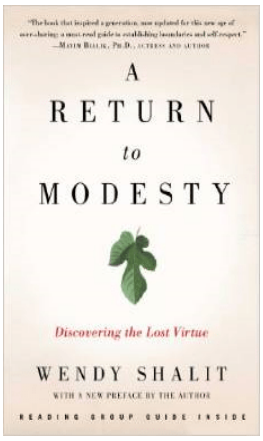
“Is It a Sin To Wear A Bikini?”

On a Christian site, someone said that it is a sin to wear a bikini. I do not agree because I went sailing the other day and I was the only one not wearing a bikini and the men on the boat did not gaze at the women wearing bikinis. I do not think bikinis are immodest because they can be appropriate when swimming, just not for walking around on the street or other public places.



I would like to direct you to Wendy Shalit’s book *A Return to Modesty*, which covers the subject of modesty (and immodesty) better than anything I’ve ever read. It is consistent with a Christian world view even though the author is not a Christian.

In my opinion, wearing a bikini is sinful under most circumstances because the purpose of it is to show off as much flesh as possible while still covering the absolute essentials of genitals and nipples. There is nothing God-honoring about bikinis and much that is gratifying to the flesh: for men to leer and for women to show off their bodies. Scripture calls us to live and dress modestly, not to gratify the flesh. It calls us to do everything to the glory of God: wearing bathing suits that are designed to cause men to lust and women to publicly display their bodies is the opposite of glorifying God.

If the men on your sailboat didn't gaze at the women wearing bikinis, I would suggest that they may have been desensitized. Or perhaps they were just wearing sunglasses and you didn't notice their eyes! <smile>

I will add a disclaimer. There is nothing at all sinful in a wife wearing a bikini if *only* her husband will see her in it. Showing off her body to please him is part of the pleasure of sex that God intends for married couples to enjoy. See "The Song of Solomon" in the Old Testament for biblical evidence of that.

I'm glad you asked.

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

"How Can a Christian Be Superstitious?"

Sue, I have a Christian friend who is highly superstitious. This is very surprising to me. I would like to be able to give him scriptural references which apply to this. I cannot understand how he reconciles the sovereignty of God with superstition. He actually thinks that things like "knocking on wood" have affect on the outcome of situations. He is also highly intelligent. If you know if any articles which address this, I would appreciate that information as well.

I share your incredulity at your friend's belief in both superstition and a sovereign God!

Here are two powerful scriptures that I think are eye-opening

concerning superstitious Christians:

Exodus 20:2-5 – The first commandment:

> *"I am the LORD your God . . . You shall have no other gods before me.*
>
> *You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.*
>
> *You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God . . . "*

Being superstitious is to trust in an act, like knocking on wood or not stepping on a crack, instead of in God. It is nothing less than idolatry! (This is why astrology is also wrong, also idolatrous—it is trusting in the stars instead of the Star-Creator!) When we trust in a superstition instead of in God, we are making it into an idol.

The other scripture is in 2 Kings 1:3:

> *"But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, 'Go up and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them, `Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?'"*

I think this verse makes it clear that consulting (and of course, trusting) anything other than the one true God is an insult and affront to God.

I'll be interested in hearing his response to this information . . .

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

“What is a Biblical Definition of Miracle?”

What is a biblical definition of ‘miracle’?

The term “miracle” has lost much of its luster in our day. And it isn’t because we see miracles taking place so often that we no longer are sensitive to their meaning. It’s because our speech has evolved in such a way that today, if I got to work on time this morning, “It was a miracle that I made it, seeing that there was so much traffic on the freeway.”

A biblical model and definition, on the other hand, for a miracle is another thing all together. Not everything hard to believe can be quantified as a miracle according to scriptural standards. Miracles are those acts that only God can perform; usually superceding natural laws. *Baker’s Dictionary of the Bible* defines a miracle as “an event in the external world brought about by the immediate agency or the simple volition of God.” It goes on to add that a miracle occurs to show that the power behind it is not limited to the laws of matter or mind as it interrupts fixed natural laws. So the term supernatural applies quite accurately.

It’s very interesting that a common word used for miracle in the New Testament can also be translated “sign.” A miracle is a sign that God uses to point to Himself; the same way we follow signs to find a museum or an airport.

