

CONTEMPORARY MORAL ISSUES

READING ASSIGNMENTS

The Orthodox Church, by Timothy Ware, pgs 145-171, 264-273

CHRISTIANITY AND EASTERN RELIGIONS

Eastern religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism) all believe in the "unity of all things", "all is one." Since this is the case, the most basic division affirmed by Christianity—the distinction between God as creator and everything else as creation or creature—must be denied. In the final analysis that is what all eastern religions do: they deny the existence of a living, personal, creating, saving, sanctifying God who is ultimately different from the created world.

ASTROLOGY & HOROSCOPES

Astrology is an attempt to describe the future of an individual based on the position of certain stars relative to the period of the year when that person was born. Astrologers make calculations on this basis and predict what events, happenings, and opportunities may occur in the life of that person. Given the above we are not free to choose and develop our own destinies. As such Astrology denies the kingship of our loving and gracious Heavenly Father, and the glory as well as the responsibility of our own freedom. It replaces God with a mechanical view of the determination of the future by the stars and as such it is a denial of the fundamental truths of the Christian faith.

CONTRACEPTION

In Orthodoxy, sexuality is seen to be fulfilled within the context of marriage and as such the use of contraception is allowed by the Orthodox Church. A couple cannot use contraception to prevent from having children. A couple can use contraception to control the number of children and to control the spacing between them. For further information on this issue please see Fr. Stanley Harakas' Book Contemporary Moral Issues, pgs. 78-82.

ABORTION

The Orthodox Church believes that once conception takes place the fertilized egg is a person with the right to life. As such, abortion is viewed by the Church as not a "women's right" as argued by the Supreme Court but as an act of murder and is treated as such in the Canon laws of the Church. For example, the ninety-first canon of the sixth Ecumenical Council states the following: "As for women who furnish drugs for the purpose of procuring abortion and those who take fetus-killing poisons, they are made subject to the penalty prescribed for murderers." There are also canons condemning those who perform abortions.

When the life of the mother is in jeopardy due to her pregnancy, an exception to the prohibition on abortion may be allowed. No other reasons are acceptable for permitting abortions in the teachings of the church (including cases of incest and rape).

ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION

The Orthodox Church does not oppose the procedure of artificial insemination as long as the procedure respects the bounds of marital fidelity. This means the egg must come from the wife and that the sperm must come from the husband. For a third party donor to participate, whether male or female would constitute the intrusion of a third party into the marriage. This is seen by the Church as an act of adultery and is therefore not allowed.

IN VITRO FERTILIZATION

The use of in vitro fertilization (test tube babies) is discouraged by the Church. One serious objection to this procedure is that many more eggs are fertilized than implanted, thus abortion occurs. In addition this procedure de-humanizes life and separates dramatically the personal relations of a married couple from child-bearing and therefore this procedure is very suspect by the church.

HOMOSEXUALITY

Regarding homosexual acts, the traditional and exclusive teaching of the Church is condemnatory, seeing such acts as morally wrong. In the face of homosexual acts as well as all other expressions of wrongful sexual expression (fornication, adultery, prostitution, incest, bestiality) the Church teaches that the only proper place for the exercise of sexuality is in the context of marriage.

There is a distinction between homosexual acts on the one hand and the homosexual condition on the other. Homosexuality is seen as a passion, as a wrongful orientation of our desires and is therefore placed in the same category as all other passions (pride, greed, gluttony, lust, theft, etc.) Christians must seek to eliminate all passions from their lives—including homosexuality. One who is engaging in homosexual acts is engaging in sin. One who is fighting the passion of homosexuality is engaged in a spiritual struggle against the passion of homosexuality (the homosexual condition).

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

The Orthodox Church is against capital punishment and has worked to abolish capital punishment in the judicial system. The Church sees this act as the taking of a life. In addition, the person being executed has forever lost the chance to repent and therefore secure his/her salvation in Jesus Christ.

EUTHANASIA

The Orthodox Church has always taught that euthanasia constitutes the deliberate taking of human life, and as such is to be condemned as murder. At the same time the Orthodox Church parts with those members of the medical profession and others who refuse to acknowledge the inevitability of physical death and advocate the use of "extraordinary measures", at whatever material and psychological cost, to keep a patient alive when there is no hope of recovery.

The Church distinguishes between euthanasia and the withholding of extraordinary means to prolong life unable to sustain itself. ■

SESSION CHECK LIST

- Attended class session
- Read The Orthodox Church, by Timothy Ware, pgs. 145-171, 264-273

SESSION NOTES

