“How Do I Answer My Friends’ Questions About The Da Vinci Code?”

I am a Graduate Student of Chemical Engineering at _____ and I hail from India. I was born in a Christian Family and I am a believer.

The book *The DaVinci Code* by Dan Brown has caught the attention of lot of Indians who are unaware of Jesus and the true meaning of Christianity.

Some of these Indians are my friends and are predominantly Hindus. As a rule I haven’t read the book but when they tell me that the book is compelling and “real”, I have no answers to the questions that are posed to me. I must confess that I am not as well versed with the Bible and the history of Christianity as I ought to be.

How do I read *The DaVinci Code* knowing the facts and not getting fascinated by the fictional “facts”?

Thank you for writing, and I understand your dilemma.

First, Probe has an article by Michael Gleghorn which addresses many of the issues in the book. See www.probe.org/redeeming-the-da-vinci-code-2.

Second, the book is definitely an entertaining read. It’s worth it as long as you can separate the fact from fiction.

Third, look at the bright side. Your Hindu friends are asking questions about the Bible and Jesus. See it as an evangelistic opportunity, and we can thank Dan Brown rather than curse him.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin, PhD
Probe Ministries

Addendum from Probe Webservant:
You can now download Powerpoints of four Probe lectures in our "Decoding *The DaVinci Code*" series here.

"What is Sociological Fundamentalism?"

Can you briefly discuss the phenomenon known as "sociological fundamentalism"? What effect has this had on the community and on the non-Christian?

I have run across a couple of possible definitions of "sociological fundamentalism" in my reading. One refers to the belief that Christians should be culturally or sociologically separate from the rest of society. The argument for this belief often comes from 2 Corinthians 6:17 which reads, "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you."

The other use of the phrase is as a description of those who conform to the social norms of the group often labeled "Christian fundamentalists" but do not believe in what is considered orthodox Christian theology.

Both situations can be problematic for the church. Those seeking to be sociologically separate from a culture often have difficulty being ambassadors for Christ. Being an ambassador implies that you know something about the people to whom you are sent as well as the message given you by your

sovereign. It can become difficult communicating with people who you have little in common with or know little about. Christ was sent by the Father, but he also identified with the culture of his day and with its people.

On the other hand, being "Christian" only in outward appearance is a great tragedy. Possessing a form of religion without actually being a member of Gods family would be a horrible mistake.

When the church focuses too much on the behavior (abortion, homosexuality, etc.) of unbelievers rather than on the message of reconciliation offered by the gospel of Christ we can convey the message that the outward appearance of righteousness is all that matters.

You might be interested in an essay that I wrote a number of years ago about the current culture war in America. Perhaps it might add context to my response.

I hope that this brief response is helpful.

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"Body Building": Edifying Thoughts about Our Bodies

Why Should I Care About This?

Our culture is obsessed with the human body. Have you turned on the television or stood in the supermarket checkout line recently? Images and information about the human body bombard our senses from almost every direction. And what we believe

about the body can make a huge difference for our daily life, and for the life beyond! That's why we need to think carefully about a Christian view of the body. For when our ideas about the body go wrong, a lot of related Christian beliefs can also be affected.



For example, in the early centuries of the Christian church there were some religious groups called Gnostics. Their name derived from the Greek term *gnosis* which means "knowledge," because they thought that salvation came through secret knowledge. In their view, reality consisted of two primary components: matter (which was evil) and spirit (which was good).{1} Since matter was evil, the human body was likewise viewed as "intrinsically degenerate."{2}

The Gnostics' negative beliefs about the human body influenced their thinking in other areas as well. Their ideas about the incarnation, the afterlife, and human sexuality, were all affected. Consider the incarnation. Christians believe that God the Son became a real human being with a real human body. But this view was repulsive to some of the Gnostics. While some believed that the divine Christ temporarily assumed a human body, they did not think this state was permanent. And others denied that Jesus had a physical body at all. They believed that Jesus only *appeared* to be human.{3} In reality, he was a completely spiritual being. This was especially true after his resurrection, which Gnostics generally held to be a purely spiritual (and not physical) event.{4}

The Gnostic view of the afterlife was similar. After death, Gnostics believed, they would be reunited with God in the spiritual realm. Unlike Christians, they had no desire for the resurrection of the body. The body was a prison from which they would gratefully escape at death.

