

Pre-Servants Curriculum - Apologetics



Apologetics



Module

APOLOGETICS

LESSON LIST

APOLOGETICS	2
Unit 1	3
1.1 On Faith & Reason	4
Introduction to Apologetics	4
Existence of God	12
Science and Faith	23
1.2 On Jesus	31
Was Jesus more than a man?	31
The Account of the Resurrection	38
Unit 2	45
2.1 God and the Supernatural	46
God and the Existence of Hell	46
Pluralism: Is Christ the Only Way?	56
Creation and Evolution	66
Miracles	72
Unit 3	80
3.1 On Humanity	81
Life after Death & Immortality of the Soul	81
Value of Human Life: Freedom of My Body	89
Freedom of Sexuality	98
Powerpoint Presentations	108

Unit 1

Introduction to Apologetics

APOLOGETICS

Origins of Apologetics

The Greek root words are apo, meaning "from," and logos, meaning "word, logic, or reasoning." The word for apologetics comes from the Greek word apologia, which is used in 1 Peter 3:15, and refers to giving a reason or reply for our faith. "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) This word is a legal term that describes what a lawyer would do in defending his client. "Apologetics offers each person evidence and reasons for believing in the truth of Christianity."

Definition and Purpose

Theological studies encompass a wide array of disciplines, each dedicated to exploring and understanding different aspects of faith and spirituality. Among these disciplines, apologetics holds a unique position, serving as the branch of theology primarily concerned with defending and proving the truth of Christian doctrines. In essence, apologetics involves presenting well-reasoned arguments and evidence in support of Christian beliefs. It seeks to establish the validity and credibility of these beliefs, often in response to challenges or objections.

One key aspect of apologetics is the defensive approach, which involves responding to criticisms and doubts raised against the Christian faith. This approach aims to provide reasonable explanations and counterarguments, addressing specific issues or objections that may arise. An example of this approach can be seen in the writings of St. Paul the apostle, who frequently defended his beliefs in the face of persecution and opposition: "just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace." (Philippians 1:7). St. Paul and all the apostles are often seen in defense of the faith. They are beaten, they are rejected, sent to prison, so they are often found needing to defend and justify why they accept such circumstances.

" Apologetics is not merely an intellectual exercise or a debate tactic. It is rooted in a deep desire to share the transformative power of the Christian faith with others. "

In contrast, the offensive approach in apologetics focuses on proactively presenting the Christian faith as a compelling and intellectually satisfying worldview. It involves engaging in discussions and dialogues with others, aiming to demonstrate the coherence and rationality of Christian beliefs. As St. Paul mentions, "casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience

of Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:5). This approach seeks to initiate conversations and challenge prevailing assumptions, ultimately inviting others to consider the truth of the Christian message. Letting no thought simmer without an answer, rooted in Christ.

It is important to note that apologetics is not merely an intellectual exercise or a debate tactic. Rather, it is rooted in a deep desire to share the transformative power of the Christian faith with others. Apologists recognize that faith is not solely based on blind belief but can be supported by reason and evidence. By engaging in apologetics, they aim to provide a bridge between faith and reason, allowing individuals to explore the depths of their spiritual convictions.

Moreover, apologetics plays a vital role in fostering a deeper understanding of Christian doctrines and beliefs. By examining and defending these doctrines, the study helps to clarify, articulate, and refine them. This process contributes to the ongoing development and enrichment of Christian theology, ensuring its relevance and adaptability in the face of changing cultural and intellectual landscapes.

Biblical Foundation for Apologetics

In the beautiful history of Christianity, apologetics has been an enduring thread, interwoven into the very fabric of our faith. From the words of our Lord Himself to the writings of the apostles and the enduring legacy of early Church fathers, the call to defend and proclaim the truth of the Gospel has resonated through the ages. Our Lord Himself engaged in apologetical argument when He appealed to His miracles as proof that He was sent by the Father; "but the Father who dwells in Me does the works" (John 14:10) Additionally when st. Luke said "it seemed good to me... to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed," (Luke 1:3–4) He was defending the information being spread regarding the miracles, etc.

In the book of Luke, in the Holy Bible, we are told, “now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say.” (Luke 12:11) When Jesus instructed His disciples not to worry about how or what to answer when brought before authorities, He was preparing them for the challenges they would face in defending their faith. The early Church embraced this call with zeal, as evidenced by the bold preaching of apostles like St. Paul, who reasoned and persuaded in synagogues and marketplaces, sharing the message of the Kingdom of God with unwavering conviction, “as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures.” (Acts 17:2) and “he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.” (Acts 19:8)

We must remind ourselves through tribulations and afflictions that defending our faith is one of the highest honors that could be appointed to anyone in this life: “some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel.” (Philippians 1:15-17) Apologetics is a vital aspect of Christian discipleship. When we engage in apologetics, we are not simply defending abstract theological concepts, but rather the very foundation of our faith.

Famous Christian Apologists

In the early centuries of Christianity, a number of influential apologists emerged, defending the faith against pagan critics and heretics. These apologists played a vital role in shaping the development of Christian thought and doctrine.

One of the most famous apologists was Justin Martyr, who lived in the 2nd century AD. Justin was a convert to Christianity from paganism, and he was known for his willingness to engage in dialogue with pagans and to defend the faith in public debates. Prepared to die for his faith and join our Lord in the Kingdom of Heaven, all to defend his faith, wrote “but since we do not place our hopes on the present [order], we are not troubled by being put to death, since we will have to die somehow in any case.” (The Apologies of Justin Martyr) He additionally spoke on heretical religions, such as that of the Greeks as, “they said that Athena was the daughter of Zeus not from intercourse, but when the god had in mind the making of the world through a word, (logos,) his first thought was Athena.” (Justin Martyr) Here, Justin Martyr uses the thinking of the time to justify the creation, or make an apologetic correlation to the creation.

Another famous apologist was St. Clement of Alexandria, who lived in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. St. Clement was a prolific writer, and his works covered a wide range of topics, including theology, philosophy, and ethics. In his writings, St. Clement emphasized the importance of faith and reason, and he argued that Christianity was the perfect synthesis of the two. “I call him truly learned who brings everything to bear on the truth, so that from geometry, music, grammar, and philosophy itself, culling what is useful, he guards the faith against assault.” Clearly, St. Clement here directs us to use anything and everything in our surrounding to defend and present the faith.

St. Augustine of Hippo was another influential apologist who lived in the 4th and 5th centuries AD. St. Augustine was a brilliant theologian and philosopher, and his writings have had a profound impact on Christian thought. In his writings, St. Augustine defended the faith against a variety of heresies. He insisted “if you believe what you like in the Gospel, and reject what you don't like, it is not the Gospel you believe, but yourself.”

These are just a few of the many famous Christian apologists who have made significant contributions to the defense and development of the faith. Their writings continue to be studied and debated by Christians today, and they provide a valuable resource for understanding the history and theology of Christianity.

Why Study Apologetics?

God generally calls upon His people to use reason, “come now, and let us reason together,” says the Lord” (Isaiah 1:18) to know spirit truth and that of error, “we are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error,” (1 John 4:6) and to discern right from wrong, “but solid food belongs to those who are

“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)

of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Hebrews 5:14). God's call for His people to use reason, discern truth from error, and distinguish right from wrong demonstrates the importance of intellectual and moral growth in our spiritual lives. We must also aim to achieve the ability to use reason as part of the image of God in man. (Gen 1:26) Reason, a fundamental aspect of the image of God in man, allows us to critically analyze information, make informed decisions, and engage in meaningful dialogue. By cultivating our reasoning abilities, we can better understand and appreciate the truths of our faith and defend them against opposing arguments.

Regarding God's command, we are told to "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) There are numerous examples of God's people using reason to navigate complex situations and make wise choices. St. Paul speaks of his mission as "defending and confirming the gospel." (Phillipians 1:16) He adds in verse 17, "I am put here for the defense of the gospel." As St. Paul emphasizes in his mission, defending and confirming the gospel is a crucial task for church leaders and servants. By engaging in apologetics, we can effectively communicate our beliefs, address misconceptions, and foster a deeper understanding of the Christian faith among ourselves and others: "holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict." (Titus 1:9). Holding fast to the faithful word, as Titus 1:9 instructs, implies that our apologetic stance is reflected in our daily lives. By living out our faith with integrity, compassion, and love, we provide a compelling witness to the transforming power of the gospel.

Holding fast to the faithful word shows that apologetics extends even to our actions! There are many important qualities needed in a Church, servant or leader, however a gentle and patient approach, is a critical aspect of the service, as "a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth." (2 Tim 2:24-25) Engaging in respectful dialogue, listening attentively, and seeking to understand the perspectives of others creates a conducive environment for meaningful conversations and potential conversions.

Ultimately, the study of apologetics also enables a personal strengthening of the faith in knowing that it is founded on facts and truth. In the Letter to Diognetus, regarding the Word at hand, we are told how our faith separates us from a crowd: "for the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. The course of conduct which they follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor do they, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines. But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life." (Epistle to Diognetus, Chapter 5)

The Importance of Reason in Our Life of Faith

Our faith is only as valid as the object in which it is placed. St. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:14 that, "if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, your faith also empty." In other words, what

makes faith have merit is the object of that faith. Why did Christ have to be one to die? Why do we use the sign of the cross? Do we really need communion? Does God really care about the details of our lives? The existence of evidence often precedes and supports faith. Rational individuals typically rely on some form of evidence or reasoning before trusting a situation or system, such as entering an elevator. There are two types of belief: "belief that" and "belief in." "Belief that" provides evidence and a rational basis for confidence, which is necessary for establishing "belief in." Once evidence-based belief is established, one can have faith in it.

The task of apologetics is not to reason someone into the kingdom. Apologetics can never actually force someone to make a decision for Christ. Christ said in John 6:65, "no one can come to me unless it has been granted him from the Father." The Holy Spirit must additionally work in their heart to move them towards faith in Christ. Therefore, faith and reason must work hand in hand to effectively reach others for Christ. Apologetics can help someone to "believe that" Jesus is the Christ, but can never force one to "believe in" Him. We are lowering people's intellectual barriers so that the Holy Spirit can penetrate their heart.

The Apologetic Approach

The call to apologetics is not reserved for a select few; it is a responsibility shared by all believers. Whether we are engaged in formal debates, sharing our faith with friends and family, or simply living out our daily lives with integrity and grace, we are all called to be ambassadors of the Gospel, proclaiming the truth of Christ to a world in desperate need of hope. We must then approach "meekness and fear" (1 Pet 3:15) being mindful of how we point out the inconsistencies of other views. We need to come across as "one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread," as well as remain patient and virtuous in our lives, as we strive to be devout Christians.

***"We need to come
across as "one
beggar telling
another beggar
where to find
bread"***

Our lives serve as a powerful apologetic to the truth of Christianity. We have probably heard the expression, "you may be the only Bible that someone ever reads." St. Clement of Alexandria says "Let us haste, let us run, my fellow men—us, who are God-loving and God-like images of the Word—let us haste, let us run, let us take his yoke, let us receive, to conduct us to immortality, the good charioteer of men. Let us love Christ." In the same way, apologetics enhances the testimony of our lives, which is most likely what non-Christians will see first.

Embrace thus the challenge of apologetics with renewed zeal, trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us. As we stand firm in our faith, may we always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks us about the hope that is within us.



Review Questions

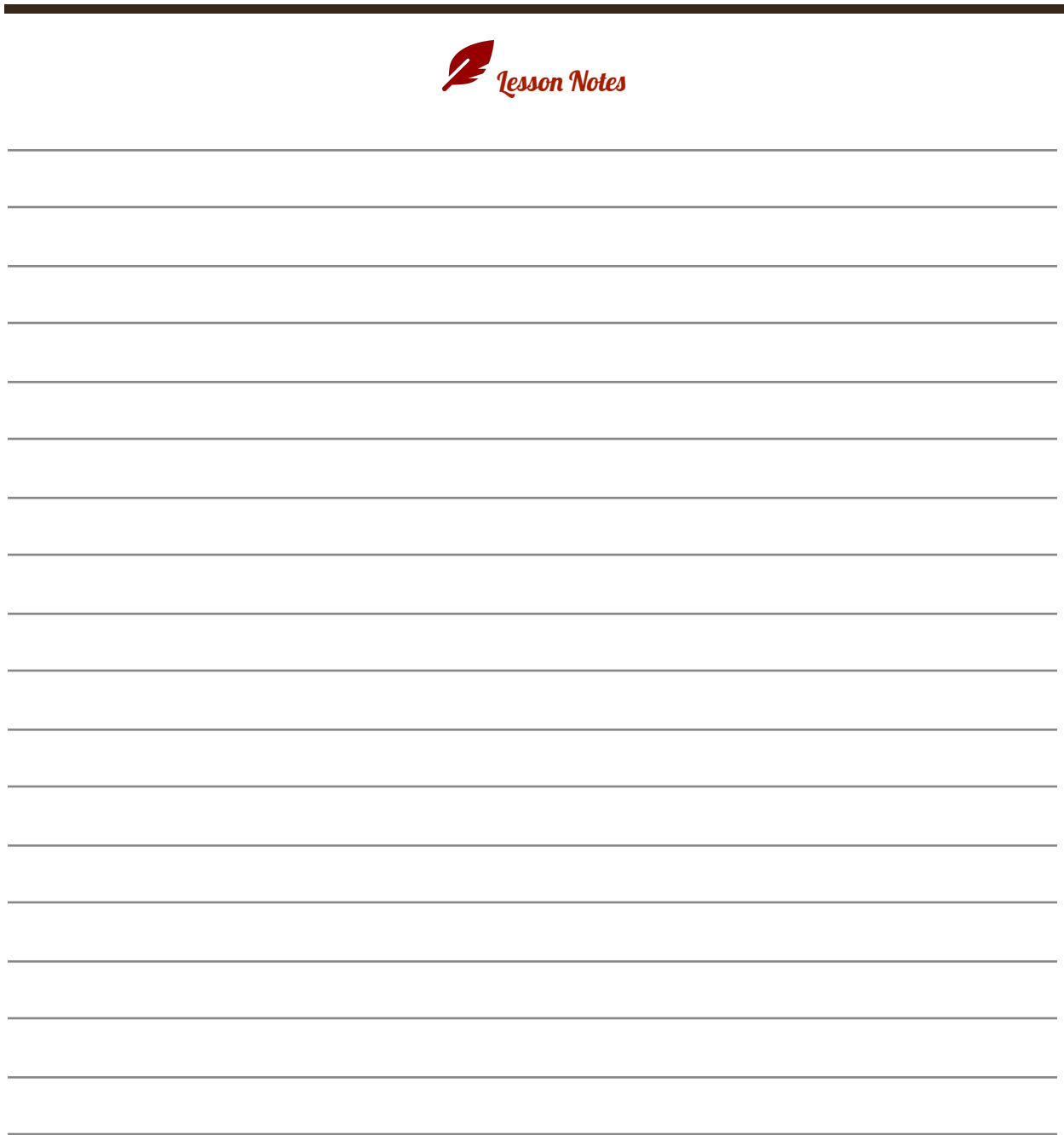
1. What are the two main approaches to apologetics?
 - a. **Defensive and offensive**
 - b. Biblical and theological
 - c. Logical and rhetorical
 - d. Empirical and rational
2. The root words of apologetics are ____, meaning “from,” and ____, meaning “word, logic, or reasoning.”
 - a. **apo and logos**
 - b. logos and theos
 - c. logos and eidos
 - d. theos and logos
3. The purpose of apologetics is to ____ and ____ the truth of Christian doctrines.
 - a. **defend and prove**
 - b. explain and clarify
 - c. justify and substantiate
 - d. all of the above
4. Apologetics is important because it provides a ____ basis for the Christian faith.
 - a. rational
 - b. intellectual
 - c. evidential
 - d. **all of the above**
5. Who are some famous Christian apologists?
 - a. Justin Martyr
 - b. Tertullian
 - c. Origen
 - d. **All of the above**
6. Why is it important for Christians to be able to defend their faith?
 - a. Because it is a requirement of the Bible.
 - b. Because it helps to strengthen their faith.
 - c. Because it helps to witness to others.
 - d. **All of the above**
7. The Bible tells us that we should be prepared to give a defense for our faith. This is because
 - a. **It is a duty of all Christians to be prepared to give a defense for their faith.**
 - b. Apologetics is a waste of time and energy.
 - c. Christians should only focus on their own personal faith and not worry about defending it to others.
 - d. None of the above
8. The word "apologetics" comes from the Greek word "apologia," which means
 - a. **"To give a reason or reply"**
 - b. "To defend"
 - c. "To provide a rational basis"
 - d. All of the above
9. Apologetics is a branch of theology that seeks to
 - a. Defend the Christian faith against objections and challenges
 - b. Provide a rational basis for the Christian faith
 - c. **Both A and B**

-
- d. None of the above
10. Which of the following is not a characteristic of good apologetics?
- a. It is intellectually honest
 - b. It is respectful of the other person's beliefs
 - c. It is persuasive
 - d. **All of the above**



Books & References

1.  Apologetics_SUS , accessed 25 March 2024,
<<https://suscopts.org/resources/literature/546/apologetics/>>



Existence of God

APOLOGETICS

Overview

The question of God's existence is a profound and enduring one that has preoccupied the minds of philosophers, theologians, and individuals from all walks of life for centuries. While some individuals may profess unwavering belief in the existence of a higher power, others may harbor doubts or outright skepticism. The decision to believe or disbelieve in God profoundly impacts one's worldview, guiding one's moral compass, purpose in life, and approach to living. There is no individual in existence that, at some point in their lives, does not face this life changing question. Does God exist? As such there are different reasons to believe in God's existence while there are many arguments against

The decision to believe or disbelieve in God profoundly impacts one's worldview, guiding one's moral compass, purpose in life, and approach to living.

His existence. Though we will not particularly address the causes of doubt in detail, they are addressed individually in other sections. As such we will briefly cover the different types of unbelief and their causes while focusing more precisely on the reason to believe God's existence from an apologetic sense. The concepts presented will be based on the cosmological argument, the argument of cause and effect, the design argument and finally the pragmatic argument.

These arguments, while not exhaustive, offer a glimpse into the diverse reasons that individuals may believe in God's existence. The decision to believe or disbelieve in God is a deeply personal one, influenced by a multitude of factors including personal experiences, philosophical contemplation, and cultural influences. It is a question that continues to intrigue and challenge individuals throughout history, shaping their lives and perspectives in

profound ways.

Types of Unbelief

The question of God's existence has fascinated and divided humanity for centuries. While some individuals possess brilliant minds and philosophical acumen, their beliefs regarding God's presence vary widely. Some firmly embrace the concept of a divine being, while others vehemently deny its existence.

Throughout history, humanity has enjoyed the freedom to choose and believe as they please. This freedom was emphasized by Joshua when he addressed the Jewish nation, presenting them with a choice between serving the Lord or alternative deities: "And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers

served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (Joshua 24:15) This act highlights the individual's agency and the profound decision they must make regarding their spiritual beliefs.

Over time, various forms of unbelief have emerged. Agnostics assert that knowledge of the divine is unattainable and that individuals must embark on a continuous search without expecting definitive answers. Atheists, on the other hand, boldly proclaim the absence of God's existence. This stance, while devoid of empirical proof, becomes a belief system in itself, much like Christianity.

Another group, known as skeptics, occupy a unique position. Neither do they claim with certainty God's lack of existence, nor do they claim the knowledge is unattainable like the agnostic. The Skeptics remain, well, skeptical of the idea. They doubt the existence, since science does not prove nor disprove, then as there is no proof, there is accordingly an unlikelihood of God's existence. This is an unfortunate position as the skeptic solely bases himself on science, and yet the skeptic believes in the existence of love, hate or even the conscience but there is no empirical proof of their existence as of today. Yet, no one denies or doubts their existence.

Lastly, infidels represent individuals who are intolerant of God's existence and actively oppose those who embrace it. They firmly believe that the concept of God is invalid and must be condemned. Atheists can fall into this category, as they reject the existence of God and view the idea as something to be condemned.

The debate surrounding God's existence has profound implications for humanity. It influences our understanding of the universe, our purpose in life, and our moral compass. While the search for answers may be arduous, the journey itself holds immense value, fostering critical thinking, intellectual growth, and a deeper appreciation for the complexities of human existence.

Causes of Doubt

The presence of evil, pain, and injustice in the world can indeed raise doubts about the existence of God. People often struggle to reconcile the idea of a benevolent and omnipotent deity with the suffering they witness around them. This cognitive dissonance can lead individuals to question whether God is truly good, powerful, or even existent.

One common assumption is that if God were real, He would prevent such suffering from occurring. This line of thinking suggests that either God enjoys the pain and misery of humanity, making Him malevolent, or that He is unable to alleviate suffering, rendering Him not truly omnipotent. Understandably, these assumptions can prompt individuals to doubt the existence of a higher power.

However, it is important to consider alternative explanations for the presence of evil and suffering. One perspective is that suffering is a natural consequence of living in a finite and imperfect world. Just as there is beauty and joy, there is also pain and sorrow. This view does not necessarily imply that God is indifferent to human suffering, but rather that it is an inherent part of the human experience. Another perspective is that suffering can serve a purpose in spiritual growth and development. Challenges and hardships can help individuals learn, evolve, and ultimately find deeper meaning in life. More on this in a dedicated section.

It is also worth noting that one's upbringing and environment can significantly influence religious beliefs. Individuals raised in religious households are more likely to adopt the beliefs and practices of their parents and community. Conversely, those raised in non-religious or secular environments may be less likely to embrace the concept of a higher power. Additionally, societal and cultural factors can play a role in shaping religious beliefs. In some societies, religious adherence is strongly encouraged or even mandated, while in others, it is discouraged or marginalized. The surrounding and environment in a family or the education provided and information given, all plays a role in the direction of belief.

Lastly, the fear of being labeled a fool or ignorant can also deter individuals from exploring religious beliefs. In a world that often values rational and scientific thinking, acknowledging a belief in God can be perceived as irrational or unsophisticated. This social pressure can lead individuals to suppress or even deny their spiritual inclinations. Occam's razor is a significant principle propounded by the medieval philosopher William of Ockham. At its core, it advocates for simplicity and parsimony in constructing explanations, asserting that among competing explanations for a phenomenon, the one with the fewest assumptions should be favored. This principle aligns with the notion that complexity should not be introduced without compelling justification. However, Occam's razor should not be applied blindly, as there are many instances where a more complex explanation is warranted based on empirical evidence.

