

“What Are the Differences Between Catholics and Christians?”

Dear Mrs. Bohlin,

I have read your article on the [“Six World Religions”](#) with great interest. I am sure you receive many emails, so I will keep this short. Could you please send me your thoughts on the essential differences between Catholics and Christians. My son is about to marry a Catholic, and I cannot fully justify to him my concerns.

Well, you’re asking the right person, since my husband and I were both raised Catholic! Of course, there’s a difference in expression between U.S. Catholicism and elsewhere in the world, but the basic beliefs are the same.

First of all, you should know that there are born-again Christian believers in the Catholic church. You should also know that the gospel really is there in the Mass, and in the catechism teachings that children and converts receive. Ray and I are grateful for the foundation of spiritual truth that we received from the Catholic church: that God is one God in three Persons, that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died on the cross for the sins of the world and was raised on the third day, and that He’s coming back.

What we DIDN’T receive was the personal aspect: that we needed to *personally* receive the grace-gift of salvation. We were taught, instead, that being baptized a Catholic was enough to bring us into God’s family. We were taught that Jesus opened the door to heaven, so to speak, but it was our responsibility and our good works that would get us there. So it was Jesus PLUS our good works that might result in salvation. But there was no assurance of salvation, just a vague hope that our good

deeds would outweigh our bad deeds when we died.

If I were you, I would gently and lovingly have a conversation with your future daughter-in-law, and ask her the great question, "If you were to die tonight, and you were to stand at the gates of heaven, and God said, 'Why should I let you into my heaven,' what would you say?"

If she says anything other than, "Because Jesus died on the cross for my sins," then she is trusting in her own self or in the Catholic Church, and not Christ. You might ask her why Jesus had to die. If we could do *anything* to get us into heaven, why would Jesus have to die a horrible death? Wouldn't that be a terrible waste?

Sometimes people will say, "Because I'm a Catholic." We were taught that salvation is only found in the Catholic church. I would respond, "Where does that idea (that being a baptized Catholic is a "free pass" to heaven) come from? How do you know it's true?" Claiming to be a member of any organization is just another way of trusting in human merit and good works instead of what Christ has done FOR us.

I think that a lot of Catholics actually believe that it's "Jesus plus me." If you were to ask her, "Do you believe Jesus is the Son of God? Do you believe He died on the cross for YOUR sins?" you might discover she has intellectual assent to the truth of the gospel. You might then want to gently explain that in the Bible, God calls us to actively TRUST in Christ and not just believe in our heads what is true. The demons, after all, also believe that Jesus is God's son and that He died for mankind, but that doesn't change their hearts.

One other thing. If and when, Lord willing, you have grandchildren, you will have some marvelous opportunities to teach the truth about Jesus to them, and it's amazing how parents can be reached through their children. Pray a lot, and ask the Holy Spirit to give you a green light to talk about

spiritual things for which He has prepared her heart. The Lord bless you and keep you!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Is Lust Justification for Divorce?”

I have a question. In Matthew 5:27ff. Jesus says that if a man lusts after a woman he has already committed adultery in his heart. Then, in v. 32 Jesus indicates that sexual immorality is the only justification for divorce. Is, then, lust justification for divorce? If so, what degree of lust is justification for divorce? Or, if it is not Jesus' intention to allow divorce for lust, please substantiate this position. Thanks.

Good question!

The bottom line answer to your question is no, lust is not grounds for divorce.

If you look at the context of the Lord Jesus' remarks about lust in Matthew 5, what you see is that He is “pulling back the rug,” so to speak, on outward sins to expose the underlying problem, which is sin in the heart. Murder doesn't start with murder; it starts with sinful anger in the heart (vv. 21-22). Don't be as concerned about the proper words in taking an oath; be people of such integrity that your simple word alone will suffice and no oath is necessary (vv. 33-37). Instead of carefully measuring the retaliatory consequences of an offense against you, give in and don't fight back (vv.

38-42). Instead of loving your neighbor and hating your enemy, love your enemies and pray for them (vv. 43-44).

The main point to all of these illustrations in the Sermon on the Mount is that a sinful heart lurks behind every offensive action. By shining the light of His perfection on our dark hearts, the Lord very effectively makes us aware of how short we fall of God's standard of righteousness. That's why we need to receive Christ's righteousness, since we have none of our own.

So the point about lust is made to expose the sinful motives of the heart, showing that even before one actually enters into an adulterous relationship, there's a heart problem that's just as serious in God's eyes as acting on it.

But if the Lord had meant to set lust as an acceptable ground for divorce, He would have said so. He doesn't play games with us to keep us guessing about what pleases Him. Personally, this makes sense to me, since a person can fall into the sin of lust for another person, and repent and receive forgiveness, without his/her spouse ever getting hurt. They don't ever need to know about it; it's an internal war of the one struggling with lust. As sinful creatures, we are going to struggle with various sins all our lives. But there's still a big difference *in consequence* between fighting the internal battle against the sin nature and going out and *acting* on it.

Furthermore, engaging in sexual immorality is an external act that can be proven by witnesses and/or testimony. Experiencing lust is internal, and can only be judged by another without any proof. Only God can know whether someone truly lusts or not. Kind of hard to hold up in a court of law!

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“Why Don't You Appreciate Herbal Medicine?”

I read an article written by Mr. Zukeran on [alternative medicine](#) and was wondering just how much time he really put into researching herbs and ancient medicine before he began to write. It sounds like the typical raised eyebrow “suspicious of anything that doesn't come out of the AMA or Good Housekeeping Magazine” approach.

There is a tremendous amount of research that has been done and is being done with herbs, and Mr. Zukeran's dismissal of herbal therapy implies a lack of scholarship, not a good apologetic. I'm a Christian and have a great appreciation for herbal medicine as well as other alternative approaches. I owe my life today to a diet change that included a vegetarian way of life for nearly a year, along with herbal therapy. I also have in my library The Yellow Emperors Book on Internal Medicine, along with Hyppocrates works, and simply because one came from Greece and one came from China I do not necessarily reject the ancient Chinese approach any more than I would reject Pythagorus or Archimedes mathematical axioms and theorems simply because Pythagorus and Archimedes belonged to “Mystery Schools” and were pagans. Their mathematical formulas and proofs form much of the basis for modern science and engineering.

You seem to be throwing the baby out with the bathwater in your blanket condemnation of a vast area of human research in the area of medicine that spans many thousands of years in an attempt to stay orthodox in your religious views.

I notice that Mr. Zukeran has a degree in theology. That does not necessarily qualify him as an expert in alternative

medicine. You would do better in defending the gospel to carefully research your topics, and have someone who is well qualified in an area to write on that topic, instead of someone who demonstrates a manifest lack of expertise on the subject.

Thanks for reading the article and your comments. I stated in my article, "... complementary therapies provide important insights into maintaining good health." I also stated in my section on Herbal Medicines this: "Some herbal treatments are costly and provide no enhancement. However, some herbal supplements have shown some promising benefits. Herbal treatments may prove to be helpful additions to conventional treatments. Herbs like ginseng have shown to be beneficial for Type 2 diabetes, for example. Herbal preparations are sometimes less potent in dosage than prescription drugs and may be less toxic." So I do not dismiss herbal therapies, I state there are some that have shown to be beneficial while there are others that are costly and have not proven to fulfill the promises they make. I think you would agree with that.

In 1998 Representative Tim Harkin passed a bill to enlarge the National Institute for Health Office to include a department to study alternative medicines. Dr. Steven Straus was placed in charge of the department. Dr. Eisenberg at Harvard Medical School also has created a department to study alternative Medicine as well. So the AMA, American Medical Association and other government research groups are doing research on Alternative Medicines. I think a person would be wise to look at their conclusions when deciding on an alternative treatment. Much research has been done and as I stated in my article, some herbs were shown to be beneficial while others were found not to be. There is very little proof that life energy therapies are beneficial.

It is true, my degree is in theology and I focus on the theological and worldview aspects of alternative medicine. I

rely on medical experts for the medical studies. I have interviewed one of the leading authorities on my radio show on this subject, Dr. Donal O'Mathuna, whose conclusions I repeat. Let's not throw out the good, let's just be discerning. I am sure you would agree with my conclusion, that there are some benefits to alternative medicine but there are also alternative therapies that are not beneficial and should be avoided. A Christian should be discerning when looking at alternative Medicine.

Patrick Zukeran
Probe Ministries

“Do People Who Commit Suicide Go to Hell?”

A young man I know committed suicide. Someone remarked that if he was troubled that day, he is *really* troubled now because the Bible says he is in hell forever. Is this true? If so, can you give me Bible references to support it, likewise if it is false?

That is NOT what the Bible says. That's what a lot of people think, but God isn't one of them.

Trusting Christ is the only criterion for determining whether one goes to heaven or hell. If the young man had trusted Christ and committed suicide as the only way he could think of to make the pain stop, then he is with the Lord because of the security of the believer. For instance, Rom. 8:38-39 says,

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, nether the present nor the future, nor any

powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Nothing—including our own acts such as suicide—can separate believers (the context of Paul’s letter) from God’s love.

Consider also John 10: 28-19, which shows we are DOUBLY safe:

“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.”

Not even ourselves.

If the young man had not trusted Christ, then unfortunately he is in hell, but not because of suicide: it would be because of his refusal to believe in and entrust himself to Jesus.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“How Do I Help This Young Teenage Wiccan?”

My husband and I are taking care of a 15-year old girl while her dad and step-mom (who are Christians) are on vacation. However, she just recently moved in with them. Previously she was living with her mom in another state. We were discussing Christianity with her last night and asked her what she believed in. She stated she believed in reincarnation and

Wicca. Also, she doesn't believe in Satan which is really a contradiction. She says she went to the public library and checked out books on Wicca and studied them and she can cast spells. Of course, her dad and step-mom are not aware of her beliefs or that she practices Wicca. I searched your website using the word "Wicca" and read all of the articles so I understand some of what it is. However, I'm not sure what approach would be effective in ministering to her about Christianity and where to point out that Wicca is a false-religion. Are there other articles on your website with more information on Wicca specifically and how to minister to someone with these beliefs? What suggestions do you have? What scriptures can I point her to?

Whoa. You DO have your work cut out for you, don't you?

If I were you, I'd go beneath the girl's Wiccan beliefs to the heart issues that drew her to Wicca in the first place. Wicca is appealing because it offers the lure of personal power, and it is particularly appealing to those who are feeling powerless. Which would seem to describe this young girl whose parents have divorced and she's being shuttled between them. . .? Personal power is the draw to be able to cast spells for those who perceive themselves as personally powerless.

Since she's a teenager, she's not interested in lectures, but longs to be heard and listened to. She's dying for real conversation with someone who honestly cares about her. So I would ask her, "Tell me about what drew you to Wicca in the first place. How did you hear about it? Tell me about the spells and why that's interesting to you."

Ask the Lord to open opportunities for you to tell her about what the true God is like—tenderly loving and kind. Wiccan teachers tend to bash the image they hold of the Christian God, not understanding who He really is. People who are drawn to a loving, kind goddess are really looking for the feminine side of God, which we can see in the Psalms and in Jesus'

lament over Jerusalem. You may be able to ask her about her understanding of the Lord Jesus, and if she's open, you might be able to tell her about not only His personality and how He proved His love for her, but—amazingly—He promised (and delivered!) personal, supernatural power for those who trust Him! There is FAR more power in Christ living His life through us, empowering us supernaturally, than any spell or charm in any witchcraft book ever penned.

It's not surprising that she doesn't believe in Satan; Wicca doesn't believe in an evil entity. It's really about pantheism, with a non-personal deity that permeates everything. Unfortunately, not believing in Satan doesn't keep him from attacking people. Those who refuse to acknowledge a personal devil are more vulnerable to spiritual warfare than anybody.

I found a couple of articles on the web you may find helpful. The first is from Leadership U., Probe's sister site, on teen witchcraft.

<http://www.leaderu.com/theology/teenwitchcraft.html>

The second is from the Christian Research Institute on "Witnessing to Witches."

<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Estates/6535/wittowit.htm>

I do hope this helps. I pray God will empower your words and let her see His love flowing to her through you.

In His grip,

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

“How Do I Show Jehovah’s Witnesses That Hell is Real?”

I’m having problems dealing with some questions given to me by Jehovah’s Witnesses. Can you please help me?

The J.W. asked me the following: “Paul had a vision of Christ, right? So if Christ is God, then why does Paul say no one has seen God when he himself saw Christ and fell off the horse?”

How do I show Jehovah’s Witnesses that hell is a real place of torment and fire? They insist that the soul dies and that everyone goes to the grave, known as Sheol or hell.

How do I show to Jehovah’s Witnesses that more people go to heaven than the 144,000 people of the book of Revelation?

JW’s are probably referring to John 1:18 which states, “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only...” What this means is that no one has ever seen God in His full glory and splendor. Throughout the Bible, God has revealed himself in temporary, physical and veiled form which we can withstand. These are called theophanies. Such examples are Isaiah 6, Exodus 3, and Genesis 15. Jesus is God the Son clothed in flesh which Philippians 2:5-11 makes clear. So although we have not seen God in the fulness of His glory, we have seen temporary theophanies of God. Paul saw the glorified Christ and what happened? He was blinded. To see God in the fulness of glory would destroy us. Paul saw, although not in his total glory, the glorified Christ. That is why he was blinded.

How do I show Jehovah’s Witnesses that hell is a real place of torment and fire? They insist that the soul dies and that everyone goes to the grave, known as Sheol or hell.

First of all, when one dies, his soul exists after the body

dies. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:6 that we prefer to be absent from the body and at home with the Lord. In Matthew 10:28 Jesus states, "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell." So there is such thing as a soul that survives the body. Hell is a real place. In Luke 16:19-31 Jesus tells the story of Lazarus and the rich man. JW's will say this is a parable. Even if it is a parable, it still tells a story about what is true. What does the story symbolize? Their explanation is not consistent with the text at all.

How do I show to Jehovah's Witnesses that more people go to heaven than the 144,000 people of the book of Revelation?

Concerning the idea that 144,000 go to heaven, ask this question. The 144,000 come from the "Sons of Israel" or the "Tribes of Israel." A word study shows that when that term is used, it is referring to literal Jews. This would eliminate a vast majority of JW's. Also Revelation 7:9 shows a multitude from every tribe and tongue. So heaven includes more than 144,000.

Hope this helps.

Patrick Zukeran
Probe Ministries

**“You are Intolerant,
Arrogant, Loud-Mouthed**

Bullies”

Re: Your article on [Wicca](#). I’m using the same measure that so called “Christians” use to condemn others: the Bible. I do not see better people here. I see a bewildering growth of intolerance, and what is worse, of arrogance. My recent contacts with “Christians” have exposed me to a movement of arrogant, loud mouth bullies. I’m am not judging your heart Sir, but your aggression towards other groups. Christians are not to judge others, that is God’s job. Christians are to love their neighbor as they do themselves. They are to hate what is “bad”, not who is “Bad”.

I think that Mr Grimassi’s letter shows that he is a better “Christian” than you are Sir. I’m not a Wiccan, but from what I have seen from your narrow side, I would rather involve myself with the type of gentleness displayed by this Wiccan man, than with the spiteful arrogant status-worshipping bullies who call themselves “Christian.”