Consider finally their views about human sexuality. Although some Gnostics may have lived a sexually immoral lifestyle, the majority seem to have rather been ascetics.{5} They treated the body harshly and rejected sexual activity and procreation as earthly, physical, and unspiritual. Such activities kept one in bondage to this evil material world.

Unfortunately, these Gnostic beliefs about the body influenced Christianity to some degree. But if we look at what the Bible teaches, what we find is much more interesting and exciting.

The Goodness of the Human Body

What do you believe about your body? Is it something good—or evil?

In striking contrast to the Gnostics, who believed both the material world and human body were intrinsically evil, the biblical writers present a positive conception of both.

The first verse of Genesis declares, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). A few verses later we learn that God created human beings in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-27). And at the end of chapter one we're told that everything God made "was very good" (Gen. 1:31). So unlike the Gnostics, who believed the material world was the work of an evil, inferior deity, the biblical writers viewed the physical universe and human body as part of the good creative work of the one true God.

Moreover, in the biblical view humanity occupies a very special place in the created order. Having been made in God's image, men and women are viewed as the crown of creation. But what does it mean to say that we are made in God's image? As one might expect, this is a question that has been given extensive consideration throughout the history of the church.

On the one hand, we probably shouldn't think of the divine

image primarily in *physical* terms, for God is a *spiritual* being. Still, it's probably also a mistake to think that our bodies aren't *in any sense* made in God's image. Genesis 1:27 says that God created man in His image. Reflecting on this statement, some scholars have noted that it's "not some part of a human or some faculty of a human, but a human in his or her wholeness [that] is the image of God. The biblical concept is not that the image is *in* man and woman, but that man and woman *are* the image of God."{6} Since God created man in His image as an embodied personal being, it seems quite natural to suppose that the material (as well as immaterial) aspects of our being are *both* included in what it means to be made in God's image.

In Genesis 2 we have a more detailed account of the creation of man and woman. In verse 7 we read that "the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being." This verse indicates that there are both material and immaterial components of man's being—and each *in some sense* bears God's image. This is why in the Christian view human beings have inherent worth and dignity. It's also why in contrast to the Gnostics we believe in the goodness of the human body.

The Importance of the Incarnation

Did you know that your beliefs about the human body can affect your view of Jesus and why He came? As we've seen, the biblical writers saw the human body as God's good creation (Gen. 1-2). Naturally enough, such radically different views of the body influenced how Gnostics and Christians understood the doctrine of the incarnation as well.

The term "incarnation" means "'to enter into or become flesh.' It refers to the Christian doctrine that the pre-existent Son of God became man in Jesus."{7} Our first hint that something like this would happen comes shortly after man's fall into

sin. In Genesis 3:15 God tells the serpent, the agent of temptation in the story, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.” The verse promises a coming Champion or Deliverer, who would be born of a woman, and who would deliver the decisive death-blow to Satan. Later we learn that this Deliverer, the Lord Jesus Christ, redeems humanity from the tragic consequences of sin and death by giving His own life as a substitute in our place (1 Jn. 2:2; 4:10). The death of God’s Son for the sins of the world was possible because of the incarnation. By becoming a real man, with a real body, He experienced a real death on the cross.

One of the clearest statements of the incarnation is found in the Gospel of John: “In the beginning was the Word . . . and the Word was God . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (1:1, 14). This Word made flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ, told His followers that He had come “to give His life a ransom for many” (Mk. 10:45). While Gnostics generally regarded the death of Jesus as irrelevant for salvation, Christians see it as absolutely essential.