An interesting question may arise. Does something have to break a natural law for it to be a miracle? C.S. Lewis defines a “miracle” in his work by the same name as an interference with nature by a supernatural power. Obviously, to interfere with natural law may not necessarily mean to break the natural

law. In fact, nature and "supernature" become interlocked after a miracle occurs and nature carries on according to the change wrought by that event. A science example: the law of inertia (Newton's first law of motion) states that an object will remain in rest until an external force is applied. Nature can only move from event to event through supernatural intervention.

Deists believe that it was only at creation that the supernatural and the natural related. But we Christian theists believe that God has intervened in nature by its inception, sustained it by His preserving power, and will redeem it through the final act of intervention. The creation and incarnation of Christ are the perfect examples of supernatural inertia (another way of referring to a miracle), not to mention their conclusion as well, in His second coming. God is still in the business of working miracles. And we wait eagerly for that greatest miracle of them all—the redemption of all creation.

Thanks for your question.

Kris Samons
Probe Ministries

"Are the Prophecies in the Book of Daniel a Pack of Lies?"

In researching the book of Daniel on the internet, I found a Web site written by a man named Bernard D. Muller in which he mythologizes Daniel and Revelation. I was just flabbergasted

that he would pretty much say Daniel's prophecies are a pack of lies. He says the book was actually written after all those things came to pass and that's how it seems so accurate. He completely discombobulated the 70 weeks' prophecy. Take a look at the web page and let me know what you think.

Thanks for the concern and the link to Muller's page. His criticisms of Daniel are not new. Porphyry had similar things to say in the third century. It's funny that the biggest reason for such criticism is that Daniel was just too accurate. Muller is trying to be an "objective" historian. Therefore, the presupposition that God knows the past, present, and future and is willing to reveal parts of it to humanity is outlandish to him.

It ought to be noted that Muller's criticisms of historic Jewish and Christian views on Daniel are quite one-sided. This is based on his biases and presuppositions, not on common sense and honest hermeneutics.

The authorship and time period of Daniel is clearly a subject of debate for Muller. There really isn't a problem with the 6th century dating of Daniel. Charles Ryrie has addressed some of the same points Muller sees as problems. Daniel would have known some of the Persian language, being from that period. And some Greek would have been common since there were Greek mercenaries employed in both Assyria and Babylonia. Daniel's Aramaic is consistent with what would have been common in the 6th century Near East. If the book had been written in the 2nd century B.C. then there would have obviously been much more Greek used than what is found. The *Nabonidus Chronicle* has shed some light on the existence of both Belshazzar and Darius the Mede. Daniel's inclusion in the Dead Sea Scrolls dates it at least before the Maccabees (seeing as how there were copies found at Qumran). So again, the 6th century date is not as problematic as Muller would have you believe.

I'm not sure how much of his treatise you want me to comment

on, but I'll just go through a bit of it, to help you. To address each point he makes would be a long drawn-out endeavor. Early on, it is obvious that Muller wants to deconstruct Daniel, making himself the most authoritative reader of the text. That's fine, but then he has no business making statements about what the writer (or writers, in his opinion) was aiming to do (such as "dropping the name Cyrus"). It is presumptuous, to say the least, that whoever is responsible for the book of Daniel is out to pull the wool over the reader's eyes by pretending to be someone he isn't. Also, Muller points out over and over that something has no validity if it is not backed up with secular sources. Has it never occurred to him that something could still be truthful, in spite of its exclusion from other sources? Besides, there are no exterior sources that contradict the traditional reading of Daniel. The only true problems that arise are the biases of the respective reader. If one doesn't want to believe something, one doesn't have to have legitimate criticisms. Muller's painstaking analysis of Daniel can be deceiving. Lots of work and details do not a scholarly treatise make! There is a vacancy of even the attempt to be objective. There is also a biting sentiment of sarcasm and bitterness prevalent.

The historical redaction found in Muller's work is related to the same type of criticisms of Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (Graf-Wellhausen theory). They are not attempts to explain the origin of an ancient book. Yet they do overflow with naturalistic presuppositions. Yes, even smart people can have biases! I pray that God may keep us all humble enough to be aware of our own biases and yet to find Truth where He resides (at the right hand of the Father).

Forgive me for not being able to speak to all that Muller lays out on his Web page. I hope that this will at least comfort you and give you a groundwork to begin with. God rewards those who seek Him.

Proverbs 2:3-5
Kris Samons
Probe Ministries

“Why Do Angels Need Wings?”

I know that not all angels have wings. But what about the old saying that angels must earn their wings, and why do they need wings? If they are spirits, they can float about, why need wings? And when do they earn them?

The Bible doesn’t tell us that much about angels, and that is our only source of dependable information about spiritual beings.

That “old saying” is only that, and it has nothing to do with truth or reality. The Bible says nothing about angels earning their wings; it does say that God created them, and there are good angels and evil angels. Whatever wings they have were given to them by God.

Why do they need wings? The description of seraphim in Isaiah 6 says that those angels had “six wings: with two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.” Wings were used to show respect to God by covering their faces and feet, but they also used them to fly. I don’t know why—maybe because it’s fun? :::::smile:::::

Hope this helps separate the cultural ideas we have about angels from some of the biblical truth about them. My guess is that God doesn’t tell us a whole lot about angels because He knows we’d concentrate on them instead of on Him. And holy angels would be horrified by that prospect!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“There’s More Information About Angels Outside the Bible!”

If I may make a suggestion, there is far more information about angels other than the bible. Maybe I missed the point of this page. The Koran & Talmud have more info that early Christianity left out.

Blessed be,

_____
Dear friend,

How do you know that the information in the Koran and Talmud are correct? We write from a Christian perspective, believing that the only holy scriptures that can be trusted are the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. There is good evidence for divine inspiration of the Bible, but not of the two sources you cite.

That’s why we limit ourselves to Biblical information.

Thanks for writing.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“I Find the Argument for a Wednesday Crucifixion Most Compelling”

I receive the Probe-Alert and read an interesting response to another email: “If Jesus Was Crucified on Friday, How Was He Dead for Three Nights?” I use a Dake’s Bible and although I try to keep an open mind when studying his (Finis Dake) interpretations, I thought his explanation of the Wednesday crucifixion was quite compelling. Dake refers to many verses in support of his interpretation. I will endeavor to include as many of the pertinent ones (admittedly my opinion) as possible. If you have access to a Dake’s Bible, the references are included beside each verse.

Matt. 27:63 – “…after three days I will rise again.”
This shows how the Jews understood the three days and three nights of Matt. 12:40

Lev. 23:7
This verse refers to the special Sabbath two days before the weekly Sabbath.

Mat. 12:40 “For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

John 19:31 “…for that Sabbath day was an high day.”
This is another reference to the special Sabbath.

Luke 9:22
Although this verse merely says that He will be raised on the third day, Dake gives another perspective on the three full days and three full nights interpretation:

• When days and nights are both mentioned, then it cannot be parts of three days, but full days and nights (Ester 4:16 with 5:1; 1 Sam. 30:12 with 13; Jonah 1:17 with Mat. 12:40). See also Rev. 11:9-11.

• The Jews understood Christ to mean “after three days” or three full days and three full nights (Matt. 27:63), hence the soldiers had orders to guard the tomb at least that long.

• It was the custom to mourn for the dead three full days and nights, called “days of weeping,” which were followed by four “days of lamentation,” thus making seven days (Gen. 27:41; 50:10; 1 Sam. 31:13; Job 2:13). According to rabbinical notion the spirit wandered about the sepulchre for three days hoping to re-enter the body, but when corruption set in the spirit left. This was believed to be on the fourth day when the loud lamentations began. Hence, on the fourth day Lazarus was supposed to stink (John 11:39).

• Herodotus testifies that embalmment did not take place until after three days when the spirit was supposed to be gone (Herod. ii. 86-89). This is why the women were taking sweet spices to anoint Jesus (Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:1)

• The Jews did not accept evidence as to the identification of a dead body after three days, for corruption took place quickly in the East. Hence, this period of three full days and three full nights was wanted by God, so as to preclude all doubt that death had actually taken place, and shut out all suggestion that Christ might have been in a trance. Jews would legally have to conclude His death, should He remain dead the full three days and three nights.

Thank you for your e-mail.

