devout Catholics”.

The non-Christian view²³

According to the Jewish tradition on abortion:²⁴

“There is no actual prohibition in the Bible against aborting a foetus. In the only biblical reference (Exodus 21 : 22) it is implied that if a man strikes a pregnant woman and brings about the destruction of the child she is carrying, he has to compensate her husband financially. Nevertheless, in the unanimously accepted Jewish consensus, abortion is a very serious offence, though foeticide is not treated as homicide. Consequently, the Mishnah (Oholot 7:6) rules that if a woman's life is endangered by the child she is carrying, it is permitted to abort the foetus in order to save her life. But once the greater part of the child has emerged from the womb, to destroy it would be an act of murder and it is not permitted to murder one human being in order to save another human being. Arguments against abortion, such as the ensoulment of the foetus or that the foetus has potential life or, in favour of abortion, that a woman has a right to do what she wishes with her own body, are not found in the classical Jewish sources in which the question is discussed, where the basic distinction is between the destruction of a 'life' (a person) and that which is not a 'life'. All the authorities agree that an abortion may be carried out only for the weightiest of reasons, though they differ on what would be considered to be a 'weighty' reason. Many would permit it where when the birth of the child might endanger the mother's sanity. Many would also permit it if, in the doctor's opinion, the child, if allowed to be born, would be

seriously deformed or an imbecile. Some would permit it where the pregnancy is the result of rape, especially the rape of a married woman by a man other than her husband. None permit an abortion, as a means of birth-control, for economic reasons, or where the child is simply unwanted. Thus traditional Jewish attitudes to abortion are stricter than those obtaining in many contemporary societies but less strict than in Catholicism”.

It is quite obvious that Jewish tradition seems to have its own views on the issue- which as it admitted is generally less strict than Catholicism or Orthodoxy but more strict than most contemporary social attitudes on the issue. The moment of ensoulment and the potential life of the foetus, which are key issues when discussing the problem from an Orthodox or Catholic point of view seem to be absent from pro-life Jewish scholars, while the feminist view that a woman can do what she likes with her own body is also of minor importance. The physical or psychological health of the mother is clearly more important than the life of the gestated foetus - especially if the latter is malformed.

Although the Islamic²³ tradition was influenced by both Biblical and Hippocratic traditions, abortion was never strictly prohibited and indeed abortifacients were included in a number of the early pharmaceutical texts. Nevertheless, it is generally known, that due to the state's emphasis in growth of population, abortion is in effect not practised in Islamic countries like e.g. Turkey.

In Africa²³, there are too many different cultures to allow generalisation, but many Africans rely on beliefs their ancestors. The striking thing is that traditional methods still exist and are practised alongside Western medicine.

Buddhism has been closely allied with medicine since its earliest days, because of the compassion for all creatures, which is one of its essential features. All Buddhists have a responsibility to take care of their own health. The basic teaching here is that it is unlawful to take life and so to the strict Buddhist, abortion would not be acceptable unless the mother's life is in danger.

"...Even though Buddhism denies both the existence of a supreme being and a soul, there is respect for life. This is not grounded in its divine origin but its spiritual destiny - which is the "nirvana" (spiritual perfection)... Existence is at a continuum from conception to death - during this interval inbetween the subject is entitled to full moral respect regardless of the stage or the mental capacities enjoyed... therefore international foetal destruction is forbidden".²⁵

"D. Keown believes that (for Buddhism), abortion is simply wrong, sheer perversity, failure to honour the oral code... but what would Buddha say today when we have the means to detect severe defects in foetuses (AIDS, ancephalics, Tay-Sachs etc) - ie children born to suffer?

In reality, however, Buddhists eg in Thailand, do not blame women whose life situations have made the decision to abort unavoidable. In other words in some cases, even though never a positive good, abortion might be the lesser of two evils (e.g. mother's life in danger) - hence motivation is important... what is later important is to minimize the "Kammic effects" (the remorse thoughts of past deeds)".²⁶

It is no surprise to see that due to the overpopulation in China and lack of specific prohibition of abortion in Confucian culture,²³ abortion is no particular offence and in addition large scale sterilization schemes are carried out. The same goes for India, where in fact sterilization and contraception are encouraged by the state. In Japan there is absolute religious and hence ethical freedom on this issue.

It is rather difficult to draw a general conclusion on this chapter; it can be said, however, that Christians are more strict on the issue of abortion than non-Christians, Catholics more strict than Protestants. It can also be mentioned that in practically all widespread religions abortion is considered to be an offence; reasons given, however differ according to the faith teaching of the particular religion. It seems, also, in practice that the decision to abort and the corresponding stance is influenced by the social problems in a country (e.g. poverty, overpopulation etc), and that for Christians of any denomination, adherence to moral principles on the abortion issue is kept by the devout faithful, whereas others proceed to abort often for minor reasons.

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CHAPTER 10: PHILOSOPHICAL AND LEGAL ASPECTS

Philosophical thinking often finds its way and influences social public opinion through the mass media. This in turn is taken into serious account when laws are made. What is more, social and legal ethics are often in competition with religious ethics and therefore somebody who is interested to influence the social attitude on the abortion issue and the legal status of the embryo, should be aware of any fluctuations in the social/legal opinion.

Since in philosophical thinking there is no dogmatic authority but only subjective views, where Man and not Christ is the measure of all things, it is not surprising to read a whole spectrum of approaches on the abortion issue. Some indicative views are summarized below.

J. Arras and B. Steinbock¹ think that there are two basic questions:

- a. Is the human foetus a human being or person thus having a right to life?
- b. Does this outweigh the rights of a mother to life and liberty?

The latter philosopher believes that an existing person has a greater right to life than a potential one.

J. Thomson², a feminist philosopher, insists that a foetus cannot use its mother's body to uphold its right to life.

B. Rothman³ tries to reach the root of the problem when considering the decision to abort; she believes it is not a "personal choice" but something that is influenced by social factors.

D. Callahan⁴, who is probably the most renowned philosopher-bioethicist, seems to strive for a compromise:

"Pro-abortion are as narrow-minded as pro-lifers. The former believe that abortion restrictions, represent a war of men against women, with the intention that they will be kept in a reproductive thralldom. They also suggest that abortion should not be promoted as a primary means of birth control: but as a back-up to contraceptive failure; all this would diminish the dependence of women upon men.

The latter believe that, in fact, most proliferers are women; the fact that there 1.600,000 abortions in the U.S.A - of which 40 per cent are repeat abortions - then it seems that abortion is the first line of defence against unwanted pregnancy. They also fear that the ease of abortion has made men more irresponsible towards women, as they would be able to abandon them in case of an unwanted pregnancy.

It is obvious that there is absence of good will from both sides - who do not seem to want even to talk to each other. I am sure common ground can be found under a good counselling program.

H. Oppenheimer⁵ accepts only therapeutic abortion; "the grown up woman who is capable of loving and being loved should not be sacrificed for a new baby which nobody knows. To kill a foetus is not a murder but it is still, nevertheless, tragic."

A. Singer⁶, a feminist, insists that:

"It is our absolute and essential right to have control over our bodies".

M. Lockwood⁷ seems to be more practical:

"The fertilized ovum and the embryo⁶ are living organisms. The neonate is a human organism. The baby is a human person. (i.e. they have a different ethical value).

Amongst these very general comments, which seem to be a summary of the various philosophical views, one can discern that the embryo is certainly considered to have an ethical value, which is, however, lower than that of the mother. There also seem to be an interest in blunting the social factors that may lead to abortion. Finally, there is general agreement that in case the life of the mother is in danger then it is the embryo that must be sacrificed. Feminists,

especially, regard any interest of the mother as being a justified reason to proceed to abortion.

Even though the philosophical challenge may seem attractive, a careful, comprehensive reply may be provided⁸:

"Extrapolating from patristic thought, one realizes that it is Christ's revelation (interpreted by the Holy Fathers) which must be the axis in our ethical considerations. As has been seen, human ensouled life is believed to start at conception and its capacity to have a relation with God means that we already deal with a human person - not however as it should be. For a person, according to the Holy Fathers, obtains the baptismal grace and grows in this life if it fully lives out Church opportunities and in the Life to come it could be glorified (theosis) in the proximity to Christ. In other words, a fully developed human person (even though it may exist at conception) may be formed asymptotically so to speak, as it mimics Christ's sanctity with His grace. Thus a human person is not something that depends on what we feel about it or what it feels about others. Also, it is the strong that must make sacrifices for the weak and not "vice versa" (e.g. handicapped foetuses). As has already been proved, both scientifically and theologically, the conceived foetus is completely different entity, both genetically and spiritually and not part of the mother's body (as feminists say)".

As far as the legal side⁹ is concerned one must always remember that the law is the embodiment and reflection of social values. In fact as Kallicles proposed in antiquity:

"Justice, according to the law, is nothing but the interest of the strongest".

The law may then be unacceptable to Christians, since it is the minimum ethical value that a society tolerates; but on the other hand it also means that if anti-abortion groups combine their efforts together, the laws may be changed.

Several comments have already been made on this legal aspect of abortion. The problem is that it has been empirically proved that¹⁰ legalising abortion opens the floodgate to this practice, for the public conscience is adversely influenced (however strict it may look on paper). Child abuse also increases after legalising abortion. In most countries abortion is legal until the third month of pregnancy or even later if the mother's mental or physical health is in danger. In a recent statistical¹¹ research it has been proved:

"that in the U.S.A. compared to the rate of illegal abortion prior to 1973, legalization of abortion has resulted in a 10 to 15 fold increase in the number of women aborted each year. Although legal abortions are 3 to 5 times safer than illegal abortions, the much faster rise in total abortions performed has offset this advantage. This means that while legalization has reduced the percentage of complications and deaths resulting from abortion, the total number of complications and deaths resulting from legal abortions is much higher".

Several distinguished scholars have commented on the legal aspect of abortion.

D. Weatherall believes¹² that

"society condones abortion for minor reasons but is too interested in the legal status of the embryo".

R. Wahlberg¹³ suggested that:

“both abortion and euthanasia boil down to the same legal argument: Input versus output (benefit/risk)”.

The “M. Warnock Report” suggests that:

“the more developed the embryo the more it should be legally protected”.

Several worldwide declarations have attempted to restrict legal liberalization of abortion e.g. the Geneva Declaration in 1948:

“I will maintain the utmost respect for human life from the time of consideration”.

The Olso Declaration in 1970¹⁵ agrees with the above even though there might be an exception:

“...but in cases of therapeutic abortion (mother in danger), two doctors are required to give their consent and it should be carried out by a competent doctor”.

It is also interesting to read that while in 1871¹⁶ in the U.S.A., abortion doctors were compared to Cain, in 1970 doctors are permitted to abort in accredited hospitals.

In conclusion, it is of interest to realize¹⁷ that:

“legalizing abortion will not solve but will only perpetuate the medical, spiritual, psychological and other consequences mentioned”.

and that:

“no law will actually be adequate, whether¹⁸ permissive or prohibitive, if it does not simultaneously contain provisions that attack the problems that tempt to abortion”.

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CHAPTER 11: CONCLUSIONS, FUTURE PROSPECTS, PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS

A vital conclusion that must be mentioned, is that if one is to reach to the right ethical stance, one must know exactly what happens scientifically on the one hand and on the other one must be aware of the exact faith teaching. If not, a maze of philosophical ambiguities will arise. In other words, there is need for a Dogmatic Authority if the Abortion debate and in general bioethics, would have any meaning. As Dostoyevsky pointed out: "Where God is absent, everything is permitted". Therefore careful Biblical and Patristic extrapolation is required to solve problems that were not faced at the time - often scientific possibilities are realized before our moral thinking matures.

This is especially important, as the abortion issue encroaches on other related contemporary bioethical issues¹, for which the Orthodox stance must take responsibility for what actually happens and not what they would hopefully aimed to be. These include:

- a. Prenatal testing² (which is almost always followed by abortion if a defect or the non-preferred sex is detected).
- b. In vitro fertilization³ (Test-tube babies; which even though is aimed to cure sterility, it involves (at the moment) the killing of extra-produced embryos (along with psychological, social, legal problems if a sperm from a donor is used).

- c. Cloning and Genetic Engineering⁴ (which at the moment are inefficient and produce lost or malformed embryos).
- d. Some forms of contraception⁵ (IUD, coil, the day after pill - RU486, and to some extent contraceptive pills) which are abortive.
- e. There is and there will be exploitation of developing countries by the rich, for deliberately aborted fetuses for experimentation and organ transplantation.⁶

In view of all these facts and probable developments, what pastoral approach should the Orthodox Church have?

As mentioned before, careful Biblical and Patristic extrapolation is required to solve problems often not faced at the time. It is easy for the church to ignore the contemporary medical challenge, social pressure or repeat old dogmas - but the world will renounce the Church if no satisfactory answers are provided. The reality of scientific progress must be admitted and encouraged where there is no ethical infringement.

However, it must be pursued in all cases that even though the church strives against pain of this life, one must not forget that whereas the present life is passing and secondary, eternal life is of prime importance and must not be sacrificed for 70-80 (?) years on earth. As St. Paul encourages us (Rom 8:18): "...that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us". One can add as St. John the Damascene suggested, God created humans to share His Love and Deity, so that abortion fights both these intentions.

It must also be emphasized that since Nature (God's creation) and Man are in balance, humanity will pay the penalty for illogical intervention, even if it is aimed to alleviate human pain. In addition, infringement on God's will lead to death - for His work is the only true salvation and grace vehicle: true pastoral concern, should therefore aim to save not only the body but the soul and spirit as well.

It must also be added that over ninety percent of abortions are performed for non-medical reasons and that rape, incest and mother in danger are used as reasons for abortion - all these should not weaken the stance of the Church against abortion, but encourage, instead, proper pastoral approach.

It is also wise to avoid being too dogmatic initially, particularly when talking to the general public; the patristic teaching should then be pressed on with discernment. Since killing is a generally condemned act, even in this corrupted world we live in, it is wise to emphasize that abortion is murder at any stage of embryonic development. While christian ethics must be clearly distinguished from prevailing social attitudes, strong language must be used (but not slogans): eg abortionist doctor and not gynaecologist, killing of innocent, unbaptized, defendless children and not uterus evacuation.

Christians must also remind themselves and others, what Christ did for the handicapped and spiritually ill. The responsibility of men should be emphasized

(whether doctor, lawyer, husband, journalist etc), so that the woman feels more relaxed on just treatment by ethicists.

It is evident that communal responsibility is necessary:

- a) Public enlightenment, which must begin early at school by all mass media.
- b) The creation of protective homes for women who don't want abort and encouragement for adoption of unwanted babies are two practical ways to alleviate social pressure on abortion.
- c) Organised protest and political decisions on fair social and economic policy, will encourage births (and abortion practice to decline).
- d) Bioethical, right to life conferences, brochures, TV programmes with the participation of both doctors and theologians, clergy, lawyers, psychologists etc, would help the consolidation of right, anti-abortion approach.
- e) Since monetary interests are involved (doctors, pharmaceutical companies etc) one should not exclude boycotting, as a means to force implementation of non-abortion practices, where good will is absent.

Finally, but by no means least, it must be realized and emphasized that true, long term, favourable results will only be achieved, if true spiritual Church life is cultivated among members of the Orthodox Church.

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CHRISTIAN MEDICAL FELLOWSHIP
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE GENERAL COMMITTEE

AGENDA ITEM: 12.8

FERTILITY TREATMENTS - BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES

1. The Sovereignty of God. Man has been given the privilege of reproducing (Gn 1:28) but it is ultimately God who gives children as a gift (Ps 127:3-5, 128:3-4) and relieves infertility (Gn 30:22, 1 Sa 1:19-20, Ps 113:9).
2. The Stewardship of Man. As Christian doctors we are stewards of God-given knowledge and skills with which come authority to act, responsibility to serve and accountability (Gn 1:26-28, Mt 25:14-30). We should practice in accordance with God's revealed standards of right and wrong seeking to do his work his way and not letting the end justify the means (1 Sa 15:22, Pr 14:12, 16:2).
3. The Reality and consequences of Sin. Whereas we must be very cautious in making any judgment in individual cases (Jb 2:4-8, Lk 13:1-5, Jn 9:1-3) the current demand for infertility treatment is at least in part the result of us as a nation abusing God-given privileges (Gn 1:28, Dt 28:15-18).
 - a. Adoption orders in England and Wales fell from 21,299 in 1975 to 6,533 in 1990 while over the same period the number of abortions rose from 139,702 to 186,912 and the number of dependent children in one-parent UK families increased from 1.3 to 1.9 million (OPCS, HMSO).
 - b. The rising incidence in tubal infertility is due in large part to damage sustained through sexually transmitted disease (esp Chlamydia trachomatis) and social abortion.
 - c. IVF and GIFT are expensive (£1000-2000), uncomfortable for prospective couples and currently not successful in meeting demand (success rates 15-20% per cycle, approx 2000 live births per year, 10% of all couples infertile).
4. The Grace of God. God is gracious and forgiving and does not treat us as our sins deserve (Ps 103:10) - but rather displays mercy and compassion. He understands the pain of childlessness (Gn 30:1, 1 Sa 1:10-11, Lk 13:34) and

has chosen in the past to alleviate it (Isaac, Joseph, Samson, Samuel and John the Baptist were all both to infertile couples). As his people we should likewise be mediators of his grace (1 Cor 11:1, Eph 5:1, Phil 2:5, 1 Jn 2:6).

5. The Sanctity of Human Life. All human life is made in God's image and is not to be unjustly taken (Gn 1:27, 9:6, Ex 20:13). We would therefore have grave misgivings about infertility programmes which involve creating 'spare' human embryos for research or disposal or which involve 'selective reduction' - the aborting of unwanted extra fetuses conceived (Ps 139:13-16). In God's economy, the strong make sacrifices for the weak, not vice versa!
6. The Integrity of Marriage. The proper place of human reproduction is within the context of a life-long, publicly recognised, heterosexual, monogamous relationship (Gn 2:24, Mt 19:4-6). Producing children for unmarried couples, homosexual couples or using donated eggs or sperm threatens the 'public', 'heterosexual' and 'monogamy' aspects of what God has ordained.

SUMMARY

We should seek to be mediators of God's grace both by countering the underlying causes of the infertility crisis (sexual immorality, easy abortion, family breakdown) and seeking treatments which respect both the humanity of the human embryo/fetus and the integrity of marriage.

xiii) I.M. Σταυροβουνίου, περί τοῦ ἐγκλήματος τῶν ἐκτρώσεων καί περί τῆς ἐν ψυχρῶ δολοφονίας ἀνθρωπίνων ὑπάρξεων κάτω ἀπό τό μανδύα:

- α) Τοῦ προγεννητικοῦ ἐλέγχου.
 - β) Ἐξωσωματικῆς γονιμοποιήσεως
 - γ) Ὀρισμένων ἀντισυλληπτικῶν μεθόδων).
- (Ὁρθόδοξη Μαρτυρία).

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Questions Posed by the Assistant Secretary for Health

1. Is an induced abortion of moral relevance to the decision to use his man fetal tissue for research? Would the answer to this question provide any insight on whether and how this research should proceed?
2. Does the use of fetal tissue in research encourage women to have an abortion that they might otherwise not undertake? If so, are there ways to minimize such encouragement?
3. As a legal matter, does the very process of obtaining informed consent from the pregnant woman constitute a prohibited "inducement" to terminate the pregnancy for the purposes of the research - thus pre-cluding research of this sort, under HHS regultions?
4. Is material consent a sufficient condition for the use of the tissue, or should additiional consent be obtained? If so, what should be the substance and who should be the source(s) of the consent, and what procedures should be implemented to obtain it?
5. Should there be and could there be a prohibition on the donation of fetal tissue between family members, or friends and acquaintances? Would a prohibition on donation between family members jeopardize the likelihood of clinical success?
6. If transplantation using fetal tissue from induced abortions becomes more common, what impact is likely to occur on activities and procedures employed by abortion clinics? In particular, is the optimal or safest way to perform an abortion likely to be in conflict with preservation of the fetal tissue? Is there any way to ensure that induced abortions are not intentionally delayed in order to have a second trimester fetus for research and transplantation?
7. What actual steps are involved in procuring the tissue from the source to the researcher? Are there any payments involved? What types of payments in this situation, if any, would fall inside or outside the scope of the Hyde Amendment?
8. According to HHS regulations, research on dead fetuses must be conducted in compliance with State and local laws. A few States' enacted version of the Uniform Anatomical Gift Act contains restrictions on the research applications of dead fetal tissue after induced abortion. In those States, do these restrictions apply to therapeutic transplantation of dead fetal tissue after an induced abortion? If so, what are the consequences for NIH-funded researchers in those States?
9. For those diseases for which transplantation using fetal tissue has been proposed, have enough animal studies been performed to justify proceeding

to human transplants? Because induced abortions during the first trimester are less risky to the woman, have there been enough animal studies for each of those diseases to justify the reliance on the equivalent of the second trimester human fetus?

10. What is the likelihood that transplantation using fetal cell cultures will be successful? Will this obviate the need for fresh fetal tissue? In what time frame might this occur?

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