In Revelation 5:9 a song is sung in praise of Christ, who through His death “purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.” In the early church, some theologians said that what Christ did not assume, neither did He redeem. They meant that if Christ did not really have a human body, then neither did He redeem our bodies. This is why the incarnation is so important. By becoming fully human and dying for our sins, Christ secured the complete redemption of all who put their trust in Him.

Human Sexuality

Those unfamiliar with the Bible might be surprised to learn how much it has to say about sex. And what it says is neither

prudish nor out of date. On the contrary, its counsel is both supremely wise and eminently practical. {8}

In fact, unlike the ancient Gnostics, the Bible has a very positive view of human sexuality. An entire book of the Bible, the Song of Solomon, is largely devoted to extolling the beauty and wonder of sexual love within the God-ordained covenant of marriage. Sex was God's idea and is rooted in His original creation of man and woman as sexual beings (Gen. 1:27). While one of God's purposes in creating us this way was for procreation (Gen. 1:28), it certainly wasn't His only purpose. God also intended sex to be a pleasurable and meaningful expression of intimacy and love between husband and wife (Prov. 5:18-19).

According to Jesus, the biblical ideal of marriage is a lifelong, exclusive commitment of one man to one woman (Mk. 10:2-9). Citing the Genesis creation account He says, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh" (Mk. 10:7-8; cf. Gen. 2:24). As one writer has observed, "Here we have a blueprint for human sexual love: through the sexual act the man and woman have a wonderful new kind of intimacy. This is called being 'one flesh,' and it is designed to be exclusive and faithful."{9}

Unfortunately, man's fall into sin brought about the misuse and abuse of God's good gift. And as one might expect, the Bible doesn't shy away from addressing such things. Essentially, the biblical view is that sex is to be fully enjoyed as a wonderful gift from God, but *only* within the sacred bonds of marriage between one man and one woman. Every other kind of sexual activity is lumped into the category of "sexual immorality." And this we are told to flee, for as Paul told the Corinthians, "he who sins sexually sins against his own body" (1 Cor. 6:18).

But Paul then went even further. He called the believer's body

“a temple of the Holy Spirit.” He said that Christians have been “bought at a price” and should “honor God” with their bodies (1 Cor. 6:19-20). This reveals something of the value which God places upon the human body. And He encourages us to do the same.

Bodily Death and Resurrection

Did you know that your view of the human body affects your view of eternity?

Throughout history humanity has entertained a variety of ideas about what happens after death. Some think that physical death is the end of our personal, conscious existence. While we might “live on” in people’s memories, we don’t live on in any other sense. Others believe that while the body dies, the human soul or spirit continues to exist—perhaps on a higher spiritual plane, perhaps in a spiritual heaven or hell, or perhaps somewhere else. According to this view, our bodily existence is only temporary. Once we die our bodies are discarded, but our souls go on living forever.

In the early years of the church, many Gnostics believed that people would experience different fates at death. Some would just cease to exist. For them, death was the end. Others could enjoy some sort of afterlife through faith and good works. From a Gnostic perspective, these people were the Christians. Only a few, however, namely, the Gnostics themselves, could expect a truly fantastic afterlife in which they would be reunited with God in the divine realm.{10} In other words, the Gnostics anticipated being liberated from this evil material world, including their bodies, and being reunited with God in a completely spiritual existence. Interestingly, although there are differences, many Christians seem to expect an afterlife that’s very similar to that envisioned by the Gnostics.

But what the Bible teaches is really quite different. Although it comforts Christians with the reminder that to be absent from the body is to be at home with the Lord (2 Cor. 5:8), this is not the believer's final state. Instead, we're told to eagerly await the resurrection of our bodies, which will be modeled after Jesus' resurrected body (1 Cor. 15:20-23, 42-49). As Christians, we don't look forward to a purely *spiritual* (in the sense of *non-physical*) afterlife. Instead, we await a *bodily* existence in a new heaven and new earth which is completely free from the presence and power of sin (2 Pet. 3:10-13)! Just as Christ was raised *physically* from the dead, so one day He will likewise raise all men from the dead. Some will enjoy His presence forever; others will be shut out from His presence forever (Matt. 25:46; Jn. 5:28-29). Which experience shall be ours depends entirely upon our relationship to Christ (Jn. 3:36; 2 Thess. 1:8-10). So why not put your trust in Him and enjoy forever the new heavens and new earth in a new, resurrected body? You're invited, you know (Rev. 22:17).

