

The Early Church Fathers on Homosexuality

There are people who believe that homosexual acts are not contrary to the teachings of the Bible. Their arguments, at best, are nothing more than wishful thinking. Some would say that God loves us all. And that is true, He does. But it doesn't mean that He condones every act we engage in. The Scriptures are clear and so are the teachings of the early Church. Engaging in homosexual acts is wrong. While the inclination may not be wrong, acting upon it is.

Athenagoras

For those who have set up a market for fornication and established infamous resorts for the young for every kind of vile pleasure, – who do not abstain even from males, males with males committing shocking abominations, outraging all the noblest and comeliest bodies in all sorts of ways, so dishonoring the fair workmanship of God (*Plea for Christians* 34 [A.D. 177])

Clement of Alexandria

The fate of the Sodomites was judgment to those who had done wrong and instruction to those who hear. The Sodomites had fallen into uncleanness because of much luxury. They practiced adultery shamelessly and burned with insane love for boys (*The Instructor* 3:8 [A.D. 193]).

Tertullian

So, too, whoever enjoys any other than nuptial intercourse, in whatever place, and in the person of whatever woman, makes himself guilty of adultery and fornication. Accordingly, among us, secret connections as well — connections, that is, not first professed in presence of the Church— run risk of being judged akin to adultery and fornication; nor must we let them, if thereafter woven together by the covering of marriage, elude the charge. But all the other frenzies of passions— impious both toward the bodies and toward the sexes — beyond the laws of nature, we banish not only from the threshold, but from all shelter of the Church, because they are not sins, but monstrosities (*Modesty* 4 [A.D. 220]).

Origen

But observe here that every great sin is a loss of the talents of the master of the house, and such sins are committed by fornicators, adulterers, abusers of themselves with men, effeminate, idolaters, murderers (*Commentary on Matthew* 14:10 [A.D. 248]).

While those who call themselves wise have despised these virtues, and have wallowed in the filth of sodomy, in lawless lust, "men with men working that which is unseemly" (*Against Celsus* 7:49 [A.D. 248]).

Cyprian

Oh, if placed on that lofty watchtower, you could gaze into the secret places – if you could open the closed doors of sleeping chambers and recall their dark recesses to the perception of sight – you would behold things done by immodest persons that no chaste eye could look upon; you would see what even to see is a crime; you would see what people imbruted with the madness of vice deny that they have done, and yet hasten to do – men with frenzied lusts rushing upon men, doing things that afford no gratification even to those who do them (*Letters* 1:9 [A.D. 253]).

Eusebius

Having forbidden all unlawful marriage, all unseemly practices, and the union of women with women and men with men, [the Word] adds: "Do not defile yourselves with any of these things, for in all these things the nations were defiled, which I will drive out before you [Lev. 18:24] (*Proof of the Gospel* 4:10 [A.D. 319]).

Basil the Great

He who is guilty of unseemliness with males will be under discipline for the same time as adulterers (Letters 217:62 [A.D. 367]).

Apocalypse of Paul

And I saw other men and women covered with dust, and their countenance was like blood, and they were in a pit of pitch and sulphur and running down into a fiery river, and I asked: Sir, who are these? And he said to me: These are they who committed the iniquity of Sodom and Gomorrah, the male with the male, for which reason they unceasingly pay the penalties (39 [A.D. 380]).

John Chrysostom

For such is the burning of Sodom, and that conflagration! And they know it well that have been at the place, and have seen with their eyes that scourge divinely sent, and the effect of the lightnings from above. (Jude 7.) Consider how great is that sin, to have forced hell to appear even before its time! For whereas many thought scorn of His words, by His deeds did God show them the image thereof in a certain novel way. For that rain was unwonted, for that the intercourse was contrary to nature, and it deluged the land, since lust had done so with their souls. Wherefore also the rain was the opposite of the customary rain. Now not only did it fail to stir up the womb of the earth to the production of fruits, but made it even useless for the reception of seed. For such was also the intercourse of the men, making a body of this sort more worthless than the very land of Sodom. And what is there more detestable than a man who hath polluted himself, or what more execrable? Oh, what madness! Oh, what distraction! Whence came this lust lewdly revelling and making man's nature all that enemies could? or even worse than that, by as much as the soul is better than the body. Oh, ye that were more senseless than irrational creatures, and more shameless than dogs! for in no case does such intercourse take place with them, but nature acknowledgeth her own limits (*Homily 4 on Romans* [A.D. 391]).

Augustine

I read also what is added, a little further on, in the same epistle: "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God (Letter 29:5 [A.D. 395]).

Therefore, those offences which be contrary to nature are everywhere and at all times to be held in detestation and punished; such were those of the Sodomites, which should all nations commit, they should all be held guilty of the same crime by the divine law, which hath not so made men that they should in that way abuse one another. For even that fellowship which should be between God and us is violated, when that same nature of which He is author is polluted by the perversity of lust (*Confessions* 3:8:15 [A.D. 397-400]).

Sulpitius Severus

He supposed them to be human beings, and welcomed them to share in his hospitality, and provided an entertainment for them in his house, but the wicked youth of the town demanded the new arrivals for impure purposes. Lot offered them his daughters in place of his guests, but they did not accept the offer, having a desire rather for things forbidden, and then Lot himself was laid hold of with vile designs. The angels, however, speedily rescued him from danger, by causing blindness to fall upon the eyes of these unchaste sinners (*Sacred History* 1:6 [A.D. 403]).

John Cassian

For whoever after baptism and the knowledge of God falls into that death, must know that he will either have to be cleansed, not by the daily grace of Christ, i.e., an easy forgiveness, which our Lord when at any moment He is prayed to, is wont to grant to our errors, but by a lifelong affliction of penitence and penal sorrow, or else will be hereafter consigned to the punishment of eternal fire for them, as the same Apostle thus declares: "effeminate, nor defilers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous persons, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extortioners shall possess the kingdom of God" (*Conference* 23:15 [circa A.D. 430]).