“Please Consider the Christian Vegetarian Position”

Greetings Mr. Williams,

I enjoyed your well-written and thoughtfully-considered article “Probe Answers Our E-Mail: Eating Animals.”

I urge you, therefore, to consider the Christian vegetarian position, developed in scholarly literature and now, finally, summarized on the Internet (www.ChristianVeg.com).

Like your own perspective, vegetarian Christians do not typically equate human and animal life and shun exploitation in order to be the best stewards we can be of the Creation God has made. Take a look for yourself and tell me what you think!

Some “food” for thought: you stated, “God provided a food chain involving plants and animals for man.” But much modern research in nutrition is showing animal protein to be hardly necessary for the proper development of humans. In fact, an animal-free (vegan) diet is shown to be optimum (for human performance, growth, etc.). It certainly avoids many risks related to cancer and especially heart disease (which it virtually eliminates)—the two biggest killers of North Americans!!!

Consider the facts for your self—I am genuinely interested in your perspective in light of this knowledge. As a starting point from this perspective, from an “outside” (i.e. nonvegetarian) source, see the American Dietetic Association at http://www.eatright.org/cps/rde/xchg/ada/hs.xsl/index.html

Thanks for your time and consideration. I am looking forward to your response!

P.S. Relevant titles are listed on the bibliography on the website. See especially *Is God a Vegetarian?* by Richard Alan Young (student of Luke Timothy Johnson). And works by Stephen H. Webb, such as *On God and Dogs: A Christian Theology of Compassion for Animals* another title forthcoming from Oxford University Press this October.

Thank you for your recent E Mail concerning my article on "Eating Animals."

I appreciate very much your contacting me, and I will make a note of your resources at ChristianVeg.com. I will be happy to refer your efforts to people who struggle with this issue, and I will explore your information myself as my dialogue with users continues.

I think there are many unanswered questions about this. For example, the human digestive system which parallels the herbivores (long) and not the carnivores (short) is an argument for your position. I have often pondered this.

On the other hand, if we take the Bible at its word, and recognizing the nutrition, disease, and environmental factors, etc., which you mentioned, I still do not think we can develop an exclusive doctrine of vegetarianism based on the Scriptures. The fact that God gives explicit instructions about which animals could and could not be eaten in the Hebrew community would indicate some meat eating is allowed.

I also turn to the New Testament and discover that Jesus celebrated Passover and ate portions of the slain lamb.

Further, there are passages in the New Testament (Peter's vision in Acts 10, or Romans 14, for example) which indicate that this is a matter of conscience, indicating that some may choose to eat meat, and others who do not. But one is not supposed to judge the other, because God has sanctified both.

I will look forward to reviewing your material.

Warm Regards,

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries

Dear Probe,

I find your correspondence with the Christian vegetarian to be so interesting. . . It's got to be the best dialogue I've seen on this topic in almost all of my 30+ years. I just wanted to add that I don't think the choice to eat or not eat meat is one of just conscience. See, I quit meat (long before becoming a Christian) and had several problems physically/medically. I'm anemic, and not eating meat seemed to complicate the matter. I tried vitamins, eating more beans, nuts, fruits and vegetables (especially spinach) and still couldn't raise my iron level to where it needed to be. . . The only thing that worked (and had I been honest with myself I would have heeded the strong cravings) was a 6-8 ounce piece of beef liver prior to my monthly cycle. I've since taken to eating meat again (although I'm still more a veggie eater) and I've been a lot healthier for it. I say all of this to say, that I and many others are not wired for life without flesh. The Lord's intricate work will never be fully figured out as it regards the body (although we've seen some of the best medical advances known to man and that's a good thing). . . Nothing could take the place of meat in my life. I'm not sure why this happened or why it's still a necessity, but I would love to be meatless, I just wouldn't be as healthy. I hope this all makes sense. I'm looking forward to the next installment regarding vegetarianism. Thanks and keep up the good work.

Well, your comment IS the next installment! <smile> As a lover of chicken and cheeseburgers, I freely admit to a pro-meat-eating bias. . . but even with my personal preferences aside, I think your experience adds an important element to the discussion. Vegetarianism can cause problems for women of childbearing age that men do not face, and this needs to be

considered as we seek to be wise stewards of the bodies God gave us to use for His glory.

Thanks for writing!

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

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

"The Archaeological Evidence for the Bible is Non-Existent!"

The archaeological evidence of the Bible is scarce. In fact, it is non-existent. After 200 years of Christian archaeologists digging up the whole Middle East, they haven't

found any proof of the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt, Hebrew Slaves or the Ten Plagues. NONE!!! And this from a nation of people who wrote EVERYTHING down in stone!! And Sinai has no proof of any large group of people travelling through it EVER!!! The first evidence correlating to the biblical story doesn't appear in Canaan archaeology until around 100 years before the Babylonian Captivity (around 600 BC).

This lack of evidence includes persons such as David and Solomon who should be recorded in other nations and supposedly lived relatively close to those who wrote the Bible in the Babylonian Captivity around 500 B.C.

In the words of Shakespeare, "Methinks thou dost protest too much." It is true that we would like to have more archaeological evidence than we now have. But of course, from an archaeologist's perspective, this is always the case. Further, your assertion that ***no*** evidence exists, is an overstatement which cannot be substantiated. And it is not accepted by the majority of those scholars who are active in the Levant. I would suspect that you are reading a narrow spectrum of archaeologists who support your desired conclusions. And there are many European and Israeli archaeologists along with Christian ones who do not share your opinion nor that of those you apparently are reading. Let me give you some examples from these scholars who feel there is substantial evidence mitigating against such a pessimistic stand.

Egypt

I will start here, because there is no doubt that we see clear evidence of Egyptian culture, language, etc., imbedded in both the Old Testament and archaeology. As you may know, the *lingua franca* (official language) used by Heads of State and commerce was Akkadian cuneiform. Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt all conversed with each other in this language. It is a northern Semitic language. If the Israelites actually spent 400 years

as slaves in Egypt, we would expect this familiarity of Egyptian language and culture among the Israelites. And if Moses was a real person—a Hebrew brought up in the Royal Egyptian family—he would have probably been tri-lingual, and able to converse in Hebrew, Egyptian and Akkadian.

Exodus, Sinai

We find abundant evidence of an Egyptian heritage and influence throughout the Pentateuch, Joshua, and Judges. As stated above, we would like more archaeological corroboration to clearly identify Biblical names, places, events, etc. For some areas the evidence is strong. For others, it is either sparse, or nonexistent. I will elaborate on this later in considering Jerusalem, but will state here the premise that an *absence* of archaeological data does not necessarily mean there is none. Perhaps we have the *wrong site* (historical Mt. Sinai is an example). Or perhaps we just haven't dug in the *right place*. To argue vigorously from "silence" is not strong proof.

We do have some indications of Egyptian influence on two biblical elements: the Tabernacle/construction described in Exodus 25-27; 36-38, and the arrangement of the Israelite travel/military camp. The order of the camp and the order of the march are laid out in great detail in Numbers 2. Much of what Egyptian archaeologists have discovered pertaining to the above find many similarities in the structures/construction/arrangement of the various war camps of the Pharaohs.

The desert Tabernacle of the Bible (Exodus 26) is described as one of elaborate design of gold, silver, bronze, wood, linen, goats' hair and leather. It so happens that this desert tent is also the centerpiece of every Egyptian war camp, but it serves as Pharaoh's personal, special tent, not a religious shrine.

The best example comes from a famous battle (at Kadesh)

between Ramesses II and the Hittite nation around 1275 B.C. This is one of the most momentous battles in antiquity and the best documented…at Thebes, Karnak, Luxor, Abydos and Abu Simbel—on papyrus and stone, in both poetic and prose forms. The best pictorial is found at Abu Simbel. The parallels between Ramesses' camp and the biblical Tabernacle, beginning with the dimensions, are striking.

- *The camp forms a rectangular courtyard twice as long as it is wide.*
- *The main entrance is located in the middle of the short walls.*
- *A road from the entrance leads directly to a two chamber tent: a reception compartment and directly behind it Pharaoh's chamber. It too has a 2:1 ratio.*
- *The tent and camp lie on an east/west axis with the entrance on the east.*
- *In pharaoh's inner tent is representation on each side of the winged falcon god Horus.*
- *Their wings cover the pharaoh's golden throne in the same manner that the wings of the Cherubim covered Yahweh's golden throne/ark (Exodus 35:18-22).*

Given your assumption that the Old Testament didn't materialize until the Persian period (fifth century B.C.), we would expect Mesopotamian influence, but we do know from several palatial reliefs found at Nineveh that the Assyrians had a *very different* form of military camp. The camp's perimeter is always *oval* in shape and the form of the king's tent bears little resemblance to the Tabernacle. Where would these sixth century B.C. "authors" come up with this accurate, Egyptian-oriented detail/description seven centuries removed?