Notes

1. Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: Christian Scriptures and the Battles Over Authentication, Course Guidebook, Pt. 1* (Chantilly, Virginia: The Teaching Company, 2002), 20.
2. Mary Timothy Prokes, *Toward a Theology of the Body* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 9.
3. J. Ed Komoszewski, M. James Sawyer, and Daniel B. Wallace, *Reinventing Jesus: What The Da Vinci Code and Other Novel Speculations Don't Tell You* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 2006), 200.
4. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 29.
5. Ibid., 21.
6. *Tyndale Bible Dictionary,* eds. Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), s.v. "Image of God."
7. *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (1st ed.), ed. Paul J. Achtemeier

(San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), s.v. “Incarnation” by Frank J. Matera.
8. A number of ideas in this section were informed by the article “Sex, Sexuality,” in Tyndale Bible Dictionary.
9. Amy Orr-Ewing, *Is the Bible Intolerant?* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 113.
10. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, 21.

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“What Should I Do About My Dream About Death?”

While sleeping I heard a voice say, “Melanie is dead.” This was repeated, loudly and clearly. I picked up my phone to dial my mom and realized I had been asleep. I am 42 years old. I am saved. Melanie is my niece who has turned Muslim. She had just given birth to a baby boy that same morning.

What am I supposed to do about this message and where could it have originated from?

Wow! What a horrible way to have your sleep crashed into!

An important response when something like this happens is to immediately invite the Lord Jesus into it. Ask for His perspective and His wisdom. Then, if it were me, I would say something like, “Lord, I don’t know where this is coming from, but I’m going to take it as a signal to pray for Melanie. No matter if it’s from an angel or a demon, you turn it into an opportunity to trust and intercede.”

For what it’s worth, I had a similar, unnerving experience one time. A month after 9/11, I was going to fly back to Dallas

from Chicago, and there was some scuttlebutt about hijackers planning to crash a jet full of fuel into the Sears Tower after takeoff. I was awakened that day with the chilling words, "You're going to die today." It caused such a spirit of fear and total lack of peace that I immediately knew it wasn't from God, but it was so strong I had a hard time shaking it off as the spiritual warfare that it was. So I do understand how deeply troubling this message was and is.

I send this with a prayer that God will open Melanies eyes to who He truly is.

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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"Aren't the Bonds in Peptides More Easily Formed?"

Dr. Bohlin: I have been in contact with a good friend and we have been having a wonderful discussion regarding a series of topics centering around intelligent design. As typical of our conversations we tend to head down tangential trails that avert our focus momentarily. This week's parley has to do with chemical bonding as associated with protein synthesis. Specifically, your position that the probability of amino acids forming proteins on their own is astronomical. My friend sent you an email recently asking why covalence is not a possibility when considering formation of amino acids and eventually proteins. In your response you referred to two primary problems: chemical and informational. In regards to

the chemical you briefly stated that using the early earth scenario (where earth scientists envision a watery world) the energy required to release the water molecule during the peptide bonding process is high especially in an aqueous solution. Further, you state that this barrier can be overcome by the cell through the use of ribosome in a protein fold devoid of water but that the early earth had no RNA to overcome this barrier. Here is my long drawn out question to you.