Please take an honest look at what you have done. You begin your letter by complaining about the behavior of so-called Christians (who may, of course, not really be Christians at all). But why should you consider yourself justified in writing such hateful things about Christians? After all, even if some so-called Christians have behaved badly, why should you have the right to behave the same way?

Just look at some of the hateful things you’ve said about Christians in your letter: You refer to Christians as intolerant, arrogant, loud-mouthed bullies (but I personally know many Christians who are not like this at all). You conclude by lumping all Christians together and denouncing them as “spiteful arrogant status-worshipping bullies”.

Then you say that you’re not judging my heart, but my aggression toward other groups. But what is it that you’re

doing? Aren't you demonstrating the same aggression toward Christians which you say I'm demonstrating toward Wiccans? Indeed, isn't your unprovoked aggression against me even WORSE than my alleged aggression against Wiccans?

Actually, I sincerely bear no ill will toward Wiccans at all. Not the slightest bit. Raven Grimassi and I had a very cordial e-mail exchange about my article. Like you, I had a very high opinion of the way he expressed himself in his letter to me. He was very kind and courteous in every respect. And I did my uttermost to be just as kind and courteous to him.

Now about judging, it's important to understand that Jesus does not condemn all human judgments. If you carefully read Matt. 7:1-5, you will see that what Jesus warns against is hypocrisy. As Jesus says in v. 5: "You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." The assumption, of course, is that once the plank is removed, the brother will see clearly enough to judge his brother rightly and without hypocrisy. Indeed, if Jesus forbid all human judgment, it would be impossible to administer church discipline against sinning Christians within the church (something which the Bible clearly commands us to do).

But that's not all. The Bible also urges Christians "to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). Paul tells Titus that church leaders "must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it" (Titus 1:9). These passages tell us that truth in doctrine is important and that we need to stand up for it, even refuting those who oppose it. Does this make Christians arrogant? Does this make Christians spiteful bullies? What is my defense against such accusations? Simply this.

What if Christianity is true? What if, as Jesus Himself

claimed, there is no other way to God but through Him (John 14:6)? What if people who reject Christ, or who attempt to find salvation through some other religion, really will spend eternity in Hell? Would it be truly loving not to warn people of this potential tragedy? Would it really be loving not to attempt to persuade them to embrace Christ while they still have opportunity? Would it really be loving to say nothing at all? For my part, I honestly don't think so.

Our ministry exists to share with others the arguments, evidence and reasonableness of biblical Christianity and to try to convince them that no other religion will ultimately save their souls. If Jesus really was who He claimed to be, then (in my opinion) it would be very unloving indeed to simply let people perish and not try to convince them to give their lives to Christ before the day of final judgment. The Bible warns us that we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and that those who have rejected Him will perish eternally. Frankly, I don't want this to happen to anyone.

I will pray for you.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries

“How Should a Christian View Civil Disobedience?”

How should a Christian view civil disobedience? Doesn't Paul's command to submit to governmental authority in Romans 13 preclude civil disobedience?

As I have said in [my article](#) on the subject, we are to obey government (Romans 13). But that is NOT an absolute command. If there was never a time when we would disobey government, then government would be God.

So the key question is *when* do we disobey government. I believe that the Scriptures teach that we obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29) when there is a direct, specific command given by government that would force us to disobey a direct command of Scripture. The Bible provides cases of this in the Old Testament (Hebrew midwives, many instances in the book of Daniel, etc.) and the New Testament (Acts 5).

The historical cases of Corrie Ten Boom, Rosa Parks, and Martin Luther King would all fit as examples. Erwin Lutzer (*Measuring Morality*) and Norman Geisler (*Christian Ethics*) deal with the issue of civil disobedience and obedience to Scripture in their books, if you would like to read more on the subject.

Your question about Romans 13 is more difficult. I take it that the Apostle Paul is giving a general principle rather than a universal pronouncement. Usually it is the case that “rulers hold no terror for those who do right.” But that is not always the case. There certainly are (and have been) tyrannical leaders.

It’s instructive, though, that Paul says this at a time when a corrupt leader (Nero) was in office. If nothing else it should remind us how much worse government leaders can be. Nevertheless, we are to obey those in authority (Romans 13) and pray for those in authority (1 Timothy 2). Just as there are exceptions to total obedience (civil disobedience), so there are exceptions to leaders who “hold no terror.”

I might also encourage you to revisit [my article on the Probe web site](#) and a recent Breakpoint commentary by Chuck Colson on “Caesar and Christ” (www.breakpoint.org). I hope this helped a

bit. God bless you.

Kerby Anderson
Probe Ministries

“How Can Computers Be Used to Share the Gospel?”

I teach technology in a private Christian school. I am putting together a list of How Computers Can Be Used To Share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Any help or insights you might have would be greatly appreciated.

Since we are really an apologetics ministry and not evangelistic, we're not really in that loop a whole lot. I would suggest you go to Google.com and type in the keywords "internet evangelism" and follow some of those links.

One thing that does come to mind is the fact that almost 100% of young people are online, and they are looking for relationships, even cyber-relationships, and looking for spirituality. So sharing the gospel in the context of developing online friendships in chat rooms (although one has to be waaaay careful there), online discussion groups, and blogging sites (weblogs. . . sort of personal diaries: see xanga.com) is a good strategy for sharing the gospel online.

I turned to our great friend of Probe, Keith Seabourn, Chief Technology Officer of Campus Crusade for Christ, for help in answering this question.

I have been using computers and the internet to share Jesus for over 10 years. We in Campus Crusade have found it to be extremely effective. I have several suggestions.

1. Visit Tony Whitaker's excellent Online Evangelism guide at www.web-evangelism.com/

2. For stories and statistics over several years, visit my personal website at www.seabourn.org. Specifically, visit my newsletter archives on that site. Many newsletters tell stories. For compilations of responses and statistics, see the End of Year Reports for 1999 or 2001.

3. For a broad overview of what Campus Crusade is doing to use the Passion of the Christ movie for online evangelism, see www.seabourn.org/newsletters/0401/thepassion.html.

These are some initial ways for you to explore. There are many, many more.

Hope you find this helpful.

Sue Bohlin

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“Where Was God Between Cain and Abel, and Noah?”

I am conversing with a Wiccan. One of her reasons for turning away from Christianity is that God was silent after dealing with Cain and Abel up to the time of Noah and the flood. For nearly two thousand years pagan civilizations thrived, say in Sumeria and Mesopotamia. Where was this monotheistic God at this time in history? In her mind this God is uninvolved and therefore heartless for bringing a flood. Where in the Bible

does it say God was involved with man during this time? I must say this got me thinking. Can you please help me out here?

God was indeed involved in the affairs of His creation between the time of Cain and Abel and the Flood. The clearest example of His involvement (in a clearly miraculous sense) can be found in Genesis 5:24 – “And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him” (see also Heb. 11:5). Clearly, such an event requires Divine intervention.

Obviously, this one example is enough to prove God’s involvement in the affairs of men and the world between the time of Cain and Abel and the Flood. But God is actually constantly involved in the affairs of the world. In the first place, the world only exists because God created it (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16; etc.). And the universe is continuously upheld in existence by the word and power of God (Heb. 1:3). Thus, God’s involvement with His creation is continuous. And God has revealed Himself to man not only in the Bible and Christ (special revelation), but also in creation (Psalm 19:1-4; Rom. 1:18-23), providential acts of kindness (Acts 14:17), and conscience (Rom. 2:14-15) – all examples of what is called general revelation. Such revelation is also continuous and ongoing to all men, at all times, in all places.

Shalom,

Michael Gleghorn
Probe Ministries