I won't elaborate on this (unless you want documentation), but the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, its design, materials, and portability, so graphically designed in Exodus

25:19-22, is also mirrored in Egyptian funerary structures to a high degree of detail.

Another remarkable example is to compare three cities mentioned in Numbers 22 (Dibon); Numbers 13:22; Joshua 10:36,37; Judges 1:10 (Hebron); and Judges 4-5 (Qishon). These passages all describe a well-known, well-traveled road (the Arabah) in the Transjordan from the southern tip of the Dead Sea to the plains of Moab (opposite Jericho). This is not to be confused with the great north-south Kings Highway (also mentioned in the Bible) which stretched from northern Arabia to Syria.

Although Thomas Thompson and other "Rejectionists" claim these cities didn't exist in the late Bronze Age II (1400-1200 B.C.), we have extra-biblical evidence that they *did*. You may know that the Pharoahs recorded, along with their achievements and military exploits, maps and the names of roads, geographical data, etc. We get a rather full picture of this road over time by several pharaohs who mention/describe this specific road on their victory monuments.

The first comes from Thutmosis III (1504-1450 B.C)., who mentions four towns/cities along this road which are also found in the Bible: Iyyim, Dibon, Abel, and Jordan. The second and third come from Amenophis III (1387-1350 B.C.) and Ramesses II (c. 1379-1212 B.C.)—found on the west side of the great hall at Karnak. He mentions two of the names found in the Bible. Further evidence comes from the Moabite stone (ninth century B.C.).

I could go into more detail about this if you are interested, but to summarize what I'm saying, there is evidence from independent and varied sources that such places existed several centuries *before* the proposed dates of the Exodus. Consider this comparison:

Late Bronze Egyptian Name	**Biblical Name**	**Modern Name**

(Yamm) ha-Malach	Melah (“Salt”)	Yam ha-Melach
Iyyin	Iyyin	Ay
Heres/Hareseth	Heres/Hareseth	Kerak (CH = K)
Aqrabat		al-Aqraba
Dibon/Oartho	Dibon	Dhiban
Iktanu		Tell Iktanu
Abel	Abel-shittim	Tell Hammam
Jordan	Jordan	Jordan (River)

If you will look at Numbers 33:45-50, you would have to say in light of the above that this is a pretty impressive and credible piece of ancient historical writing, and most Bible scholars still consider it so. Its exacting specificity and precision of detail strongly indicates that the ancient historian who wrote it had at least had *sources* that accurately preserved the memory of a road (and cities along its route) used in very early times dating clear back to Late Bronze Age II.

On the face of it, we would have to reject Thomas Thompson (et al.)’s conclusion that *no* such cities existed at the proposed time of the Exodus. The places mentioned in the Biblical accounts did in fact exist at the time. None of these pieces of information were fabricated centuries later. There would be no purpose to include them (or make them up).

Israelites

I am not going to spend any time trying to convince you that Moses was an historical person, but I would like to refer you to an Egyptian stele in the temple at Thebes which gives us the earliest known mention of Israel. It is a 7.5 foot high funerary monument of Pharaoh Merneptah, who ruled from 1213 to 1203 B.C. As you may know, these monuments outlined a Pharaoh’s lifetime accomplishments and were written (or dictated) by him for his tombstone prior to his death. He

refers to conquering Israel (among others) and says, “Israel is laid waste, his seed (people) is not.” Israel is referred to as “a people,” that is, they were already known and acknowledged as a distinct ethnic group at that time! In my mind, this reference provides persuasive, early evidence against those who argue that there was not a distinct people called the Israelites until after the Babylonian Captivity in the sixth century B.C. (600 years later—ridiculous!)

I will be discussing the Amarna Letters (14th century B.C.) in another context later, but will here state that a people designated as the “Hab(or p)iru” (i.e., Habiru) in the Amarna Letters (14th Century B.C.) is still considered by many scholars to be a possible, additional mention of the Hebrews.

Another substantial line of evidence comes from discoveries of a new community in the central hill country of Canaan which sprang up late in the 13th to the 11th centuries B.C. Some 300 small, agricultural villages are now known. They are new in the archaeological record and have certain identifying characteristics which include the layout of the village and the signature (Israel: four-room houses, pottery, and the absence of pig bones, which are numerous at other sites in trans-Jordan, and the coastal towns [Philistines, Phoenicians]). The above layouts of village and town fit exactly the biblical descriptions found in Joshua, Judges, and Samuel. These newcomers also brought with them new agricultural technology not evidently known heretofore by the Canaanites living there when the Israelites arrived. And it has been pointed out that this new community did not *evolve* over time (natural, gradual population increase), but rather, migrated into the area more rapidly, and they almost exclusively chose *new* sites to build, instead of taking over existing Canaanite dwellings, and well away from their urban areas.

This new people introduced the terracing of hills for their agricultural needs, which were carefully designed with

retaining walls (rock) to take advantage of all rainfall (as well as available springs) coming down to these areas of rocky, sloping terrain. These villages stretch all the way from the hills of the lower Galilee in the north to the Negev in the south. Population estimates at the end of the Bronze age in this area numbered 12,000 (13th century) but grew rapidly to about 55,000 in the 12th century B.C., and then to about 75,000 in the 11th century B.C.

As I mentioned above, another uniqueness in these settlements is that their food system was found by archaeologists to be void of pig bones in excavated remains. This is another indication of a particular, ethnic/religious community. And religiously, there is also a complete absence of any kind of temple, sanctuary, or shrine, and also of any stone idols (deities). This assemblage is sufficiently homogeneous and distinctive to warrant *some* kind of designation, or label. If not Israel, *WHO?* Archaeologist William Dever has suggested naming this 12th to 11th century assemblage of individuals as "proto-Israelites."

David, Solomon, and Jerusalem

As you may know, there is a hot debate going on among archaeologists concerning the tenth century B.C., the purported time of the United Kingdom under David and his son, Solomon. Are they historical figures, or did some author(s) invent these mythical persons centuries later? And what can be said about Jerusalem? There is very little archaeological evidence to substantiate that it existed in the tenth century B.C. as described in the Bible. This has led a small group of archaeologists to conclude David and Solomon never existed, and Jerusalem was not the thriving royal capital of the Israelites. I will develop this in more detail later, but I first want to say again that an *absence* of evidence does not necessarily and automatically bring us to conclude *nothing* was going on in the tenth century B.C. at Jerusalem. This is an argument from silence. There are alternative explanations.

First of all, the most likely place where Jerusalem's public buildings and important monuments would be located is on the Temple Mount, which for obvious reasons (Arab occupation), cannot be excavated. Thus, the most important area for investigation to uncover possible confirmation for David and Solomon is off limits to us.

Secondly, even those areas which *are* partially available to excavate—the ridge known as the City of David, for example—was continuously settled from the tenth to the sixth centuries B.C. Destructions leave a distinct mark in the archaeological record. But where there is continuous occupation (i.e. conqueror after conqueror) we would not expect to find remains of earlier building activity for the simple reason that Jerusalem was built on terraces and bedrock. Each new conqueror destroyed what was underneath, robbed and reused stones from earlier structures, and set its foundations again on solid rock.

We mostly have Herod to thank for our present inaccessibility to what lies underneath the flat, massive platform of today's Temple Mount when he began construction in 20/19 B.C. To accomplish this task of leveling, it is estimated that roughly 1.1 million cubic feet of rock was removed from the northeast corner and was used in the southeastern corner to first fill in a portion of the Kidron Valley and then raise up 150 feet from bedrock with fill to level that side!

So we would not expect to find abundant remains of earlier strata (though there are a few indications [capitals, columns, masonry] of Herod's Temple). For these reasons it is dangerous and misleading to draw negative inferences from the lack of archaeological evidence.

Fortunately, however, we *do* have another means of testing what was happening in Jerusalem even *before* the tenth century B.C. It comes from the Amarna Letters (14th century B.C.) where Jerusalem (referred to as "Urusalim") is specifically

mentioned. These 300 documents, written in Akkadian cuneiform, are mostly diplomatic correspondence from local rulers in Canaan to two Pharoahs—Amenophis III [1391-1353] and Amenophis IV (also known as Akhenaten) [1353-1337]. At this time Canaan was under Egyptian hegemony, and Jerusalem was ruled by a local king, or vassal.