First, I contend that the weak hydrogen bond (not covalent) associated with the loss of the two hydrogen and one oxygen atom during the formation of an amino acid with the peptide bond is easily broken through a heat catalyst such that existed during the high radioactive decay of the early earth as it cooled from its molten stage (and still does today but to a much lesser degree). This loss of a water molecule would heighten the affinity of the amino acid to the peptide bond thus strengthening their mutual attraction. The early earth model also indicates that pH (percent hydrogen) levels were probably very different which would also act as a catalyst to break the hydrogen bond as the hydrogen and oxygen atoms try to degas from solution and neutralize the solution. The earth's closed system perpetuated this process indefinitely by trapping the heated gases laden with other hydrous compounds such as sulfuric acid. The formation of the amount of water on earth certainly could not be accomplished by the release of water molecules through the formation of proteins alone. This begs the question of which came first the chicken or the egg? If it were the amino acids, then we would have a sea of amino acids greater than the volume of the oceans. If the amino acids were formed outside of an aqueous solution then where did the water molecules come from that were eventually released? Both hydrogen and oxygen had to be abundantly present and together they form many, many more molecules other than just amino acids and water. The information concern you were referring to suggests that 10 to 65th power is

unobtainable. However, when there exists many times more that number of amino acids the odds quickly reduce and become more favorable. 10 to the 65th sounds astronomical but 10 to the 6500th is even more astronomical thus diminishing the former. Further, amino acids can be synthesized in the laboratory which suggests that the building blocks are present on earth. In time, with the correct agents in place (such as powerful radioactive isotopes {neutrinos perhaps?}) the left-handed stereoisotopes of amino acids may also be laboratorily synthesized.

Finally, I would like to know your thoughts on why you believe that proteins were designed. Is it purely philosophical or have you developed a hypothesis that has been tested by others that lends further credence to your postulation? Thank you for your time in advance.

Thank you for your consideration of my earlier response and I am glad to answer your questions and objections.

First, the bonds that are broken to form a peptide bond formation with the subsequent release of water are not hydrogen bonds, they are covalent. That is why peptide bond formation is endothermic or uphill in relation to energy. Simply providing heat is not going to overcome this problem. Sydney Fox attempted thermal synthesis of proteins in early earth conditions, the results of which he termed proteinoids. Beginning with amino acids (in solution or dry) he heated the material at 200 degrees C for 6-7 hours. The water produced by bond formation (and any original water from the aqueous solution) is evaporated. The elimination of water makes a small yield of polypeptides possible. The increased temperature plus the elimination of water makes the reaction irreversible. However, this process has been rejected for four reasons. First, in living proteins only alpha peptide bonds are formed. In Fox’s reactions, beta, gamma and epsilon peptide bonds are also found in abundance. Second, these thermal proteinoids are composed of both L and D amino acids.

Only L amino acids are found in living proteins. Third, these are randomly sequenced proteins with no resemblance to proteins with catalytic activity. “Fourth, the geological conditions indicated are too unreasonable to be taken seriously. As Folsome has commented, ‘The central question [concerning Fox’s proteinoids] is where did all those pure, dry, concentrated, and optically active amino acids come from in the first place.'” (*Mystery of Life’s Origin*, 1984, Thaxton, Bradley, and Olsen, p. 155-156)

I am sorry you got the impression that I believed that the formation of peptide bonds and the concomitant release of a water molecule produced the original water on the planet. That is not the nature of the chicken or egg dilemma. The chicken or egg dilemma refers to the fact that in living systems today, proteins are required for DNA and RNA to function with specificity. Histones are required to maintain DNA folding structure and more importantly, proteins are required for DNA and RNA replication. However, it is the DNA which contains the code for the construction of proteins. DNA needs proteins, proteins need DNA. Which came first in the early earth? DNA or protein, chicken or egg? The proposed RNA world, RNA molecules which can perform some limited enzyme (protein) functions is negated by the fact that there is no mechanism for the production of RNA in an abiotic early earth. Even if this is accomplished, the enzyme-like functions of some small RNA molecules are not sufficient to support life in any shape or form.

Just because 1/10 to the 65th power is large compared to 1/10 to the 6,500 power does not minimize 1/10 to the 65th as a very small probability. It is estimated that there are 10 to the 80th power particles in the universe. The smallest amino acid, glycine is comprised on 13 atoms, each atom (either hydrogen, carbon, nitrogen or oxygen) is composed of multiple protons, electrons and neutrons and each of these is composed of multiple quarks. You can readily recognize that a sea of 10

to the 65th amino acids is a physical impossibility. Current estimates suggest that the concentration of amino acids in the early earth could never have exceeded, 10 to the -7 molar, which is the same as the present Atlantic Ocean (*Mystery of Life's Origin* cited earlier, p. 60). Sheer numbers are not going to help. Most researchers rely on some form of concentration mechanism to get enough amino acids together for protein formation. Even when this happens, many of the same problems that Fox's experiments run into are difficult to eliminate.

Finally, I believe that proteins are designed for both philosophical and scientific reasons. Proteins as stated earlier, contain information. The sequence of the 20 different amino acids in a protein consisting of 100 amino acids is crucial to its function. William Dembski (in the *Design Inference*, Cambridge University Press, 1999 and *Intelligent Design*, Intervarsity Press, 2000) rigorously defines this information as complex specified information or CSI. It is complex because the sequence of a protein is not a simple repetition as in a nylon polymer. And it is specified because it can tolerate only a small range of substitution at any one of the 100 positions, indeed at some positions, no substitution can be tolerated. Summing these up is where the 10 to the 65th power came from.

Most biologists readily admit today that chance alone is incapable of overcoming these odds. Therefore, they hold out for some undiscovered natural law that will allow information to arise out of the chaos of a mixture of amino acids. But law is also an unlikely candidate. Some have suggested that perhaps certain amino acids have an affinity for certain other amino acids. This could give some level of sequence specificity. This fails on two counts. First no such pattern is observable when nearest neighbors are analyzed in modern proteins. Second, this would defeat the entire process since the sequence would no longer be complex but simple. Simple

because the sequence could now be predicted once the first amino acid is put in place. This would lead to a very limited number of possible combinations and not the millions of possibilities currently residing in living cells.

The only known source for CSI today is intelligence. Even the fundamentalist Darwinian Richard Dawkins, said in his book *The Blind Watchmaker*, "Biology is the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose." Perhaps they appear to be designed because they were designed. There is certainly nothing unscientific about wanting to explore that possibility.

Respectfully,

Ray Bohlin
Probe Ministries

"Sue Bohlin a Hypocrite for Teaching at Probe.org"

If women are not to teach men or have authority over them, I find it odd that Sue Bohlin responds to questions on this website. Doesn't that constitute teaching authority???? And doesn't the fact that she writes a response ABOUT women in ministry absurdly ironic (i.e., if women are not to teach men or have authority over them by instructing them, then a woman speaking about women in ministry is absurd)???

Scripture does not forbid men to learn from women. It says we are not to be in teaching authority over men. I have no authority over anyone. I just offer my perspective on this website. If a man chooses to consider what I say and learn

from it, that's fine, but it's a very different (and indirect) thing than me standing in the pulpit or on a platform in a position of spiritual leadership over him.

Thanks for writing.

Sue Bohlin

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"If Everyone Left Unhealthy Churches, Wouldn't Many Shut Down?"

Dear Mr. Zukeran,

I recently came across your article Abusive Churches: Leaving Them Behind." In it, you state that "it is best to leave an abusive or unhealthy church."

Why is this a necessary step to take? If everyone were to leave churches considered unhealthy, many churches would shut down as a result. Can you clear this up for me? Thank you.

I stated that leaving an abusive church was the best thing to do. The reason is that it is very difficult to recover or worship the Lord when you are in an abusive church that is dominating your life. Being surrounded in such an environment constantly is not healthy and the atmosphere will affect your outlook. It is like being a fish swimming in an unhealthy aquarium. The more you remain in it, often the more unhealthy you get.

It is also very difficult to change an abusive church since it is structured with no accountability on the leader so it is very unlikely to change. So for your personal health, mentally and spiritually, it is best to leave and enter into a healthy environment and church.

You asked, wouldn't the abusive church shut down if people left? That is correct and that is the best thing that could happen. Abusive churches do a lot of harm to people and to the name of Christ. We do not need abusive churches growing and spreading. We need unhealthy churches to shut down and healthy churches growing and planting healthy churches. That is why I say it is best to leave an abusive church.

Patrick Zukeran

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"How Do the Health-and-Wealth Believers Rationalize Their Beliefs?"

I read your Stairway to Heaven article on materialism and still can't understand why people (and especially these new mega churches) are still so into it. People have actually told me that God wants us to have wealth, and I keep receiving "religious" email chain letters about being "blessed" monetarily. I would prefer blessings of a more loving type . . . !!

My question is always, what kind of "wealth" does that necessarily mean? It is all so contradictory to Jesus'

teachings as well as to His overthrowing of the merchants' tables in the Temple. How do they rationalize this way of thinking?

Thank you for your thoughtful response to my essay on materialism.

I also have difficulty understanding the "health and wealth" gospel that some profess in the name of Christ. I find no justification for it in Scripture. In fact, I find just the opposite in passages like 1 Peter 4:12-16:

> "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you.
> But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.
> If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.
> If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler.
> However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name."

Paul, in Romans 5, points out that suffering is an integral part of developing the character we need to serve Christ effectively. As to where this "health and wealth" gospel comes from, I suppose it begins with the very popular view that "God wants me to be happy" rather than the biblical admonition to be holy as God is holy. Fortunately, many churches (both large and small) work hard to overcome this form of hedonism.

For Him,

Don Closson

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“Since Angels Aren’t Christians, Why Should They Follow Christ?”

Why would angels follow the teachings of Christ if they are the creations and servants of God, besides the angels are not Christian but Jewish in nature. The letters “-el” at the end of their names (such as Gabriel, Uriel) is actually the Hebrew name for God. In his orginal name Gabri-el is actually Hebrew for “messenger of God.” Angels are not Christianity’s creations nor their guardians, if anything they have more ties to Judaism.

Jesus Christ IS God, the second Person of the three-Personed God. Who is one God, in three Persons. [It’s beyond me to understand, but then, who wants a God we can fully understand?]

So, angels follow the teachings of Christ because He has always been God and He was the one who created them in the first place; He existed in heaven before He took on a human body and came to earth.

I don’t make a distinction between Christianity’s Jewish roots and its Christian fruit because it’s all one story. There IS no Christianity without Judaism; it’s the first part and the foundation of our history.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Does This Angel Thing Work?”

You mentioned two angels, Raphael and Uriel in this book of Epochs or something like that—why wasn’t it included in the Holy Bible? They were not included in the King James version nor the Roman Catholic kind?

Could you pray to St. Michael to protect you or do you have to pray to Jesus Christ first to have St. Michael look after you?

How does this work?

> *You mentioned two angels, Raphael and Uriel in this book of Epochs or something like that—why wasn’t it included in the Holy Bible?*

Because the names Raphael and Uriel were names made up by some people some time ago; they are not real angel names of real angels, like Gabriel and Michael are. The Book of Enoch wasn’t included in the Bible because it was not inspired by God the way all the other books were; it is a piece of fiction written by a human with no input from God.

> *Could you pray to St. Michael to protect you or do you have to pray to Jesus Christ first to have St. Michael look after you?*

Scripture instructs us to pray ONLY to God, not to angels or saints. That’s because He wants our focus on HIM, not on angels or believers who now live in heaven. Jesus died for you—Michael the archangel didn’t. (He is never called a saint in the Bible, by the way; only people are saints, which means

“holy ones,” and refers to those who have placed their trust in Jesus because He died in our place on the cross and paid the penalty of our sin.)

> *How does this work?*

I want to honor you for your seeking heart and for your curiosity about spiritual truth. May I invite you to read a wonderful article on our website about how to have a personal relationship with God? It’s full of very helpful details that I think you’ll enjoy. Click here: The Most Important Decision of Your Life

The Lord bless you and keep you!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries