

Life after Death & Immortality of the Soul

APOLOGETICS

What Happens After Death?

In the poetic and profound words of Ecclesiastes 12:7, we find a fundamental truth about the human experience: "Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it." This verse suggests that at the end of our earthly journey, our physical body, akin to dust, will return to the earth from which it came. Simultaneously, our spirit, the essence of our being, will make its way back to the divine source from which it originated—God.

St. Augustine, a revered theologian, further expounds on this concept in his writings. He posits that even after death, the spirit of the departed retains a strong connection to its earthly body. Though disembodied, the spirit maintains a semblance of its physical form, creating a sense of familiarity and self-recognition: "the man himself who is in such a state, though it be in spirit only, not in body, yet sees himself so like to his own body that he cannot discern any difference." This enduring link between the spirit and the body suggests that our spiritual existence is not entirely divorced from our physical experience.

Our ultimate goal, as Christians, is to achieve reunification with God after our earthly existence. St. Irenaeus, another esteemed theologian, affirms the continuous existence of souls beyond death. He emphasizes that the soul does not engage in a cycle of transmigration from one body to another. Instead, the soul retains the same form as the body to which it was initially adapted. "The Lord has taught with very great fullness that souls continue to exist. They do not do this by passing from body to body. Rather, they preserve the same form as that of the body to which they were adapted." This notion underscores the enduring nature of our identity and the significance of our earthly embodiment in shaping our spiritual essence.

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The understanding of the afterlife as a journey of the spirit, rather than a mere transition from one physical form to another, provides comfort and hope. It suggests that our spiritual existence transcends the limitations of our mortal bodies and that our connection to God endures beyond the confines of earthly life. As we strive to live lives guided by faith and love, we can find solace in the knowledge that our spirits will find their true home in the eternal presence of the Divine.

What will rise?

Within the realm of the afterlife, as depicted in Mark 12:25, individuals who have risen from the dead transcend the earthly customs of marriage. “For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.” (Mark 12:25) In this celestial realm, they exist in a state akin to that of angels in heaven. This vision of eternity aligns with our spiritual aspirations, as we yearn to spend our everlasting existence in the company of the divine and among the highest ranks of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Scripture further elaborates on this concept in Luke 20:35-36, indicating that those deemed worthy of attaining the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage. “But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.” Moreover, they will be exempt from the cycle of death, achieving a state of equality with the angels and becoming “sons of God.” This suggests that after death, those who have repented and lived a virtuous life undergo a spiritual rebirth, granting them the privilege of eternal communion with the divine.

The apostle Paul provides insights into the nature of this transformation in 1 Corinthians 15:42-45. He compares the resurrection of the dead to the planting of a seed, which undergoes a process of transformation and renewal. The physical body, sown in corruption and dishonor, is raised in incorruptibility and glory. It is sown in weakness, but raised in power: “so also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” (1 Corinthians 15:42-45) This transformation signifies the transition from a natural body to a spiritual body, transcending the limitations and imperfections of earthly existence.

World Views on Life After Death

Regarding a materialistic lifestyle, it is often argued that nothing survives after death, and as such, it presents a limited view of existence. However, various religious and philosophical beliefs offer alternative perspectives on the afterlife.

One such belief is Paganism, which embraces the idea that a ghost survives after death. In this worldview, the spirit or essence of a person continues to exist in a disembodied form. This concept is often associated with the veneration of ancestors and the belief in the interaction between the living and the dead. Another belief is reincarnation, which asserts that after death, an individual's consciousness or soul is reborn into a new physical body. This cycle of rebirth is often seen as a means of spiritual evolution and learning. Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism emphasize the concept of reincarnation, believing that the quality of one's actions in this life will determine the circumstances of their next life.

Pantheism, on the other hand, takes a unique stance by suggesting that death changes nothing. According to Pantheism, the universe is a manifestation of a single, all-encompassing divinity. As such, death is merely a transition from one form of existence to another within the larger cosmic consciousness. Perhaps the most heretical belief is the concept of Immortality, which proposes that

the soul survives but not the body. In this view, the soul is an eternal essence that transcends physical death and continues to exist in a non-corporeal form.

Finally, Resurrection maintains that the soul separates from the body at death and will be reunited with a new, immortal, and resurrected body at the end of the world. This belief is associated with the idea of eternal life and the promise of salvation. In contrast to these beliefs, the idea that nothing survives after death suggests that at the moment of death, the individual's consciousness and identity cease to exist entirely. This view, often associated with materialism and atheism, emphasizes the transient nature of life and the finality of death. Rebutting the idea that nothing survives after death, upon which we will set our focus on, requires engaging with philosophical and theological arguments as well as considering evidence from near-death experiences and reports of past-life memories.

Evidence of Life After Death

Undoubtedly, the prospect of life after death has captivated the imaginations of people for eons. Scripture, particularly the resurrection of Jesus, provides compelling evidence for those who seek it. The resurrection account recounts how Jesus rose from the dead, interacted with others, spoke, ate with his disciples, and performed various actions after his crucifixion. This profound event, as explicated in the Resurrection section, rules out alternative theories such as hallucinations, conspiracies, myths, or swoon theories.

Nevertheless, one must also consider the numerous accounts of resuscitation and life after death experiences. While these experiences may be subjective and susceptible to deception or mental hallucinations, their sheer volume cannot be entirely dismissed. Although the value of individual accounts may be debatable, the collective weight of these experiences suggests a potential reality beyond our mortal existence.

In the realm of materialism, death is perceived as a tragic end, a permanent cessation of consciousness. However, in the context of resurrection, death takes on a different meaning. It becomes a transformative gateway, marking the beginning of a remarkable journey. Death is not merely the end; it is a transition to a new and everlasting phase of existence. The idea of life after death offers solace and hope in the face of mortality. It suggests that our earthly existence is but a chapter in a grander narrative, a prelude to an eternal adventure.

General Objections of Materialist

To survive death, consciousness must survive post brain-death. Consciousness has generally been associated with brain activity. Death, by destroying the brain, removes that which processes our experiences. There is an impossibility of distinguishing disembodied souls. In Orthodoxy and Christianity in general, God places within each person, at conception, a spirit which gives them a unique personality: “before I formed you in the womb, I knew you.” (Jeremiah 1:5)

God places within each prenatal person at conception a spirit that makes each individual a unique personality. Zechariah 12:1 observed that God “forms the spirit of man within him.” Our spirits are what makes each one of us a distinct entity, a person that will survive physical death and live on immortally throughout eternity.

According to scripture, and in the eyes of God, there is a clear distinction between the person and the body. Identity is not related in any fashion to the body. Suppose an individual, John Doe, is a victim of a gruesome fire that severely burns him head to toe, yet his life is preserved. He may no longer be recognizable, yet is he no longer John Doe? An individual is not identified by their height, weight, race, facial features, and whatnot. There are merely characteristics of an individual, but it does not reach the intrinsic core of a person. It is unclear how our souls are identified, as it is immaterial, but nonetheless very real and evident much like love and peace are. We see this in scripture as Elijah prays on the dead child saying: “let this child’s soul come into him again...and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived.” (1 Kings 17:21-22) Recall as well in James 2:26, “the body without the spirit is dead.” In other words, the separation of one’s spirit from one’s body results in physical death. Thus, there is a physical death, (spirit exits body,) and a spiritual death, (spirit separated from God due to sin.)

There is a differentiation between body, soul, and spirit. In 2017, scientists now doubt the interdependence of body and consciousness. While medically an individual is proclaimed dead after 15 minutes of no heartbeat, there has been sufficient evidence in the studies of Dr. Sam Parnia, to

suggest that life continues after physical death. In fact, in many situations, a person has been proclaimed physically dead, yet after their physical death, resuscitation was made possible. An assumption of separation between body and consciousness is thus made by Dr. Sam Parnia. Given that the primary premise of materialism is no longer true, and science does acknowledge a separation of body and consciousness, it does indeed, to the very least, leave the very plausible clause of a life after physical death. That is not to say that human beings are essentially immaterial souls, there is a mystical union of matter and spirit. Our spirit rises with a true spiritual body. Therefore, can the soul really survive death and live eternally?



Immortality of the Soul

There is an argument regarding the law of conservation of energy: the principle of the conservation of energy states that physical energy is never created or destroyed. If, to some degree, matter is immortal. Why not the immortality of the soul?

1. Matter is Never Destroyed, Only Transformed:

- The Law of Conservation of Mass states that the total mass of a closed system remains constant, regardless of the changes that occur within the system.
- This means that matter can neither be created nor destroyed but can only be transformed from one form to another.
- For example, when wood burns, it undergoes a chemical reaction with oxygen to produce carbon dioxide, water, and heat. The total mass of the wood,

oxygen, carbon dioxide, water, and heat is the same before and after the reaction.

2. It is More Likely that Spirit is Not Destroyed Than that Matter is Not:

- o While matter is subject to the laws of physics and can be transformed from one form to another, the nature of spirit is less well-understood.
- o Some people believe that spirit is a non-physical entity that exists beyond the material world and is not subject to the same laws as matter.
- o If this is the case, then it is possible that spirit could exist even after the physical body has died.

3. Therefore It is Very Likely that Spirit is Not Destroyed:

- o The fact that matter is never destroyed, only transformed, suggests that spirit may also be indestructible.
- o If the total amount of matter in the universe remains constant, then it stands to reason that the total amount of spirit in the universe also remains constant.
- o This would mean that spirit cannot be destroyed, only transformed from one form to another.

Argument From Design

The existence of creation, with its intricate natural designs and apparent purpose, suggests that there is a greater meaning and goal to the cosmos. This purpose seems to culminate in the emergence of human consciousness, a unique and remarkable phenomenon. The very fact that we possess consciousness implies that it serves a purpose within the grand scheme of things.

However, if human consciousness were to end forever, with death being the ultimate conclusion, then this purpose would be rendered meaningless and in vain. The idea of a "cosmic abortion," where consciousness arises only to be extinguished eternally, poses a profound existential dilemma. It challenges our understanding of the inherent value and significance of consciousness itself.

Therefore, the logical conclusion is that consciousness does not simply cease to exist after death. Death may mark the end of our physical form, but it does not necessarily signify the end of our consciousness. The concept of an eternal afterlife, where consciousness continues in some form beyond our mortal existence, offers a more coherent and meaningful explanation for the emergence and purpose of human consciousness within the larger cosmic design. In this perspective, death is not the final word, and our consciousness transcends the limitations of our physical bodies.

Argument From Simplicity

If souls die, they must die either by decomposition or by annihilation. What is not composed cannot be decomposed. Whatever is composed of parts can be decomposed into its parts: a molecule into atoms, a cell into molecules, an organ into cells, a body into organs, a person into body and soul. What is not composed of parts cannot be taken apart. The soul is not composed of parts. It has no countable, quantifiable parts as the body does. You can cut a body in half but not a soul; you can't have half a soul. You do not cut an inch off your soul when you get a haircut. Therefore souls cannot decompose.

And nothing is annihilated as a whole. Therefore souls are not annihilated as a whole. Thus souls do not die either by decomposition or annihilation, and souls do not die.

Why Not Reincarnation?

Reincarnation and karma, while initially captivating, are riddled with deep intellectual flaws. Both Hinduism and Buddhism reject the idea of a personal creator and designer, which raises significant challenges for their accounts of karma and reincarnation.

Karma is often presented as the moral engine of reincarnation. It is a law that records and assesses moral actions and assigns corresponding results in future lives. However, for karma to function effectively, it requires moral knowledge and evaluation to ensure fair placement of an entity in its next life. Crucially, karma lacks these essential elements, as it operates impersonally, excluding moral knowledge and evaluation. This contradiction undermines the moral coherence of reincarnation, which depends on karma for its justification.

Another challenge arises from the vast scope of karma, which purports to administer moral results for all individuals across lifetimes. Such a comprehensive administration requires a powerful agent to bring about these results. However, karma is not depicted as an agent capable of administering rewards and punishments but rather as an automatic and impersonal system. This discrepancy casts doubt on the feasibility of karma's purported moral administration.

Non-dualistic Hinduism poses a further challenge to reincarnation and karma. This worldview denies the existence of finite, individual selves, asserting that all is one. Reincarnation and karma, however, require the existence of finite, individual selves for their operation. Given the non-dualistic perspective, the concepts of reincarnation and karma become untenable.

Buddhism, which teaches that humans are aggregations of changing parts and lack an enduring soul, also faces difficulties in upholding karma and rebirth. An enduring self is necessary to establish continuity between one lifetime and another, providing a foundation for karma to attach. Without an enduring self, Buddhism lacks a basis for affirming karma and rebirth, undermining one of its defining doctrines.

In conclusion, despite their initial allure, reincarnation and karma are undermined by substantial intellectual flaws. The absence of a personal creator and designer in Hinduism and Buddhism complicates their accounts of karma and reincarnation. The impersonal nature of karma, the lack of a powerful agent to administer moral results, the incompatibility with non-dualistic Hinduism, and the problematic notion of an enduring self in Buddhism all contribute to the intellectual challenges facing these concepts.

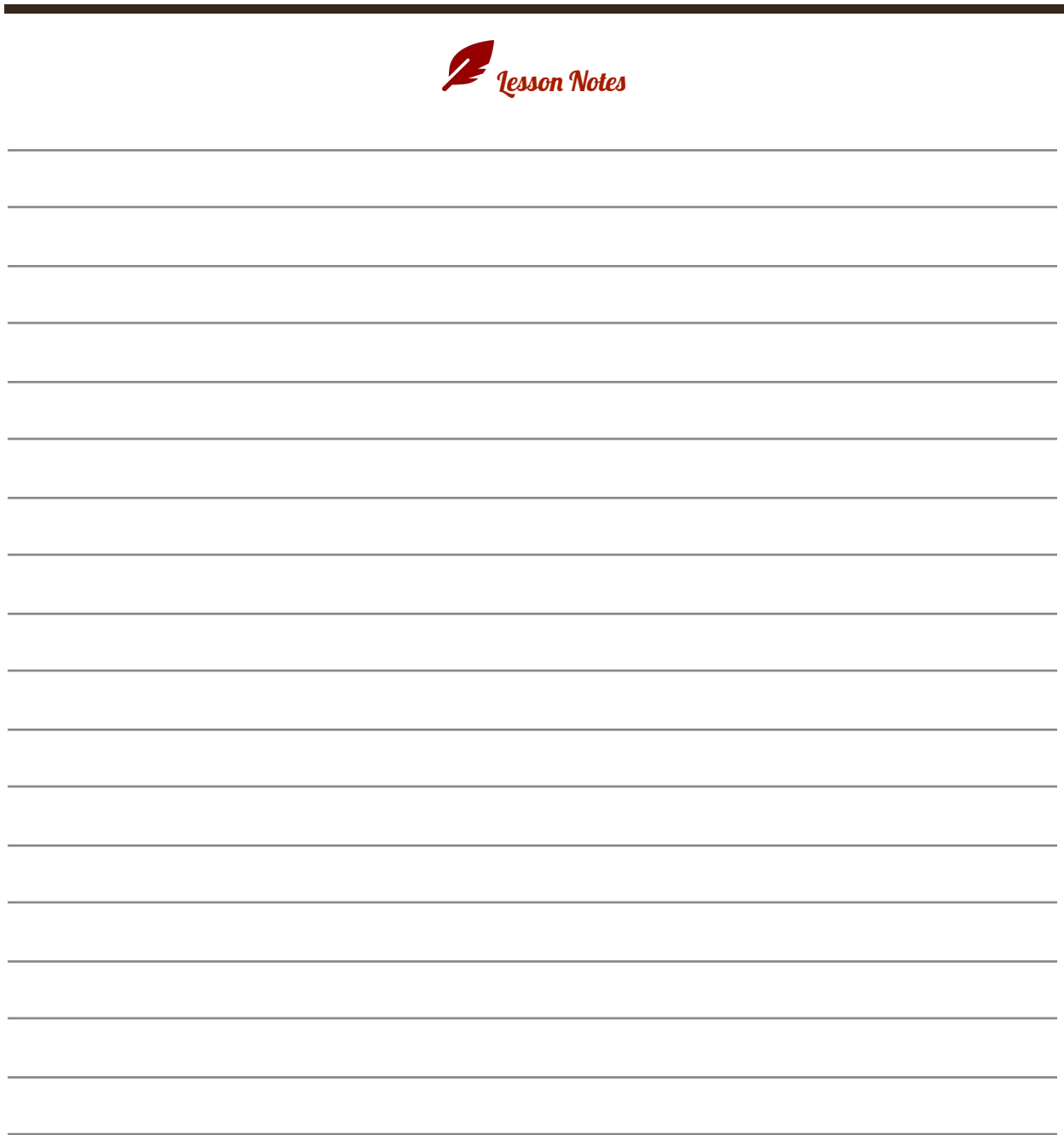


Review Questions

1. True or false? We believe in reincarnation. (A: False)
2. True or false? We do not believe in karma. (A: True)
3. True or false? Our natural designs and purposes are in vain. (A: False)
4. True or false? In the eyes of God, there is a clear distinction between the person and the body. (A: True)
5. True or false? We are composed of a soul, body, and spirit. (A: True)
6. What are a few things Christ did after resurrection, that are proof of his resurrection. (A: He rose after he died, talked to many, and ate with his disciples.)
7. Which verse explains what happens to us after death? (A: Ecclesiastes 12:7)
8. What does paganism preach? (A: The belief that a ghost survives after death.)
9. Explain the law of conservation of energy in regard to the immortality of the soul. (A: The principle of the conservation of energy states that physical energy is never created or destroyed. If, to some degree, matter is immortal. Why not the immortality of the soul?)
10. What does materialism state? (A: It indicates that nothing would live on after death.)

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Value of Human Life: Freedom of My Body

APOLOGETICS

Prevalence of Evil in the World

Evil has been a persistent adversary of human existence and personal worth since the beginning of time. The unfortunate story of Cain and Abel in the book of Genesis serves as a prime example of this. The narrative recounts how Cain, consumed by envy and resentment, murdered his own brother Abel in a fit of rage. This tragic event occurred due to several significant factors. “Now Cain talked with Abel, his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel, his brother and killed him.” (Genesis 4:8)

Firstly, the introduction of sin into the world played a pivotal role. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, explains how sin entered the world through the disobedience of one man, Adam. This original sin not only brought about physical death but also corrupted human nature, leading to a propensity for evil and violence: “therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.” (Romans 5:12)

Secondly, the forgetting of God contributed to the prevalence of evil. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses warns the Israelites against forgetting the Lord and His commandments. He emphasizes that material prosperity and success should not lead them to neglect their spiritual responsibilities. When people turn away from God, they become more susceptible to the temptations of evil.

“beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments, His judgments, and His statutes which I command you today, lest—when you have eaten and are full, and have built beautiful houses and dwell in them; and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and your gold are multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied; when your heart is lifted up, and you forget the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; who led you through that great and terrible wilderness, in which were fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty land where there was no water; who brought water for you out of the flinty rock; who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end— then you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’”
(Deuteronomy 8:10-17)

Lastly, the perpetuation of false morality further exacerbates the problem of evil. The prophet Isaiah condemns those who call evil good and good evil, blurring the lines between right and wrong: “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20) This moral relativism erodes the foundation of ethical behavior and makes it easier for evil to flourish.

Throughout history, we have witnessed countless examples of evil manifesting itself in various forms. From the brutal atrocities of war and genocide to the insidious spread of injustice and oppression, evil has left an indelible mark on human society. It is a constant reminder of our fallen nature and the need for redemption.

Is My Body My Own?

The inquiry of "Is My Body My Own?" has been a subject of philosophical, religious, and ethical consideration throughout history. In Christianity, St. Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 present a perspective on the relationship between the body and the spirit. He asserts that the body is not solely one's own possession but rather a sacred vessel entrusted by God. “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) This notion is rooted in the belief that human beings are created in the image of God and are thus imbued with divine purpose.

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St. Paul's assertion that "we are not our own" challenges the idea of absolute individual autonomy over the body. It suggests that our bodies are not merely physical entities but also have spiritual significance. This perspective aligns with the Christian understanding of the human person as a composite of body, soul, and spirit. St. John Chrysostom's interpretation of Paul's words further elucidates this concept. He emphasizes that St. Paul's intention is to caution against sinful behavior and improper desires of the mind. Chrysostom acknowledges that humans possess many inappropriate desires, but he asserts that we have the ability to restrain them through self-control and discipline. This emphasis on personal responsibility highlights the belief that humans are not mere puppets of predetermined fate but have the capacity to make choices that shape their lives.

“What is Paul trying to prove when he says that we are not our own? He wants to secure us against sin and against following the improper desires of the mind. We have many improper desires, but we must constrain them, and we can do so. If we could not, there would be no point in exhorting us like this. Paul does not say that we are under compulsion but that we have been bought—and bought with a great price, reminding us of the way in which our salvation was obtained.”

The notion of conception as presented in the Bible also contributes to the understanding of the body as a sacred vessel. The portrayal of the womb as a place where life already exists, rather than where it is gradually created, suggests that human life has inherent value and significance from the moment of

conception. “For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;” (Psalm 139:13-14) This perspective aligns with the Christian belief that every human being is created in the image of God and is thus endowed with inherent dignity. Clearly, human life has intrinsic value from the moment of conception, reinforcing the sacred nature of the body.

Abortion

In the landmark case of *Roe v. Wade*, Justice Harry Blackmun famously stated, “We need not resolve the question of when life begins.” This statement has been interpreted in various ways, but it essentially reflects the view that the legal question of when a fetus is considered a person is separate from the biological or philosophical question of when life begins. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), over 1,200,000 abortions were performed in the United States in 1995. This statistic highlights the prevalence of abortion as a reproductive choice and the need for ongoing discussions about the legality and ethics of the procedure.

Scientific advancements have provided insights into the biological development of a fetus. The detection of a fetal heartbeat as early as eighteen days after fertilization underscores the earliest signs of life. Additionally, brain waves have been recorded by the fortieth day, indicating the onset of neurological activity. By eight weeks, all the major body systems are present, and by the eleventh week, they are fully functional. These biological milestones raise questions about the moral and legal status of a fetus. The presence of a heartbeat and brain waves strongly demonstrate the existence of life and, therefore, the fetus should clearly be afforded the same rights and protections as a newborn child. Somehow, others maintain that personhood begins at a later stage of development, such as viability outside the womb. Technological advances in neonatal care have also contributed to the debate. The survival of babies born prematurely, sometimes as early as twenty to twenty-four weeks, challenges further traditional notions of viability and raises questions about the appropriate limits of medical intervention.

From a scriptural standpoint, on several occasions, passages refer to conception in reference to the beginning of life of an individual. “Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, ‘I have acquired a man from the Lord.’” (Genesis 4:1) Why would the Bible mention conception if it was not significant to life? Keep in mind, the Holy Bible speaks of conception 40 times. There must be a reason the inspired writers mention the moment where sperm and egg come together—since it's only at that instant that their chromosomes join to form the full complement of chromosomes that is capable of producing human life: “your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them.” (Psalm 139:16)

God planned our lives before conception ever occurred. “And I will bless her and also give you a son, by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; ... then Abraham fell on his face and laughed, and said in his heart, “shall a child be born to a man who is one hundred years old? And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” ... Then God said: “no, Sarah, your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him.” (Genesis 17:16-18)

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God speaks about Isaac before he was even conceived: “before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:5) Our Lord knows us each from the womb and has a plan for us, therefore it is not right for us to be involved in the ending of a life that God has spent time working on, (making it in his image:) “but when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace.” (Galatians 1:15)

The Lord watches over us even before our birth, indicating the importance of our lives in His eyes; “the Lord has called Me from the womb; from the matrix of My mother He has made mention of My name...And now the Lord says, Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant.” (Isaiah 49:1,5)

Dr. Jerome Lejeune, (the father of modern day genetics,) even goes as far to say, from a scientific perspective, that “to accept the fact that after fertilization has taken place a new human has come into being is no longer a matter of taste or opinion...it is plain experimental evidence.”

Temple of God

The significance of our physical bodies is pivotal in the Christian understanding of human existence. The apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 reveal that our bodies are not merely shells but are actually temples, sacred dwellings for the Holy Spirit, who resides within us. This profound truth carries immense spiritual implications. “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

Recognizing our bodies as temples has profound consequences for our behavior and lifestyle. We are called to honor and glorify God through our physical bodies. This means caring for our bodies responsibly, avoiding behaviors that damage or defile them. Substance abuse, such as smoking and drinking, and self-destructive acts like suicide, are all considered sinful because they harm and disrespect the sacredness of our bodies.

The apostle Paul further emphasizes the principle of reaping what we sow in Galatians 6:7-8. He warns us that if we sow to our fleshly desires and impulses, we will reap corruption and decay. Our bodies, being the temples of the Holy Spirit, should not be used for sinful and destructive purposes. Instead, we are to sow to the Spirit, cultivating spiritual growth and holiness in our lives. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” (Galatians 6:7-8)

The ultimate goal of understanding the sacredness of our bodies is to live in harmony with God's purpose for us. By glorifying God in our bodies, we not only fulfill our spiritual calling but also

experience true freedom and fulfillment. Our bodies become instruments of righteousness and tools for serving others, as we seek to love God and love our neighbors with all our hearts.

Tattoos and Clothing

We read in the Holy Bible how God was precise in telling the people of Israel what to wear and why? "Again the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel: Tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a blue thread in the tassels of the corners. And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God." (Numbers 15:37-40)

Later we read in Zephaniah that the people forgot God's commandments and started adopting the fashion of the countries they lived in "And it shall be, in the day of the Lord's sacrifice, that I will punish the princes and the king's children, and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel." (Zephaniah 1:8)

The choice of a strange apparel involves the choice to want to be as the nations of the world. St. Jerome adds insight regarding the topic at hand, saying, "the garment of the sons of the king and the apparel of princes which we receive in Baptism, is Christ, according to that, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," and, "Put ye on bowels of mercy, goodness, humility, patience," and the rest."

Wherein, we are commanded to be clothed with the new man from heaven according to our Creator, and to "lay aside" the clothing of "the old man with his deeds." (Ephesians 4:22) If in our daily life we have always God before our eyes we will not have a problem deciding what to wear for we can just ask the question: If Lord Jesus Christ comes right now am I dressed appropriately to meet Him? Although we live in a secular society that forbids religion in the schools we find that some schools do have a dress code they pass out to the students at the beginning of each school year.

Most institutions have a dress code, how much more the church? "I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting; in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works." (1 Timothy 2:8-10)

St. Ambrose explains the danger of giving too much care and attention to worldly attributes, such as clothing, etc. as, "in our prayers, too, modesty is most pleasing and gains us much grace from our God.... A noble thing, then, is modesty, which, though giving up its rights, seizing on nothing for itself, laying claim to nothing and in some ways somewhat retiring within the sphere of its own powers, yet is rich in the sight of God, in whose sight no one is rich. Richness is modesty, for it is the portion of God. Paul bids that prayer be offered up with modesty and sobriety. He desires that this should be first, and, as it were, lead the way of prayers to come, so that the sinner's prayer may not be boastful but veiled, as it were, with the blush of shame. Indeed, it may merit a far greater degree of grace, in giving way to modesty at the remembrance of its fault."

These arguments can also be extended, to some extent, to tattoos and earrings. Tattoos and earrings were signs of slavery. Masters would mark their slaves with tattoos or earrings as a branding of ownership. God gave the Israelites these commandments after they had already left slavery signifying they now belong to nobody else but God. Symbolically this represented being freed from the slavery of sin, repenting, and returning to God. If the concept of tattoos comes down to intent, what is our reasoning? If to glorify God, let us engrave God in our hearts instead lest we be blamed for hypocrisy.

“You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 19:28) Tattoos were rites and ceremonies with which people expressed their sorrow at funerals. The heathen did so to pacify the infernal deities they dreamt about, and to render them favorable to their deceased friend. God commanded that this must not be imitated by His people. His people, whom the God of Israel had set apart for Himself must not receive the image and superscription of these worthless deities, and therefore must not make cuts or prints in their flesh. Such practices were signs of rebellion against God Himself.

“Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me,” (Isaiah 29:13) as Christians, our standards are established by God Himself. “Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Corinthians 6:20)

Suicide and Euthanasia

The Church teaches that all life is sacred. Through His death on the Cross, the Lord Jesus Christ transformed suffering so that all people could draw closer to God and others through it. People who killed themselves prematurely are destroying the temple of God that was given to them while also rejecting the power and love of God. One who commits suicide have found themselves completely self-absorbed and deny the possibility that God can take care of their difficulties and transform them into something positive and meaningful.

A person who commits suicide has rejected life and God's love. The sixth commandment states, “Thou shalt not commit murder.” The Holy Bible strictly forbids murdering anyone, including the murder of oneself. While murder involves the ending of life of another body, suicide ends the life of both body and soul as it prevents the possibility of repentance which jeopardizes salvation, (blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.) This is contrary to the will and authority of God.

Judas, our Lord’s disciple, is a prime case study for suicide: “then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” And they said, “What is that to us? You see to it!” Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.” (Matthew 27:3-5)

St. John Chrysostom explains: “this was a charge both against him and against these others. Against Judas, not because he repented but because he did so late and slowly and became self-condemned. For that he gave himself up, he himself confessed. And it was a charge against the others, in that having the power to reverse the verdict, they did not repent. But observe when it is that Judas feels remorse. When his sin was completed and had been fully accomplished. The devil is like this. He does

not permit those that are inattentive to see the evil in due time, lest they might repent. At least when Jesus was saying so many things, Judas was not influenced. But when his offense was completed, then repentance came upon him. And then it was too late to be profitable. For to condemn it and to throw down the pieces of silver and not to regard the Jewish people were all acceptable things. But to hang himself, this again was unpardonable and a work of an evil spirit. For the devil led him out of his repentance too soon, so that he should reap no fruit from it, and carried him off by a most disgraceful death, and one manifest to all, having persuaded him to destroy himself.”

*“For the devil led
him out of his
repentance too
soon, so that he
should reap no
fruit from it”*

St. Jerome also speaks on Judas, stating why his suicide was not the correct decision to make, following his original sin. “It profits nothing to do an act of penance which is incapable of correcting the sin. If a man sins against his brother in such a way that the wrong he committed can be amended, it is possible for him to be forgiven. If the consequences of his sin remain in force, however, in vain does he attempt to do penance. The psalmist applies this truth to our most miserable Judas when he says, “Let his prayer be counted as sin.” Not only was Judas unable to repair the damage of his sinful betrayal, but he even continued to compound the evil of that initial crime by committing suicide. Of such things the apostle speaks in his second epistle to the Corinthians: “Let not a brother be overwhelmed by greater sorrow.”



Review Questions

1. True or false? Abortions are allowed under certain circumstances in the church. (A: False)
2. True or false? Suicide is one of the worst sins that can be committed: (blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.) (A: True)
3. True or false? Committing suicide is murder. (A: True)
4. True or false? Abortions are not murder, but still principally wrong. (A: False)
5. True or false? Suicide breaks the sixth commandment of our Lord. (A: True)
6. As Christians, are we allowed to care excessively about clothing? (A: No, as the choice of a strange apparel involves the choice to want to be as the nations of the world.)
7. What verse represents the Orthodox opinion on tattoos? (A: Leviticus 19:28)
8. What does St. Jerome say regarding Judas taking his own life? (A: “Not only was Judas unable to repair the damage of his sinful betrayal, but he even continued to compound the evil of that initial crime by committing suicide.”)
9. True or false? God knows us only after we are born. (A: False)
10. True or false? Life begins at conception. (A: True)



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Freedom of Sexuality

APOLOGETICS

Homosexuality in Society

Over the last century, the view of homosexuality has undergone a dramatic transformation. In 1952, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) classified homosexuality as a disorder or perversion, warranting psychiatric treatment. This pathologization reflected the prevailing cultural attitudes of the time, which stigmatized and marginalized individuals who identified as homosexual. However, in recent decades, there has been a significant shift in societal perceptions of homosexuality. The DSM removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders in 1973, claiming that it is not a pathological condition. Furthermore, there has been growing legal recognition of the rights of LGBTQ individuals, with many countries enacting laws that protect them from discrimination based on sexual orientation.