It is clear from these documents that 400 years *before* our century in question (tenth century B.C.), Jerusalem was a capital city over a considerable area, and we are told it had a palace, a court with attendants and servants, a temple, and scribes who had charge of diplomatic correspondence with Egyptian authorities. Six letters were sent by the king of Jerusalem to the pharaohs, which confirm a diplomatic sophistication of his court and the quality of his scribe.

Apart from these crucial letters, we find the *archaeological* evidence to confirm this history both *opaque* and *nil*. Scholars would never have guessed from their excavations of Jerusalem that any scribal activity took place there in Late Bronze Age II. We should not be surprised at this, however. From the standpoint of location, elevation, climate, water sources, and defense, Jerusalem is, and always has been, by far the most choice and desirable place for occupation and settlement. That being the case, we should be surprised if we found *no* indication of ancient activity there.

The truth of the matter is we must realize how little has been recovered; and perhaps how little can ever be recovered from ancient Jerusalem. There is very little from the 17th century, the 16th century, 15th, 14th, 13th, 12th, 11th, 10th, or the 9th century B.C.! Or to put it in other terms, we have little archaeological evidence of Jerusalem for the Late Bronze Age or Iron Age I or from the first couple of centuries of Iron Age II—a period of a *thousand* years!

But it isn’t totally void of evidence. The “Stepped Stone” Structure on the eastern ridge of the city of David, the

oldest part of Jerusalem, is a mammoth, five-story support for some unknown structure above it. It measures 90 feet high and 130 feet long. The dates given to it by archaeologists range from the late 13th to the late 10th centuries. But whatever the exact date will turn out to be within these centuries, this structure shows that Jerusalem could boast of an impressive architectural achievement(s) and had a population large enough to engage in such huge public works projects. This structure dates to David's time, or earlier. Contrary to some archaeologists who claim "no evidence," some 10th century pottery has been found, though not in great abundance (which holds true for all the other centuries at Jerusalem). Milat Ezar also dates a black juglet found which dates to the tenth century. Ezar also dates the fortifications and gate just above its location as also tenth century B.C.

Granted, the Jerusalem of the United Monarchy was not as grand or glorious as Herod's Jerusalem, but the alternative conclusion that the city was abandoned for a thousand years on the basis of the paucity of archaeological evidence, seems to me to be very improbable. And I reach this conclusion, not on any Biblical evidence, but quite apart from it.

A further example comes from the fifth century B.C., and specifically the rebuilding of the Temple and walls of Jerusalem by Ezra and Nehemiah after the Babylonian captivity (when the Persians allowed the Jews to return). The Temple is assumed not to have been anything beyond a very modest structure. In fact, it was never even referred to by the Jews as the "Second Temple" and was demolished when Herod began his project in the first century B.C. But there is little doubt that Nehemiah's wall *was* constructed, even though almost no trace of it has been found in excavations. Jerusalem of the Persian period is known only from fills and building fragments and is mainly identified because it is sandwiched between the debris from the Iron Age and the Hellenistic periods. This is another example of the difficulty in recovering strata that

developed peacefully and did not end with some catastrophic construction, and thus another caution against drawing negative conclusions from negative archaeological evidence. I will come back to this with some conclusions after we have considered David and Solomon.

David and Solomon

With respect to David, until recently no historical, archaeological evidence has been available to deny or confirm if he lived. But in 1993, the discovery by excavator Avraham Biran of a stone slab (and two additional fragments of same) at the ancient Tel Dan near Mt. Hermon contains an extra-biblical reference to David. The specific words are "Beth David," or, "House of David." This is a formulaic term frequently used, not just by Israel, but by all peoples throughout the Levant to describe a particular dynasty—their own, or other States (political entities). A small group of archaeologists have rejected it out of hand, and some have even suggested that it is probably a forgery *planted* by Avraham Biran himself! In reality, the inscription was found, *in situ*, in *secondary* use, that is, reused and inserted into the outer wall of a gate that was destroyed in the eighth century B.C. by the Assyrians. Paleographically, experts date it to the ninth century B.C.

The discovery of this artifact presents a terrible problem for the archaeologists you appear to have been reading, because this is a non-Israelite source, outside the Bible, that refers to the dynasty, or "House" of David.

There are two other possible indications (not yet conclusive) which mention David. Kenneth Kitchen (University of Liverpool) makes a strong case for a mention of David by pharaoh Sheshonq I in the tenth century B.C. It is in the temple of Amun at Karnak. This pharaoh is mentioned in I Kings 14:25 (Hebrew: *Shishak*). The exact letters are *dvt*. In the transliteration of words from one Semitic language to another, **d** and **t** are often

used interchangeably. We have a clear example of this from the sixth century B.C. in a victory inscription of an Ethiopic ruler who is celebrating his triumphs. He quotes two of David's Psalms (19 and 65), and the reference is *unmistakably* to the Biblical king David. Here too the **t** is used rather than the **d**. Granted, this is sixth century, but it shows an Ethiopic king was aware of and refers to David as a real person and two of his literary efforts.

An additional reference comes from the Moabite Stone (which is not yet completely deciphered). It is also called the Mesha Stele, which is contemporaneous with the Tel Dan inscription (ninth century B.C.) Andre Lemaire, the eminent French paleographer, believes he has detected a reference to the House of David on the Mesha Stele.

With respect to Solomon, we can pretty well document when he ruled (and) died by comparing the King Lists of the Assyrians and the Egyptians with each other as well as with various kings of Judah, of Israel, of Egypt, and Assyria mentioned in Kings, Chronicles, and the Prophets of the O.T.

Astronomy helps us here. The Assyrians recorded a solar eclipse during the reign of Assur-dan III, and modern astronomers have calculated a firm date that it occurred in 763 B.C. We have from Assyria a record of 261 continuous years, with names and dates of kings as well as the noting of any important events which occurred during each year. We thus have a "peg" for a long line of Assyrian rulers from 910 to 649 B.C.

There is no controversy about the *Divided* kingdom. At some historical time (Solomon's death—930 B.C.) the United Kingdom split, with Reheboam, Solomon's son, ruling as king of Judah in the south, and simultaneously, Jeroboam I assumed rule of northern Palestine and became the first king of Israel.

Solomon's son, Rehoboam (his reign: 931-913 B.C.) is not

mentioned by name in Egyptian or Assyrian records (like Ahab Jehu, and Jereboam, etc), but we have a very clear and accurate Egyptian chronology of the ten kings of the XXII Dynasty, beginning with Shoshenq I (Shisack in Hebrew)'s invasion of Israel (926,925 B.C.) during the time of Reheboam's reign. (Cf. I Kings 14:35,36; II Chronicles 12:1-9 where this king and this event are recorded.) Both Egyptian and Bible chronologies mirror one another!

We are talking history here. The Bible records this invasion during Rehoboam's reign. Shoshenq chronology confirms the event. And if we can point with accuracy to an event which occurred at the very time the Bible designates Reheboam and his reign, what assumptions should we come to about the history immediately preceding it? If Rehoboam is an historical figure, why do we assume arbitrarily that his father (Solomon) is a fictitious/mythical character just because we haven't yet been fortunate enough to find archaeological confirmation? Until recently we have said the same thing for a time about many of the items/people/places mentioned above. Again, lack of evidence does not equal "myth."

In the ninth century B.C., Shalmaneser III (859-824 B.C.) mentions two kings of Israel: Ahab (872-853 B.C.) in 853 B.C.and Jehu (841-818 B.C.) in 841 B.C. Using the Assyrian dates, we can count back the years from 853 B.C. 78 years and arrive at the year of Solomon's death and the beginning of the reigns of both Reheboam and and Jeroboam I (931/930 B.C.) The Biblical chronology *mirrors* these dates. Now, without written records of some kind, how could this clever author(s) of the fifth century B.C., who purportedly conjured up all of this, create such a detailed chronology with such accuracy?

I am not going to go into more detail about Solomon which ties into the hot debate over the tenth century B.C. These involve for example Megiddo, Gezer, and Hazor which the Bible attributes to Solomon with their impressive renovations during this century. We are told in the Bible that Solomon married

pharaoh’s daughter and gave Gezer to him as her dowry (1 Kings 3:1; 7:8; 9:16,24; 11:1). This Pharaoh was probably Siamun (979-960 B.C.).

In summary, all indications are that Solomon’s life took place in the middle of the tenth century B.C. (970-930). Using the Egyptian and Assyrian king lists, which agree with the Biblical royal chronologies, we can pinpoint Solomon’s death: 930/931 B.C. We find at this time that the pharaohs were marrying their daughters to various foreign rulers. There is no reason to reject the premise that mini-empires such as David’s and Solomon’s could flourish in the centuries between 1200-900 B.C. when the power of the two great empires (Egypt and Assyria) began to and did wane.

I do not think one can make a good case that some Hellenistic writer from 300 B.C. would possess the resources/information at that late date to write with such accuracy of the United Kingdom as we find from the biblical sources.

I have borrowed liberally from a host of archaeologists to respond to your question. I have not taken the time to document/footnote all this material which has come from numerous, well-known archaeologists from Europe, Israel, and the U.S.A.

If you would read a wider spectrum of scholars you will find the vast majority reject your major premise on these areas. I can document all of this if necessary.

Jimmy Williams
Probe Ministries

“Is There a Version of the Bible that Agrees with the Chester Beatty Manuscripts?”

I read your article on early Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Someday I would like to make my own translation of the Bible using these early manuscripts. God willing I hope to someday attend Dallas Theological Seminary. Since p45 p46 p47 p66 p75 [of the Chester Beatty Papyrus group] contain almost all of the New Testament, is there a version/translation of the Bible that agrees with these manuscripts?

Thank you for your e-mail. And thank you for informing me you have read my essay, “Are the Biblical Documents Reliable?”

I commend you on your desire to learn the Koine Greek of the New Testament so that you may be able to translate it in the original language. I myself attended Dallas Theological Seminary (1960-64) and received my Th.M. degree. I have never regretted that I went there.

I believe that at DTS you are given the largest “shovel” with which to dig into the Scriptures. I have continued to study Old and New Testaments in the original languages now for forty years. I never fail to see something that blesses me and gives richer clarity and meaning to my understanding of the text.

Now let me respond to your question about the Chester Beatty Papyrus group.

P 45 was originally a codex which contained all Four Gospels and the Book of Acts. Unfortunately, what we HAVE are two leaves of Matthew, seven of Luke, two of John, and thirteen of Acts.

P 46 consists of eighty-six nearly perfect leaves, out of a

total of 104, which contain Paul's epistles. Philemon and the Pastoral Epistles (I & II Timothy, Titus are missing, but Hebrews is included.

P 47 contains Revelation 9:10 to 17:2, except one or more lines is missing from the top of each page. So this is a little under half of the book of Revelation.

These three volumes are dated at the early 200s A.D. Mr. Beatty found these papyrus leaves in Egypt in 1930 and bought them from an antiquites dealer.

There are also portions of seven manuscripts of the Old Testament as well as some extra-canonical writings.

Photographic facimilies have been created for each page and are available for study. All of the verses which we have from them have been edited by Frederic Kenyon. The have also been made available in the critical text of Erwin Nestle's translation of the New Testament (title: *Novum Testamentum Graece*).

Most modern versions/translations of the New Testament in English are based upon this text, so the Chester Beatty Material is imbedded within the translation wherever extant material was available to impact or contribute to the text.

This entire work is based on a compilation mostly of the Chester Beatty material, but also includes the other ancient Greek documents of the New Testament.

I would recommend that you buy Nestle's Greek Text of the New Testament, start learning Greek, and you will be reaching your stated objective, since the Chester Beatty material is there. You could check with the American Bible Society (the actual publisher is Wurtt.Bibelanstalt Stuttgart, Germany). Or, contact the nearest theological seminary to your home, and go to their bookstore. They will have it or they can order it. I do not think you will find it in a Christian bookstore

(although they may be able to find and order it for you.)

I believe this is a good first step. Looking at the Cheaster Beatty facsimilies would be a daunting and discouraging venture unless you were well versed in the Greek of the Bible.

I hope this answers your question.

Sincerely in Christ,

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries

"Do Babies Go to Hell?"

Do you believe that babies go to hell or not? Please support your answer with Scripture.

This is an issue that challenges or questions the justice of God. It is a legitimate question, and I must say at the outset we cannot give a total answer. But there are passages in the Bible which shed a great deal of light on the subject. I will try to address the ones that have come to my mind which I think bear directly or indirectly on your question of the innocence/accountability of children.

Generally speaking, we are asking the question, "What do children know and when do they know it? And the key issue here is one of comprehension of, or the understanding of the Gospel message. This is not only true for children, it is true for adults. When Philip saw the Ethiopian eunuch sitting in his chariot reading Isaiah 53, he was instructed by the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:29) to "Go up and join this chariot." Philip asked him if he **understood** what he was reading. The eunuch replied, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides Me?" (v.

31). Acts 8:32-40 goes on to relate that Philip explained how this Eunuch could become a Christian. He responded and was baptized.

My point in beginning with this incident is because there can be no salvation without an understanding of the gospel message. We find Paul throughout the book of Acts reasoning, debating, contending with people so they might understand the message of salvation. And so children must be old enough to **understand** the gospel, which involves a comprehension of their own personal sin and guilt.

This brings the next question: *At what age would that be?* I am sorry that I cannot give an affirmative answer since the Scripture never pinpoints clearly the exact age when this occurs. The Talmud from ancient times designated age thirteen for boys ("Bar Mitzvah,"—cf. *Judaism*, Arthur Hertzberg, p. 100) and twelve for girls ("Bat Mizvah"). This was the time when Jewish boys and girls became responsible for themselves and were to observe all the rituals, feasts, etc., incumbent upon them as members of the Jewish community. It was also the time when the boys were allowed (called) to read the Torah as full members of the worshipping community.

The confirmation services for the young which are practiced in all Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and some Protestant churches are based on the earlier Jewish traditions above. All of them, including the Jewish community, have traditionally set the "age of accountability at about age twelve.

It is also interesting that Luke records the incident at the temple where a twelve-year-old Jesus lagged behind his family and was found (three days later!) in the temple "sitting amidst the teachers both listening to them and asking them questions. . .And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers." (Luke 2:46,47).

We can glean from other Old Testament passages additional

insights:

1. I Samuel 1:22-18; 3:1-19: Hannah, married to Elkanah, was barren. She made a vow to the Lord that if He would give her a son, she would dedicate him to the Lord for lifelong service. God graciously did so, and Samuel was born. Hannah cared for him and told her husband she would not go up to the Tabernacle (at Shiloh) for the annual sacrifice (Day of Atonement) until she had weaned Samuel, saying, *"I will not go up until the child is weaned; then I will bring him, that he may appear before the Lord and stay there forever."* (1:22).

The weaning of Hebrew (and other ancient) children did not occur until two or three years, and nursing may have extended beyond to perhaps age five. Therefore Samuel was a very young boy when he was dedicated to the service of the temple. Hannah says on this occasion, "For this boy I prayed, and the Lord has given me my petition which I asked of Him. . .So I have also dedicated him to the Lord; as long as he lives he is dedicated to the Lord. And she worshipped the Lord there."(1:27,28). We are also told in 2:11 that "the boy ministered to the Lord before Eli the priest." Verses 2:18-21 indicate that the boy was visited each year by his mother, at which time she would bring him a new, little robe. Several years are indicated in this passage, including the fact that Hannah had given birth to three more sons and two daughters. We can conclude, since Samuel was at least three or four years old when initially brought to the temple, he would at least be nine or ten, and could have been even older (a teenager) when he had his visitation and call from the Lord in I Samuel 3:1-21. The critical verse in this chapter is as follows: "Now Samuel **did not yet know the Lord**, nor had the word of the Lord yet been revealed to him." (v. 7).

So here again, Samuel could well have been around age twelve when this event occurred, an incident pointing out a demarcation in his life—of "not knowing" and then "knowing" the Lord.

2. Another passage which marks out this demarcation is found in Nehemiah 8:1-3. After Nehemiah and the Jews had rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem they gathered together in worship to hear Ezra the Scribe read the Torah: “And the people gathered as one man, . . .and they asked Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses which the Lord had given to Israel. Then Ezra the priest brought the law before the assembly of **men, women, and all who could listen with *understanding*.** And he read from it before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of **men and women, those who could *understand*;** and all the people were **attentive** to the book of the law. . .And they read from the book, from the law of God, translating to give the **sense** so that they **understood** the reading (v.8). By implication, the younger children—those without understanding—were **not** present.

3. Another interesting “accountability” issue is found in the Torah which involves the numbering of the fighting men of Israel in the book of Numbers. We are told in Numbers 1 that Moses was instructed to “take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, and their families. . .according to the number of names, every male, head by head **from twenty years and upward,** whoever is able to go out to war in Israel.” (1:2,3). This passage informs us that there were *no teenagers* in Israel’s army. This census was taken at the end of the entire year the Israelites spent at Mt. Sinai where they received the Law, and during which time they built the Tabernacle and organized themselves into a well-defined community. They were now to embark upon the conquest of Canaan. However, they were called upon to postpone that conquest because of their unbelief and disobedience at Kadesh Barnea. God sent them into the wilderness for forty years after their “Reconnaissance” of Canaan by the twelve spies ended in failure.