As you may know there is some controversy/discussion about Passover meal and whether it was celebrated Wednesday night,

or Thursday night, and some evidence which argues for both days.

I am inclined to agree with the full three days, and the Wednesday night theory.

I appreciate your sending this information (some of which I already have) and your nice summary.

If you go with Thursday, you just have to accept the fact that the Lord was in the tomb some PORTION of three days (Friday, Saturday, and Sunday).

As far as theology and/or interpretation is concerned, either (in my judgment) is acceptable since the rudimentary facts of the death, burial, and resurrection are not affected.

Warm Regards,

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries

"What Is the 'Sin Unto Death'?" [Jimmy Williams]

I have always been puzzled with 1 John 5:16-17 and the meaning of the "sin unto death." Can you explain exactly what John is referring to?

> *16 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it.*
> *17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto*

> *death.*

I would really appreciate any help you can give me on this.

Thank you for your e-mail and your concerns about "the sin unto death" mentioned in 1 John 5:16-17.

Let me see if I can give you an acceptable answer to your question. In doing so, we will first have to explore a number of factors which come from the Bible. Let me begin with a passage from Hebrews 12:

> *"My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord. . . Nor faint when you are reproved by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and scourges every son whom He receives. It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? . . . "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness. Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet. . ." (Heb. 12:5-13).*

Whether we are reading the Old Testament or the New, we find that God is at work to create a family for His own pleasure, a company of sons and daughters who will commune with and look to Him for love, provision, guidance, and consolation. In the Gospel of John, chapters 1 and 3 make it clear that when we place our faith in Jesus Christ to be our Savior Who, through His death, can make us presentable to God, we join the family of God through a new spiritual birth and thus embark upon our personal Christian pilgrimage which ends on the day we die.

As newborns in this family, we are admonished by the Word to "Grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3:18), and "as newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the

Word, that by it you may *grow* in respect to salvation" (1 Pet. 2:2).

All children, physical and spiritual, undergo a process of development which involves time. The theological term for this process is "sanctification," which means the **Christian life.** Along the way, as we saw above in the Hebrews passage, we observe that God, like any good father, disciplines us appropriately when necessary. The goal is *training*, not *punishment*. This training process may occur through circumstances we encounter, and which God allows, or it can come through knowledge of the Bible:

> *"All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16,17).*

We have a vivid example of this process in the Apostle Paul's life. He describes it this way:

> *"And because of the surpassing abundance of (my) revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me—to keep me from exalting myself…. Concerning this I entreated the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He has said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness'" (2 Cor. 12:7-9).*

We don't have a clear picture what this "thorn" was. Most believe it was a physical ailment. There is some indication that it may have been an eye problem. But the point I make here is that God may allow all kinds of circumstances into our life which are designed for training purposes. This process is *the normal Christian Life.*

Another good example comes from 1 Corinthians 11:21-31. Paul

writes this epistle to address several problems and/or abuses occurring among the church members there. One abuse was that when the believers came together to take communion, some of the members showed up to enjoy the food and some came *drunk!* Paul rebukes them saying, "Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry, and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you. . . For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep."

This passage makes it clear to us that there are consequences to our disobedience. Some of these Corinthian believers evidently are disciplined by God through both illness and even death ("some of you sleep"). That is *not* to say that all illness and death are divine judgments, but some *are.*

In this particular instance, some of the disobedient Corinthians experienced the "sin unto death." (That is, some of them died).

With this background, we come to the heart of your question. The "sin unto death" is found throughout the Bible and seems to be connected to new eras of biblical history.

Here are some examples where people experienced death through disobedience:

- *Giving of the Law, Mount Sinai: Golden Calf (Exodus 32)*
- *Institution of Levitical Priesthood: "Strange Fire" (Leviticus 10)*
- *Conquest of the Land: Achan (Joshua 7)*
- *Beginning of the Church: Ananias & Sapphira (Acts 5)*

(See also Samson and Saul—God was longsuffering with

both)

Speaking of the incident in Leviticus 10 where Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, offered "strange fire" which "consumed them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev. 10:2), Rev. Ray Stedman of Palo Alto Bible Church says:

> *This was a sin of presumption, not a sin of ignorance. They knew better and what incense they were supposed to burn. . . they had been told emphatically that God would be offended if they offered incense other than that which he had prescribed.* Second, it was a sin dealt with severely because it distorted God's revelation of Himself. All of these sacrifices and rituals were intended for us to learn what kind of God He is. Third, God used it to set an example. God is here teaching a lesson-to show how important it was for the priests at the beginning of their priesthood to follow explicitly what God commanded. And it only happened once. Similarly, though the sin of Ananias and Sapphira (deception, hypocrisy) was common among Christians of the early church and common ever since, God never visited death like that again. It is a manifestation of God's love and concern. At the outset, He is wanting to stop this kind of thing from happening again, and He is giving fair warning of the eventual consequences to anyone presumptuous enough to sin deliberately in this way." That is the way we human beings work. Unless an issue is vividly, dramatically, openly, symbolically made clear to us, we'll go right on and do the wrong thing. So God is stopping that, arresting it with his judgment at this point. But he really wants us to learn to refrain for the sake of his glory, not out of fear for our lives. *(Cf. elaborate instructions on incense, Exodus 30:34-38, particularly v. 38).*

Sin Unto Death (1 John 5)

Now let's look at the passage you have questioned. The first

thing to note is the *context*. This major topic from 5:13-18 is prayer. We are given in verses 13-15 that God hears and responds to our prayers. The key word is "*anything*." Then John remembers there ***is*** an exception: praying for a disobedient, sinning brother or sister in Christ. What to do? How do we pray for that one? Here is the sequence we must keep in mind for such a one as we pray.

First of all, the Apostle John tells us that there is a sin **not** leading to death (physical). In verse 16, he tells us that it is possible for Christians to fall into this sin not leading to death. [See also 1 John 2:1,2—the ideal is to "sin not." But if anyone sins (*and we will*), we have an Advocate, a defense attorney.]

When Christians observe disobedience in brothers and sisters, they *are* to pray for him/her (16b); as a result of these prayers, God may choose to preserve, prolong, extend the person's physical life (not eternal life, since that life is determined by one's personal faith decision).

This intercession is effective only in the case of sin **not** leading to death (16c): that is, the person has not reached the end limits of God's patience and grace (His "last straw"). See also v. 17 where John says, "All unrighteousness is sin, but there is a sin which is not unto (physical) death."

Secondly, there **is** a sin which results in physical death—the sin unto death (v. 16d): This is the death of a believer characterized by persistent, willful sinning in which "the flesh is destroyed [physical death—1 Cor. 5:1-5] so that the *spirit* might be saved."

John tells us that this is a sin ***not*** to be prayed for, because God's immutable law concerning this final, "last straw" disobedience is involved and will be unaltered by intercessory prayer (16e), and frankly, we do not know another's heart condition before the Lord. We are not encouraged to speculate

about the cause of any believer's untimely death. In our prayer life, we can continue to intercede for a wayward brother or sister, but we are not to draw any conclusions about what may, should, or has happened in regard to a believer's death.

Thirdly, when some Christian we know dies, we might be inclined to ask the question of ourselves, "Was this the sin unto death or not?" John is telling us in this passage not to speculate, because we just don't know.

All through this Epistle (1 John) the Apostle has been addressing sin in the life of the believer—yours and every Christian you know. It is fitting that John portrays the remedy of *habitual* sin on the part of a believer in the context of the new birth. The "black and white" contrast all through 1 John concludes with the same idea, and one that is also expressed in the book of James:

> *"Even so, faith, if it has no works is dead, being by itself. But someone may say, 'You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.' . . Are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? . . . For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead." (James 2:17,18, 20, 26)*

The New Testament clearly teaches that "Faith alone saves (Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:5), but saving faith is never alone."

This leads us to a practical application in observing/evaluating another believer's life and imperfections. This verse comes to mind: "The Spirit Himself bears witness with *our* spirit that we are the children of God" (Romans 8:16). What we learn from this verse is that we can know about *ourselves*, (i.e. that *we* have the Spirit, that *we* are born again), but ultimately we cannot know about *another*.

In other words, I can know about *me,* but I can't know about *you.* You can know about *you,* but you can't know about *me.*

Practically speaking then, we should accept every person's testimony who claims to be a Christian. Actual Christian behavior is on a spectrum which John describes by saying, "all sin [big and little] is unrighteousness." Only God can rightly see the totality of a believer's obedience and disobedience over a lifetime, and rightly judge it. As a loving Father, He may bring discipline to get us "back on track." 1 John 1 and 2 speak to the way this may be accomplished—God's grace through the Blood of Christ providing daily cleansing through confession/acknowledgement (1 John 1:9) and thus, further potential opportunity to serve.

Since we cannot see the heart of another, we can only inspect the "fruit" (or lack thereof) we see in a life. The farther a believer appears to wander away from God, the more "bad fruit" we observe, and the more we wonder about the truthfulness of that believer's profession of faith. We cannot help being tempted to ask the question: "Is this person *really* a Christian?" We are to go no farther in our evaluation or conclusion; rather, we should *continue our intercession* for him or her.

> *John 21: 20-22: "And looking around, Peter saw the disciple whom Jesus loved (John the Apostle) following them. . .and therefore seeing him said to Jesus, 'Lord, what about this man?' Jesus said to him, 'If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? **You** follow me!" (Old Aramaic Expression: "Stick to your knitting!" <smile>).*

I hope this answers your question, _____.

Sincerely in Christ,

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries

“Was Reincarnation Ever in the Bible?”

I have a question about reincarnation. My father recently read this book called *Many Lives, Many Masters* by Dr. Brian Weiss. It is about a psychiatrist who explored the past lives of one of his patients through hypnotic regression.

In the third chapter he claims that reincarnation was in the Bible but was later removed. I quote from the book:

> **“There were indeed references to reincarnation in the Old and New Testaments. In A.D. 325 the Roman emperor Constantine the Great, along with his mother, Helena, had deleted references to reincarnation contained in the New Testament. The Second Council of Constantinople meeting in A.D. 553, confirmed this action and declared the concept of reincarnation a heresy.” (p. 35-36)**

Is this true?

I would like to answer two issues in your e-mail. The first is about past-lives regression through hypnosis. Our friends at the Watchman Fellowship have a MOST interesting article by their director, James Walker, called “The Day I Hypnotized a Reincarnated Prospector.” The point was to demonstrate to a Dallas Seminary class the powerfully deceptive nature of the cults and the occult. I highly recommend this article: www.watchman.org/na/chair10.htm

Secondly, concerning your question about reincarnation being excised from the Bible. Similar to what your father found in the book he read, a section of Shirley MacLaine’s book *Out on a Limb* records these comments from her New Age mentor, David:

> “The theory of reincarnation is recorded in the Bible. But the proper interpretations were struck from it during an Ecumenical Council meeting of the Catholic Church in Constantinople sometime around 553 A.D, called the Council of Nicea. The Council members voted to strike those teachings from the Bible in order to solidify Church control.” [New York: Bantam Books, 1983, pp. 234-5.]

Dr. Paul R. Eddy, Associate Professor of Theology at Bethel College in St. Paul, Minnesota, responds:

> “In response to this claim, we must begin by pointing out a few basic historical inaccuracies. First, The Council of Nicea, the first of the seven Ecumenical councils, took place in 325 A.D. It was concerned with the teachings of Arius and their implications for a correct understanding of the person of Jesus Christ. The documents from this Council offer no evidence that the topic of reincarnation ever came up for discussion, let alone that it was condemned and removed from the Bible. No doubt this claim means to refer, rather, to the fifth Ecumenical Council, held in 553—the Council of Constantinople. The primary purpose of this Council was to ease the tensions in the Church caused by the Council of Chalcedon 100 years previous. Again, there is no evidence whatsoever that the idea of reincarnation was ever discussed, let alone condemned and purged from the Bible. What the reincarnationists are probably referring to here is the condemnation of Origenism, which included belief in the pre-existence of the soul. This should not, however, be confused with the notions of the karmic cycle of reincarnation. This is clear from Origen’s own words on this matter when he writes of “the dogma of transmigration, which is foreign to the Church of God not handed down by the Apostles, nor anywhere set forth in the Scriptures.” Other early theologians, including Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Gregory of Nyssa, also explicitly rejected the idea of reincarnation. Another problem with this theory is the fact