Overall, the decision to believe or not believe in God is a complex one, influenced by a multitude of factors. While the presence of evil and suffering can raise doubts, it is essential to consider alternative perspectives and recognize that religious beliefs are shaped by various personal, social, and cultural influences.

Philosophy of Religion

An argument, as defined by Merriam-Webster, is a "coherent series of reasons, statements, or facts intended to support or establish a point of view." Deductive arguments are a type of argument that guarantees a conclusion based on certain premises. This is because the conclusion of a deductive argument is necessarily true if the premises are true. For example, if we know that all men are mortal and that Socrates is a man, then we can conclude that Socrates is mortal.

Inductive reasoning, on the other hand, is a method of reasoning in which a general conclusion is drawn from specific statements. Inductive arguments are not as strong as deductive arguments, because the conclusion is not necessarily true even if the premises are true. For example, if we observe that the sun has risen every day for the past 100 years, we might conclude that the sun will rise tomorrow. However, this conclusion is not certain, because it is possible that the sun will not rise tomorrow. Thus, it is distinct from deductive reasoning. If the premises are correct, the conclusion of a deductive argument is certain; in contrast, the truth of the conclusion of an inductive argument is probable, based upon the evidence given.

The difference between deductive and inductive arguments can be seen in the following table:

Feature	Deductive Argument	Inductive Argument
Conclusion	Certain if premises are true	Probable, based on evidence

Example

All men are mortal. Socrates is a man.
Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

The sun has risen every day for the past
100 years. Therefore, the sun will rise
tomorrow.

Deductive arguments are often used in mathematics and science, where it is important to be able to prove statements with certainty. Inductive arguments are often used in everyday life, where we need to make decisions based on incomplete information.

Reasons for His Existence: The Cosmological Argument

The cosmological argument, also known as the argument from first cause, posits that the existence of the universe and all that it contains requires a transcendent cause. It argues that the universe, with its intricate laws and structures, cannot have arisen spontaneously or eternally but must have been created by a being with infinite power and intelligence. This argument suggests that the existence of the universe itself implies the necessity of a creator, or God.

The concept of "The First Cause" seeks to identify an ultimate cause of all events that does not itself have a cause. It is often associated with the existence of God. The exploration of this concept raises fundamental questions related to the nature of the universe and its origins:

1. Is the Universe Eternal?:
 - If the universe is eternal, it implies that it has always existed without a beginning. In this case, the idea of a First Cause becomes irrelevant, as there is no starting point for a chain of causation.
2. Did the Universe Create Itself out of Nothing?:
 - This question challenges the notion of something arising from absolute nothingness. The concept of *creatio ex nihilo*, or creation out of nothing, is often attributed to religious traditions. It suggests that the universe, along with all its matter and energy, came into existence from a state of non-existence.
3. Was the Universe Created?:
 - If the universe had a beginning, it implies that there was a point in time when it did not exist. This raises the question of what existed before the universe came into being and what caused its creation. The First Cause argument posits that there must be an external entity responsible for the universe's creation.

The deductive reasoning of the argument of First Cause begins with two stipulations that set the foundation for its logical framework. These stipulations serve as the starting point from which the argument unfolds, establishing the necessary premises to support its conclusion.

1. Everything that has a beginning has a cause
 - This premise asserts that any event or phenomenon that comes into existence must have a cause that brought it into being.
2. The universe has a beginning
 - Based on scientific observations, the universe appears to have a finite age, with even the Big Bang theory suggesting a specific point of origin.

Together, these two stipulations provide the logical underpinnings for the argument of First Cause. They establish the premises that everything has a cause and that the causal chain cannot regress infinitely, thereby creating the necessity for a first cause. From these premises, the argument concludes that the universe must have a cause, and since this cause cannot have a beginning itself, there must be an eternal and uncaused cause, which is identified as God. Therefore, you may deduce the following arguments and conclusion.

1. Therefore, the universe has a cause.
2. Since there must be a cause that has no beginning, there must be an initial cause that is without beginning, thus eternal and creator: God

This argument is inspired by Thomas Aquinas's Argument from Causation. It presents an argument for the existence of God, which states that everything that exists has a cause, and that this chain of causes cannot go back forever. Therefore, there must be a first cause, which is God. This argument is not based on empirical evidence, but on logical deduction. It is possible to come to the conclusion that God must exist through various other arguments, such as the argument from design or the moral argument.

However, before delving into these arguments, it is essential to consider whether there must be an uncaused cause. Must there be an uncaused cause? Why can't there be an unceasing end of caused events? The Law of Conservation of Energy, a fundamental principle in physics, states that energy cannot be created or destroyed, only transferred from one form to another. This suggests that the total amount of energy in the universe has remained constant since its inception. Entropy, on the other hand, represents the amount of unusable energy within a system. At creation, at the start, the universe had 0 entropy and maximum potential. Based on the laws of thermodynamics, it can be inferred that the maximum potential usable energy must itself have a source. If there were an unceasing end of caused events, this would imply that the universe's energy supply is perpetually replenished, seemingly contradicting the Law of Conservation of Energy. Naturally, it can be inferred that the maximum potential usable energy must itself have a source, according to the laws of thermodynamics.

“Things without intelligence cannot give themselves a purpose but are ordered towards a purpose.”

Reasons for His Existence: Teleological Argument (or argument by design)

Closely related to the cosmological argument is the argument of cause and effect. This argument asserts that every effect must have a cause, and that the intricate design and order observed in nature point to an intelligent designer. The complexity of biological systems, the harmonious functioning of ecosystems, and the delicate balance of forces in the universe suggest the work of a conscious and purposeful creator rather than random chance or natural processes alone.

“Things without intelligence cannot give themselves a purpose but are ordered towards a purpose. There must be an intelligent designer that gives purpose to those without intelligence and move objects to their ends. That is God.”

The design argument, often referred to as the teleological argument, postulates that the evidence of purpose and order observed in nature implies the existence of an intelligent designer. It draws a parallel between the intricate design of a watch and the complexity of the universe, suggesting that just as a watch implies the existence of a watchmaker, the universe exhibits signs of intentional design.

The intricacies of organisms' adaptations to their environments, the interdependent relationships among species in ecosystems, and the remarkable properties of the universe that support life all contribute to the argument for a purposeful creator. These observations suggest that the world was not merely the result of random chance but rather the product of a deliberate design.

Design of the Universe

Consider the design of the universe itself. The precise orbital speeds of the Earth, the Sun, and the Milky Way, along with the vast size of the galaxy and the intense temperatures at the Sun's core, all demonstrate a level of precision that defies explanation by chance alone.

Imagine what would happen if the Earth's orbit were even slightly altered, either closer or farther from the Sun by a mere 2.5 millimeters. Such a seemingly insignificant change would have devastating consequences for life on Earth. The intricate balance of temperature, atmospheric composition, and other factors essential for life would be disrupted, leading to potentially catastrophic outcomes.

The fact that the universe operates with such incredible accuracy, where even the slightest deviations could have disastrous effects, strongly suggests the involvement of an intelligent designer. It is beyond the realm of plausibility that such a complex and finely-tuned system could have arisen solely through random processes.

The design argument finds its foundation in the belief that the intricate order and purpose observed in nature are not simply the result of natural laws or chance occurrences. Rather, they point to the existence of a higher intelligence, a creator who purposefully designed the world and endowed it with the properties necessary for life to flourish.

Design of the Animal Kingdom

The Malleefowl, an extraordinary bird native to the arid regions of Australia, showcases a remarkable behavior related to incubation of its eggs. It engages in a complex process that involves the construction of an elaborate mound, precise temperature control, and attentive care for its offspring.



The male Malleefowl constructs a mound of rotting vegetation, in which the female lays her eggs. After the pit is excavated, the male Malleefowl gathers a large quantity of rotting vegetation, such as leaves, twigs, and bark. This compost is piled into the pit, creating a

substantial mound. The compost provides insulation and helps to regulate the temperature inside the mound. After laying her eggs, the female Malleefowl covers them with a layer of sand. The sand helps to protect the eggs from predators and from the elements. It also helps to distribute heat evenly throughout the mound.

The Malleefowl has a remarkable ability to control the temperature inside the mound. The male Malleefowl regularly pokes a small hole in the top of the mound and inserts his tongue to measure the temperature. If the temperature is too high, he removes some of the sand covering the eggs. If the temperature is too low, he adds more sand. The Malleefowl eggs incubate for a period of about 60 days. During this time, the male Malleefowl continues to care for the eggs, ensuring that the temperature remains optimal. The male Malleefowl also defends the mound from predators, such as foxes and goannas. After hatching, the chicks are fully developed and leave the mound to explore their surroundings.

The Malleefowl's nesting behavior showcases animal intelligence and parental care, demonstrating the amazing adaptations animals have evolved to reproduce and ensure their offspring's survival.

Design of the human Body

Saint Augustine, in his book of The Confessions, says:

“And men go forth to wonder at the heights of mountains, the huge waves of the sea, the broad flow of the rivers, the extent of the ocean, and the courses of the stars, and omit to wonder at themselves.”

The Human Individual, as a whole, is a complete wonder. Far beyond the wonder we’ve just seen in the Design of the universe.

The human individual, as a holistic entity, is a captivating enigma that transcends the awe-inspiring design of the universe itself. Physically, the human body is a masterpiece of intricate complexity. At the cellular level, the smallest units of life, known as cells, perform remarkable functions. They encode, transcribe, and deliver messages, nourish, dispose of waste, repair damage, and reproduce, all powered by their own internal energy source, the mitochondria. The intelligence and efficiency displayed by cells surpass any smart system currently in existence, and the average human body consists of approximately 100 trillion cells, of which there are 250 distinct types.

Beyond the cellular level, the body is organized into tissues, organs, and systems, each with its own specialized functions. Muscle tissue enables movement, nerve tissue facilitates communication, and organs such as the heart, liver, and kidneys work in harmonious unison to maintain homeostasis. Moreover, the various systems in the body, including the reproductive, digestive, excretory, and nervous systems, collaborate seamlessly to ensure the overall well-being of the individual.

Furthermore, the human mind is a realm of boundless wonder. It possesses the capacity for abstract thought, creativity, and self-awareness. It allows us to experience emotions, form relationships, and engage in meaningful pursuits. The human mind is not merely a passive recipient of information but an active interpreter and creator, capable of shaping our perceptions and guiding our actions.

Moreover, the human spirit transcends the physical and mental realms, embodying the essence of who we are. It encompasses our values, beliefs, and sense of purpose. It is the wellspring of our compassion, empathy, and aspirations. The human spirit is resilient, capable of overcoming adversity and finding meaning in life's challenges.

The human individual is truly an astounding creation, a marvel beyond comparison. Physically, mentally, and spiritually, we are beings of extraordinary complexity and potential. Posing this creation to mere chance and not design may seem more foolish than believing in a physically unseen Creator.

Reason for His Existence: The Moral Argument

Objective morality is self-evident – we intuitively know that some things are right and others are wrong. A universe that is random and uncreated and that operates purely on unintentional interactions can only result in subjective inclinations, not absolute morals. The existence of objective morality necessitates a supernatural source.

Choosing to Believe: The Pragmatic Argument

Finally, the pragmatic argument, also known as the existential argument, proposes that belief in God has practical and existential benefits for individuals. It posits that a belief in God can provide meaning, purpose, and moral guidance in life, fostering a sense of connection with something greater than oneself. It argues that religious belief can lead to positive outcomes such as increased well-being, social cohesion, and a sense of transcendence.

1. If you believe in God and God does exist then your payoff is immeasurable. You will enter heaven and know eternal happiness
2. If you believe in God and God does not exist then you have lost some pleasure but you have led a decent life. You have forfeited a given amount of 'pleasure' but your existence was not miserable.

If you do not believe in God and God does exist then your penalty is immeasurable. You will suffer eternal displeasure. Though the argument does not provide a deductive or inductive argument for the existence of God, it does supplement the notion of the value of believing in the existence of God providing all other arguments.

Reason for His Existence: Biblical Evidence

While there are many arguments to prove God's existence, let's look at two verses that prove scientific evidence of the Earth's shape before the Greek philosophers had even proposed the idea. In the Holy Book of Job, we read, "He stretches out the north over empty space. He hangs the earth on nothing. He binds up the water in His thick clouds, yet the clouds are not broken under it. He covers the face of His throne and spreads His cloud over it. He drew a circular horizon on the face of the waters, at the boundary of light and darkness." (Job 26:7-10) These verses clearly explain the shape of the Earth as well as how it sits in space. Furthermore, in the Holy Book of Isaiah, we read the following, "It is He who sits above the circle of the earth." This verse also plainly describes the Earth's shape.

The first person to propose that the Earth was round is the Greek Philosopher Pythagoras, around 500 BC. It wasn't until two centuries later that Aristotle validated this theory. However, we know that the Holy Book of Isaiah was written between 740 and 686 BC, and the Holy Book of Job was written between 1900 and 1700 BC. Both of these Books were written before Pythagoras' proposed theory. Thus, we have historical evidence of the accuracy of the Holy Bible.

An entire section is dedicated to the Authenticity of Scripture, but from a scientific point of view, scripture does not negate, but only supports scientific realizations. Its validity also presupposes that its content likewise is true.



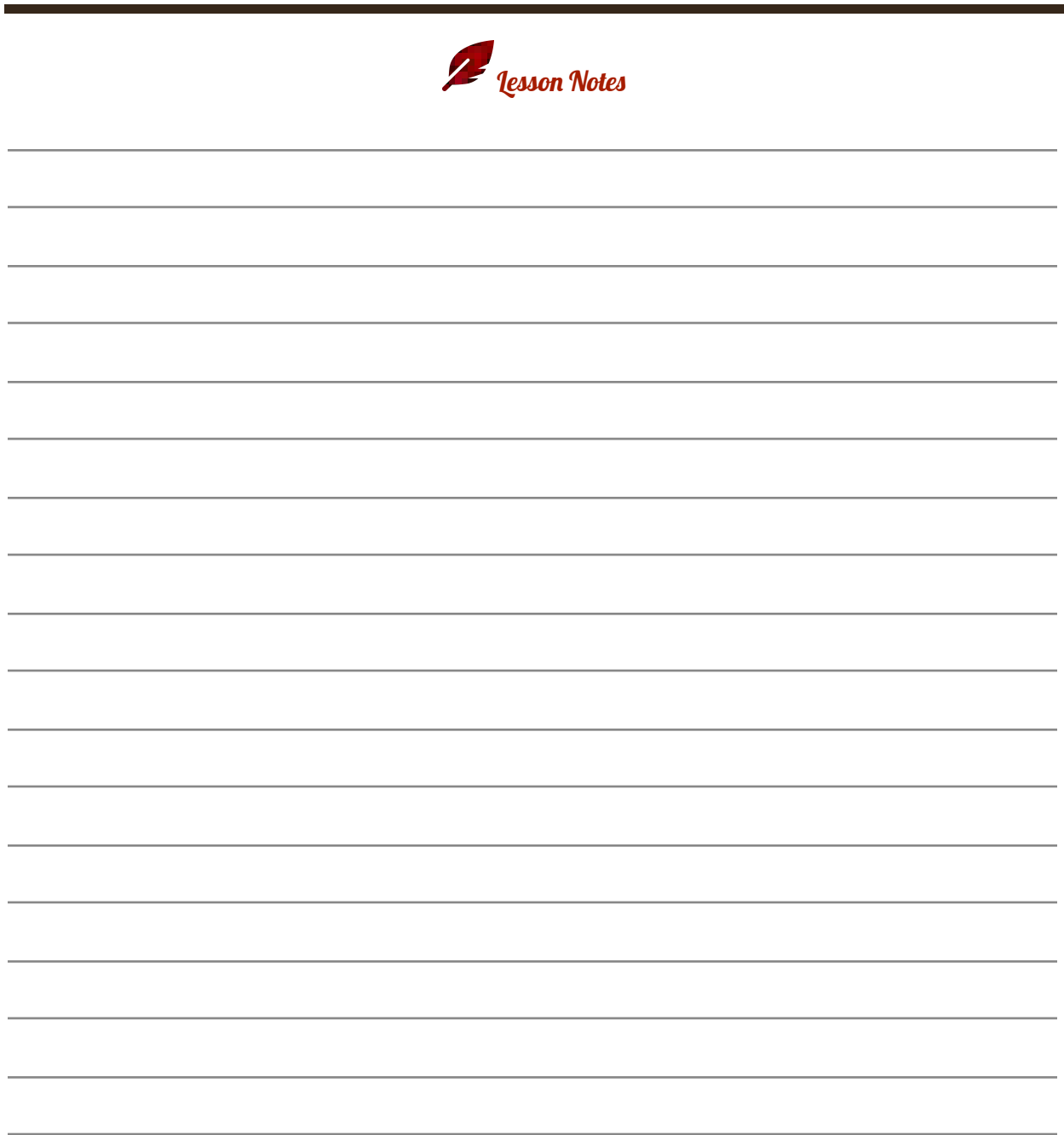
Review Questions

1. Agnosticism is the view that
 - a. God exists.
 - b. God does not exist.
 - c. It is impossible to know whether God exists.
 - d. None of the above choices.
2. A person who holds the position that God does not exist is called a(n)
 - a. Theist.
 - b. **Atheist.**
 - c. Agnostic.
 - d. None of the above choices.
3. Which of the following is not a cause of doubt about the existence of God?
 - a. **The problem of evil.**
 - b. The argument from design.
 - c. The lack of evidence for God's existence.
 - d. All of the above choices.
4. The problem of evil states that the existence of evil in the world is a problem for the belief in God because
 - a. God is all-powerful.
 - b. God is all-good.
 - c. God is all-knowing
 - d. **All of the above choices.**
5. Theists use the Teleological Argument to support their belief in God because:
 - a. The universe shows evidence of design.
 - b. The universe shows evidence of intelligent design.
 - c. The universe shows evidence of a designer.
 - d. **All of the above**
6. Everything that has a beginning has a cause. True or false? (A: True)
7. Things without intelligence can give themselves a purpose. (A: False)
8. Objective morality is self-evident. True or false (A: False)



Books & References

1.  Existence of God - Cause and Effect , Apologetics Press , accessed 25 March 2024,
<<https://apologeticspress.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/hsc0102.pdf>>
2.  Existence of God -Design , Apologetics Press , accessed 25 March 2024,
<<https://apologeticspress.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/hsc0103.pdf>>
3.  Existence of God -Morality , Apologetics Press , accessed 25 March 2024,
<<https://apologeticspress.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/hsc0104.pdf>>



Science and Faith

APOLOGETICS

A Balanced Outlook

How should a Christian approach science? Is science something a Christian should be uncomfortable with? Is it a threat against his or her faith? What are the boundaries of science and religion? Do I use my Bible to prove science? Do I use science to prove the Bible? Do Orthodox Christians agree with the concept of blind faith? Did the Early Church live a blind Christianity?

Because of the rapid advances in science and technology during the last few centuries, some people have become convinced that science is the answer to everything. There are also other individuals that hold the belief that people of faith have no need for science. God is the only resource needed and the Bible the only knowledge one needs to study. Most people would fall somewhere in the middle of these two opinions. Science and religion are two distinct things. They are not at odds with one another, they can only complement and clarify one another. It is crucial for Christians to approach science with a balanced perspective, acknowledging both its strengths and limitations. While science has made significant contributions to our understanding of the natural world, it is essential to recognize that it operates within specific boundaries. Science deals with the realm of the physical and observable, utilizing empirical evidence and logical reasoning to formulate theories and explanations. However, there are aspects of existence that transcend the scope of scientific inquiry. The boundaries between science and religion become evident when we consider questions that extend beyond the realm of empirical evidence. For example, science cannot answer questions related to the existence of God, the nature of the soul, or the ultimate meaning of life. These questions fall within the realm of faith and religious belief.

“Science cannot answer questions related to the existence of God, the nature of the soul, or the ultimate meaning of life.”

According to the Bible, human beings are created in God’s image, which includes a capacity for curiosity, reasoning, and learning, among other things. When King Solomon asked God for wisdom, God was pleased and granted him understanding of trees and animals—the natural world—among other things. The Bible places great value in the acquisition of knowledge and understanding: “Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding; For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, And her gain than fine gold.” (Proverbs 3:13-14). The early church fathers are well known for their intellectual pursuits, engaging in philosophical discussions and apologetics to defend and explain their faith. They sought to integrate their religious beliefs with the intellectual and cultural currents of their time.

Science and its limitations

Science is supposed to be concerned with objective facts and observations. In science, we measure things, we observe things, and we speculate about things. We speculate about matter, its properties, and its behaviors. We are concerned with how things work in science. More specifically, we are focused on physical things that are observable in the natural world – either by the naked eye, or through tools that we develop to measure those things.

Science answers what is the universe, what is a human being made of, how did the universe come to be, etc. So science answers the what and how but has no authority on the who and why.

Science is a powerful tool for understanding and explaining the mechanisms and dynamics of the physical universe. But science cannot examine or explain the purpose of the universe. That is a question that falls under theology. The scientific method applies ONLY to the physical universe that we can observe with our senses.

Science is one of God's greatest gifts to humanity. He gave us the tools and the mechanisms to create and repair. He has given us a mind to comprehend the order of the universe that He designed, and it testifies of His own characteristics and Person. This can help us enormously in our spiritual lives and in our Theology.

Science, however, has its limitations. Scientists can only study phenomena that can be observed, measured, and tested. This means that science cannot investigate matters that are beyond the reach of our senses or that cannot be quantified. For example, science cannot tell us whether there is life after death or whether God exists. It cannot answer the question "Does God exist?" Science studies the natural world, not the supernatural. No amount of scientific testing or theorizing could prove or disprove the existence of a supernatural creator. The claim that "God exists" is a metaphysical one, not a claim about nature or physical laws.

Another limitation of science is that it is always evolving. Our understanding of the natural world is constantly changing as new discoveries are made. This means that scientific theories are always subject to revision. For example, the theory of evolution has been modified over time as new evidence has emerged.

***"Science can help us
to understand the
natural world and
appreciate the
wonders of God's
creation."***

As Orthodox Christians, we should not be afraid of science. Science can help us to understand the natural world and appreciate the wonders of God's creation. However, we should also be aware of its limitations. We should not expect science to answer all questions or to provide us with a complete understanding of reality. Instead, we should see science as a tool that can help us to explore the natural world and to learn more about God's creation while being open to the possibility that there are some things that science cannot explain. These things may belong to the realm of faith and God. By understanding the limitations of science, we can avoid being misled

by its claims and can appreciate the value of other means of knowledge, such as faith and revelation of God.

How Religion relates to Science

Religion is supposed to be concerned with belief about why things are, why they came to be, what kind of meaning does a thing have. In other words, in religion we might look at the same material that a scientist looks at, but instead of trying to answer what it is, we use religion to ask why it is. It is a different set of questions than what the scientists ask.

The Bible is not intended to explain science. It is the word of God spoken by His Holy Spirit to His servants. Not only that, but it is the truth; Jesus said: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17). Additionally, the word of God is revealed to all people, from all ages and until eternity; Jesus again says: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31, Luke 21:33).

***"Heaven and
earth shall pass
away, but my
words shall not
pass away."***

The Bible is not intended to be a scientific or historical text. It does not aim to provide comprehensive explanations of the creation of the world or specific historical events. Instead, the Bible serves as a narrative that focuses on the relationship between God and humanity throughout history. This aspect is of great significance, as it presents a unique perspective that differs from purely scientific or historical accounts. Rather than attempting to provide detailed explanations, the Bible offers a simple and profound statement: "In the beginning, He made it."

Scripture tells us that there is a reality beyond this universe. This reality has not been observed by science but that does not mean it is any less real. It takes faith to interact with it. While the Bible is not a science book, whenever it makes a statement relating to a scientific principle or fact, it is completely accurate. Many archaeologists have explored the land of Palestine. Has any one of those scientists ever discovered anything which disproves the Bible? No. Many archaeological discoveries have confirmed the Biblical record. However, none has ever contradicted the Word of God. The Bible never claims to be a science textbook. Nevertheless, the Bible claims to be "true from the beginning" (Psalm 119:160), so every specific reference about science must be accurate.

Atheist Scientists Who Believed Because of Science

Alister McGrath was a professor of science and religion at Oxford University. He was a biophysicist and theologian. He became an atheist in his mid-teens and was drawn toward Marxism. But encounters with what he calls 'articulate Christians' at university began to weaken his stance. Reflecting on his time as an undergraduate at Wadham, McGrath has written, "I was discovering that Christianity was far more intellectually robust than I had ever imagined. I had some major rethinking to do, and by the end of November [1971], my decision was made: I turned my back on one faith and embraced another."

He passionately believes science and Christianity complement rather than conflict with each other. He was a leading scientist and a strong believer that Christianity and science are compatible.

He says, “If you believe that God made the world, you can get additional insights into God by studying nature. Science can’t answer the big questions such as “Why are we here?” or “What’s life all about?” Science is neutral. It does not presuppose or imply atheism. Darwin’s theory of evolution is not by definition atheistic. Some people just interpret it that way. Science does not in principle exclude God. Science simply says we are not going to bring God into things.’ He also says, “‘There is more to life than the physical world and God urges us to find it,’ he says.

John Lennox is professor of mathematics at Oxford University. He has written many books on religion, ethics, the relationship between science and faith like *Has Science Buried God* and *Can Science Explain Everything*, and has had public debates with atheists including Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens.

Professor Lennox argues that all science is deeply dependent on an act of faith, that is, a firm belief in the fundamental intelligibility of the universe. From an atheistic perspective, there is little reason to say why human reason, derived from brains that are the end-product of mindless evolutionary forces, should be a trustworthy tool for understanding reality.

Lennox addresses the conjecture that science depends on reason, but Christianity doesn’t. As he puts it: “God is not anti-reason. He gives us the highest-level encouragement possible to use our minds; and not only to use them to think about him but to think about the natural world we live in.”

Lennox believes that the Bible repeatedly upholds the importance of rational thinking, not least when Jesus states that the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Reasonable Faith vs. Blind Faith

Our Christian faith is not blind. When Christ told St. Thomas “blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed,” He meant that it is fitting to have faith. And those that have faith will be blessed. But faith is not the same as blind faith.

***“Hope that is
seen is not
hope.”***

“Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” St. Paul says. And “hope that is seen is not hope.” In other words, you cannot have faith or hope in something you see. So faith and hope imply not seeing what you hope for. But since you are born in the image of God, He gave you a mind to think. Faith therefore uses this mind to hope for the spiritual things that are not seen; however, blind faith cancels the mind God has given you. Blind faith means believing although what you perceive doesn’t make sense. Blind faith abandons the pursuit of truth—ultimately the pursuit of God Himself.”

When we look at how the early Church Fathers lived Christianity, we can clearly see that they did not adopt the concept of blind faith. On the contrary, they were extraordinary systematic theologians, and they didn’t shy away from embracing philosophy and science and they were able to fit all the pieces of the puzzle together when they perceived philosophy and science from a Christian lens. For example, did you know that St. Justin

Martyr, who was born a pagan in the year 100 AD, did not remove his philosopher's cloak after baptism. Actually, he believed that it was only after his baptism that he was worthy to wear it, now that he has found the Truth in Christ.

Similarly, St. Clement of Alexandria, born to a pagan family around the year 150 AD, esteemed philosophy very much, although he understood its limits. Being the disciple of his great master St. Pantaenus, who was a convert to Christianity from the Stoic school of philosophy, St. Clement essentially believed that philosophy guided people to the truth of God. In his work *Stromata*, Book 1, chapter 5, he says: "Accordingly, before the advent of the Lord, philosophy was necessary to the Greeks for righteousness. And now it becomes conducive to piety; being a kind of preparatory training to those who attain to faith through demonstration...For God is the cause of all good things; but of some primarily, as of the Old and the New Testament; and of others by consequence, as philosophy. Perchance, too, philosophy was given to the Greeks directly and primarily, till the Lord should call the Greeks. For this was a schoolmaster to bring 'the Hellenic mind,' as the law, the Hebrews, 'to Christ.' Philosophy, therefore, was a preparation, paving the way for him who is perfected in Christ."

St. Basil also, in his *hexameron*, a detailed work on the six days of creation, uses the science of his time as a means to demonstrate the truth and beauty of God and how a Christian ought to live. He was a master rhetorician and his sermons led many to repentance.

"As for the question of precisely how any single thing came into existence, we must banish it altogether from our discussion. Even in the case of things which are quite within the grasp of our understanding and of which we have sensible perception, it would be impossible for the speculative reason to grasp the "how" of the production of the phenomenon, so much so that even inspired and saintly men have deemed such questions insoluble. For instance, the apostle says, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen are not made of things which do appear."⁷ ... Let us, following the example of the apostle, leave the question of the "how" in each created thing without meddling with it at all but merely observing incidentally that the movement of God's will becomes at any moment that he pleases a fact, and the intention becomes at once realized in nature." – St. Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Soul and the Resurrection*.



Review Questions

1. True or false? The Bible is a scientific book. (A: False)
2. True or false? Our Christian faith is not blind. (A: True)
3. True or false? Christian should be uncomfortable with science. (A: False)
4. True or false? Science is supposed to be concerned with objective facts and observations. (A: True)
5. Name a scientist who was atheist and became a believer. (A: Alister McGrath.)

6. A balanced outlook on science and faith might include:
 - a. **acknowledging that there are things that science cannot explain.**
 - b. accepting that science is the only way to understand the world.
 - c. believing that science and religion are incompatible.
 - d. All of the above
7. Which of the following is not a limitation of science?
 - a. Science cannot answer questions about the meaning of life.
 - b. Science cannot tell us what we ought to do.
 - c. **Science cannot be used to predict the future with certainty.**
 - d. Science cannot be used to prove or disprove the existence of God.
8. A balanced view of science acknowledges that:
 - a. Science is the only way to understand the world.
 - b. **Science has limitations, but it is still a great way to understand the world.**
 - c. Science and religion are incompatible.
 - d. Science is not as important as religion.
9. Which of the following is a good definition of blind faith?
 - a. A belief that is held without evidence or proof
 - b. A belief that is based on emotion rather than reason
 - c. A belief that is accepted as true without question
 - d. All of the above
10. Faith is the ____ of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
 - a. Belief
 - b. **Substance**
 - c. Evidence
 - d. D. All of the above

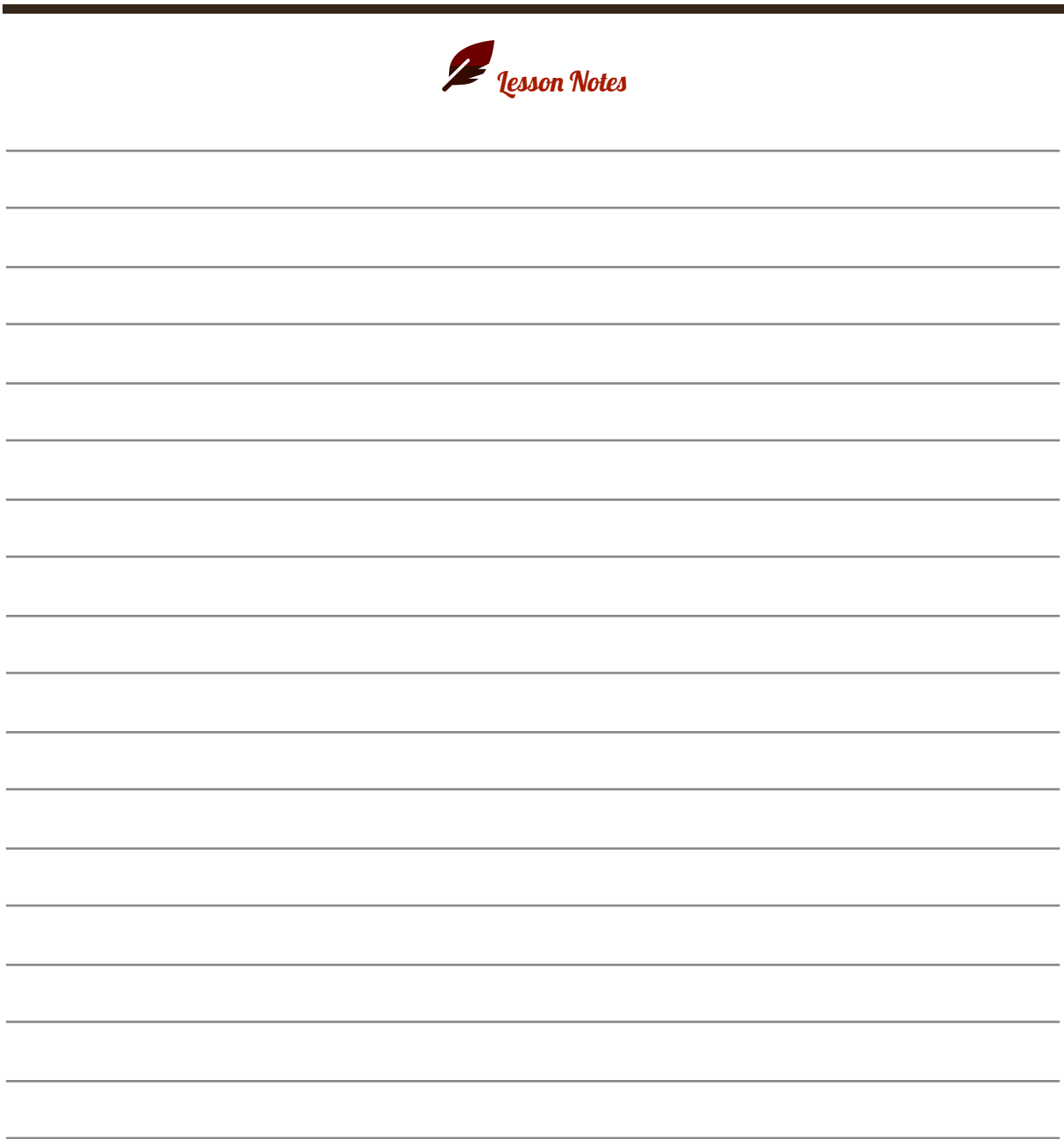


Books & References

1. <INSERT DOCUMENT HERE>, accessed 25 March 2024, <https://www.lacopts.org/story/qa-why-am-i-not-allowed-to-believe-in-science/>
2. <INSERT DOCUMENT HERE>, accessed 25 March 2024, <https://copticorthodoxanswers.org/apologetics/how-should-a-christian-approach-science/>
3. , accessed 25 March 2024, <https://www.christianity.org.uk/article/alister-mcgrath>
4. <INSERT DOCUMENT HERE>, accessed 25 March 2024, <https://www.john15.rocks/list-intellectual-atheists-scientists-became-christians-believed-god-bible/>
5. <INSERT DOCUMENT HERE>, accessed 25 March 2024, <https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources-category/csli-resources/series-can-science-explain-everything/>
6. <INSERT DOCUMENT HERE>, accessed 25 March 2024,

<http://www.coptic.net/lessons/ReligionAndScience.txt>

7. Peter Kreeft,  *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, Chapter 2, Intervarsity Press; 1994,
https://www.google.com/books/edition/Handbook_of_Christian_Apologetics/1DH1ZPyTkiC?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover



Was Jesus more than a man?

APOLOGETICS

The Impact of Christ being Divine

The Divinity of Christ lies at the very heart of Christianity, serving as a foundational pillar upon which the entire faith rests. It is the pivotal truth that unlocks the deeper understanding of every other Christian belief. As followers of Christ, we embrace these beliefs as a unified whole, trusting in His authority without meticulously analyzing each aspect. The reason behind this unwavering trust is the profound recognition that if Christ is truly God, as we profess, then everything He uttered must possess both veracity and authority.

This divinity of Christ has a far-reaching impact on various core Christian teachings. For instance, the forgiveness of sins, a concept central to Christianity, is inextricably linked to the divinity of Christ. It is through His sacrificial death and subsequent resurrection that our sins are atoned for, granting us the opportunity for reconciliation with God. Similarly, the reality of hell, a place of eternal punishment for those who reject Christ's salvation, is grounded in His divine nature. It is because Christ is God that His words carry the weight of truth and authority, making His teachings about hell a matter of utmost significance.

Furthermore, the sacrament of communion, also known as the Eucharist, derives its profound meaning from the divinity of Christ. In this sacred act, we partake in the symbolic consumption of bread and wine, representing the body and blood of Christ. Through this act, we experience a deep spiritual connection with Christ and are reminded of His ultimate sacrifice. These are just a few examples of how the Divinity of Christ permeates the fabric of Christian beliefs, shaping our understanding of salvation, forgiveness, and the ultimate destiny of humanity.

To non-Christians, particularly those unfamiliar with Orthodox Christianity, the tenets of our faith may indeed seem challenging to comprehend. However, it is precisely the foundation of Christ's divinity that provides the necessary context and justification for these beliefs. It is through the lens of Christ's divinity that the intricate tapestry of Christianity unfolds, revealing its profound wisdom and transformative power.

Bare Bones Argument

When Christianity emerged, the divinity of Christ became the primary target of skepticism and opposition. Both Jews and Gentiles struggled to comprehend the notion that someone could be both fully human and fully divine.

For Jews, who had been taught since childhood that there was only one God, the idea of a human claiming to be God or even equal to God was seen as blasphemous. They questioned how Jesus, the

son of Joseph, a man known to them, could claim to have come down from heaven. “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, ‘I have come down from heaven’?” – John 6:42

This tenet of Christ's divinity serves as a cornerstone of the Christian faith. Once an individual accepts this fundamental belief, it becomes the foundation for understanding the rest of the Christian doctrine. Intellectually, it establishes the truthfulness of all of Christ's teachings, while personally, it recognizes Him as both the Creator and Savior.

The significance of this belief lies in the dichotomy it presents: either Christ was truly divine, or he was a deceptive and wicked person. The implications of this choice shape the entire Christian theological framework and influence the way believers perceive and relate to God, themselves, and the world around them.

**“Most
assuredly, I say
to you, before
Abraham was,
I AM.”**

Did Jesus Say He Was God?

The question of whether Jesus claimed to be God has been debated for centuries. All people who read about Christ come to the same conclusion: He was a good person. Even Pilate saw nothing worth crucifying Him over, He came across as a wise good person.

There are many passages in the Bible that show clear support for the idea that Jesus claimed to be God. For example, in John 8:58, Jesus says, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." This statement is a direct reference to the name of God as revealed to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). By claiming to be "I AM," Jesus was essentially saying that he was God.

In another passage, March 2, Jesus heals the paralytic. This passage illustrates the confusion of the Jews, and how Christ proclaims His divine authority:

And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, “Why do you question these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk’?”

But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins—*He said to the paralytic—“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home.” And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!” - Mark 2-10-12*

Jesus was not a mere simple miracle worker. He went far beyond that - he claimed to forgive sins. He does this also in Luke 7 with the sinful woman - forgiving her sins. In this passage, the scribes asked a clear rhetorical question, “who can forgive sins but God alone?”. It’s a great question, and they knew the answer. They were the theologians of the time, and understood the implications. No one can forgive sins but God alone - this was precisely what Christ was proclaiming. No other man or prophet in history ever made such a claim. The implications are too great and clear.

However, there are also passages in the Bible that seem to suggest that Jesus did not claim to be God. For example, in Mark 10:18, Jesus says, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone." This statement seems to indicate that Jesus did not believe that he was God, but rather that he was simply a good man. This however must be understood in context.

The preceding verses describe the encounter between Jesus and the rich young ruler, who asks how to inherit eternal life. Jesus instructs him to follow the commandments, but the young man claims to have done so since childhood. Recognizing that something more is needed, Jesus then challenges him to sell his possessions, give to the poor, and follow him. This encounter highlights Jesus' focus on helping the rich young ruler understand the true nature of goodness and the importance of a personal relationship with God.

In this light, Jesus' response in Mark 10:18 can be seen as a redirection of the young man's attention away from external religious observances and towards a deeper understanding of God's nature. Rather than establishing his own divinity as a central point of the conversation, Jesus seeks to guide the young man towards a transformative realization of the absolute goodness of God and the potential for a profound relationship with him. Ultimately, Jesus' reply in Mark 10:18 serves as a call to recognize the true source of goodness and to pursue a life rooted in that divine reality.

To the Jews, everything was clear. Christ wanted:

1. Everyone to believe He was God
2. Everyone to worship Him
3. Everyone to know that He could forgive their sins

The Jews lost their minds at these notions. Even today, if we found somebody walking around making these claims what would we say about them?

2 Possibilities

The life of Christ and the events surrounding it present us with two distinct possibilities, each with profound implications. The central question is whether Jesus spoke the truth about His identity and teachings. If He spoke the truth, then He is indeed God, and we are called to believe in Him, worship Him, and follow His teachings. This conclusion would have far-reaching consequences for our understanding of life, morality, and our relationship with the divine.

"If He spoke the truth, then He is indeed God, and we are called to believe in Him, worship Him, and follow His teachings"

On the other hand, if what Jesus said was not true, we must consider the implications. If He was just a man claiming to be God, then His actions would be morally questionable at best. A person who knowingly deceives others into worshiping him, despite knowing that he is not divine, would be considered a deceptive liar and morally corrupt. Such a person would lack integrity, honesty, and compassion, which are essential qualities of a morally sound individual.

Furthermore, if Jesus genuinely believed He was God but was mistaken, then His mental state would come into question. In such a case, it would

be reasonable to consider Him intellectually or mentally unstable or even insane. Insanity is measured by the gap from what you think you are to what you really are. If I think I'm the smartest person in the world then I'm just arrogant but if I think I'm actually Albert Einstein in the flesh then I'm probably insane. Or If I think I'm an eagle I'm even further insane, now I've gone from one type of being to another. But if I think I'm God then I might be even more insane because I've jumped from the finite to the infinite which is an even bigger gap than the one between 2 finite things, even between a man and an eagle.

“Lord, Liar or Lunatic?”

This is called the trilemma by Josh McDowell. Let's say Christ is not actually Lord, then why isn't He a Liar or a Lunatic? Nobody who's read the gospels comes to that conclusion. Christ was too savvy, witty, wise, enchanting unless you are a prejudiced or hardened reader. Jesus has 3 qualities that sets Him apart from liars and lunatics:

1. **Wisdom:** the ability to read human hearts, to understand people and read between the lines of their words, the ability to heal people's spirits as well as their bodies. His wisdom extended beyond mere knowledge to the healing of both spirits and bodies, demonstrating His divine nature.
2. **Unconditional Love:** His winning love and passionate compassion drew people in, making them feel at home and forgiven. His authority, described as being distinct from that of the scribes, further set Him apart.
3. **Ability to astonish:** His unpredictability, his creativity. Liars and lunatics are dull and predictable! No one who knows both the Gospels and human beings can seriously entertain the possibility that Jesus was a liar or a lunatic, a bad man.

For those familiar with both the Gospels and human nature, it would be difficult to entertain the possibility that Jesus was either a liar or a lunatic. His exceptional qualities and the profound impact He has had on millions throughout history point to a divine origin that transcends human understanding.

Just a good man, a prophet, or a wise man?

Many unbelievers believe that Jesus was a good man, a prophet, or a wise man. Yet, if He was wise then would you not also trust and believe the things He said? Christ's core message was that He is the divine Savior of the world - a world in need of His gift of salvation. The reason this logic is airtight is because it's not about concepts but about Jesus Himself. It draws people in to read about Him in the Gospels and get to know Him. The rationale underlying this logic is compelling because it transcends abstract concepts and focuses on the central figure of Jesus Christ Himself. This approach effectively captivates readers, drawing them toward the Gospels to gain a deeper understanding and connection with Him. The basis of the argument is Jesus's character, His human nature. Similar to the ladder of Jacob, it begins on Earth with the humanity of the Son and leads you to His Divinity in Heaven. And He spoke to him, saying, "Verily, verily, I say to you, from now on, you will observe the heavens open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." - John 1:51 If He is a sage, you must accept his essential teaching as true. If his teaching is false, then He is not a sage.