After this forty-year exile we read in Deuteronomy 2:14-16, “Now the time that it took for us to come from Kadesh-barnea

to (here has been) thirty-eight years; until all the generation of the men of war perished from within the camp, as the Lord had sworn to them. Moreover the hand of the Lord was against them, to destroy them from within the camp, until they all perished."

What is significant here is that those men who perished were those selected for the army forty years earlier whose ages ranged from twenty to age sixty. The Bible says that by thirty-eight years later, all of these men, the men of "unbelief," had now died off, leaving only the new generation which *would* be allowed to enter Canaan. This new "fighting force" would include that original group of males (from age 1 to 19 (which would now be ages 40 to 59) as well as all the males which had been born during the roughly forty years of Wilderness wanderings. So here again, there is an "age of accountability" factor taken into account by the Lord and His servant, Moses. There was no judgment upon this younger group of males. They were allowed to enter Canaan and participate in the conquest of the Land.

There is another passage that touches on this later "age of accountability" from the life of Jehoiachin, II Kings 24:8: "Jehoiachin was **eighteen** years old when he became king. . .and he did **evil** in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father had done." So here we find an eighteen- year-old king who is viewed by the Lord as being accountable for the evil he had already done.

I put this section in, but I don't personally believe that exempting the "under-twenty-year-olds" at the time of the Exodus is a likely precedent for an age of accountability. Furthermore, we find in the legal regulations of the Torah that a disobedient and unmanageable teenager was responsible for his actions, and could be stoned to death by the community! This could occur for cursing his parents, violence, drunkenness, adultery, and so forth. So, in my thinking, the ten to twelve year age would seem more likely for an age of

understanding or accountability.

4. Another passage which bears upon our question comes from the life of David, and specifically the outcome of his sin with Bathsheba and the premeditated murder of her husband, Uriah the Hittite (II Samuel 11 & 12). You will recall that David lusted after Bathsheba's great beauty and committed adultery with her, after which she became pregnant (11:1-5). David gave instructions to have Uriah placed "in the fiercest battle and withdraw from him so that he may be struck down and die." (11:15). After Uriah's death, David brought Bathsheba to his house as his wife, and she bore him a son. (11:27) Nathan the prophet confronts David with his sin and says, "because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die.: Then the Lord struck the child that Uriah's widow bore to David, so that he was very sick." (12:14,15).

The child lingered for seven days and then died. During this time, David prayed and fasted and laid on the ground. When the child died the servants were afraid to tell David, but he saw them whispering and they finally told him, "He is dead." (12:19).

When David heard this, he got up, washed himself, changed his clothes, asked for food and ate. His servants were perplexed by this: while the child lived, David mourned. When the child died, David got up and ate food. They wondered why. David said, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, Who knows, the Lord may be gracious to me, that the child may live. But now he has died; why should I fast.? Can I bring him back again? ***I shall go to him*****, but he will not return to me."**(12:22,23)

David has a view of death and immortality which expresses itself in this incident involving the death of a child. David believes in the after life. In Psalm 23 he concludes by saying: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the

days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." So for David there was a place for the dead, including children—the house, or the dwelling place, of the Lord. David also speaks of this in Psalm 16:9,10 where he says, "For thou wilt not abandon (leave) my soul in Sheol (the grave); Neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to see (experience) decay (corruption)." David believes in the resurrection of the body—for himself, and for the Messiah (the Holy One) (see also Acts 13:35). Job says something very similar: "And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is flayed (corrupted) Yet without my flesh I shall see God; Whom I myself shall behold, and whom my eyes shall see and not another."

The point of David's perspective is that he believes that the child is still alive and in God's presence, David anticipates that when *he* dies, he will join his little son in the house of the Lord: "I shall go to him."

5. Finally, we have the teachings of Jesus Himself. In Matthew 19:13-15, our Lord says as the children we being hindered from coming near to Him, *"Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these, and after laying His hands on them, He departed. . ."*

Christ has a special love for little children. Why He associates children with the Kingdom of Heaven is because it is the place of the innocent, the blameless. It would appear that Jesus sees children in this light. The whole trend of Scripture seems to teach that the innocents who are too young to sin and too young to accept Christ intelligently (*with understanding!)*, are safe in the arms of a just and holy God.

We need never fear about God being unjust. He cannot be. His mercy and justice are from everlasting to everlasting. I therefore conclude, that there will be no children in hell.

There will also be no retarded, or otherwise mentally-incapacitated individuals there, those who cannot fully comprehend and understand what Christ has accomplished on their behalf at Calvary.

In summary, I think we can conclude the following:

First, that there is some period of grace afforded the young before they have developed an understanding to fully comprehend the gospel message and its implications for their lives.

Second, there seems to be good scriptural support that all infants, like David's little son, go immediately, in their innocence, into the arms of the Lord.

Third, that the likely range of such an age of "accountability " may occur around the time of puberty.

Fourth, that we are not saying children younger than this "accountability age" commit no sin (as sinful tendencies and acts occur quite early in children), and because of their fallen nature, they do these things spontaneously, things which they have definitely NOT learned from their parents or their friends). What we are saying is that up to the point when they reach clear understanding, they do not come under the judgment of the Law.

I'm sure that much more could be gleaned from the scriptures on this, but these passages came to my mind. At least it's a start at answering your question, D____. I hope this helps.

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries

Yes Sir, that does help. Thanks very much. What you wrote is what I've long believed, without really knowing how to defend it biblically.

Now for a follow-up question which seems to spring quite

logically from what you wrote: If God exempts from holding accountable for their sins those who are not old enough to have "understanding," and those of any age who are incapable of having "understanding" (such as the mentally retarded), is it also possible, Scripturally speaking, that He exempts in some measure those who have never heard of Jesus at all—judging them perhaps by whatever standard He utilized for those before Christ (lived), both Jews and non-Jews, some of whom certainly gained eternal life, rather than automatically condemning them for not accepting the Savior of whom they never heard?

I would suggest you check the Probe web site and look for three articles which address this question: "What About the Person Who Never Heard of Jesus," "Is Jesus the Only Savior?" and "Is There a Second Chance to Believe After Death?"

I would say in addition, to your remarks about Old Testament believers, that there were two kinds of people before Christ just as there are two kinds of people now: **believers** and **unbelievers**.

It is helpful for me to think of this in terms of a painting. As early as Genesis 3:15, immediately after the "Disobedience/Fall" God began to reveal His plan of redemption. He speaks there of the "Seed" of a Woman" who would one day **crush** the head of Satan and destroy his power and influence on the earth.

As we move through the Old Testament, God continues, with broad strokes at first, to sketch out the details of Who this Person would be. By the time we get to Malachi, a fairly accurate portrait of Messiah and His Mission has been provided. The New Testament is the fulfillment of that unfolding from the Old.

Jesus said, "Your Father Abraham **saw my day** (time, era) and rejoiced in it" (John 8:16). Now, what did He see (comprehend,

understand)? Not the **whole** picture revealed in the New Testament, but enough information for him to have a basis (God's promise of a Messiah) for his trust, his belief, at that time.

Noah is another example. There is nothing directly mentioned about the Messiah in the Noah narrative (except the fact that the Ark itself is a **type** of Christ—those inside the Ark were saved; those outside the Ark perished), the important principle is that God revealed some things to Noah and asked him to be obedient to them.

We cannot understand this Old Testament Salvation issue unless we see clearly what God was doing. What was He doing from Genesis 3:15 to the end of the Old Testament? He was progressively revealing more and more details about His promised Messiah. Hebrews 1:1-2 says, "God spoke long ago to the fathers by the prophets and in may portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world."

It seems apparent that the Old Testament saints had *some* "light" and they were responsible to respond to it. The CROSS has always been the *basis* for our salvation. Those who came before it looked *forward* in time to when it *would* be fulfilled. Those of us who have lived *after* Jesus's Day look back to that time when it *was* accomplished. This is the *basis* for our salvation. The *means* of our salvation is always *faith*, encompassing all who lived before and all who lived after the Cross who "believed God" and whatever revelatory information they had at that time. And the *results* of our faith are always expressed in being obedient to those things which God has revealed. I hope this information and the other articles I have recommended you to read will answer your above question.

Do Babies Go to Hell? #2

This is one of those items that, as you know, God has not revealed. Consider this: If we think they don't, that is, that God takes them all to Heaven, then abortion and the killing of those before the so-called age of accountability would be a great way to have more babies go to Heaven. Consider, what percent of those that reach the so-called age of accountability get saved/born again. By aborting and killing the young children we could increase that to 100 percent. This would of course make abortion and murder good.

Thank you for this response to my remarks about the above topic.

First of all, I respectfully disagree with your first statement. It seems to me that, while we do not have a total answer to this question from the Scriptures, I enumerated several lines of thought pertaining to the question, one of which was a clear, biblical example recorded of a child who had died and went to heaven. So I don't think you could say "God has not revealed anything about this issue to us. We do have *some* information and insight from the Scriptures.

So I will restate my conviction that I do believe there are *not*—nor will there ever be—any children in hell.

Secondly, I don't follow your logic in your next statement. Given my view, any infant death—whether from abortion, accident, disease, assault or other causes—does not matter: *All* babies go to heaven. And so aborting children would *not* be a great way to have more babies go to Heaven, as you suggest, since all of them go to Heaven.

Thirdly, you have tacked on to this another issue which must be kept separate from the above. You say, I think, that we would be doing *some* persons (those who are not going to become Christians after they have reached the age of accountability

when they are held responsible to God for their choices and behavior) a big "favor" by aborting them. I hope I am reading you right.

There are several things very wrong about what you propose: (a) I would assume that you believe, as I do, that the "termination of a pregnancy" (i.e., a euphemism for killing and destroying an unborn infant) is murder. This is a violation of the Sixth Commandment (Ex. 20:13). This commandment alone is in opposition to what you suggest. (b) Further, in order to carry out such a task, you would literally have to be God Himself, since you don't know which ones are the "fledgling" non-believers upon whom you are to perform your acts of "mercy." (c) But why stop there? Why not go ahead and do the same with the mentally-impaired? The comatose? The *"non compos mentis"* elderly? Would they not also qualify? Something is wrong with this picture.

Fourthly, you say that carrying out such an enterprise would "make abortion and murder good." This is actually very far from what I view as a Scriptural perspective. Paul asks, "Shall we sin (continue in sin) so that (we can see) grace abound? (Romans 6:1)" In other words, should we take advantage of God's forgiveness of sins through Christ and go on sinning so we can see His marvelous Grace go to work to cover it? Paul says, "God forbid." He elaborates on this later on: "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cleave to what is good (12:9)." Earlier Paul defends his actions against those who were criticizing him and his colleagues, "slanderously reporting that we say, '*let us* ***do evil*** *that* ***good*** *may come.' Their condemnation is just* (Romans 3:8)." In Psalm 109:3-5 David's words could easily be applied to the unborn: "They have spoken against me. . they have also surrounded me with words of hatred, And fought against me *without cause*. In return for my love (innocence) they act as my accusers;…Thus they have repaid me *evil for good*. …and *hatred* for my *love.*" In II Corinthians 13:7,8 Paul says, "Now we pray to God *that*

you do no wrong…but that you may *do what is right* . …For we can do *nothing* against the *truth*, but only *for* the truth." In Proverbs 17:13 it says, "He who returns evil for good, Evil will not depart from his house." And "He who *justifies* the wicked, and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an *abomination* to the Lord (vs. 15,16)." And Moses says, "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you *life* and *death*, the blessing and the curse. So *choose life* in order that you may live, you and your seed, by loving the Lord your God, by *obeying* His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days (Deut. 30:19,20)." And finally, James says, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am being tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does *not tempt anyone* [to do evil] (James 1:13)."

The principle is pretty clear: **"It is never *right* to do *wrong* in order to do *right*." "It is never *good* to do *evil* in order to do *good*."**

I hope this answers your question, _____ .

God's blessings,

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries

Do Babies Go To Hell #3

First, I want to say that our family has been blessed by the ministry of Probe. I've caught up on my mail, and just read the answer to the questions "Do Babies Go to Hell?" There is a passage in Romans that always comes to mind in this regard. It is Romans 7:9.

> I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died;

This is “the” verse that really spoke to me about the existence of an “age of accountability,” whatever that age may be. Being a Jew, and a Pharisee at that, I’m sure Paul had a knowledge of the law on some level at an early age. But it wasn’t until it “came” to him (he understood it?) that he was accountable, i.e. he “died” (came under condemnation which he knew was worthy of death).

Just though I’d pass this on. I might not have bothered to respond, not wanting to take time to look up the verse, but I just read Romans 7 this morning so it was “quite” fresh in my mind. And I can never read this without thinking of this point.

May the Lord continue to bless your ministry.

PraiSing Him,

Dear _____,

Thank you for your e-mail and comments on Romans 7:9. It really relates to this subject. I am glad you are benefiting from the Probe web site. Thank you for expressing your appreciation, which is a real encouragement to all the Probe Staff.

Jimmy Williams
Probe Ministries

Do Babies Go To Hell #4

I frequent your web site and have enjoyed it thoroughly. It has helped to shape me and has been a source of God’s truth for me. For that I am grateful!! I don’t think that once I have ever felt that you have been different than what God’s

truth says. Below I raise some questions about the recent article about babies' salvation. Please comment to help me understand how you feel. Thanks.

First of all, the Bible says that ". . .all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to our own way. . ." ". . . there is none that doeth good, no not one." These folks that believe that children won't be held accountable for their sins, I believe, don't understand the fallen nature of man and the righteous character of an all-Holy God.

Even David had a handle on this doctrine when he wrote in Psalm 51: "Behold, I was shaped in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me."

It's important to note that the "all" and "everyone" listed above means all people, even babies, born and yet unborn. We are by nature sinful, which means we are spiritually dead and enemies of God. Spiritually-dead people (of any age) cannot make themselves spiritually alive any more than physically-dead people can make themselves physically alive.

Spiritually-dead babies are enemies of God and separated from Him and completely unable to change that situation. The nature of God is that He is totally just and righteous. The Bible says, ". . . I am of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "I will by no means clear the guilty." He had sworn a "thousand" times in Scripture to punish sin wherever He finds it. His justice demands that He do it. He cannot make any exceptions.

So. . .this is why Jesus came to earth to die on the cross. If babies were not going to be held accountable for their sins (and would automatically go to heaven when they die) as this fellow teaches, then Jesus wasn't needed for them. This path would lead us to believe that Jesus came to die only for those who have reached that mystical "age of accountability" and

understand their sinful condition and can make a decision regarding the gospel. It is true that as we mature and do become aware of our thoughts and behavior and choices that we will be held accountable for them. Those who assert that the age of accountability is when children become responsible before God, yet none of them seem to know when that age is. Wouldn't it seem important to know that?

One more thing. By stating that we must reach this (unknown) age before we can understand and believe and thus be responsible for our salvation puts some of the credit for our being saved upon US, doesn't it?

The business of enlightening souls and saving same belongs to the Holy spirit. Martin Luther stated, "I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in God or come to Him. . ." We are saved by God alone. "By grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast."

We are accountable for our sins from conception and can only be saved when the Holy Spirit gives us this faith and changes us from spiritually dead to spiritually alive. This is why we embrace Baptism. In I Peter 3:21, Peter states: "Therefore we conclude, that Baptism doth also save us, not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

In Baptism, we are responding to a command of Christ's and the Holy Spirit promises to save us through the water and the Word by this act. What do you think of this?

Thank you for your recent e-mail. I appreciate the fact that you have found benefit from the Probe Website. I am the fellow you refer to who is responsible for writing the e-mail, "Do Babies Go to Hell?"

In your first two paragraphs you mention the fact that from conception babies bear the stamp of sin. I have no problem

with this as long as we understand what that means. And what it means is that babies are members of a fallen race (See my discussion on this in E-Mail #1). Sin is passed on genetically from the male. This was why the Virgin Birth was necessary and specifically why Jesus was "without sin." He is therefore the only exception to the general rule.

And I also agree with you that apart from the working of God, all humans are spiritually dead until they hear the Gospel, respond to it and are born again into the family of God.

You say that "spiritually-dead babies (born and unborn) are enemies of God, separated from Him, and are completely unable to change that situation." And I agree with you on the basis of what I have just said above. But I want to ask you a question. Do you then believe that every embryo, every unborn fetus, and all toddlers, let's say, from the beginning of time until now, are actually in hell? What if we add four and five-year olds? Them too? I don't think so. But this is what you are asserting to be true.

I point you back to a review of my original discussion in E-Mail #1 about an alternative to your conclusion and one which has some (not exhaustive) support in the Scriptures. Specifically, I would ask you to focus on David's experience with his newborn son (from Bathsheba) who became sick and died seven days after his birth (II Samuel 11 and 12). After the child has died, David says, "I shall go to him, but he will not return to me (12:22,23)." Now here is a baby that had, as we all do, a sin nature, but *didn't* go to Hell. In Psalm 23 we have a clear indication of where David felt he would be after death: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." And he anticipated that he would again see his little son.

In your next paragraph you make the assumption that those who have not reached the age of accountability have no need of a Savior. I don't follow your logic. On the basis of your own premise that all in Adam are tainted with sin and are in need

of a redeemer, I don't understand why you would say His death would not apply to these young ones as well. You do admit that **"it is true that as we mature and do become aware of our thoughts and behavior and choices that we will be held accountable for them."** That is exactly the point. The primary reason that Christian parents hesitate to explain the Gospel to very young children is because those parents want them to be old enough to fully UNDERSTAND what Jesus did for them.

This leads me on to answer your question about "pinning down" what/when that age might be. I don't think we can arbitrarily pick an exact age for everyone. There are too many variables. But we do know this: there are FOUR components necessary for one to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. We find them in Paul's interchange with Lydia in Acts 16:14: "And a certain woman named Lydia. . .was (1) **listening**, and the (2) **Lord opened her heart to respond** to the (3) **things spoken** by (4) **Paul**."

In Acts 9:27-39 we have the account of Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian Eunuch, who was reading Isaiah 53 out loud as he sat in his chariot. Philip ran up and asked him, "Do you **understand** what you are reading? The eunuch answered, "How could I, unless **someone guides** me?" You know the rest of the story. My point here is that even **adults** don't become Christians until they, with the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, come to **understand** the gospel and see it with the eyes of faith. Would it be any **less** important for children to have the same understanding?

We also find in the Scriptures times when God **overlooked** sin under certain circumstances as the redemptive work unfolded through time: "the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness , because of the **passing over** of the **sins** previously committed in the **forbearance** of God (Romans 3:24-25." (See also Acts 17:30; Romans 5:13,14). You will also find other, similar elements in

the first e-mail.

In your next paragraph you indicate you feel special credit is due those who come to a place of accountability to God, and that their use of reason or comprehension somehow negates the work of the Spirit. I point you back to Lydia. NO ONE COMES TO CHRIST WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPEL. This involves *reason*. And part of that reasoning is to comprehend Romans 6:23—it is, as you mention, by *grace* and not of works, "lest *anyone* might boast."

You conclude with some comments about baptism, and quote I Peter 3:21. I am not sure why you included this in the discussion, but let me comment: First of all, I am wondering if you are including believer baptism as *part* of the Gospel: that is, you believe one does not become a Christian when he *believes* the Gospel, but rather that you only accomplish when you are baptized. I am assuming that you are not here referring to infant baptism, which, incidentally, is used by some segments of Christendom to do something to *cover* these young ones until they come of an age when they *can* understand the Gospel. I do not personally believe that baptizing an infant with water, without an understanding of the Gospel, accomplishes *anything*. It isn't even mentioned in Scripture.

Further, Paul tells us clearly in Romans 1:16 that he is "not ashamed of the **gospel**, for **it** is the **power** of God **unto salvation for every one who *believes*.**" And so it is clear that the ***Gospel*** is the power of God unto Salvation, and *nothing else*. But we find in 1 Corinthians 1:17 that Paul **clearly** distinguishes between the Gospel and Baptism: "For Christ did not send me to **baptize**, but to preach the **gospel**." Evidently, Paul does not include baptism as part of the gospel, but rather saw it as the appropriate response of obedience following one's conversion. Even the verse you quote from Peter must be carefully read: Peter qualifies his statement about baptism by making sure he is not misunderstood. He appears to me to be saying that water will not wash away sin,

but rather, in **obedience** to the command of Christ, the believer, in good conscience toward God, gives his answer, or his response, to the truth of the Gospel by submitting to baptism. Baptism is a public testimony of one's inner commitment to the Person and Work of Christ: "The word is near you, in your **mouth**, and in your **heart.—**That is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you **confess** with your **mouth** Jesus as Lord, and **believe** in your **heart** that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be **saved**; for with the **heart** man **believes**, resulting in righteousness, and with the **mouth** he **confesses**, resulting in **salvation.**

You asked me to comment on these issues and I have tried to do this as honestly as I can from my understanding of God's Word. You may not be comfortable with all of my responses, but I have given you my "best shot."

May the Lord bless you and your family,

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries

© 2001 Probe Ministries

"Is There a Second Chance to Believe After Death?"

Hi there Jim. We've spoken before and I found it quite helpful. Can I ask you a question on divine judgment? What about those who would come before God and who really weren't HONESTLY sure about it all and didn't become a Christian in life? When they stood in front of Him and God knew how they felt through life…would that be fair to send them to hell?

Obviously they would have a sudden change of heart, right? Thanks, Jim.

If I understand you correctly, you are wondering if a person who is skeptical of the claims of Christ throughout life, didn't CLEARLY understand the gospel but you imply if they had, they would have placed their faith in Christ. And then you wonder if once dead and seeing that His claims were genuine, God would be unfair in sending that person to hell. If I am not clear on your meaning here, please let me know.

First of all, the Bible says that "it is appointed unto man ONCE to die and afterwards comes judgment (Hebrews 9:27)." This seems to rule out any idea of a second chance, and the concept of reincarnation as well.

Furthermore, we are told in John 16:8-11 that the Holy Spirit is constantly convicting the world (including your hypothetical person) of "sin, righteousness, and judgment." What this means is that *no one* is left without an opportunity to respond to this prompting of the Spirit, repent, and place their faith in Christ.

And Romans 1:18-20 Paul tells us that God's **wrath** has been revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness (as we see above in the John passage), and "because that which is **known** about God is **evident within** them. . .For since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been **clearly seen**, being understood through what has been made, so they are **without excuse**."

Luke 17 also gives us some things which bear on your question. Read the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (17:19-31). The crux of the story is that both of these men died. The rich man found himself in hell, and was able to see Lazarus (the poor beggar) in heaven (Abraham's Bosom). The rich man is in torment, and now, "knowing" the truth of things, asks if he could be sent back to earth to talk to his five brothers and

warn them so they don’t join him in hell. (This is analogous to the man in your hypothetical). Look carefully at the Lord’s answer. He tells the man it wouldn’t do any good. The Lord says they *have* a witness: Moses and the Prophets. The rich man says, yes, but they would *listen* if someone came back from the dead and *told* them!

Jesus responds by saying if they didn’t believe/respond to the light they already had (through Moses and the Prophets), they wouldn’t be persuaded even if someone came back from the dead to tell them! In short, the necessary information and guidance to enter the family of God is available to all during their lifetime. And faith must have an object worthy of its trust. Hebrews 11:6 tells us that “Without **faith** it is **impossible** to please God, for he who comes to God must **believe** that He is, and is a rewarder of those who **diligently seek** Him.”

Now what would be fair about giving those who “sat” on the fence, ignored the evidence, and failed to **exercise faith** in Christ, and then, when dead, like the rich man, now **knowing** the truth, (no need to exercise faith) asking for another chance?

There are **no unbelievers** in heaven *or* hell. They are now **all** believers. They know the truth. Unfortunately, those who chose not to respond to all of the “signposts” God has given the world (which could be believed if any person desired), they must face the consequences of their “non-actions.” It would not be fair of God to include the man you are suggesting along with those who pleased God by exercising their faith in Christ while faith was still the issue!

I hope this answers your question, _____.

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries

Are the Ideas of the Jesus Seminar Now Catholic Doctrine?

I am a philosophy major at Oregon State University where Marcus Borg is a professor. Many of the churches in our community ascribe to his teaching.

Here is my question…I have a dear friend that grew up in an evangelical Catholic home and knows Christ as her personal savior. She has been attending the local Catholic church here in Corvallis and recently has been strongly confronted by one of the deacons on issues surrounding the literalism of the Bible (i.e. the ideas of the Jesus Seminar, taught by Borg). The deacon has been telling her that Biblical non-literalism as Borg teaches is part of Catholic doctrine and part of the Catechism. Is this accurate? Is this indeed an international Catholic teaching or does it depend on the individual parish or person?

I would appreciate any wisdom you might have on this topic. Honestly, it's been really heated here lately, as Borg's new book has just been released. We would love it if either of you (or other speakers from Probe) could come out and do a presentation for all of the confused Christians. There is a strong evangelical movement in Corvallis, but unfortunately, it tends to be strongly anti-intellectual and isn't well respected in the university community. As a student, I want to be able to better understand the critical issues at hand and be able to represent Christ in grace, truth, and love.