> that manuscripts of the Bible exist dating back to the third century. For example, the Bodmer Papyri (dated around 200-225), the Chester Beatty Papyri (dated around 200-250), Codex Vaticanus (dated around 325-350), and Codex Sinaiticus (dated around 340) are all documents written centuries prior to the 533 Council, and none of them reveal any supposed reincarnationist teachings that were removed from later editions of the Bible! Beyond this, it is known that the core canon of the Bible was essentially recognized and acknowledged throughout the orthodox Church as early as the late second and early third centuries, as evidenced by the list contained in the Muratorian Fragment (dated around 170). All of this points towards the impossibility of a conspiratorial purgation of the doctrine of reincarnation—or any other doctrine for that matter—from the Bible during any of the Ecumenical Councils." [ittsy.com/focusonthefaulty.com/reincarnation-and-the-bible/]

I hope you can see that the burden of proof is on the reincarnationists to show us those supposed Biblical passages supporting reincarnation! The idea that the original versions of the Bible containing teachings on reincarnation were all confiscated and burned—another fantasy floating around these days—is merely that, a fantasy. There is no evidence for any myth of reincarnation taught in the Bible, either past or present. Hebrews 9:27 nails that coffin shut: "It is appointed unto man to die once, and after that comes judgment."

Hope this helps!

Sue Bohlin

“Why Did God Allow Animals to be Eaten and Sacrificed?”

Why did God allow animals to be sacrificed and to eat other animals if He loves His creation? They are innocent. (I am not an animal rights activist. I am a Christian.)

I think the answer must first be addressed in the reality with which we find ourselves. The cosmos according to Christians was created by God. In the early chapters of Genesis we find that everything God created is expressed over and over as being something GOOD.

The Cosmos is made up of minerals, plants, animals, and humans, the lower to the higher. We are told that only man was created in God’s image. That does not mean the rest of creation is of NO value, but there is a hierarchy involved. We are told that all of the created order was intended for man. And that he was to have dominion over it. This does not mean the exploitation of everything for selfish purposes. But God provided a food chain involving plants and animals for man.

We see in the Hindu culture a good example of what happens to a culture when the food chain is distorted. Hindus, with their doctrine of reincarnation, believe that animals are just as valuable as human beings, and some, in a former life, may have actually been human beings. Therefore, all devout Hindus are vegetarians.

What makes this difficult is that now scientists are moving toward the position that even PLANTS have consciousness! Does God love the flora any less than the fauna He created? That leaves us with a diet for our existence totally dependent upon rocks!

Man was never intended to “rape the resources.” Having “dominion” meant for man to be good stewards of the plant and

animal world. “The Earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof,” says the psalmist. (Ps. 24:1) We don’t own the earth; we are to be good stewards of it.

The scriptures are filled with indications of God’s love for that which He created. Jesus notices the beautiful lilies of the field. Men are not to abuse their animals, but rather care for them with kindness, not with harshness. He takes notice of every sparrow who falls to the ground in death. God explicitly states that one purpose of plants and animals was to provide food for man. He even gave some instructions about *which* animals we were to eat and which we should not.

Consider this verse: Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not *worth much more than they?* (Matt. 6:27). Jesus goes on to say, “Do not be anxious saying, ‘What shall we eat? Or what shall we drink?’…for…your heavenly Father *knows* that you have *need* for all these things.” (Matt. 6:31-32).

Your question springs out of a matrix of thought which is very popular in the modern world. . .that all life is sacred (I agree). But the further notion held forth today is that the life of a dolphin or a sea otter or a spotted owl is equal in value to a human being.

The Bible does not teach this equality. Jesus didn’t teach it, as we see above. All life is sacred because it came from the hand of God. But it is not all equal in value. Man is set apart as the recipient for which it was intended.

Those who would remove this distinction do not elevate man. If there is nothing special about man (which appears to be true in so many ways), then man is dragged down to the status of beast or animal, and an “open season” on man to cure overpopulation problems would make as much sense as an open season on whitetail deer each fall here in Texas to thin out

the one half million which inhabit this state. My point here is that once you remove this line, man is not special in any sense and there is no reason we shouldn’t live like the rest of the animals on the planet: “survival of the fittest.” Hitler understood this. . .and practiced it!

I don’t think you would agree that this is a solution to the problem.

Does this help any?

Sincerely,

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries