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**The opinion of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church on family values (basing on documents «Basic principles of Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church», 2000 and «Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church», 2004)**

The article focuses on the attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church towards family values, basing on two fundamental documents of both churches - «Basic principles of Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church» and «Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church». Historical peculiarities of social teaching of both churches are analyzed and statistics from secular sources on the problems in review by the churches are introduced.

*Key words*: Russian Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church, social doctrine, religion, family values

The modern world faces widespread changes, such as globalization, universalization of culture, new communication tools, identity crisis of a single person and whole nations, devastation of traditional familiar structures, leading to a vast and deep mental crisis.

The present research aims to analyze the social doctrines of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church in the context of culture and history with the succeeding comparison of their peculiarities.

The sources of the research are the documents «Basic principles of Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church» and «Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church», published on the official sites of both churches. The documents were prepared in the beginning of the 2000-s and they cleanly articulate the opinion of both churches on a vast variety of problems that exist in the modern society, from dealings with secular state and aspects of education and schooling to morals.

In modern Russia after the dissolution of the USSR the condition of the Russian Orthodox Church changed significantly. The number of monasteries, churches and clerics has grown noticeably: in 1963 it was amounted to 8500 churches, 16 monasteries and approximately 8200 clerics[[1]](#footnote-1). In the year 2013 it was amounted to more than 34000 churches, 8000 monasteries and approximately 33000 clerics[[2]](#footnote-2). Furthermore, the Church becomes an inalienable part of social and cultural life in Russia. According to the survey of the All-Russia Public Opinion Research Center VCIOM made in the beginning of year 2010, the number of orthodox Christians is about 75% of Russian citizens[[3]](#footnote-3), and this number has grown from the year 2006, when the number of orthodox Christians constituted 63% of Russian citizens[[4]](#footnote-4). Besides that, it shall be mentioned that the modern Russian society notes the vital role of the Russian Orthodox Church in the country: according to the All-Russia Public Opinion Research Center VCIOM made in November, 2013, 56% of Russian citizens point out the critical influence of the Church in history and development of Russia, 47% consider Orthodox Christianity its driving force, and 64% of those surveyed noticed that the Russian Orthodox Church influences, first of all, on the morals of Russian society[[5]](#footnote-5). Broadly, the growing of the Church’s activity might be seen in elaboration of social problems, aspects of education, etc.

In 2000 The Bishops’ Council of the Russian Orthodox Church was held under the chairmanship of patriarch Alexiy II (1990-2008) that carried the document «Basic principles of Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church». In comparison with the Roman Catholic Church that from the XIX century has been turning to the subject of social problems, the Russian Orthodox Church composed such a document notably later. This fact could be explained by a range of reasons, among which, for example, is a long-term dependence from secular powers: the Holy Governing Synod (XVIII- the beginning of XX centuries), with an emperor as the head of church, later the Church faced persecutions from USSR powers. In other words, it was a vital necessity of the Church to demonstrate loyalty to the secular state. After the dissolution of the USSR the Russian Orthodox Church tends to articulate its own position on political and social problems.

«Basic principles of Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church» draws attention to the importance of taking and affirmation of moral Christian values. The document consists of 16 parts, within the confines of the research parts X, XI and XII, dedicated to problems of personal, family and social morals, the moral health of nature and questions of bioethics, are of interest.

During the analyze of the document various aspects are considered, such as gender, matrimonies and the problem of divorce, the connection of generations in one family, the abandonment of children, orphanhood, the role of a woman in family and society, the problem or pornography, abortions, interception, sex education in secular schools, homosexuality, surrogacy. The Russian Orthodox Church clearly formulates its opinion about the said problems. The problems of matrimony and divorce, the role of a woman and abortion and homosexuality tend to be of the primary interest and are deeply analyzed in the document.

The Russian Orthodox Church places emphasis on the importance of matrimony between a man and a woman as an embodiment of a blessed match for giving birth to a child. Likewise, the Church admits also matrimonies without a church wedding ceremony when the couple lives together holily and for a long time. Nevertheless, the Russian Orthodox Church cannot accept cohabitation or numerous matrimonies[[6]](#footnote-6). Still, the position of the Church, in the light of the life of modern society, seems quite flexible and predictable, but the judgment about a divorce is categorical: the Russian Orthodox Church is strongly against divorcing, and the only reason that might be assumed is adultery of a husband or a wife[[7]](#footnote-7). The topicality of the problem of divorce is confirmed by statistics: according to ROSSTAT (Federal State Statistics Service), in 2008 1178 thousand of matrimonies were contracted, while 703 thousand of matrimonies were dissoluted[[8]](#footnote-8). That means that more than 50% of matrimonies go broken, and herewith there is no official statistics about cohabitation and unregistered unions.

The Russian Orthodox Church considers a woman first of all as wife and mother and appeals to her not to forget about her special role in the modern circumstances, to remember her true, god-given destination and to organize priorities in conformity with her nature[[9]](#footnote-9)

The Church regards abortion as one of the gravest problems of modern society, considering it as a menace to future generations[[10]](#footnote-10). The lack of conviction from society and the idea that a woman has a right to order about her body independently are considered by the Russian Orthodox Church as a reason of a growing number of abortions. It is underlined that pregnancy is god’s gift, and a woman has no right to order it at her own discretion. Nevertheless, a more flexible feeling is possible only in a case of a danger to a woman’s life, and a case-by-case approach is used in such situations[[11]](#footnote-11). Statistics says that the problem is very significant in Russia: in 2008, according to ROSSTAT, for 100 births there were 81 abortions[[12]](#footnote-12).

In these latter years the problem of homosexuality has come to the fore in society. The Russian Orthodox Church assumes an uncompromising position and rejects entirely the possibility to equate a matrimony between a man and a woman to a union between people of the same sex[[13]](#footnote-13). Furthermore, the Church negatively perceives surrogacy and inception, as they are ways to invade the “divine disposal”, notes the problems of secular school education and the growing number of children whose parents are alive in orphan asylums.

All in all, analyzing the «Basic principles of Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church», the variety of problem arisen and strict eloquence should be mentioned. The Church shows its view on the existing problems of the society, emphasizes its attitude towards them and articulates implacability of its position towards a range of problems. Without giving any clear solutions, the Church shows Christian moral orienting points that a person, according to the Russian Orthodox Church, should follow.

The Roman Catholic Church, without any doubt, has a more long and expanded tradition of expressing its view on social problems. Despite its usually conservative politics, the Holy See in the end of XIX century turned its attention to problems that alarmed the society and needed an explanation from Church. This refers to the appearance of the labor class and industrialization, and so the Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) faced a necessity to react on the fundamental changes in the society. This rotation of the Church to social problems resulted in the Pope’s encyclical “Rerum Novarum” (1891) that admitted the labor class and fairness of its claims. The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) played an extremely important role in establishing of social views of the Roman Catholic Church. The Council was convoked in order to renovate the Church, and became one of crucial moments of the changing of the Church’s attitude towards actual problems of society. Nevertheless, the Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) managed to formulate the new social concept of the Roman Catholic Church that was aimed at negotiation of the consequences of the “Cold War” in the world and at apprehension of the place that the Church might take in the modern society.

The Roman Catholic Church is one of the biggest religious organizations in the world by the number of adepts: according to the information agency Fides[[14]](#footnote-14), in 2013 the number of Catholics in the world amounted 17,5%, with a growing of the number in 0,04% in comparison with the previous year[[15]](#footnote-15). The role of the church in European history and culture cannot be underestimated, too.

Turning to historical peculiarities, the Roman Catholic Church always was one of key forces of European politics who had great influence on kings and emperors and whole countries, in comparison with the Russian Orthodox Church that keep Byzantine tradition of “symphony” with a secular state[[16]](#footnote-16). In 1929 after the Lateran Treaty the Roman Catholic Church received a territory of modern state Vatican. So, throughout history, the Church was an independent player and a supranational church that kept following its own views.

The document in focus “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church”, as the «Basic principles of Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church», appeals to establishing of Christian moral orient point for the modern society. But the Roman Catholic Church, in virtue of its historical and modern differences from the Russian Orthodox Church, comes to a supranational level and appeals to the whole world to follow its moral values.

The document consists of introduction, three parts and conclusion. The range of problems that is in the center of analyzing of the document is considered in the second part, dedicated to problems of family, economy, labor, politics and democracy, international collaboration, peace and environment. The problems of family, values, the modern situation and the Church’s position are closely examined in chapter 5 “The family, the vital cell of society”[[17]](#footnote-17). Considering the “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church”, a vast range of problems need analyzing, such as the role of family in the society, matrimony and divorce, connection of generations, abortion, sex education in secular schools, inception, surrogacy, homosexuality, rights of children and their defense.

First of all, the Roman Catholic Church considers matrimony reverently as a crucial element of a healthy society[[18]](#footnote-18), underlying its inalienability for present and future generations. A family, according to the Church, is a key aspect of a well-functioning society, and the violation of its basic principles damages everyone gravely. The Church insists on the idea that extramarital relationship are based only on egoism and personalism[[19]](#footnote-19). The Roman Catholic Church claims that divorce is one of the most negative phenomena of the modern society and declares that introduction of such a regulation in civil law is a “real social malice”[[20]](#footnote-20). It is necessary to make a note that until the 1970-s the Church didn’t admit any reason for a divorce, except the death of one of a couple. The “Compendium” formulates that it is extremely important to build and preserve the connection between generations in the family, and underlines separately the essential role of a family childrearing[[21]](#footnote-21). Abortion, according to the Church, is a “serious moral crime”[[22]](#footnote-22), that is subject to severe conviction.

An individual place in the document is filled by the analysis of homosexuality question that does not seem unusual and is quite logical in the context of a difficult situation inside of the Church itself and the recognition of the rights of sex minorities in a range of countries to conclude an alliance. The views of the Roman Catholic Church on the problem can be summarized to an idea that it is impossible to equate the matrimony between a woman and a man to a homosexual union[[23]](#footnote-23). It is articulated also that a full-fledged union, either in the context of moral and ethics or in the context of psychology and anthropology, might be possible only in the case of a union between two people of different sex[[24]](#footnote-24).

The Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church, having both the same base, without any doubt played a crucial role in the history and culture of their regions. The development of both Churches had different ways due to historical peculiarities. Comparing these both social concepts, it is quite difficult to find out and formulate essential differences, the Churches declare their attitude towards traditional family values and the present situation similarly, drawing attention to various point in a range of cases. But all in all the principles declared are analogous.

The present research is based on two documents that are really significant for the Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church and the societies, moreover, the churches are changing alongside with society, despite all their conservatism. After publishing of the «Basic principles of Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church» 14 years passed, and 6 years ago the new patriarch was enthroned. 10 years passed after the publication of the “Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church” and 2 Popes were enthroned.

The major scientific interest is in analyzing of the positions of both Churches in dynamics that is the subject of a separate ambitious research.

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