“This is not believable”: What, then do people say when confronted with this argument? Often, they simply confess their prejudices: “Oh, I just can’t believe that!” But if it has been proved to be true, you must believe it if you really seek the truth! The best one can ask for is their openness for discussion for a seed to be planted. Through prayer, it may be that the ground will be softened up and plowed. The seed has been sown. God will give the increase.

Two Scholarly Attacks

Attack of “scholars” on the historical reliability of the Gospels: In that case, who invented traditional Christianity if not Christ? A lie, like a truth, must originate somewhere. Peter? The twelve? The next generation? What was the motive of whoever first invented the myth (euphemism for lie)? What did they get out of this elaborate, blasphemous hoax? For it must have been a deliberate lie, not a sincere confusion. No Jew confuses Creator with creature, God with man. And no man confuses a dead body with a resurrected, living one.

What if Jesus never claimed to be divine. Or all the embarrassing passages were inventions of the early Church? Here is what they got out of their hoax. Their friends and families scorned them. Their social standing, possessions, and political privileges were stolen from them by both Jews and Romans. They were persecuted, imprisoned, whipped, tortured, exiled, crucified, eaten by lions, and cut to pieces by gladiators. So some silly Jews invented the whole elaborate, incredible lie of Christianity for absolutely no reason, and millions of Gentiles believed it, devoted their lives to it, and died for it—for no reason. It was only a fantastic practical joke, a hoax. Yes, there is a hoax indeed, but the perpetrators of it are the twentieth-century theologians, not the Gospel writers.

Aquinas argues that if Christ was a mere man and the entire story was manufactured, then an even more unbelievable event happened: the conversion of the world by the biggest lie in history and the moral transformation of lives into unselfishness, detachment from worldly pleasures and new heights of holiness achieved by a mere myth!

The second is to Orientalize Jesus, describing Him like a Hindu mystic from history. The difference is Jesus said He was God and not that we are all gods. All other religious pioneers after Him claimed to know more about a god and not that they themselves were gods.

To interpret Him not as the unique God-man but as one of many mystics or “adepts” who realized his own inner divinity just as a typical Hindu mystic does. This theory takes the teeth out of his claim to divinity, for he only realized that everyone is divine. The problem with that theory is simply that Jesus was not a Hindu but a Jew! When he said “God”, neither he nor his hearers meant Brahman, the impersonal, pantheistic, immanent all; he meant Yahweh, the personal, theistic, transcendent Creator. It is utterly unhistorical to see Jesus as a mystic, a Jewish guru. He would ultimately also be one of the worst teachers in history as He failed to illustrate this message to anyone in over 2 millennia. He taught prayer, not meditation. His God is a person, not a projection or illusion. He said he was God but not that everyone was. He taught sin and forgiveness, as no guru does. He said nothing about the “illusion” of individuality, as the mystics do.



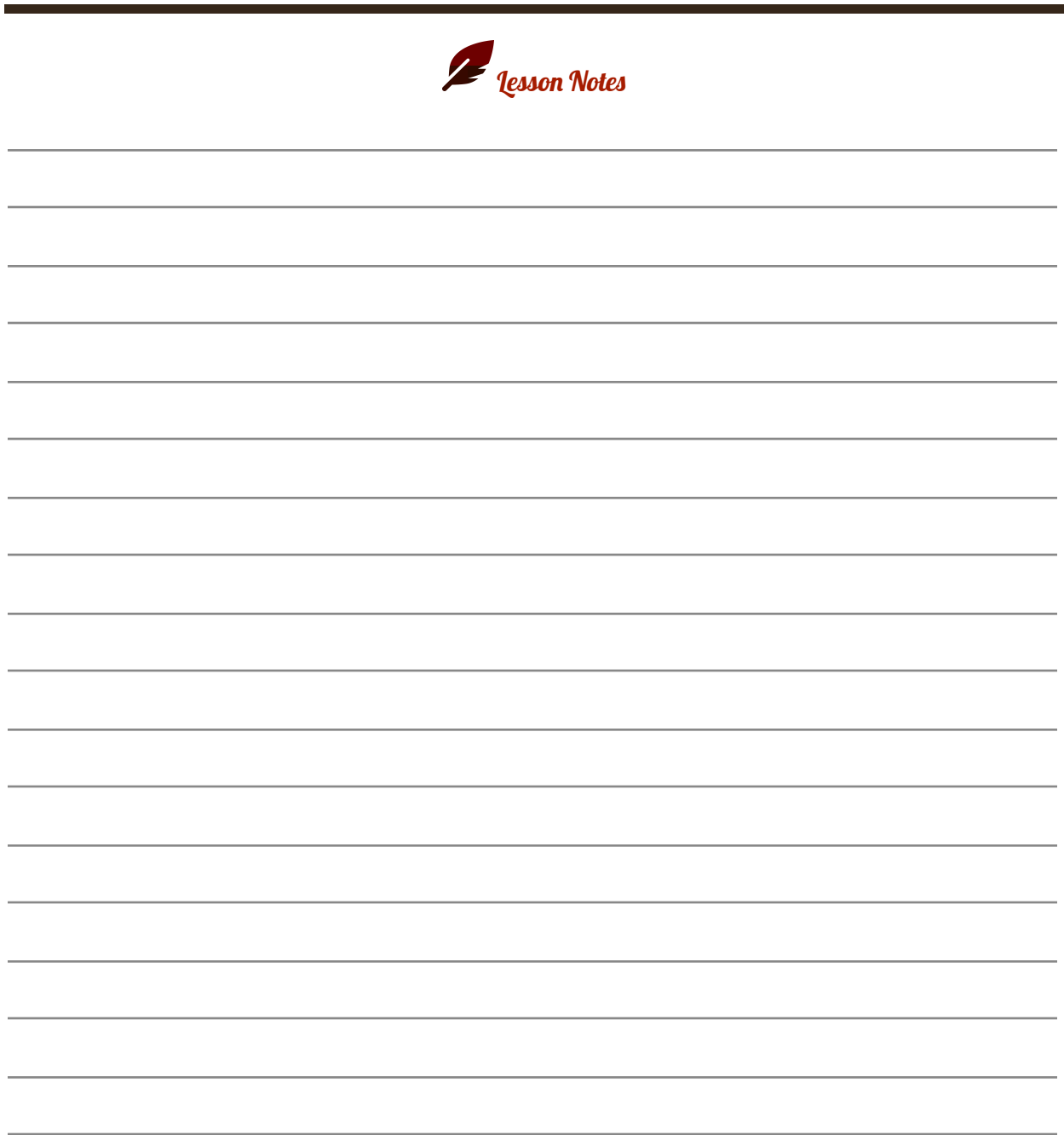
Review Questions

1. What was the first thing to be attacked when Christianity was first being preached? (A: Christ's divinity)
2. True or false? Christ wanted everyone to believe He was God. (A: True)
3. What are the two natural responses? (A: This is unbelievable, or wondering and shaking their heads and thinking)
4. True or false? The first escape is the attack of "scholars" on the historical reliability of the Gospel. (A: True)
5. What is one difference between Jesus Christ and other religious pioneers? (A: Jesus said He was God and not that we are all gods.)



Books & References

1. Peter Kreeft,  *Handbook of Christian Apologetics* , Chapter 7, Intervarsity Press; 1994, https://www.google.com/books/edition/Handbook_of_Christian_Apologetics/1DH1ZPyTkiC?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover



The Account of the Resurrection

APOLOGETICS

Impact of the Resurrection

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ is a cornerstone event in Christianity that completes humanity's salvation and holds profound significance for believers. As stated in 1 Corinthians 15:14-19, the apostle Paul emphasizes that if Christ had not risen from the dead, the Christian faith and preaching would be futile, and believers' faith would be empty. "If Christ is not risen, then our preaching *is* empty and your faith *is* also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if *the* dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith *is* futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."

The Resurrection affirms that Jesus conquered death and fulfilled the promise of salvation. It is not merely a historical event but an ongoing reality that continues to impact the present. In the Orthodox services, we say "Christ is risen from the dead" (present), not "Christ rose from the dead" (past). It is not a historical event, it is a present day reality that is continuous. Christ is risen. Unlike Lazarus, who was resuscitated and would eventually die again, Jesus' Resurrection represents a transformation into a spiritually glorified body that is not subject to decay or death. He did not rise as a ghost, He rose with a real Body. He did not reincarnate nor take on a new human body. Christ is risen with His spiritually glorified body, and it is not a legend, nor a myth, nor an illusion of some sort. The empty tomb of Jesus stands as a testament to His Resurrection and distinguishes Him from other religious founders whose remains can still be found on earth.

The belief in the Resurrection is rooted in the biblical accounts and the testimonies of eyewitnesses. The apostles and disciples encountered the risen Christ, and their lives were transformed as they witnessed His appearances and received the Holy Spirit. The evidence for the Resurrection is further supported by the fact that the early church faced intense persecution and martyrdom, yet the followers of Jesus remained steadfast in their faith, demonstrating their conviction in His Resurrection and the hope it brought.

In contrast to the Resurrection, there are various theories that attempt to explain the events surrounding Jesus' death and disappearance. These theories, such as the Substitution, Swoon, Conspiracy, Hallucination, and Myth theories, seek to provide alternative explanations for the Resurrection. However, upon examination, these theories lack sufficient evidence and fail to account for the historical testimonies, eyewitness accounts, and the transformative impact of the Resurrection

on the lives of believers throughout history. Let us then attempt to refute all possible assumptions such that the one remaining is the only one possible. We will begin with assumptions that Christ did not die and the associated theories, then follow with theories associated with Christ historically dying on the cross, which is not a contested event.

#	Assumption #1	Assumption #2	Theory
1	Jesus didn't die	Jesus didn't die; a look-a like was crucified in his place	Substitution
2	Jesus didn't die	Jesus didn't die; he Merely fainted & later revived in tomb	Swoon
3	Jesus died	Jesus didn't rise; apostles were deceivers	Conspiracy
4	Jesus died	Jesus didn't rise; apostles were deceived	Hallucination
5	Jesus died	Jesus didn't rise; apostles were myth-makers	Myth

Theory #1 - Substitution Theory (You Have the Wrong Man)

The substitution theory believes that Christ prayed for protection and didn't die, so therefore, someone with the resemblance of Christ was Crucified in His place. Islam here takes the most critical element, and casts doubt on it. Without which, there is no purpose for Islam (reminiscing of the serpent and Eve). This theory originated from them, for them. More importantly, who was this man and where are his remains? And why would his body disappear and make it look like a resurrection? If Christ survived, the disciples had no purpose to steal, and God had no reason to raise the innocent man. Is then God a murderer? Causing an innocent man to die? This significantly changes details about the person of God. The number of eyewitness accounts is too significant to consider this theory even plausible.

Theory #2 - Swoon Theory (Fainted & Alive)

The swoon theory, also known as the apparent death theory, is a fringe belief that questions whether Jesus Christ actually died on the cross. Proponents of this theory argue that Jesus merely fainted during the crucifixion and later revived in the tomb. One of the main arguments in favor of the swoon theory is that the Bible itself contains passages that seem to indicate that Jesus did not actually die on the cross. For example, in the Gospel of Matthew, it is said that after Jesus was crucified, he was taken down from the cross and placed in a tomb. The tomb was then sealed with a large stone, and Roman soldiers were stationed to guard it. However, on the third day, the tomb was found to be empty, and Jesus' body was nowhere to be found.

This has led some people to believe that Jesus did not actually die on the cross, but rather that he was merely unconscious and later revived. They point to the fact that Jesus was not pierced in the heart, which is where a Roman soldier would typically spear a crucified victim to ensure death. They also note that Jesus' body was not embalmed, which was the customary practice at the time.

However, the vast majority of Christian scholars and theologians reject the swoon theory. They argue that the evidence presented in favor of the theory is not convincing, and that it is more likely that Jesus did actually die on the cross.

There are several reasons why the swoon theory is not widely accepted. First, it contradicts the teachings of the Bible. The Bible clearly states that Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected three days later. Second, there is no historical evidence to support the theory. There are no records of anyone resembling Jesus being crucified in his place. Third, the theory raises a number of theological problems. If Jesus did not actually die on the cross, then it means that he did not atone for the sins of humanity. This would undermine the entire foundation of Christianity. For all of these reasons, the swoon theory is rejected by the vast majority of Christians. It is a fringe belief that is not supported by the evidence.

In addition to the arguments mentioned above, there are a number of other reasons why the swoon theory is not credible. For example, it is difficult to believe that Jesus would have been able to survive the crucifixion even if he had not actually died. The crucifixion was a horrific form of execution, and it is unlikely that anyone could have survived it without sustaining serious injuries. Romans procedures are quite strict, which is why they typically break legs, to speed up death. His lungs, water & blood gushing out, clearly indicate that his lungs collapsed, and cause of death was asphyxiation. “Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury.” (John 19:38-42)! The level of shock in the appearances of Christ left everyone convinced of death. Did they really not check for a pulse? And if it was weak, it suddenly came back without any help? Christ came out alone in a faint state and rolled over the stone and overpower the soldiers, all alone? And no one cared to mention anywhere? How then afterwards, did He disappear? No one cared to say anything?

The swoon theory does not explain how Jesus was able to escape from the tomb. The tomb was sealed with a large stone, and Roman soldiers were stationed to guard it. It is difficult to believe that Jesus would have been able to overcome the guards and escape from the tomb without being detected. Finally, the swoon theory raises a number of theological problems. If Jesus did not actually die on the cross, then it means that he did not atone for the sins of humanity. This would undermine the entire foundation of Christianity. For all of these reasons, the swoon theory is not a credible belief. It is a fringe theory that is not supported by the evidence.

Theory #3 - Conspiracy Theory (The Last Conspiracy)

This theory has two different components to it. The first gets us to revisit the Last Supper under the assumption that there is some type of conspiracy. Maybe that is why Christ told Judas “Then Jesus said to him, ‘What you do, do quickly.’” (John 13:27) Within the context of a conspiracy still seems to hit a nice echo. Right? The Last Conspiracy. Why is this not the case? What evidence that this is a misportrayal of events? Judas hanged himself! See how gullible our human nature and our faith can be? It fails to think when half logical challenges seem to arise. But let us continue further, Jesus truly dies, the disciples are distressed and conspire together to give value to their experience with Him.

The second component of the conspiracy indicates that Christ died and did not rise, but the disciples in agreement conspired as 'deceivers' to say so to give value to their experience with Him. No one, weak or strong, saint or sinner, Christian or heretic, ever confessed, freely or under pressure, bribe or even torture, that the whole story of the resurrection was a fake, a lie, a deliberate deception. Can a conspiracy and web of lies continue for so long? Was St. Paul apparition, the persecutor of Christians, a lie? Were they all martyred for something they knew was a lie? None of them said to themselves this lie is not worth death? Did unarmed poor disciples really overpower Roman soldiers or roll away a great stone silently while guards remained asleep? Did no one at the time really not think to try to expose this as fraud? Examinations were without a shadow of a doubt conducted. The conspiracy theory clearly fails in light of all the other events of history.

Theory #4 - Hallucination Theory

The hallucination theory, which proposes that Jesus did not physically resurrect and that the apostles were deceived by hallucinations, faces significant challenges. One key objection is the length and frequency of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances. Hallucinations typically last only a few seconds or minutes, not 40 days as described in Acts 1:3. Additionally, Jesus appeared to many people on multiple occasions, including hundreds at a time. It is highly unlikely that all these individuals would simultaneously experience the same hallucination.

Furthermore, hallucinations typically arise from within the individual's mind and lack external stimuli. In contrast, Jesus' post-resurrection appearances involved unexpected actions and interactions that were unlike dreams. For example, he ate fish in Luke 24:42 to demonstrate his physical presence and allowed his disciples to touch him in Matthew 28:9. These actions suggest that Jesus' appearances were not mere hallucinations.

The fact that the disciples themselves initially doubted Jesus' resurrection also argues against the hallucination theory. If the disciples were prone to hallucinations, they would have been more likely to believe in Jesus' resurrection from the start. Instead, they required physical evidence, such as eating fish and being touched, to be convinced.

Additionally, the hallucination theory fails to explain the absence of Jesus' body from the tomb. If Jesus' body had been stolen, it would have been a major conspiracy involving multiple individuals. Yet, there is no historical evidence to support such a conspiracy.

Overall, the hallucination theory presents several significant challenges that undermine its credibility. The length and frequency of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances, the unexpected actions and interactions during these appearances, the initial skepticism of the disciples, and the absence of Jesus' body from the tomb all suggest that Jesus' resurrection was a genuine historical event.

Theory #5 - Myth Theory

The myth theory, which asserts that Jesus did not actually resurrect and that the apostles were mere myth-makers, presents a compelling argument. The natural writings of each author, however, reveal distinct perspectives and focus on various details of the same events, reflecting their individual

viewpoints. Unlike forgers, there is no attempt at harmonization among the Gospels. If the empty tomb were an invented legend, its inventors surely would not have had it discovered by women, whose testimony was considered worthless!

Myths typically evolve over centuries, and it is highly unlikely that no external source would have referred to the entire story as a myth or legend at some point in time. There is substantial evidence contradicting the myth theory. The story of Christ spread rapidly throughout Europe, Eastern Asia, and North Africa within a century, suggesting a profound impact on contemporary witnesses. Several early Christian writings, such as the letters of Barnabas and Clement, mention Jesus' miracles and resurrection. Polycarp, Irenaeus, Ignatius, Quadratus, and Justin Martyr also provide testimonies supporting the resurrection and other miraculous events attributed to Jesus.

Furthermore, there is significant external evidence from reputable sources like Tacitus, Josephus, and Philo, corroborating the existence of Jesus and the extraordinary events surrounding his life. If the empty tomb were a fabricated legend, its inventors would have likely attributed its discovery to more credible individuals than women, whose testimony held little weight at the time. Conversely, if the writers were merely reporting their firsthand experiences, they would have been compelled to convey the truth, regardless of potential social and legal ramifications.

In addition to the historical testimonies, the Gospels demonstrate an intimate knowledge of Jerusalem prior to its destruction in 70 AD, providing accurate details of proper names, dates, cultural nuances, historical events, and prevailing customs and opinions of that era. These elements further substantiate the reliability and authenticity of the Gospel accounts.

While the myth theory offers an alternative interpretation of the origins of Christianity, the overwhelming historical evidence and contemporary testimonies strongly support the belief in Jesus' resurrection and the transformative impact it had on early Christians and subsequent generations.



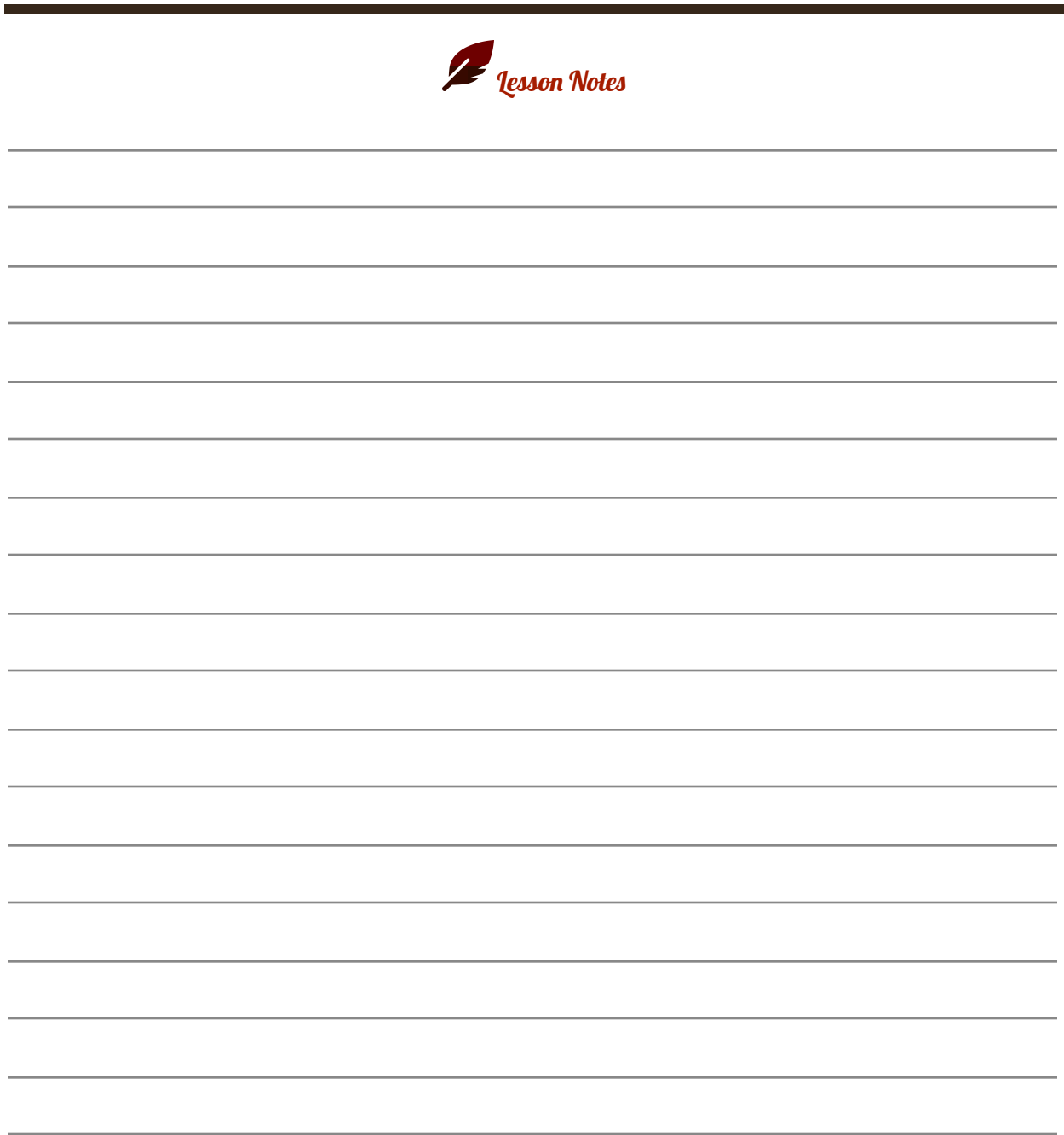
Review Questions

1. Why is the resurrection of Christ an essential part of our faith? (A: The Resurrection is a cornerstone event of our faith because it completes our salvation.)
2. What does the substitution theory state? (A: Someone with the resemblance of Christ was Crucified in His place on the cross.)
3. True or False? The swoon theory questions if Christ even survived the crucifixion since it believes that Jesus merely fainted and later revived in the tomb. (A: True)
4. Fill in the blank. The myth theory believes that Jesus did not actually rise and that the apostles were _____. (A: Myth makers.)
5. True or False? The hallucination theory is founded on the concept that Jesus did not rise and that the apostles were deceived by a hallucination. (A: True)



Books & References

1. Peter Kreeft,  Handbook of Christian Apologetics , Chapter 8, Intervarsity Press; 1994,
https://www.google.com/books/edition/Handbook_of_Christian_Apologetics/1DH1ZPyTtkIC?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover
2. Lee Strobel,  Case for Christ Part III, ZondervanPublishingHouse; 1998,
https://www.google.com/books/edition/The_Case_for_Easter/S8_qUo8W3OcC?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Case+for+Ester&printsec=frontcover



Unit 2

God and the Existence of Hell

APOLOGETICS

The reality of Hell

Of all the different doctrines in Christianity, Hell is the most burdensome to believe. In a world absent of Heaven and Hell, life's choices lose their infinite significance. The triumphs and failures, the victories and defeats, become relative and measured against each other, diminishing their inherent value. Without Hell, Heaven itself becomes a mundane and automatic destination, accessible to all without distinction or consequence.

The reality of Hell is firmly established in both Scripture and the teachings of the Orthodox Church. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself spoke about Hell and warned of its existence. Dismissing this concept solely because it may be unbearable or unpleasant would set a dangerous precedent, leading to the potential rejection of other challenging or uncomfortable truths. To better understand the Orthodox Church's perspective on Hell, it's essential to explore the relevant beliefs and address common objections raised against the concept. The Orthodox Church holds that Hell is a real and distinct place, separate from both Heaven and the physical world. It's a realm of eternal torment and suffering, where unrepentant sinners and those who reject God's love and mercy will abide.

However, the Orthodox Church emphasizes that Hell is not merely a place of punishment but also a manifestation of God's love and justice. It serves as a reminder of the consequences of sin and the importance of striving for spiritual growth and communion with God. The existence of Hell underscores the significance of free will, as individuals have the choice to accept or reject God's grace and salvation.

Let us then understand what does the Orthodox Church believe with regards to hell? Then we will move on to the objections about hell and why they are not correct.

What is Hell?

The concept of hell is shrouded in mystery and often evokes fear and trepidation. Divine revelation, through scriptures and teachings, provides limited information about hell compared to heaven. This disparity can be understood from the perspective of human purpose and design. Humans were created for a heavenly existence, not for a place of torment.

Just as a travel agent would focus on promoting the beauty and amenities of a beach resort rather than the dangers of a swamp by the highway, divine revelation emphasizes the joys and blessings of heaven over the horrors of hell. This approach aligns with the belief that humans were intended for a life of love, joy, and eternal happiness.

However, it is important to acknowledge the existence of hell as a place of punishment and separation from God. While it was not intended for humans, the torments of hell were primarily designed for Satan and his fallen angels. Passages like Matthew 25:41 in the Bible indicate that hell was prepared specifically for the devil and his followers: “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels ...’ (Mt 25:41)

The concept of hell serves as a reminder of the consequences of straying from the path of righteousness and embracing evil. It highlights the importance of making moral choices and living a life aligned with divine principles. By emphasizing heaven as the ultimate destination for those who follow God's teachings, divine revelation guides individuals towards a life of virtue and spiritual growth.

What do we know about hell?

While no one truly desires to physically experience the nature of these torments, the Holy Scriptures provide us with numerous examples to deter us from sinning and guide us toward repentance.

Comparable to the heavenly reward, of which it is written, “eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man,” the same words can be applied to the punishment in hell. We may not fully comprehend its exact form, but certain elements have been revealed to us.

- **Binding of the hands and feet** (Matthew 22:13): This symbolizes the complete loss of freedom, representing the inability to act according to one's will or make choices that could potentially lead to liberation.
- **Outer darkness** (Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30): This signifies alienation from God, who is the true light and source of life. It portrays the profound isolation and despair experienced by those separated from the divine presence.
- **Weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth** (Matthew 13:42, 50): This imagery conveys a state of extreme guilt, sorrow, and anguish. It reflects the profound regret and remorse felt by those who realize the consequences of their actions and the magnitude of their sins.
- **Unquenchable darkness** (Mark 9:43-48): Jesus speaks of an unquenchable fire and worms that do not die, symbolizing severe pain and suffering. This fire is not physical but spiritual and signifies the lack of communion with God after death. The resurrection of our bodies will transform them to conform to the resurrected body of Christ, which will differ from our current earthly bodies.

Now let us ask. Is there any contradiction between the “unquenchable fire” and the “outer darkness”? The concepts of “unquenchable fire” and “outer darkness” in theological discourse may initially appear contradictory, presenting a paradox that challenges our understanding of eternal punishment. However, a closer examination reveals that these concepts are not mutually exclusive and serve distinct purposes in conveying the nature of eternal consequences. For instance, the microwave ovens generate heat without light. The concept of darkness in the Bible is often associated with evil, chaos,

and the absence of God's presence. In contrast, light is often associated with God, truth, and salvation. John 1:4, as mentioned in the input text, highlights this connection, stating that "In Him (Jesus) was life, and the life was the light of men." This verse reinforces the idea that God is the ultimate source of life and that separation from Him results in a state of darkness and spiritual death.

The description of "unquenchable fire" evokes the image of a perpetual and intense state of suffering, reminiscent of the torments experienced in earthly fires. Therefore, eternal punishment can be understood as both a state of intense suffering and a state of profound alienation from God's love and presence. The "unquenchable fire" symbolizes the perpetual consequences of sin, while "outer darkness" represents the absence of communion with the divine. These concepts serve as warnings against rejecting God's grace and the importance of seeking reconciliation with Him during our earthly existence. In this sense, eternal punishment is not simply a vindictive act of divine retribution but a natural consequence of choosing a path that leads away from God. Just as physical death is the result of a body's separation from its vital life force, eternal death, symbolized by the unquenchable fire and outer darkness, is the consequence of a soul's separation from its true source of life, which is God.

Hell: Eternal Torments

The concept of eternal torment in hell is a significant theological tenet within various religious texts, particularly in Christianity. Numerous verses in scripture provide evidence supporting the belief that the punishment for sin in the afterlife is everlasting. One prominent passage often cited is Matthew 25:41, where Jesus is depicted saying, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." This verse suggests that the fate of those who are condemned to hell is not temporary but extends infinitely.

Another notable verse is Revelation 14:11, which states, "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest day or night." This passage emphasizes the relentless and unending nature of the suffering experienced by those in hell. The imagery of perpetual smoke rising conveys the idea that the torment is continuous, without any respite or relief.

There are many more verses in scripture that confirm that Torments of hell are eternal:

- "... Some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Dan 12:2)
- "These will go away into everlasting punishment." (Mt 25:46)
- "... to whom the gloom of darkness is reserved forever." (2 Pet 2:17)
- "Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them ... are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." (Jude 7)
- "... for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." (Jude 13)
- "They will be tormented day and night forever and ever." (Rev 20:10)

The concept of eternal torment is often contrasted with the notion of purgatory, which is believed by some Christian denominations to be a temporary state of purification for souls before they enter heaven. However, the idea of everlasting punishment in hell stands in stark contrast to the concept of purgatory, as it suggests that there is no possibility of redemption or eventual salvation for those who are condemned. The Catholic Church believes in the existence of Purgatory, a place of temporary punishment or purification for souls who have died in a state of grace but have not yet fully atoned for

their sins. However, this doctrine lacks a clear Scriptural basis and contradicts certain passages in the Bible.

One such passage is found in Luke 23:43, where Jesus tells the thief crucified alongside Him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise." This verse suggests that the thief would go directly to Paradise, or Heaven, upon his death, without undergoing any intermediate purification in Purgatory.

Another passage that contradicts the doctrine of Purgatory is 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: "And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord." (1 Thess 4:16,17). This passage implies that believers will immediately be with the Lord after death, without the need for any intervening period of purification.

The doctrine of Purgatory also contradicts the doctrine of Atonement and Redemption. If Purgatory exists, it implies that the blood of Jesus Christ was not sufficient to fully cleanse believers from their sins. This would undermine the central tenet of Christianity that salvation through the incarnation, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ alone. If human sufferings were capable of satisfying the Divine Justice, then what was the need for Lord Jesus Christ's Incarnation and death on the cross?

The Bible portrays purging as an act of mercy and grace that takes place on Earth through the cleansing power of the water of baptism, not through tormenting flames of fire after death. Passages such as Ephesians 5:25-27 and Titus 3:5 emphasize the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in believers' lives, transforming them into the image of Christ.

Hell: Levels

In the realm of the afterlife, the concept of levels within hell holds profound significance. It suggests that the severity of punishment in the afterlife is not uniform but varies based on the actions and deeds of individuals during their earthly existence. This notion is rooted in the belief that divine judgment is just and equitable, considering the nuances and degrees of sin.

Scriptural evidence supports the existence of levels in hell. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus Christ speaks of the servant who knew his master's will but failed to act accordingly. "That servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few." (Lk 12:47; Lev 5:17) This servant will receive "many stripes" as punishment, implying a more severe consequence compared to someone who acted ignorantly or committed lesser offenses.

Similarly, in the Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of Luke, Jesus warns of "greater condemnation" for those who exploit widows and take advantage of the vulnerable. "Who devour widows' houses ... those will receive greater condemnation." (Mk 12:40; Lk 20:47) This differentiation in punishment suggests that certain sins are considered more heinous and warrant more severe retribution.

The Epistle of James highlights the responsibility of teachers and leaders, emphasizing that they will face a stricter judgment. "Let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a

stricter judgment.” (Jam 3:1) This underscores the idea that those who hold positions of influence and authority are held to a higher standard and will be accountable for their actions accordingly.

The Gospel of Matthew Chapter 10 provides further evidence of levels in hell by contrasting the fate of Tyre and Sidon with that of Capernaum. Jesus indicates that it will be "more tolerable" for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment compared to Capernaum, which had rejected his teachings and miracles. This comparison implies that the severity of punishment in hell is influenced by the extent to which individuals have embraced or rejected divine revelation.

Understanding the concept of levels in hell serves several purposes. It instills a sense of accountability and encourages individuals to reflect on their actions and strive for righteousness. It also provides a framework for understanding divine justice and the consequences of sin. Additionally, it emphasizes the need for repentance and transformation, as individuals can seek forgiveness and strive to align their lives with divine principles. By contemplating the existence of levels in hell, we gain a deeper appreciation for the intricate workings of divine judgment. It reminds us that every action and decision has consequences, and that true justice will ultimately prevail in the afterlife.

Hell: Absence of God’s Grace

It seems somewhat weird when we say God is in hell right? But God is everywhere. He is omnipresent, let’s read those verses.

- If I ascend into heaven, You are there; If I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. (Psalm 139:8)
- Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. (Revelation 14:9-10)

While He is there, it’s going to be the lack of communication with Him that will be in Hell. Right now God is everywhere too, but do we ALL enjoy his joy, His peace, His grace the same way? Do some people not enjoy it at all? Are you living in the darkness of sin? They are. Same with hell.

How can a “Loving” God allow Hell?

In the parable of the unmerciful servant, we witness a profound interplay of justice and mercy. The servant begs his master for patience and forgiveness, promising to repay the debt he owes. Moved by compassion, the master releases and forgives the servant, demonstrating boundless mercy. “The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.” Matthew 18:26–27

However, when the same servant refuses to show compassion to his fellow servant, despite having received such mercy himself, the master's anger is kindled. He hands the unmerciful servant over to

the torturers until he can repay all that is due. This act of justice serves as a reminder of the consequences of unforgiveness and the need for reciprocal mercy.

‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” Mt 18:32–35

Jesus concludes the parable with a sobering warning, emphasizing that our heavenly Father will treat us in the same way that we treat others. If we fail to forgive our brothers and sisters from our hearts, we risk incurring God's judgment and experiencing the full weight of justice. The parable invites us to consider the profound nature of God's love. Love is not merely a sentiment; it is an active force that manifests itself in both justice and mercy. Justice ensures that there are consequences for wrongdoing, while mercy offers the possibility of redemption and a fresh start.

Far from being incompatible, justice and mercy are two sides of the same coin. They are both essential expressions of God's love, working together to create a harmonious and just world. CS Lewis expresses: “What are you asking God to do? To wipe out their past sins and, at all costs, to give them a fresh start, smoothing every difficulty and offering every miraculous help? But He has done so, on Calvary.” Love is God's essence, justice is one of its works, and mercy is another. We think of mercy as the relaxation and compromising of justice, and justice as prior. Justice is simply a form that love takes, and on the cross, he expresses justice on Himself on behalf of His love for mankind.

In the book of Sirach, scripture puts forth clearly the wrath of God: “Even if there were only one stiff-necked person, it would be a wonder if he remained unpunished. For mercy and wrath are with the Lord; he is mighty to forgive—but he also pours out wrath. Great as is his mercy, so also is his chastisement; he judges a person according to his or her deeds. The sinner will not escape with plunder, and the patience of the godly will not be frustrated.” Sirach 16:11–13. God is a Just Perfect Judge. If someone has chosen to be evil, and God has been very patient with him, but the person still refuses to come back, God must put an end to that evil because He does not want others to suffer because of this person. This may not be out of utmost desire, He desires all men to be saved, but out of necessity - just like during Noah's flood. He thus puts an end to it. God is all knowing and knows if this person will repent or not. If given a million more years, will they change their way or not?

Forgiveness appeals to freedom; it must be freely given and freely accepted, like any gift. If we do not repent and ask for God's forgiveness, we do not receive it, not because God holds it back but because we hold ourselves back.

An Unfair “Punishment”

The word "punishment" carries a complex meaning, embracing two distinct interpretations. Positive law punishments are those chosen by

***“God is merciful
in his justice and
just in His
mercy.”***

HH Pope Shenouda III

the punisher, rather than being inherently necessary. They may be just and reasonable, but they are subject to change and are not absolute. For example, if you steal a cookie, the punisher might slap your hand, or if you drive at ninety miles per hour, your license might be taken away. These punishments are imposed externally and are intended to deter certain behaviors.

On the other hand, natural law punishments are intrinsic and stem from the natural consequences of one's actions. They are necessary and unavoidable, and they are not subject to the whims of the punisher. For instance, if you eat a cookie before supper, you may spoil your appetite. If you drive at ninety miles per hour, you will endanger your life. And if you jump off a cliff, you will likely die. These punishments are inherent to the actions themselves and serve as a natural deterrent to harmful or dangerous behaviors.

Positive law punishments are often imposed by authority figures, such as parents, teachers, or the government, to maintain order and enforce rules. They can be subjective, as the punisher has the discretion to choose the appropriate punishment. However, natural law punishments are objective and universal, as they are embedded in the laws of nature. They are not subject to human interpretation or manipulation.

Understanding the distinction between positive law and natural law punishments is important within the dialogue of mercy and justice. First, it helps individuals to recognize the different types of consequences that their actions may have. When looking at the fall, God instilled a natural law: “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” (Genesis 2:16-17) He defined and described a natural consequence to the action. If we eat the forbidden fruit of disobedience to God's will, divorcing our will and spirit from God's, then the inevitable result will be disaster and death, for God is the source of all joy and life.

A “Punishment” not fitting for the crime

Those who object to hell's over severity do not see what sin really is. They probably look at sin externally, sociologically, legalistically, as "behaving badly." They fail to see the real horror of sin and the real greatness and goodness and joy of the God who is refused in every sin. We all fail to appreciate this.

Eternity is not more time, or even endless time. It is another dimension than time, just as time is another dimension than space. The relation between earthly choices and eternal rewards or punishments is not like the relation between crimes and prison sentences, but like the relation between a foundation and a building. Hell's punishment fits sin's crime because sin is divorce from God. The punishment fits the crime because the punishment is the crime. Saying no to God means no God.

Some have objected saying that a “short-lived” sin should not be punished with eternal punishment. In this case, neither should the reward of the righteous be eternal, for the same analogy and relationship exists between this joy and the worthiness of the deeds. There is no opportunity for repentance in the afterlife, sins will remain with the person eternally and thus the torments will also continue forever.

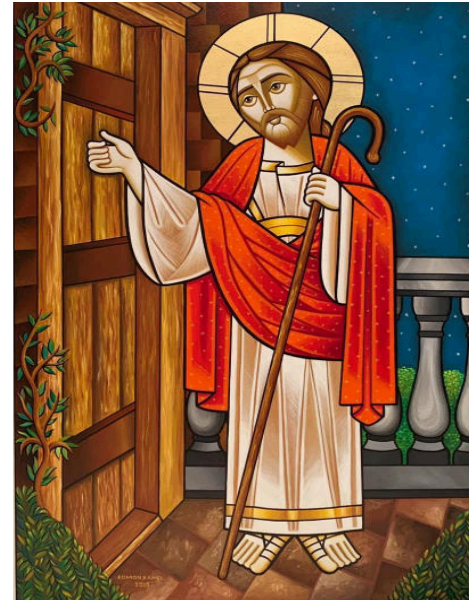
Let's look at an example of Civil Law. Let's say someone murdered a person and it took them 15 minutes, does this mean you get to stay in prison for only 15 minutes? We hear of many cases when someone, due to the sins he/she has committed at one point or another, received a punishment which lasted many years or even until the end of his/her life. The duration of time in which the evil act itself was committed does not necessarily commensurate with the duration of the imposed punishment. Someone may spend years in prison for a fifteen-minute crime.

Contrary to Human Freedom

We do, and therefore can, freely choose hell over heaven. We do this in principle in every sin. We do not want or explicitly choose sin's "wages," sin's inevitable punishment-banishment from the paradise of God's presence-but we do choose the sin and falsely hope to escape the punishment.

If you look at the icon of Jesus knocking on the door, you'll notice something....what is it? There's no door knob. The door can only be opened on the inside.

C.S Lewis has a nice quote....the doors of hell are locked from the inside. Not literally of course, but meaning that we choose that willingly chose it and will not leave. They have gotten the freedom they asked for and are enslaved to themselves.



Does the fear of hell remove free choice? Does fry contradict free? No more than the fear of falling off a cliff removes the free choice to skate close to the edge or to avoid it. If the threat "repent or you'll fry" removed free will, then all would repent. The threat does not remove free choice.

"In all our discussions of hell we should keep steadily before our eyes the possible damnation, not of our enemies nor our friends ... but of ourselves. This chapter is not about your wife or son, nor about Nero or Judas Iscariot; it is about you and me." - C.S. Lewis The Problem of Pain

Contrary to Omnipotence

The question of why God, with his limitless power, does not destroy hell or ensure that no one goes there raises profound theological and philosophical issues. Three primary options emerge: destroying hell, annihilating the souls in hell, or preventing the conception of hell-bound persons.

1. Destroying Hell:

Destroying hell would mean eliminating one of the two options available to individuals through free choice: choosing God or rejecting Him. If hell does not exist and there is no separation from God, then all individuals would be compelled to choose God. However, this would essentially destroy free will, as individuals would no longer have the ability to make meaningful choices.

2. Annihilating the Souls in Hell:

Annihilating the souls in hell would involve destroying something God created. Even though these souls have made choices that led them to hell, God created them with the potential for salvation. Annihilating them would be akin to erasing a part of God's creation, which goes against the notion of God's love and mercy.

3. Preventing the Conception of Hell-Bound Persons:

Preventing the conception of hell-bound persons would effectively be another way of destroying free choice. By predetermining who will and will not exist, God would be eliminating the possibility of individuals making their own choices and shaping their destinies. This would undermine the purpose of human existence and reduce individuals to mere pawns in a predetermined game.

The objection assumes that a world without hell is possible and questions why God did not create such a world. However, the response is that God did indeed create a world without separation from Himself. God did not create hell; it is a consequence of the choices made by individuals who freely reject His love and grace.



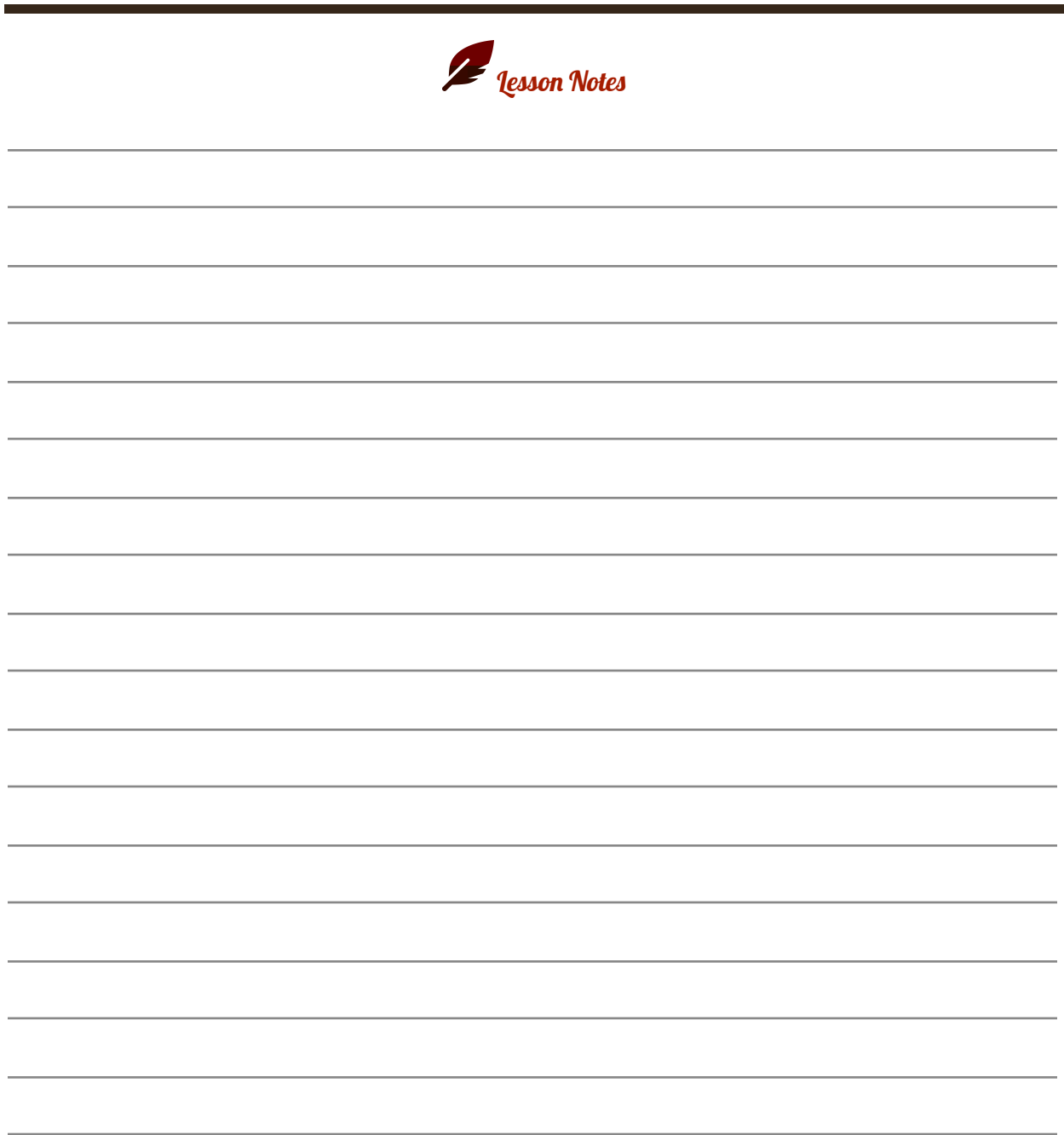
Review Questions

1. Who said, "God is merciful in his justice and just in His mercy."? (A: Pope Shenouda III)
2. Provide an example of God's justice. (A: The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant)
3. A God of love cannot *make* or even tolerate such a chamber. True or false? (A: False)
4. God wants everyone to be saved. True or false?. (A: True)
5. If God's power has no limit, why does He not destroy hell or arrange for no one to go there? (A: God did not create separation from himself. God did not create hell. We did)



Books & References

1. Suscopts Q&A on Hell, accessed 25 March 2024, <<https://www.suscopts.org/q&a/index.php?catid=183>>
2.  St. Chrysostom on Hell , accessed 25 March 2024, <<http://michaelbremner.com/2013/11/st-chrysostom-on-hell-a-collection-of-proof-texts/>>



Plurism & Post-Modernism: Do we all believe in the Same God?

APOLOGETICS

The Only Way

At the core of every church, transcending various activities, events, and services, lies an unwavering purpose: the salvation of souls. This fundamental mission is rooted in the belief that Jesus Christ is the sole path to eternal life. It is a conviction that propelled the Disciples and Apostles to embark on a lifelong journey of preaching and sacrifice after Christ's death and resurrection. Their unwavering dedication stemmed from the understanding that if salvation could be found through other means, their mission would have been rendered unnecessary. St. Paul evoked this very message when speaking to the Corinthians: *"For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable."* (1 Corinthians 15:16-19).

The gospel message, encapsulated in John 3:16, emphasizes the profound love of God in sending His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, as a sacrificial offering for the world: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life"(John 3:16). Through faith in Christ, individuals can escape eternal condemnation and embrace everlasting life. This central tenet of Christianity underscores the belief that salvation is not a mere philosophical concept but a transformative reality accessible only through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Disciples and Apostles spent the rest of their lives after Christ's death and Resurrection, traveling, suffering, and preaching. Salvation is only found in Jesus Christ and it is for this reason that the disciples accepted all these circumstances and mustered the courage to preach to Jews and Gentiles. Our mantra as servants is: "Christ is the only way to heaven". As servants of Christ, it becomes our sacred duty to faithfully proclaim this message to the world and to those we serve. It is not simply a matter of adhering to religious rituals or engaging in charitable works, but rather, it is about extending the invitation of salvation to all who are lost and in need of hope. Our words and actions should consistently reflect the love and grace of Christ, drawing others to experience the transformative power of His sacrifice.

Furthermore, as we engage in various ministries and outreach programs, it is essential to remember that our ultimate goal is to lead people to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. While providing practical assistance and addressing temporal needs is important, it should never overshadow the spiritual

dimension of our service. It is through the proclamation of the gospel and the guidance of the Holy Spirit that individuals can truly find lasting peace and purpose in their lives.

In a world often characterized by uncertainty and despair, the message of salvation through Jesus Christ offers a beacon of hope and eternal life. Let us, as servants of Christ, embrace our sacred calling with unwavering commitment, boldly proclaiming the gospel and leading others to the saving grace found only in Jesus Christ.

Pluralism & Relativism

The concepts of pluralism and relativism have, for a long time, served as obstacles to the apprehension of Truth in our society. These ideas, often intertwined and deeply ingrained in contemporary thought, pose a significant challenge to the foundational principles of Christianity and the notion of absolute truth.

Pluralism, characterized by the coexistence of multiple principles and sources of authority, suggests that there is no single, objective truth but rather a mosaic of truths that vary depending on individual perspectives and cultural contexts. This mindset undermines the idea of universal truths and promotes the notion that all beliefs are equally valid. In the realm of religion, pluralism leads to the belief that all religions are essentially the same and that there is no one true path to salvation.

Relativism, on the other hand, posits that knowledge, truth, and morality are relative to cultural, societal, and historical contexts. It asserts that there is no absolute or objective standard of truth but rather a spectrum of truths that are contingent upon the subjective experiences and beliefs of individuals. In the context of religion, relativism implies that all religious beliefs and interpretations are equally valid and that there is no inherent superiority or inferiority among them.

The combination of pluralism and relativism has had a profound impact on the religious landscape of our society. It has fostered an environment in which truth is seen as subjective and provisional, rather than objective and immutable. This has led to a widespread skepticism toward religious doctrines and a reluctance to embrace any particular faith as the ultimate source of truth.

For Christianity, the implications of pluralism and relativism are significant. The Christian faith is predicated on the belief in the existence of an objective Truth revealed through the teachings of Jesus Christ. It asserts that Christianity is not merely one among many equally valid religions but rather the exclusive way to salvation. The relativist and pluralist mindset, however, challenges this exclusivity and opens the door to a more fluid and inclusive understanding of religious truth.

The tension between Christianity and the prevailing cultural ethos of pluralism and relativism raises profound questions about the nature of truth, the role of faith, and the foundations of human existence. As Christians, we are called to uphold the truth of the Gospel in a world that increasingly embraces a relativistic and pluralistic worldview. This requires a thoughtful and compassionate engagement with those who hold different beliefs, a willingness to listen and learn, and a steadfast commitment to the truth as revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Practical Questions and Application

Morality transcends individual perspectives and societal norms. It is not something that can be determined solely by personal beliefs or political correctness. Just because a person is sincere in their beliefs does not make those beliefs factually correct or ethically sound. Consider the following examples:

1. **Chemistry:** If a person sincerely believes that the Earth is flat, it does not make their belief scientifically accurate. Chemistry is a well-established scientific discipline with extensive evidence and experimentation supporting its principles. It is not a matter of personal opinion but a body of knowledge based on empirical data.
2. **Slavery:** Historically, many individuals held sincere beliefs that slavery was morally acceptable. However, the abolition of slavery was a major moral breakthrough, and it is now widely recognized as a heinous institution that violates fundamental human rights. Morality is not determined by the prevalence of a belief but by its alignment with universal principles of justice and equality.
3. **Holocaust:** The Holocaust stands as one of the darkest chapters in human history, characterized by the systematic genocide of millions of Jews and other marginalized groups. Denying or minimizing the Holocaust is not only factually incorrect but also morally reprehensible. It trivializes the suffering of victims and perpetuates harmful historical revisionism.

Being politically correct with our Christian faith does not mean we are factually correct. In all three of these examples you would not see someone able to say any of the following.

- "It doesn't matter what you believe about Chemistry as long as you are sincere in what you believe"
- "It doesn't matter what you believe about Slavery as long as you are true in what you believe"
- "It doesn't matter what you believe to be true about the Holocaust as long as you are true in what you believe"

This concept fits nowhere else, so why should we apply it to matters of life and death? Why take a gamble on our eternity? It is crucial to engage in thoughtful and informed discussions based on evidence, ethical principles, and respect. However, taking a gamble on our eternity by adhering to blindly held beliefs without critical reflection is a dangerous and potentially harmful approach.

Morality requires us to strive for truth, compassion, and justice. It demands that we challenge our assumptions, question prevailing narratives, and seek a deeper understanding of the world around us. "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." (1 Kings 18:21). Relying solely on personal beliefs or political correctness, without regard for objective truth can lead us astray and undermine the very foundation of a just and humane society. "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other." (Matthew 6:24) "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad." (Matthew 12:30)

- Something cannot be one thing and another thing at the same time and in the same way.
- An object cannot be a sphere and a rectangle at the same time.
- Can something be true and false at the same time and in the same way?
 - “For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” – 1 Corinthians 14:33
- Can the Eucharist be the true body and blood of Christ and also be a symbol at the same time?
- If the Words in the Bible were ambiguous, there would be a valid argument to be made.
- The words of God in scripture however do not falter; He is clear about Truth and Non-Truth.

The Concept of Two Roads

From the mundane choices we make each day to the profound decisions that shape our destiny, we are constantly faced with a myriad of options. And just as in life, where we are presented with binary choices like right or wrong, left or right, good or bad, the concept of religion also presents us with two distinct paths: heaven or hell. Religion, in its various forms, elaborates on this duality, much like other institutions in society. In the same way that a company establishes guiding principles and "best practices" to dictate the preferred way of conducting business, religion provides a framework of beliefs and moral codes that guide individuals' thoughts and actions. The "right" way, as defined by the company or religious doctrine, becomes the standard by which everything else is deemed "wrong."

It is intriguing to consider why religion and God cannot function in a similar manner to successful individuals in the world, who have found the "right" path or the optimal way of doing things. In the realm of business, companies strive to achieve efficiency, profitability, and growth by implementing well-defined processes and strategies. Similarly, successful people often attribute their achievements to their ability to make sound decisions, develop effective habits, and cultivate a positive mindset. If we were to apply this logic to religion and God, it implies that there is a "right" way to believe, worship, and live in accordance with divine principles. This would imply the existence of a singular, universally accepted path to salvation or enlightenment.

In the profound words of St. Augustine, found in his seminal work "City of God," two distinct loves shape individuals and societies: the love of self and the love of God. The love of self, driven by selfish desires and worldly pursuits, leads to the creation of an earthly city. This love is characterized by division, conflict, and a focus on material possessions. In contrast, the love of God, guided by divine grace and a desire for spiritual fulfillment, gives rise to a heavenly city. This love cultivates unity, compassion, and a longing for transcendence. St. Augustine invites us to examine our hearts and reflect on what we love, for it reveals the city we truly belong to: “Two loves have formed two cities. The love of self has formed the earthly city; the love of God has formed the heavenly one. Let us examine ourselves to what we love and we’ll find which city we belong to” – St. Augustine: City of God

In C.S. Lewis's poignant work "The Great Divorce," the author presents a similar dichotomy in the human experience: “There are 2 kinds of people in the world: those who say to God ‘Thy will be done’ and those that God will say to in the end ‘Thy will be done.’” The former group embraces God's

sovereignty and finds fulfillment in aligning their desires with the divine plan. They recognize the limitations of their own understanding and trust in the wisdom of a higher power. The latter group, however, clings to their own will, driven by pride and a desire for control. They fail to recognize the true source of joy and fulfillment, and ultimately experience the consequences of their choices.

These two perspectives offer a profound reflection on the nature of human existence. Our choices, both consciously and unconsciously made, determine the trajectory of our lives and shape our ultimate destiny. By examining what we love and to whom we surrender our will, we can gain a deeper understanding of our identity and purpose in the world. The choice between self-love and love of God, between our own will and the will of a higher power, is a fundamental decision that has profound implications for our present and eternal existence.

What is the Christian Goal?

The Christian goal is to achieve unity with Jesus Christ. This journey begins with salvation through Christ and culminates in perfection when we join Him in Heaven. Heaven represents the ultimate realization of being one with Christ. Every aspect of religious practice is designed to facilitate this unity.

At the core of service in the church, the goal is to teach the requirements for being worthy of Communion, which symbolizes oneness with Christ. This process involves repentance, prayer, confession, baptism, following the Canon, and ultimately receiving Communion. As the Nicene Creed states, "We confess one baptism for the remission of sins." Being one with Christ involves a transformation of our hearts and minds. It is a process of becoming more like Christ in our thoughts, words, and actions. We strive to embody His love, compassion, and forgiveness in our daily lives.

Achieving unity with Christ requires a commitment to spiritual growth and discipleship. We engage in prayer, Bible study, and fellowship with other believers to deepen our understanding of His teachings. Through these practices, we grow in faith and develop a closer relationship with Him. The Christian goal is not merely a destination but an ongoing journey. It is a life lived in pursuit of Christ, seeking to know Him more deeply and to reflect His character in all that we do. By surrendering our lives to Him and following His guidance, we experience the joy and peace that come from being one with Christ.

Is Christ the Only Way to Heaven?

The Bible proclaims that the path to salvation lies exclusively through Jesus Christ. In John 14:6, Jesus unequivocally declares, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." This profound statement affirms that Jesus is not simply one among many ways to salvation but the sole and unique way. No individual, regardless of their stature, accomplishments, knowledge, or personal righteousness, can reach God the Father except through Jesus.

The exclusivity of Jesus' role in salvation is rooted in His unique nature and accomplishments. He is the only One who has descended from heaven and returned there, signifying His divine origin and authority (John 3:13). Furthermore, Jesus stands alone as the only person in human history to have lived a perfect life, free from sin (Hebrews 4:15). His sinless life serves as the perfect sacrifice that atones for the sins of humanity (1 John 2:2; Hebrews 10:26). In addition, Jesus uniquely fulfilled the

prophecies and requirements of the Old Testament Law and the Prophets, leaving no doubt about His divine mission (Matthew 5:17).

But Jesus' significance extends beyond His sinless life and sacrificial death. He is the only one to have conquered death forever, shattering the chains of mortality and paving the way for eternal life for those who believe in Him (Hebrews 2:14-15). Jesus is also the sole Mediator between God and humanity, acting as the bridge that connects us with the divine (1 Timothy 2:5). And it is Jesus alone whom God has exalted to the highest place of honor and authority in the universe (Philippians 2:9). The exclusivity of Jesus as the way to salvation is further emphasized through His prayer in John 17:3, where He implores, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." This prayer reveals that eternal life in heaven is made possible solely through Christ.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus faced moments when even His followers were tempted to abandon Him, seeking alternative sources of salvation. In John 6:67, Jesus confronts the Twelve with a pointed question: "Do you also want to go away?" Peter's response encapsulates the understanding of Jesus' unique role: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (John 6:68-69).

In a world of diverse beliefs and claims of spiritual truth, the Bible's emphatic declaration of Jesus as the exclusive way to salvation stands as a firm foundation for Christian faith. It is through Jesus Christ alone that individuals can find forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, and the promise of eternal life.

- "For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him," – Hebrews 2:2-3
- "...without shedding of blood there is no remission...so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation." – Hebrews 9:22,28
- "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day...He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him....Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, "This is a hard saying; who can understand it?" When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, "Does this offend you? From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more." – John 6:51-54,56,60,66

Nineveh's Example

In the realm of divine providence, the story of Jonah and the city of Nineveh serves as a profound testament to God's compassion and His desire for all people to find salvation. It challenges the notion

that only those who know and believe in God are eligible for His grace and mercy. Nineveh, a bustling metropolis renowned for its grandeur and opulence, was a hub of pagan worship and moral depravity. Its inhabitants had turned away from the true God and embraced a life of idolatry and wickedness. Yet, despite their spiritual blindness, God's heart yearned for their redemption.

In an unexpected twist, God commissioned the prophet Jonah to undertake a challenging mission—to travel to Nineveh and deliver a message of impending judgment unless the people repented of their evil ways. Jonah, initially reluctant and filled with prejudice against the gentiles, reluctantly embarked on his journey. As Jonah approached the gates of Nineveh, a profound transformation took place. The people of the city, from the king to the common folk, were gripped by a wave of genuine repentance. They humbled themselves, fasted, and cried out to God for mercy. Their heartfelt contrition and willingness to turn away from their sinful ways moved the heart of God, and He spared them from destruction.

The story of Jonah and Nineveh highlights several important truths. First, it underscores God's universal love and compassion for all people, regardless of their religious beliefs or ethnic background. God desires the salvation of all humanity and longs for every individual to come to a saving knowledge of Him. Second, the narrative challenges the idea that God is a vengeful and capricious deity who delights in punishing His creation. Instead, it portrays Him as a patient and merciful Father who is slow to anger and eager to forgive those who repent of their sins. Third, the story emphasizes the power of repentance and the transformative impact it can have on individuals and communities. When people genuinely turn away from their sinful ways and seek God's forgiveness, He is faithful to cleanse them, restore them, and grant them a new beginning.

If people could stumble their way into heaven without knowing and believing in God, Jonah would not have been sent. Nineveh was a gentile country, but God cared for them as much as He cared for the Jews. “Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.” “But He answered and said to them, “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here.” (Matthew 12:38-41). Jesus came to do for the Jews, what Jonah came to do for the gentiles. Why would God destroy a city if it didn't know better?

Moreover, the account of Jonah and Nineveh foreshadows the coming of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. Jesus, the "greater than Jonah," came to offer salvation not just to the Jews but to people of all nations and backgrounds. Through His sacrificial death and resurrection, He opened the door for all who believe in Him to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. The story of Jonah and Nineveh serves as a timeless reminder of God's boundless love, His desire for the salvation of all people, and the transformative power of genuine repentance. It invites us to embrace God's grace and mercy, turn away from our sinful ways, and experience the abundant life He offers to all who come to Him in faith.

Revelation

In the realm of Revelation, a profound vision unfolds, unveiling the ultimate destiny of humanity. An angel soars through the heavens, bearing the eternal gospel, a message that reverberates across the earth, reaching every nation, tribe, tongue, and people. With a voice that shakes the foundations of the world, the angel proclaims, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come. Worship the Creator of heaven and earth, the seas, and the springs of water."

The angel's message carries a solemn warning, heralding the imminent judgment of God. Yet, amidst the impending doom, a beacon of hope shines forth. In Revelation 3:10, a promise is given to those who have faithfully persevered in their faith. They shall be spared from the hour of trial that will engulf the world, a time of testing that will separate the true believers from the pretenders. The revelation continues, revealing the triumphant return of Jesus Christ, accompanied by clouds and visible to every eye. Even those who pierced Him will witness His glorious advent, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. The day of reckoning has arrived, and the ultimate judgment will be pronounced.

In the chilling climax of Revelation, those whose names are not found written in the Book of Life are cast into the lake of fire: "And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:15) This irreversible fate serves as a stark reminder of the consequences of rejecting God's grace and mercy. The revelation underscores the urgent need for repentance and a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ, the only way to escape eternal condemnation.

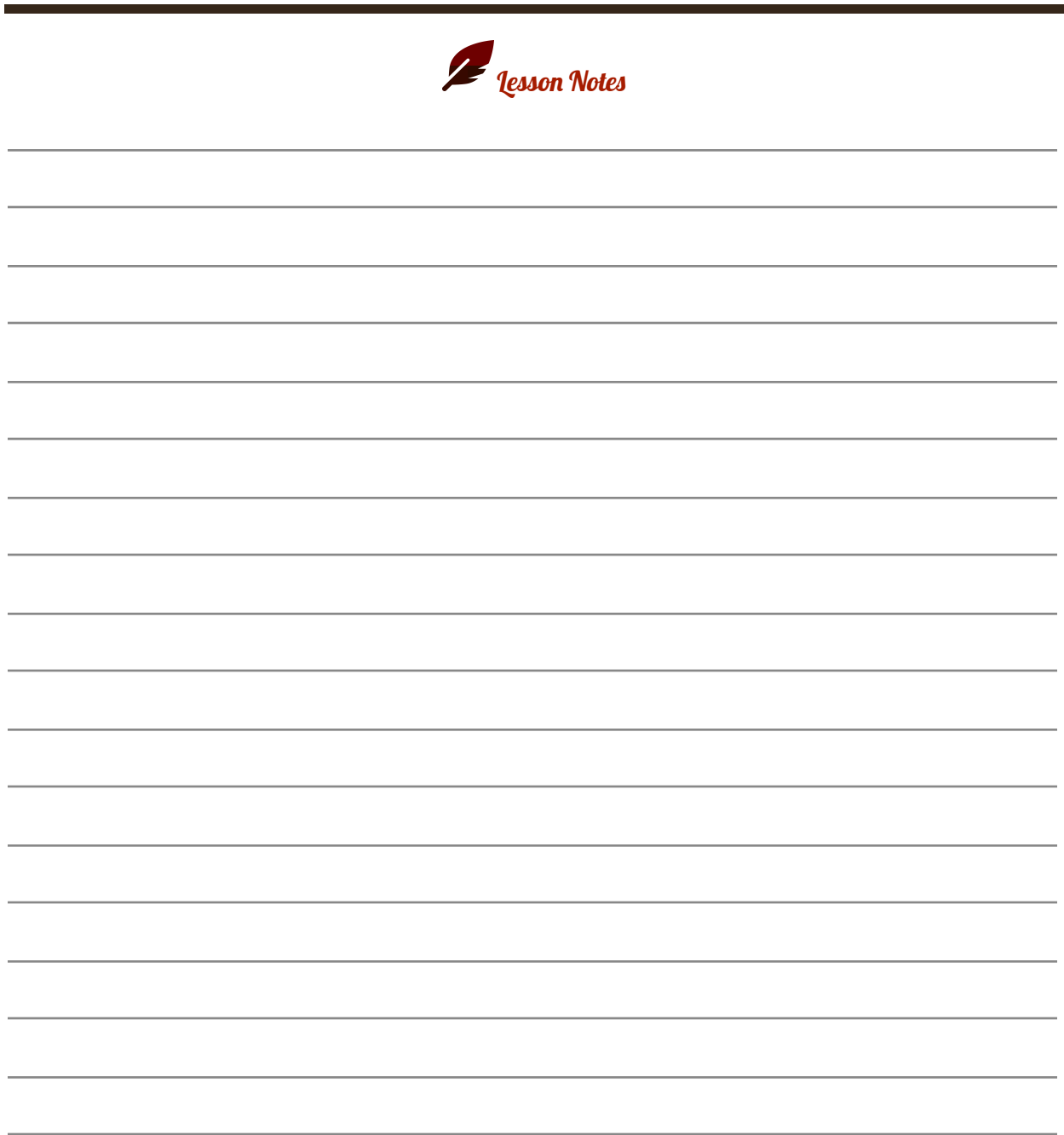
Throughout history, the message of Jesus has transformed millions of lives. Countless individuals have experienced radical change through their encounter with Jesus Christ. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, they have devoted their lives to serving Him, sharing the good news of salvation with others, and standing firm in their faith even in the face of adversity and persecution.

The revelation of Jesus culminates in a glorious vision of the new heaven and the new earth, a realm where righteousness dwells and God's presence is eternally experienced. In this eternal paradise, pain, sorrow, and death are no more, as God wipes away every tear from every eye. The faithful, having overcome the trials and tribulations of this world, will inherit eternal life and dwell in the presence of God forever. As we navigate the complexities and challenges of life, let us find comfort and strength in the revelation of Jesus Christ. By aligning our lives with His teachings, seeking His forgiveness, and living in accordance with His will, we can experience the transformative power of His love and the promise of eternal life that awaits us. The revelation of Jesus is a timeless treasure, a source of hope and guidance for all who embrace it.



Review Questions

1. What is the purpose of the church? (A: saving souls)
2. All religions are the same. True or false? (A: False)
3. Morality is relative to the person. True or false? (A: False)
4. Provide two references that show Christ as the only way to heaven. (A: John 14:6; Hebrews 4:15)
5. God cared for the gentiles as much as He cared for the Jews. True or false? (A: True)



Creation and Evolution

APOLOGETICS

Human-first ideologies

Charles Darwin lived from 1809 to 1882, during a period when the concept of evolution was relatively new. Even today, evolution continues to be a subject of debate and controversy. In the context of human history, the development of evolutionary theory coincides with a gradual shift away from theocentric ideologies, particularly Christianity. As humanity progressed and gained a deeper understanding of the natural world, various heresies emerged, challenging traditional religious beliefs.

Examining the proponents of evolutionary theory reveals a pattern of individuals who embraced ideologies that prioritized human self-interest over divine guidance. For example, leaders like Lenin, Stalin, and Marx, who advocated for communist ideologies, espoused a human-centric worldview that often led to the suppression of religious beliefs. Similarly, Adolf Hitler, with his twisted ideology of racial superiority, exemplified the dangers of ideologies that place humanity at the center of existence. These ideologies stand in direct opposition to the core tenets of Christianity and theistic theology. Relativism, pluralism, communism, and atheism all challenge the notion of a transcendent divine being and emphasize the importance of human autonomy and worldly concerns.

It is important to note that many scientists and thinkers who contributed to the development of evolutionary theory were also devout believers, seeking to reconcile scientific knowledge with their religious convictions. The complex relationship between evolution and Christianity has been a subject of ongoing discussion and debate, with various perspectives and interpretations emerging over time.

Darwin's theory of Evolution

Darwin's theory of evolution put forth the idea that all life shares a common ancestry and has transformed over time through gradual, incremental changes. At the heart of this theory is the principle of natural selection, which proposes that in a competitive environment, organisms better adapted to their surroundings are more likely to survive, reproduce, and pass on their advantageous traits to their offspring. Over vast spans of time, this process of natural selection leads to the accumulation of beneficial adaptations and the gradual divergence of species. In the case of human evolution, Darwin suggested that our species, *Homo sapiens*, descended from a series of ancestral primates through a gradual process of natural selection. This evolutionary journey began with early primates like monkeys, progressed to primitive humans such as *Homo erectus*, and ultimately led to the emergence of modern humans.

Similarly, Darwin's theory extends to the evolution of fish. According to his theory, fish evolved from simpler aquatic creatures, such as amphibians and reptiles, over long periods of time. This

evolutionary process involved the development of various adaptations, such as fins, scales, and gills, which facilitated survival in aquatic environments.

The Father of Lies

In the tapestry of human history, the figure of Satan has often been intertwined with notions of deception and falsehood. It is believed that Satan played a pivotal role in humanity's downfall, tempting Eve with the forbidden fruit and leading her and Adam astray. In a similar vein, the theory of evolution, which serves as the cornerstone of our understanding of the natural world, has also faced scrutiny due to instances of deceptive claims and misinterpretations. The realm of scientific research, which is often viewed as a bastion of truth and objectivity, is not immune to such instances of misinformation and deceit. Throughout history, there have been notable cases of scientific fraud that have cast a shadow on the integrity of the field. One striking example is the infamous "Nebraska Man" incident.

In the early 1900s, scientists working in Nebraska discovered a single tooth embedded in a rock formation. Eager to make a significant contribution to the field of paleoanthropology, they hastily extrapolated an entire narrative based on this limited evidence. They envisioned a majestic prehistoric human species, dubbed "Nebraska Man," and even speculated on the appearance of both the male and female members of this supposed species. However, as DNA testing technology advanced, scientists were able to determine that the tooth actually belonged to an extinct pig, exposing the erroneous claims made by the original researchers.

Another instance of alleged scientific fraud involves the Piltdown Man, a combination of a human skull and an ape's jaw. For over four decades, this fraudulent reconstruction was presented in textbooks as evidence of early human evolution. It was only in 1953 that this chimera was exposed as a hoax, shattering the illusions it had created.

A more enduring and consequential case of scientific deception dates back to 1856. In that year, bones belonging to a human with arthritis were presented as evidence of a new species, named "Australopithecus africanus." This "discovery," made in 1924, was hailed as the missing link between apes and humans. However, in 1973, an African geologist named Ronald Clarke demonstrated that the bones had been incorrectly attributed and had no connection to early human evolution. Despite this revelation, "Australopithecus africanus" remains listed as a valid species in some science books today, perpetuating an inaccurate narrative about human origins.

It is important to emphasize that these instances of misinformation were not merely the result of honest mistakes. Rather, they involved the deliberate manipulation of evidence and the creation of narratives that were not supported by the available facts.

The Homo-sapiens Lie

There is not enough evidence to answer the basic science questions of when, where, and how homo sapiens "evolved." The bones being found are sometimes a mile apart, and yet for the sake of a narrative being combined to say we found a new intermediary species. Sin started with Satan's lie and has not changed ever since; it has just been adjusted to our modern society. Because of these lies,

there are holes in the arguments, such as where is the proof then that chimpanzees evolved? Where are their preliminary ancestors and bones?

Evolution is still a theory, but its proponents still claim it as fact although even if it were true would be very hard to prove. They say that instead of being created in the image of God we evolved from the descendents of monkeys. Satan is always trying to bring down humanity to the lowest possible point because He knows how much God loves us: “every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.” (Matthew 7:17) So if we judge this theory by its fruit, we are left to conclude that this tree should be cut down as Christ says “every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.” (Matthew 7:19)

Contra Evolution

The fundamental laws of science, such as the law of conservation of energy, unequivocally state that something cannot arise from nothing. This principle implies that the creation of anything, including life, requires a source or a creator. Science has yet to provide evidence supporting the spontaneous generation of life from non-living matter. For example, dirt in a backyard, despite being composed of various chemical elements, does not transform into trees and flowers on its own. Plants originate from seeds, cuttings, or grafts derived from existing plants, underscoring the need for a source of life. While it is conceivable that humans may one day synthesize a living cell in a laboratory using raw chemicals, such an achievement would merely reinforce the notion that intelligence is a prerequisite for creating life. It would not, however, provide evidence for the theory of evolution.

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution posits that all life forms on Earth share a common ancestry and have undergone gradual changes over millions of years. However, the timeframe proposed by Darwin is too vast to be observed within a human lifetime. If evolution were true, one would expect to find fossil evidence demonstrating the gradual transition from one species to another. Yet, the fossil record predominantly reveals the sudden appearance of distinct species, rather than intermediate forms. Instead of unlimited transitional forms, nature exhibits well-defined and distinct species.

The theory of natural selection, a key component of evolutionary theory, fails to provide a plausible explanation for how one type of creature can evolve into an entirely different kind. Genetic coding plays a crucial role in determining the characteristics of an organism, and without the necessary genetic information, the transformation of one species into another becomes highly improbable.

Mutations destroy genetic information and produce creatures more handicapped than the original, with the exception of bacteria, since the purpose of their mutation makes them more resilient but even in this regard, they remain bacterium. “To suppose that the eye with all its inimitable contrivances for adjusting the focus to different distances, for admitting different amounts of light, and for the correction of spherical and chromatic aberration, could have been formed by natural selection, seems, I freely confess, absurd in the highest degree.” (Goldschmidt: Material Basis of Evolution, Yale University Press)

Due to a lack of evidence of how the first living creature evolved, and with the lack of current proof of all the transitory species over the years, evolution is at best still ‘a theory,’ not a proven fact, as it lacks a body of supporting evidence. Despite this, most people believe evolution to be true. Faith, rather

than facts, then holds the theory of evolution. Regarding Darwin's theory, Fred Hoyle states that the evolution of nothing to something is laughable, as, "that is about as ridiculous and improbable as the proposition that a tornado, blowing through a junkyard, could assemble a Boeing 747." If we look at the evidence presented to us, we see that the belief in evolution as an explanation for our origin, requires far more faith than the belief in a creator because of all the evidence around us that there is truly a 'designer.' "The heavens declare the glory of God. And the firmament shows His handiwork." (Psalm 19:1)

What Does the Bible Say?

The Bible explicitly tells us that God is the creator: "then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good." (Genesis 1:31) He is the Alpha and the Omega: "you are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created." (Revelation 4:11)

"By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible." (Hebrews 11:3) The science community still states there are many things not fully understood about the origins of life. However, there is no excuse, "for since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." (Romans 1:20)

God's concept of time is different from our own. The word 'day' used in Genesis does not mean '24 hours,' but instead a time frame that could be millions of years. The solar system was not created until the fourth "day", so time, as we now know it, did not exist until then.

The Bible also uses the word 'day' to mean different things: "the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and notable day of the Lord," (Acts 2:20) where 'day' here means eternity. We are also reminded that "with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." (2 Peter 3:8)

Day seven of creation did not end with 'so the evening and the morning were the seventh day;' this seventh "day" goes from the creation of man until today. St. John Chrysostom explains by saying, "you see, in saying at this point that God rested from his works, Scripture teaches us that he ceased creating and bringing from nonbeing into being on the seventh day, whereas Christ, in saying that "my father is at work up until now and I am at work," reveals his unceasing care for us: he calls "work" the maintenance of created things, bestowal of permanence on them and governance of them through all time. If this wasn't so, after all, how would everything have subsisted, without the guiding hand above directing all visible things and the human race as well?"

Creation Through Evolution?

God could have used evolution to create...but He didn't. Although the creation could have taken millions of years, the Bible says: "then God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth"; and it was so...So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that *it*

was good.” (Genesis 1:11,21) This means God created mature animals and plants ready to reproduce more of their own kind. The Bible also tells us that the first man was created from dust not from an ape or monkey-like creature. Those who try to marry the theory of evolution with the story of Creation, in the end, satisfy neither.



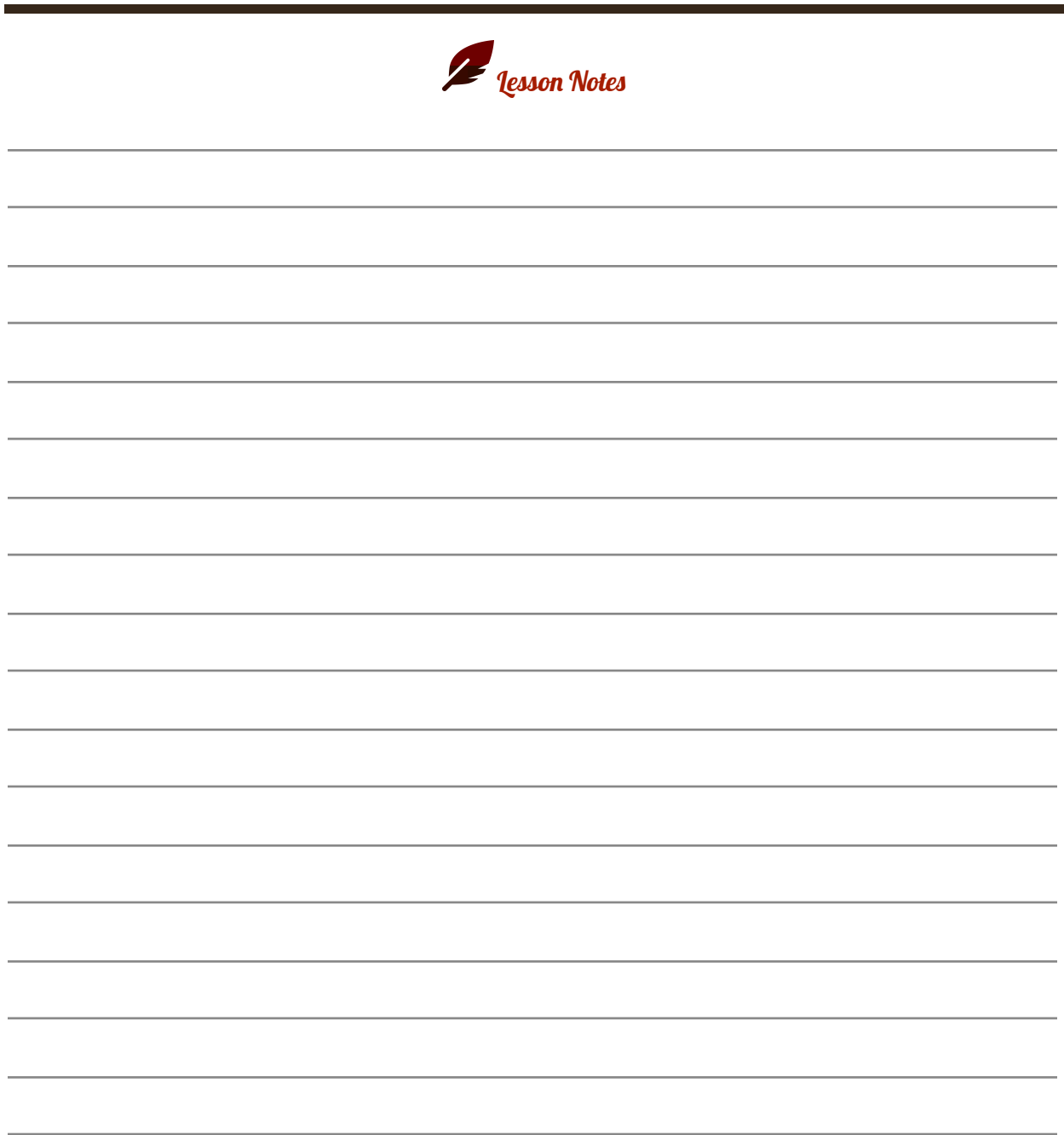
Review Questions

1. True or false? The word ‘day’ used in Genesis means ‘24 hours’ to our creator. (A: False)
2. True or false? EVolution is one of Satan’s many modern-day traps. (A: True)
3. True or false? God chose not to use evolution for our creation at the beginning. (A: True)
4. True or false? The ‘Neanderthal man’ information is still in textbooks today. (A: True)
5. Who said evolution “is about as ridiculous and improbable as the proposition that a tornado, blowing through a junkyard, could assemble a Boeing 747?” (A: Fred Hoyle.)
6. What concept did Darwin base evolution on? (A: Natural selection.)
7. Why can something not evolve from nothing? (A: It is due to the Law of conservation of energy.)
8. Explain the situation of the Piltdown man. (A: Scientists took a human skull, and an ape’s jaw, and said this is what preliminary humanity looked like.)
9. Explain the situation of the Nebraska man. (A: Scientists found a tooth, and created a narrative showing what he looked like, even though it was a pig’s tooth.)



Books & References

1. Suscopts,  Evolution , Accessed March 25, 2024.
https://www.suscopts.org/pdf/conference/2001college_abstract-evolution.pdf
2. Suscopts,  The Evolution Controversy , Accessed March 25, 2024.
<https://www.suscopts.org/mightyarrows/issues/sept07-2.pdf>



Miracles

APOLOGETICS

Perception of Miracles

The renowned British novelist, essayist, poet, and Christian apologist, C.S. Lewis, astutely observed that if one begins by ruling out the existence of the supernatural, they will consequently perceive no miracles. "If you begin by ruling out the supernatural, you will perceive no miracles." (CS Lewis) This sentiment underscores the fundamental connection between Christianity and the belief in miracles.

The life of Jesus Christ stands as the central tenet of Christianity, and it is replete with supernatural events from His miraculous birth to His death and resurrection. Christ's birth itself was a miraculous event, as He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary. His life was marked by numerous miracles, including healing the sick, raising the dead, walking on water, and multiplying food to feed the multitudes. The culmination of His earthly ministry was His sacrificial death on the cross, followed by His glorious resurrection three days later. These events form the bedrock of the Christian faith, providing irrefutable evidence of Christ's divinity and His triumph over death.

The Old Testament is replete with accounts of God's supernatural interventions throughout history. From the very beginning, the creation of the world is presented as a miraculous act, with God speaking the universe into existence. The story of Noah and the flood stands as a testament to God's judgment and His preservation of the righteous. The life of Samson, with his God-given strength, showcases God's empowerment of individuals for specific purposes. The prophet Elijah, through his miraculous works, demonstrated the power of God over nature and false prophets. The story of Jonah, who was swallowed by a large fish and later vomited out alive, serves as a reminder of God's ability to deliver from seemingly impossible situations. These and numerous other miracles recorded in the Old Testament require faith in the supernatural to be fully understood and appreciated.

The acceptance of miracles is not merely a matter of blind faith but is supported by compelling evidence. The historical evidence for the life and times of Jesus Christ is substantial, with numerous non-Christian sources corroborating the existence of a Jewish teacher named Jesus who performed miracles and was crucified. The fact that Christianity spread rapidly throughout the Roman Empire in the face of intense persecution is a testament to the compelling nature of the eyewitness accounts of Christ's miracles.

While the belief in miracles may challenge the prevailing naturalistic worldview, it finds resonance in the human experience. People from all walks of life have reported miraculous occurrences, such as inexplicable healings, answered prayers, and profound spiritual experiences. These personal testimonies, coupled with the historical evidence and the teachings of Christianity, provide a compelling case for the reality of miracles.

C.S. Lewis's observation highlights the inextricable link between Christianity and belief in miracles. The life of Christ, from His miraculous birth to His resurrection, forms the cornerstone of the Christian faith. The Old Testament abounds with accounts of God's supernatural interventions in human history. The acceptance of miracles is not only supported by evidence but also resonates with the human experience. Embracing the reality of miracles enriches our understanding of the world and opens us up to the awe-inspiring power of the divine.

Faith Leading to Miracles

The Bible calls upon us to embrace faith in the extraordinary works of God, assuring us that we can personally experience His supernatural power in our lives. The Gospel of Mark emphasizes that "all things are possible to him who believes," reminding us that what may seem unachievable to humans is within reach with God's intervention. The passage from Mark 10:27 further reinforces this concept, stating that "with men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

In the New Testament, believers are encouraged to have faith as small as a mustard seed, which, despite its size, possesses the strength to accomplish the improbable. As illustrated in Matthew 17:20, with such faith, believers can command mountains to move and overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles: "if you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you." (Matthew 17:20) This passage serves as a testament to the transformative power of faith, empowering individuals to embrace the impossible and witness the extraordinary workings of God in their lives.

The Bible's emphasis on faith in the supernatural is a testament to the boundless love and grace of God. It invites us to trust in His ability to intervene in our lives, to heal us, to provide for us, and to guide us through life's challenges. By embracing faith, we open ourselves up to the limitless possibilities that come from relying on a power greater than ourselves.

Arguments Against Miracles

Science is a powerful tool that has helped us understand the world around us in extraordinary ways. It has allowed us to make incredible progress in fields medicine, technology, and many others. However, there are still many things that science cannot explain. For example, some people believe that certain events in the past, present, and future are not explainable without the knowledge of science and that as science evolves, it will debunk what was once considered miracles.

While science has indeed debunked some events, like lightning and thunder, it has not been able to explain all supernatural healings or miracles attributed to God. For instance, the Virgin Birth, the resurrection, and the feeding of the 5,000 remain unexplained by science. As philosopher Peter Kreeft rightly points out, "what science will do tomorrow, no one knows today, and we cannot argue scientifically from what is not known."

It's important to recognize that science does not tell us what always happens or what is possible or impossible. Scientific laws are merely generalizations based on our observations of how nature usually

works. They do not rule out the possibility of exceptions. In fact, exceptions are simply additions to the natural process, and they do not diminish the validity of science or nature.

Myth and Symbols

Individuals' interpretation of the Bible is often influenced by their personal beliefs. If a person does not believe in miracles, they may interpret biblical accounts of miraculous events as myths or symbols rather than as literal truths. This approach allows them to reconcile their beliefs with the biblical text without rejecting it outright as false. However, it is important to distinguish between interpretation and belief. Interpretation involves seeking to understand the meaning of a text within its historical and cultural context, taking into account the author's intent and the intended audience. Belief, on the other hand, is a subjective acceptance of a proposition as true regardless of evidence or logical reasoning.

Confusing interpretation with belief can lead to the imposition of one's personal views on the text. This is a common mistake made by many modern-day biblical scholars who approach the Bible with a predetermined set of beliefs and then interpret the text in a way that confirms those beliefs. Arrogance plays a role in this mistake as it reflects a belief that one's own understanding of the Bible is superior to that of the author or the intended audience. It is important to recognize the limitations of one's own perspective and to be open to the possibility that the text may have multiple meanings and interpretations.

A more humble and open-minded approach to biblical interpretation involves seeking to understand the text on its own terms, without imposing external beliefs or assumptions. This requires a willingness to set aside one's personal biases and to engage with the text in a respectful and critical manner.

Religion Requires Miracles

The significance of miracles in religion can vary greatly depending on the specific faith. While some religions may not require a belief in miracles as a fundamental tenet, Christianity stands apart in this regard. For Christians, faith in miracles is essential to their religious beliefs.

Christianity's core teachings revolve around the Incarnation, Atonement, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. These events are considered to be miraculous in nature, as they involve divine intervention and supernatural occurrences. The Incarnation, for instance, refers to the belief that God became human in the form of Jesus Christ. The Atonement encompasses Jesus' sacrifice on the cross to redeem humanity from sin. And the Resurrection signifies Jesus' victory over death and his subsequent bodily resurrection. These miraculous events hold profound theological significance for Christians. They serve as the foundation for the Christian faith and provide believers with hope and assurance of salvation. Without faith in these miracles, the central tenets of Christianity would be undermined, and the religion would lose its unique identity.

It is worth noting that not all religions view miracles in the same way as Christianity. In some faiths, miracles may be considered rare or extraordinary occurrences that are not essential to religious practice. In religions like Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, this is true. In contrast,

Christianity emphasizes the importance of miracles as integral to its teachings and as evidence of God's power and grace. Ultimately, the necessity of belief in miracles depends on the specific religion and its theological beliefs. For us Christians, miracles are not merely optional or peripheral elements; they are fundamental to the very core of their faith.

Why Do Miracles Happen?

Throughout history, there have been numerous accounts of miracles that have left people in awe and wonder. But why do miracles happen?

One reason why miracles happen is to display the glory of God. In the Bible, we see many instances where miracles are performed to demonstrate God's power and majesty. For example, in the Old Testament, God parted the Red Sea to allow the Israelites to escape from Egypt. This miraculous event showed God's sovereignty over nature and His ability to intervene in human affairs. Similarly, in the New Testament, Jesus performed many miracles, such as healing the sick and raising the dead. These miracles revealed Jesus' divine nature and His authority over life and death. It brings mankind to a point where it proclaims with King David saying: "I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works." (Psalm 9:1)

Another reason why miracles happen is to provide comfort and reassurance to believers. In times of trouble or distress, miracles can serve as a reminder of God's presence and His love for His people. For example, in the book of Exodus, God led their way through the wilderness: "and the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night. He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day or the pillar of fire by night from before the people." (Exodus 13:21-22) He also provided the Israelites with manna and quail in the desert to sustain them during their journey. These miracles show God's faithfulness and His provision for His people. Similarly, in the book of Acts, the apostles performed many miracles, such as healing the sick and casting out demons. These miracles brought comfort and hope to the early church and helped to spread the gospel message.

Miracles can also be used to answer the prayers of those who have faith. In the Bible, we see many instances where people's prayers are answered in miraculous ways. For example, in the book of 1 Kings, Elijah prayed for rain, and God sent a torrential downpour that ended a severe drought. Similarly, in the New Testament, Jesus healed the centurion's son in response to the man's faith: "then Jesus said to the centurion, 'Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.'" And his servant was healed that same hour." (Matthew 8:13) These miracles demonstrate God's willingness to answer the prayers of those who trust in Him.

While miracles do not seem like a common occurrence, they do happen. When they do, they serve as a reminder of God's power, His love, and His faithfulness. Miracles can bring comfort to believers, strengthen faith, and even lead people to salvation.

Belief

In the realm of miracles, faith stands as a pivotal element. Without it, the very essence of divine intervention remains elusive. It was a deficiency in faith that prompted Christ to perform extraordinary

signs and wonders. Conversely, it is the absence of faith that often hinders believers from witnessing the miraculous. The gospels provide numerous instances where Jesus emphasized the significance of faith in receiving healing and experiencing the power of God.

In the case of the blind man in Luke 18:42, Jesus declared, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." This statement underscores the transformative power of faith in initiating the healing process. Similarly, in Luke 17:19, Jesus instructed the ten lepers who were cleansed of their disease, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well." Here again, faith is presented as a catalyst for miraculous healing. Furthermore, in Matthew 9:22, Jesus addressed a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years, saying, "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well." These words illustrate how faith can bring about healing and restoration even in seemingly hopeless situations.

On the other hand, Matthew 13:58 reveals the sobering truth that a lack of faith can hinder the outpouring of God's miraculous power. In this passage, Jesus laments, "Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief." This verse highlights the crucial role of faith as a conduit through which God's miraculous intervention flows. In Mark 9:23-24, the father of a demon-possessed boy approached Jesus with a plea for help. Recognizing the interplay between faith and miracles, Jesus responded, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes." The father's immediate response, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" poignantly captures the human struggle with faith and the desire to overcome it.

It is worth noting that God's miraculous works can serve both as a response to faith and as a means to foster faith. While many miracles require faith as a prerequisite, there are instances where God performs miracles to inspire faith and draw people closer to Him. In both cases, faith is an integral part of the miracle experience, either preceding it or resulting from it.

Faith and miracles are inextricably linked. Faith acts as a bridge between the human realm and the realm of the miraculous. It opens the door for God's intervention and transforms the impossible into the possible. As believers, we are invited to embrace faith, not only as a means to receive miracles but also as a way to deepen our relationship with the God who performs them.

Faith and Humility

In our spiritual journey, humility plays a vital role alongside faith. While intellect can guide us toward faith, it is faith that transcends our understanding and opens the door to the supernatural realm. If we rely solely on our intellect and neglect the significance of faith, we may find ourselves questioning and doubting the existence of the divine. The world around us presents countless phenomena that defy easy explanation. Space travel, for instance, is a testament to humanity's ingenuity and our ability to venture beyond the boundaries of our planet. Despite our limited understanding of the vastness of the universe, we embrace the reality of space exploration. Similarly, faith invites us to accept truths that may not be fully comprehensible to our finite minds.

The apostle Paul reminds us in Romans 12:3 that we should not think more highly of ourselves than we ought but rather cultivate a mindset of humility: "for I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as

God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” (Romans 12:3) Arrogance and self-importance can hinder our spiritual growth and make us resistant to the working of the supernatural. A humble heart, on the contrary, is receptive to the wonders of God's grace and the mysteries of faith.

Jesus, in Matthew 11:25, speaks of how God reveals hidden truths to the "babes." Here, "babes" symbolizes those who are simple in understanding and pure in heart. It is not intellectual prowess or worldly wisdom that grants access to the profound mysteries of faith but rather a humble and receptive spirit. In our quest for spiritual understanding, it is essential to strike a balance between faith and intellect. While our intellect can provide a foundation for belief, it is faith that takes us into the realm of the supernatural and allows us to experience the transformative power of God's love and grace. May we embrace humility, surrender our pride, and open our hearts to the wonders that faith reveals.

The Ultimate Faith

Faith is a personal and profound connection between an individual and God. It is a journey of trust built on the belief in things that transcend the limitations of our physical senses. The biblical verse from Hebrews 11:1 provides a powerful definition of faith: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It highlights that faith is not merely a passive acceptance of beliefs but a dynamic force that gives substance to our hopes and provides evidence for the unseen. It is not something anyone else can provide or teach.

In the account of Thomas, as described in John 20:29, we witness the struggle of a disciple who could not believe in Christ's presence until he saw physical proof. Jesus' response to Thomas offers a profound insight into the nature of faith: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." This verse emphasizes that true faith does not rely solely on visible evidence but on a deeper connection with the divine. The Kingdom of Heaven is an embodiment of this principle. It cannot be perceived by the naked eye, yet millions of believers around the world have faith in its existence. Similarly, miracles are not confined to the realm of the visible as described in 2 Corinthians 4:18: "while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:18). Miracles require a belief in things that are unseen and eternal.

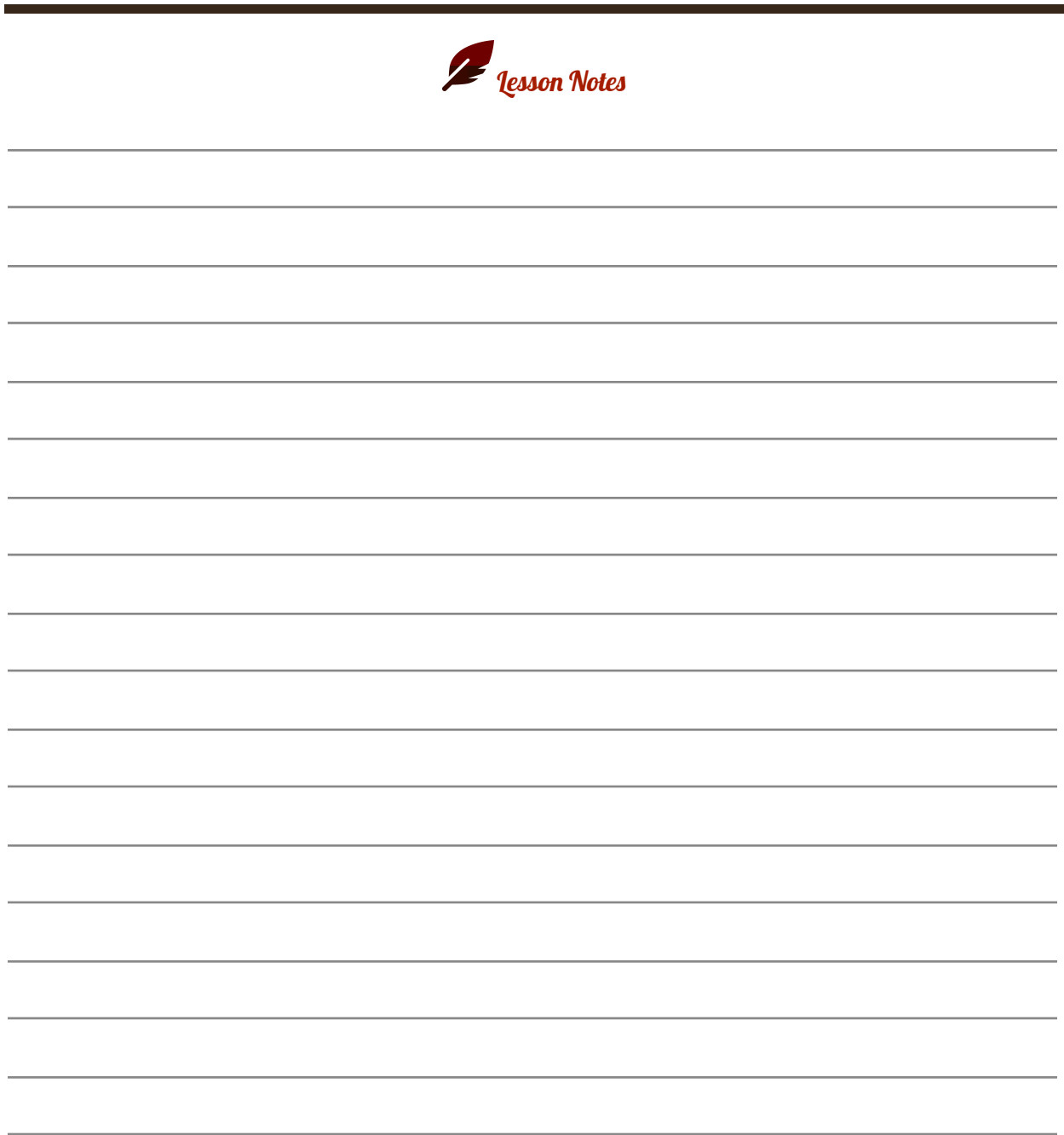
In Christianity, faith and miracles are inextricably linked. They go hand in hand, reinforcing each other in a virtuous cycle. Faith provides the foundation for our belief in miracles, while miracles, in turn, strengthen our faith. To cultivate a strong faith, we must embrace simplicity of heart, mind, and soul. This means shedding preconceptions, biases, and distractions that may hinder our spiritual growth. A simple heart is open to the possibility of the unseen, allowing faith to take root and flourish.

Faith is not a static state but a continuous journey of exploration and discovery. It evolves and deepens as we navigate life's challenges and blessings, always seeking a deeper understanding of our connection with God.



Review Questions

1. True or false? We must learn to believe without a miracle in our lifetime. (A: True)
2. Why do miracles happen? (A: For comfort to believers, as answers to prayers, as well as to show the glory of God to the unbelieving.)
3. True or false? Thomas had faith in Christ wholeheartedly, and therefore we should be more like him. (A: False)
4. True or false? We must not interpret the Bible in light of our own beliefs, but in light of the author's beliefs. (A: True)
5. True or false? Belief in Christianity does not require belief in miracles. (A: False)



Unit 3

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.

***"The Lord has
taught with very
great fullness
that souls
continue to
exist."***

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.

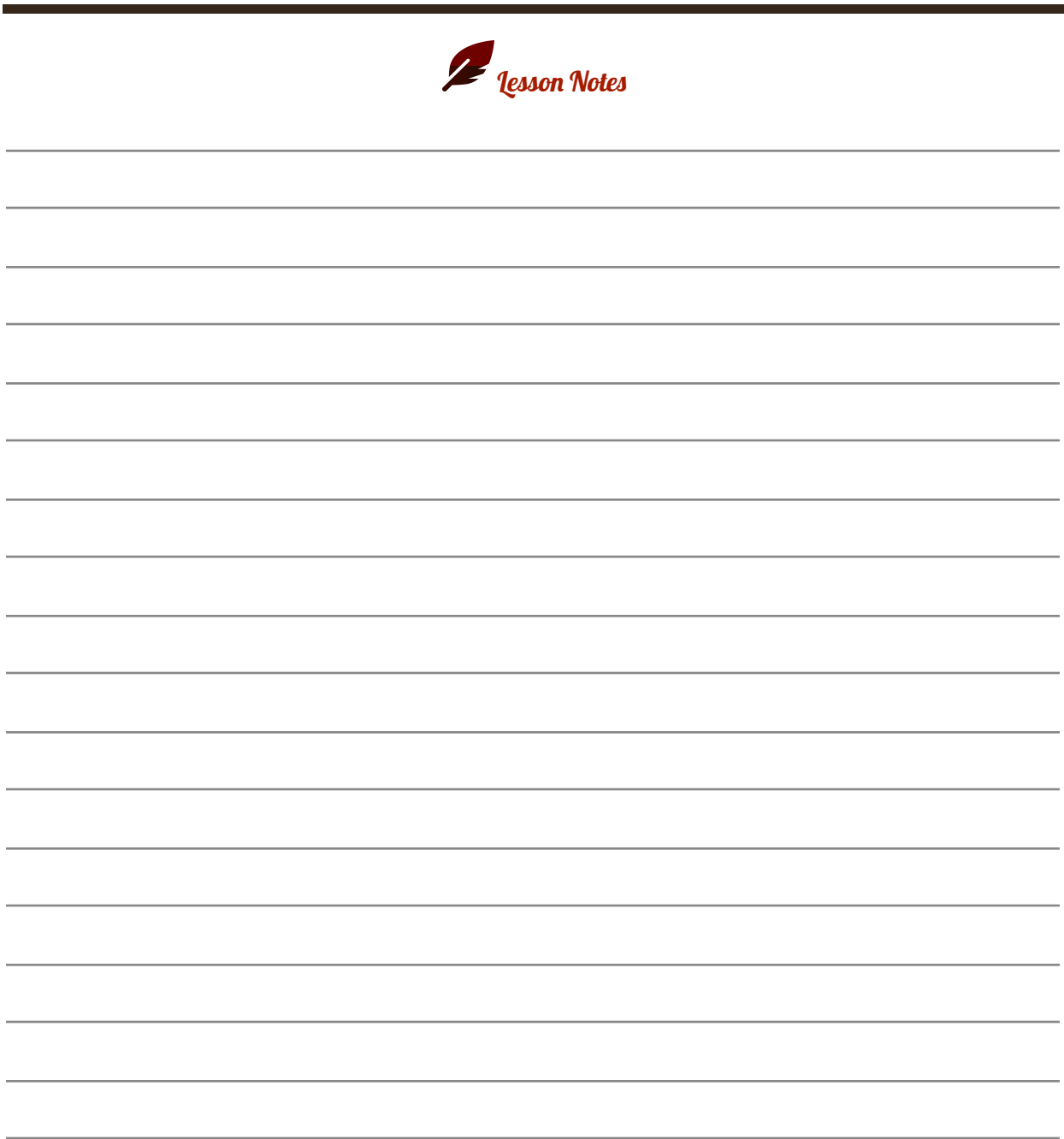


Review Questions

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.)

Books & References

3. CBS News,  *Researchers say there's evidence that consciousness continues after clinical death* YouTube. Oct 19, 2017. Accessed March 25, 2024.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wnolf2NwaRY&ab_channel=CBSNews
4. Closer to Truth,  *Sam Parnia - Is Life After Death Possible* YouTube. Sep 25, 2019. Accessed March 25, 2024. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hz_4FGdWVF8&ab_channel=CloserToTruth
5. Peter Kreeft,  *Handbook of Christian Apologetics*, Chapter 10, InterVarsity Press; 1994,
https://www.google.com/books/edition/Handbook_of_Christian_Apologetics/1DH1ZPyyTkIC?hl=en&gbpv=1&printsec=frontcover



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.

*“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?”*

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)

***“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.”***

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)



Books & References

-
1. Lacopts,  *Euthanasia* . Accessed March 25, 2024. <https://www.lacopts.org/story/euthanasia/>
 2. Lacopts,  *Abortion* . Accessed March 25, 2024. <https://www.lacopts.org/story/abortion/>
 3. Suscopts,  *Suicide* . Accessed March 25, 2024.
<https://suscopts.org/resources/literature/168/suicide/>



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.



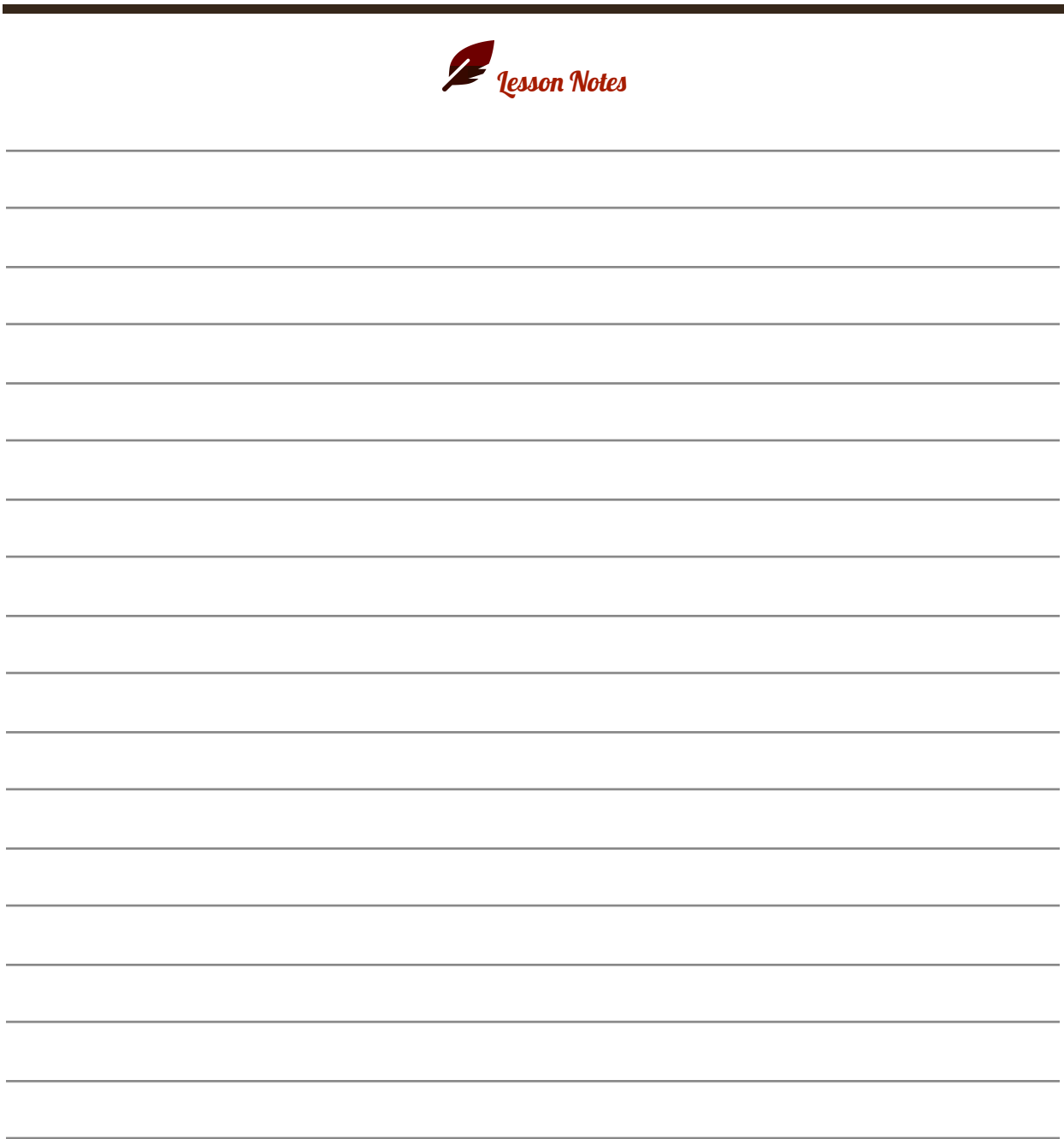
Review Questions

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.)



Books & References

1. Suscopts,  Contemporary Ambivalent Attitudes...Homosexuality . Accessed March 25, 2024. <https://suscopts.org/resources/literature/269/contemporary-ambivalent-attitudeshomosexuality>
2. Suscopts,  Homosexuality . Accessed March 25, 2024. <https://suscopts.org/resources/literature/238/homosexuality/>





Faith & Reason

P APLG100.01 - Intro to Apologetics.pptx

P APLG100.2- Existence of God.pptx

P APLG100.3 - Science & Faith.pptx

Life of Jesus

P APLG101.1 - Was Jesus More than a Mere Man.pptx

P APLG101.2 - The Account of the Resurrection .pptx

God and the Supernatural

P APLG201.1 - God and the existence of Hell.pptx

P APLG201.2 - Is Christ the Only Way to Heaven.pptx

P APLG201.3 - Creation vs Evolution.pptx

P APLG201.4 - Faith and Miracles.pptx

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...