As a result of these changes, the public's view of homosexuality has become increasingly welcoming of homosexuality. Surveys conducted in recent years have shown that a majority of people in many countries now believe that homosexuality should be accepted and tolerated. This shift in attitudes has been driven by a number of factors, including the increased visibility of LGBTQ individuals in the media and popular culture, as well as the efforts of LGBTQ advocacy groups to raise awareness and understanding of the issues facing LGBTQ people.

Despite these developments, there is still significant opposition to homosexuality in many quarters. Most traditional religious groups often condemn homosexuality as a sin or a violation of traditional values. The Orthodox Christian tradition has continued to maintain its view of homosexuality, considering it to be a sin and a departure from God's intended order for human relationships. Though the church condemns the act, it continues to believe that all people are created in the image of God and deserve to be treated with love and respect, regardless of their sexual orientation.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;” (1 Peter 3:15) “and on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.” (Jude 1:22-23) When speaking about these topics we need to remind ourselves of gentleness and respect. These are complicated and deeply personal issues; they can be harmful and painful, so we need to exercise respect for the issues themselves and even more so to the individuals. Having respect also for the struggle they may be going through which we do not have a clue about, nor can we even come close to relating to.

Obstacles to Dialogue

In the realm of human communication, there lies a profound chasm between what is uttered and what is genuinely comprehended. My intention may be to convey the Christian perspective with utmost gentleness and respect, yet it is highly likely that my words will be interpreted in a manner far removed from my intended meaning. For instance, when I make an ethical statement such as "I think homosexuality is wrong," it may be misinterpreted anthropologically as "I do not accept you" or, more pointedly, "you are wrong." This disparity underscores the critical importance of considering two fundamental aspects: first, carefully examining my own intentions and the message I aim to convey, and second, analyzing how my words are actually being received and understood by the person on the receiving end.

To bridge this communication gap, we must exercise empathy and actively listen to the other person. It is essential to create a space where both parties feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment or misunderstanding. This requires us to be patient, attentive, and open-minded. Furthermore, we need to be mindful of the context in which our words are spoken. The same statement can carry different meanings depending on the cultural, social, and personal context in which it is uttered. It is important to consider the potential impact of our words on the other person and to adapt our communication style accordingly.

Effective communication is a two-way street that requires effort, understanding, and a genuine desire to connect with the other person. By being aware of the potential for misinterpretation and actively working to bridge the gap between what is said and what is heard, we can foster deeper, more meaningful, and more compassionate relationships with others.

Clichés

In today's society, we are inundated with a plethora of clichés that are often used to address complex moral and ethical issues. These clichés can be problematic because they oversimplify the issues at hand and can lead to misunderstandings and confusion. For instance, the statement "this is an issue of human dignity and human rights" is often used to support a particular sexual lifestyle. While it is true that human dignity and human rights are important values, they do not automatically justify any and all actions. It is important to differentiate between anthropological statements, which describe the nature of human beings, and ethical statements, which evaluate the rightness or wrongness of actions.

Anthropological statements describe the nature of human beings and their inherent dignity and value. All human beings, regardless of their race, gender, or any other characteristic, possess inherent dignity and value. This dignity is based on the fact that human beings are created in the image of God and are therefore endowed with a unique and special status.

Ethical statements, on the other hand, evaluate the rightness or wrongness of actions. They are based on moral principles and values that guide our behavior. Not all actions are equally right or wrong; some actions are morally good and others are morally evil. The fact that all human beings possess equal dignity and value does not mean that all actions are equally right. For example, it would be wrong to say that murder is equally right as saving a life, simply because both actions involve human beings.

In order to address complex moral and ethical issues in a meaningful way, it is important to avoid using clichés and oversimplifications. We need to carefully examine the issues at hand and consider the different perspectives and values involved. We also need to be aware of the distinction between anthropological statements and ethical statements, and avoid conflating the two. By doing so, we can engage in more meaningful and productive discussions about the moral and ethical challenges facing our society today.

Sexual Christian Ethics

Christian ethics is not merely a separate discipline but rather an ambitious multidisciplinary endeavor that draws upon various fields of knowledge, including biblical studies, theology, philosophy, and the social sciences. This comprehensive approach is necessary to address the complex moral issues facing individuals and communities in today's world.

One significant aspect of Christian ethics is its understanding of human sexuality. Christian ethics recognizes that sex is a good gift from God with specific purposes. These purposes are best fulfilled in the context of marriage between a man and a woman. This view is based on the understanding that human relationality, including sexuality, is an aspect of the imago Dei, reflecting the image of God in humanity.

However, due to the fall of humanity, human sexuality has also been affected by sin and brokenness. This brokenness manifests itself in distorted relationships with God, self, others, and nature. Christian ethics acknowledges this fallenness and seeks to provide a framework for understanding and addressing the challenges it presents to human flourishing. The multidisciplinary approach of Christian ethics allows it to engage with a wide range of perspectives and insights on human sexuality. Biblical studies provide a foundation for understanding God's design for human sexuality.

There are four possible purposes of sex: consummation of marriage (Genesis 2:24), procreation (Genesis 1:28), love (Ephesians 5:25), and pleasure. The ethical status of any sexual act or relationship is determined by how well it aligns with the four purposes of sex mentioned above. Acts of sex that fulfill these purposes. Sexual acts outside of the institution of marriage are ethically problematic because they fail to fully achieve the purposes of sex as defined within this framework. Homosexual relations would also fail to meet these purposes. The Bible never talks about hetero or homosexual identities but only about the different acts, as in which acts are in accordance with God's way and which ones are outside the will of our creator. As Christians, we are created in the image of God, yet still sinners, so our view of others should always be from the bottom looking up rather than above all looking down.

“Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it;” (Genesis 1:26-28) Carrying the image of Christ to the world: “therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming

yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.” (1 Peter 1:13-15) We are therefore, instructed by the Holy Bible itself, to reproduce and repopulate the earth in the image of Christ, however all types of lust, including but not limited to homosexuality, hinders this wish.

The Holy person does not live in the lusts of the flesh but walks according to the spirit. The Holy person has two characteristics: their flesh is guided by their human spirit, and their human spirit is guided by the Spirit of God. So the Spirit of God is guiding the whole person – body and spirit, so we should be holy in both body and spirit. “For I am the Lord, your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy.” (Leviticus 11:44) “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Romans 8:5-8)

Thankfully, redemption even of our sexuality is possible, both via His common grace that works throughout the world and the salvific grace through which God forgives his people and fulfills his ultimate purposes by bringing them into his kingdom. Sex is God’s good gift to us, and we should rejoice in it without shame—within the limits set by God’s design.

Challenging Arguments

A common misconception is that “homosexuality is genetically caused and unchangeable.” The purpose of this argument is for the right to express a certain sexuality. Biologically, this is false, and it has been shown that our sexual orientation is not genetically determined and unchangeable. And even if it was, genetics does not dictate sexual ethics, upon which we have elaborated previously.

We may have heard “Well, homosexuality is found in nature and is therefore natural.” It is very dangerous to transfer what happens in the animal kingdom to human relationships which are much more complex, as well as less animalistic and uncivilized. Humans have complex moral frameworks and ethical systems that guide their behavior and interactions with others, based on concepts such as empathy, fairness, and justice. While some animals exhibit behaviors that could be interpreted as moral, such as cooperation, altruism, and empathy, these behaviors are often more instinctual and lack the abstract reasoning and cultural context found in human morality. For example, animals naturally kill each other but humans do not, so why would we want other aspects of our lives to be validated by them?

Next, “love can never be wrong.” Of course love is never wrong; we need to support and care for everybody, but not all love should be sexually expressed. Sexual acts can be right, or they can be wrong. Again, if love causes someone to kill someone, does it justify the act?

Lastly, a complicated thought arises when one says, “I have prayed about it and I feel peace about it from God.” In big ethical or theological issues, that is not enough, God guides us through reason, the Holy Spirit, and the Bible, which all need to come into play, otherwise it is really one’s own motives that are guiding their feelings. Arius prayed about his heresy and was convinced by it, this did not justify his heresy. There are many aspects to hearing God’s voice.

Evolution of the Cause

The term “homosexuality” was not a coined phrase found in original scripture. It was phrased in 1869 by a Hungarian journalist alluding to homosexuality as an identity. It made its way into the academic world a few years after that. The whole premise and thought of homosexuality as an identity comes from science and not from the Christian faith. It is man-made. The Christian perspective on our identity does not define us as merely “straight” or “gay.” Our identity comes from Genesis, wherein we are all created in the image of God: male and female. We are valuable, important, and loved by God because we are unique beings created in His image, which we must therefore uphold His image.

The Natural Man

Christ defines what He intended as natural when He said: “have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female’. Our Lord has always made it clear what genders there have always been, and what each purpose is in a sexual relationship. “But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Mark 10:6-9)

Recall, in the Old Testament, when people walked according to the lusts of the flesh, God destroyed them: “then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.” (Genesis 6:5-8)

People in the days of Noah and Lot were both destroyed with fire and water: the two things that also have the ability to save us. The difference was walking in the flesh rather than walking in the spirit. “For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly ... then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed.” (2 Peter 2:4-6,9-10)

Sexual Immorality and Homosexuality

We must be able to control our worldly desires, as they lead us down a path of sin and no life on earth is worth giving up an eternity in heaven with our Lord, who promises “I will give of the fountain, of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral,

sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Revelation 21:6-8)

When it comes to homosexuality in sexuality, some misinterpret the meaning of the word as meaning pedophilia. But when put in light and context of the entire scripture, this cannot be so. Scripture does not just refer to homosexuality, it refers to the action and act itself as an abomination: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination... Do not defile yourselves with any of these things; for by all these the nations are defiled, which I am casting out before you.” (Leviticus 18:22-24) In the law, God takes the enemies of the Jews and the destruction of these enemies to explain why they are an abomination. God wanted the Jews to do the exact opposite of what they saw their enemies and other nations do. This is true in both the Old and New Testament, however, only a few succeeded in this wish.

The infamous verse from the Holy Bible, directly renouncing homosexuality explains, “if a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.” (Leviticus 20:13) There is no room for misinterpretation here. This is also iterated in a similar manner in the New Testament, lest someone claim it is an outdated law and Christ abolished it. Defiling the body is to dishonor the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

“Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; ...” (Romans 1:24-32)

“Gave them up” refers to the Grace of God leaving them, or in other words, silencing the voice of the Holy Spirit in their hearts by repeating sins without repentance and confession.

A Sin like all others

The sentence of those who practice homosexuality, or a life of sin in general, is very clearly laid out: “do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

Recall the fate of the two lustful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, wherein they were given a chance to change their ways, but they chose a life of pleasing the ‘flesh,’ rather than the spirit: “as Sodom and

Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, reject authority, and speak evil of dignitaries.” (Jude 1:7-8)

Additionally, “we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust.” (1 Timothy 1:8-11)

Homosexuality is put on the same field as murder and lawlessness which are from the original Commandments from the Old Testament. Thus, we observe homosexuality being condemned in the Old and New Testaments.

The Solution: Standing Up for the Truth

Keep in mind, when we sin against our flesh, we sin against the Holy Spirit, and the light and darkness cannot coincide within us: “now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For “the two,” He says, “shall become one flesh.” But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Corinthians 6:13-20)

Standing up for the truth is not to protect the church but to protect the sinner! Is it better to mince words so people are not offended, or is it better to be clear and correct them? By not correcting them we help them lose their eternity, and be condemned to eternal punishment. Furthermore, political correctness is distorting the truth and leads many astray. We need to go back to the ways of the early church: “so continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.” (Acts 2:46-47)

The New Era

To identify with the lust of the flesh is the definition of living for the world of which God throughout the ages has condemned. When we start to identify ourselves with our sins, we have reached the level of silencing the voice of the Holy Spirit that convicts us to repent even if we continually fall. Defending a sin to be a character trait is a very late stage in sin and we need to make every effort to revive the voice of the Holy Spirit in the heart.

We are human beings, living together in this world, therefore, can it be anything like natural law? Can we look at humanity through the lens of design? What is the goal of something even if landed here through natural or evolutionary means? For example, an acorn has the possibility of becoming an oak tree, as it is designed this way, regardless of *how* it was designed. In this same way, are there indications for what human beings were designed for? And when we look at sexuality, are there things we can notice as indicators of what the ultimate design is?

The Three Basic Indicators

There are, first and foremost, physical indicators: a man and woman's body belong together sexually, therefore these act as indications regarding what our bodies were designed for.

Additionally, there are reproductive indicators: biologically, it is obvious that sexuality and reproduction are connected, as we are meant to use the bodies our Lord has given us to reproduce. We are sexual beings biologically in order to mate and make sure our species does not die out. Therefore, homosexual relationships are by principal biologically sterile, and hence, unnatural. If a homosexual wants to recreate, they have to borrow from the heterosexual world, which happens regularly, through insemination.

Lastly, there are psychological indicators: homosexual relationships lack the complementarity of male, (respect component,) and female, (love component.) These factors are essential in any intimate relationship or marriage, and are lacking for those taking part in homosexual activities.

Can This Be Corrected?

As we are well aware, nothing is impossible for God. Whenever God gives a commandment, He also gives us the power to fulfill that commandment. "But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord concerning you, both that you do and will do the things we command you." (2 Thessalonians 3:3-4) Even if we tread down the wrong path, "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)

Pope Shenouda mentions in his book on homosexuality some practical steps: they need to accept that this is a sin and not the will of God. Once they've repented, begin to enjoy the sweetness of spiritual life: prayer, contemplation, spiritual songs, the Bible, spiritual books, fasting, liturgies, etc. Additionally, if the spirit is strong, it can resist temptation. Servants and clergy need to pray, fast, and raise up liturgies in their names. Regarding medical treatment for homosexuality, trained clergy/individuals can work to find a root cause to treat: abuse physically, verbally, or mentally.

The Goal is Christ

Genesis, the Gospels, and the Epistles of Paul all agree that the Christian perspective on sexuality is summed up into two categories: God calls us to marriage between a man and woman in a life-long committed relationship. Rather, we can also commit to a single life, sexually abstinent, living for the Lord.

For anybody called to be a disciple, whether married or consecrated for the Lord, Christ tells us the cost of being a disciple: “he who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. 38 And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. 39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.” (Matthew 10:36-39)

And this is the challenge that Christ gave us, that anything we have as a priority in our lives, whether relationships, possessions, or sexuality, He calls us to put Him above everything else.



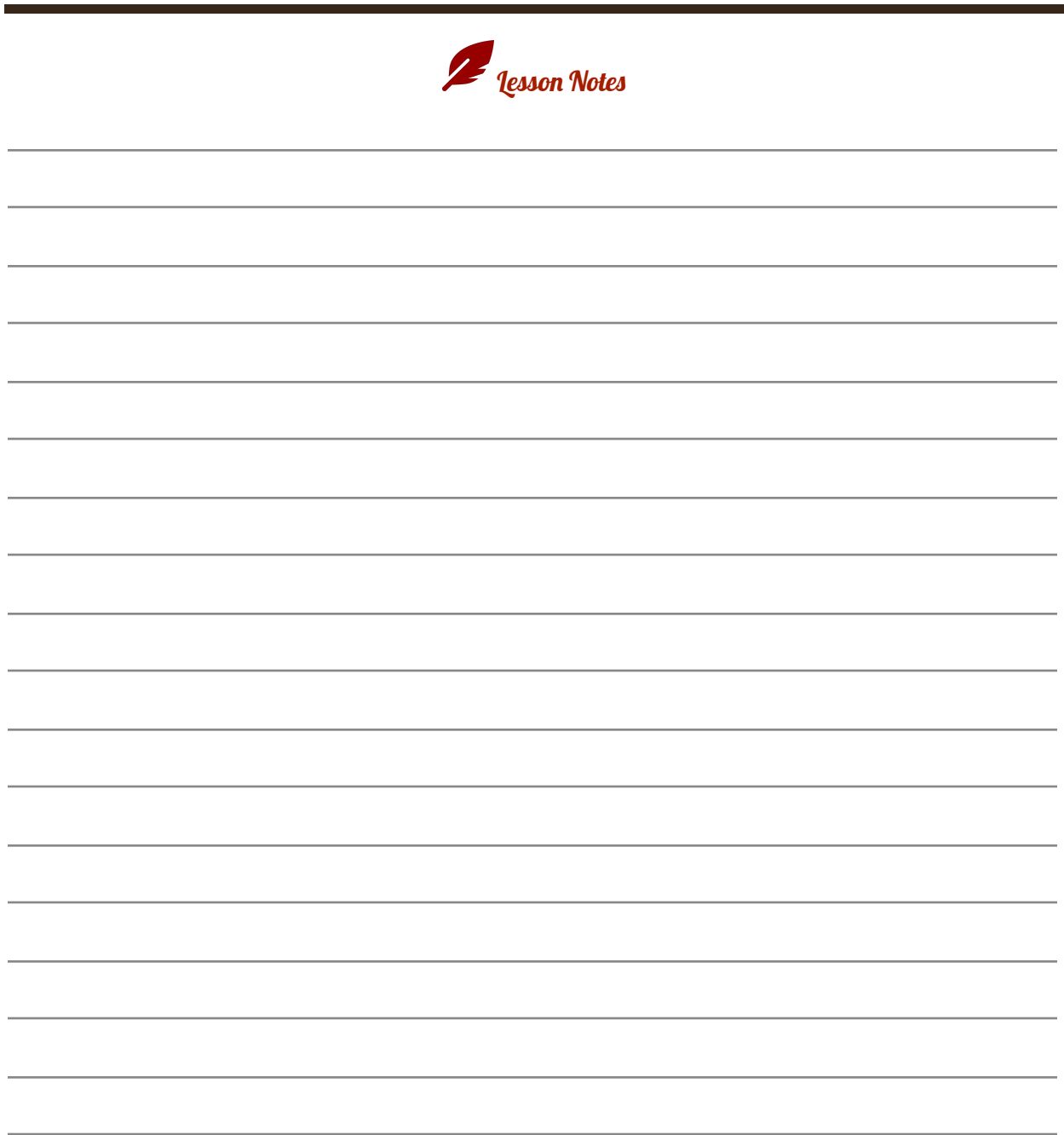
Review Questions

1. True or false? Although we do not agree with them, homosexuals can still be accepted Orthodox Christians. (A: False)
2. What are the three basic indicators? (A: Physical, biological, and psychological.)
3. True or false? The term “homosexuality” was a coined phrase found in original scripture. (A: False)
4. Which verse speaks directly on homosexual acts, thereby condemning them? (A: Leviticus 20:13)
5. What is the difference between moral and legal issues? (A: All laws should be moral, but not all morals should be put into laws.)



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On Humanity

P APLG300.1 - Life After Death.pptx

P APLG300.2 - Apologetics - The Freedom of my Body ...

P APLG300.3 - The Freedom of Sexuality [Homosexual...