Send me whatever thoughts you have…I read article on the Jesus Seminar through Leadership University and that helped, but I really would love even more detailed information if you have any.

Thank you so much for serving as a resource for students of the Word!

Thank you for your recent e-mail concerning the Jesus Seminar. I can empathize with your "dilemma" under the shadow of Marcus Borg at your university.

I don't know if you have checked the Probe Website (www.probe.org) or not, but I would direct you to at least two essays: one that I wrote is called The Jesus Seminar, and a second was written by my colleague, Rick Wade, entitled The Historical Christ. You will find good bibliographical info for further study.

I would rather doubt that the tenets of the Jesus Seminar are now officially sanctioned by the Roman Catholic Church worldwide. I would recommend that your friend ask for official, written documentation from this priest for his assertion that this is true. I am 99% positive that no such position has been taken by the Catholic church and its biblical scholars. There is too much at stake for the church to take such a radical stand which undermines much of what they have held to be true about Jesus Christ.

If you are looking for someone to come and debate Borg, I would suggest that you contact my good friend Dr. J. P. Moreland and/or Michael J. Wilkins at Talbot Seminary in southern California. They edited a book entitled *Jesus Under Fire* which was published by Zondervan in 1995. Each chapter is written by a evangelical scholar, each of which develops and refutes the major arguments of the Jesus Seminar position.

I have been studying this topic for several years, and following the literature, but these men, as New Testament Scholars, are current on this issue and have devoted the kind of study and depth necessary to give good account of themselves with a fine scholar like Borg.

I can appreciate your frustration with the general Christian community. Most are not “armed” for the battle of ideas which we face. That is why I left Campus Crusade in 1973 and began Probe Ministries. At the time I gave oversight to the Campuses in the Southwest U.S. The worldview America has come to embrace generally now once existed only on a few campuses: UC Berkeley, San Francisco State, U. of Wisconsin (Madison), Columbia U., and U. of Colorado.

I found myself hard pressed to respond to the questions of these students. So I decided the Lord was calling upon me not to “curse the darkness”, but rather “light some lamps!” The early Christians, it is said, were effective because they OUT-THOUGHT and OUT-LOVED the ancient world! In fact, for 250 years after the apostles died off, the church did nothing but try to survive and answer/refute/respond to all the doctrinal challenges which came from the Jewish and Pagan communities without, and from sects and heresies within. They were so busy doing this, that it was not until 325 A.D. (Council of Nicea) that the addressed/clarified the doctrine of the Trinity! The FIRST theology of the early church was APOLOGETICAL theology, and we find ourselves facing the same kind of circumstances and challenges today.

So you hang in there! And tell your friend to do the same. Challenge the priest and don’t be bullied by him. If it IS an official position, tell her that I requested that it be documented so I will be able to confirm to others who ask that this is truly official. If I were a betting man (and I am ::::SMILE!::::), your friend will find that no such affirmation of this policy will be forthcoming.

With Warm Regards in Christ,

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries

“What Do We Do When Critics Point to the Atrocities of the Crusades?”

This is a great website. I have benefited from the strong biblical perspectives you provide here and on AFR Radio station KAMA in Sioux City, Iowa.

What I am looking for is accurate info regarding the Crusades. Everywhere I turn, some “bible basher” is criticizing Christianity for all the people it has murdered in the name of religion. . .the Crusades is ONE of those examples that is thrown in our faces. We want to know how to intelligently respond with FACTS.

What do you have that could help?

Dear _____:

Thank you for your recent e-mail regarding the Crusades. Let me see if I can give you some help on this.

To begin with, a Christian response to charges like this one must be honest with the facts of history. The truth of the matter is that the historical, institutional Church and true,

Biblical Christianity have not always been synonymous. There is no way that we should try to defend or excuse those times and incidents where the Church has erred from her calling and failed to emulate and model the teachings of its Founder. In short, the Christian Church, in all of its forms—Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant—has a "checkered" past. Where the church has failed, we must agree with our critics. The Pope's recent apology in Jerusalem for the Church's failure to take the lead in preventing the Holocaust is a current example.

But we should also know our history, and the Crusades is a good case in point. Most critics of our faith make sweeping generalizations about the Church's failure in a certain issue or event (like the Crusades) and assign to her *all* the blame. Another tactic is to just ignore other factors which might interfere with the case they are trying to make against Christianity.

This is not a new problem. Tertullian, one of the early church fathers (c.200 A.D.) complained that whether the Tiber flooded, or there was an earthquake, or a famine, etc., Rome's answer was, "The Christians to the Lions!"

It is important for us in historical analysis to make a clear distinction between the ideals, teachings, and practices of Our Lord and the lives, and often questionable behavior, of all professing Christians—be they ecclesiastical bodies, "Christian" nations, or individuals. In short:

> Renaissance popes are **not** Christianity; St. Francis of Assisi **is.**
> Pizarro and Cortez are **not** Christianity; Bartolome de Las Casas **is.**
> Captain Ball, a Yankee Slaver, is **not** Christianity; William Wilberforce **is**.

And when we come to the Crusaders, we find we are faced with a

“mixed multitude.” First, we have the Pope, who, along with his colleagues, thought it shameful the Holy Land was possessed by the infidel. Secondly, we have genuine parishioners, from peasants to nobles, who sincerely desired to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. These tens of thousands went with a true spiritual purpose (many died on the way) and are not guilty of the charge above. And third, we have a large contingent of men who were motivated by two primary things: economic gain, and the automatic promise from the Church that they could “skip” Purgatory” and be assured of heaven if they “took up the Cross” and died fighting in their mission to reclaim the Holy Land for Christianity. This Christian “*Jihad*” could be said to have promised “All this, and heaven too!”

If you want a good book about this, I would recommend a readable volume simply entitled *The Crusades* by Zoe Oldenbourg. You should be able to get it in any library. It was published in 1966 by Pantheon Books. Oldenbourg is a Russian Jewess who lived much of her life in Paris.

This book almost reads like a novel and is fascinating.. Before she begins her account she gives a marvelous description of what western Europe was like at the time of the Crusades. Conditions were, at the time, just the opposite from what they are today. Now, the wealth and industry is in the West, while the Middle East is blighted and “third-worldish” (excepting huge wealth in the East held by the few who control vast oil holdings), then, it was the West that was blighted and primitive, while the Middle East possessed vast wealth and contained great, opulent cities.

Many of the Crusading Knights who joined the Crusades were second and third sons, who were not entitled to an inheritance because of the practice of *primogeniture*—the exclusive right of the first born to a Father’s Estate. From the “get-go” these men demonstrated their prime motive for joining the Crusade: economic gain.

From beginning to end, the Crusades are truly a trail of tears. . .from the (1) pogroms in various cities where thousands of Jews died at the hands of the Crusaders as they journeyed East toward the Holy Land, to the (2) "peeling off" of many knights as the great cities of the Levant were reached [Edessa, Tarsus, Aleppo, Damascus, Antioch, Acre. Some of them never even got to Jerusalem! Greedily, they captured a city by force, put themselves in charge, and lived in new-found luxury], to (3) the capture of Jerusalem and the complete massacre of all its inhabitants—both Jews and Muslims, to the (4) other sorry Crusades that followed, the last of which, when the Crusaders found themselves at the gates of Constantinople, decided to just attack and sack *it* instead!

Other "black marks" which critics pounce on include: (1) virulent anti-Semitism, practiced by Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and even Protestant (including Martin Luther himself), (2) the Inquisition, (3) the torture and burning of heretics and witches, (4) the practice of slavery, (5) the treatment and destruction of native populations [the Irish, the Indians of the Americas, the African Tribes, the island populations in both Oceans], (6) treatment of women, and (7) all "Religious" wars.

Here again we cannot defend the actions of "Christian" people. We must quickly agree with our critics. At the same time, we must press home the idea *that the Church is* ***not*** *our model. . .* ***Jesus*** *is.* Where His teachings and His personal example have been followed many positive things have helped to change society in such ways that much of the world is still benefiting from His impact. Even the critics have to recognize this.

I will close with these quotes written by three eminent historians, R.R. Palmer, Roland H. Bainton, and W.E.H Lecky:

> "It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of the coming of Christianity. It brought with it, for one thing, an

altogether new sense of human life. For the Greeks had shown man his mind; but the Christians showed him his soul. They taught that in the sight of God, all souls were equal, that every human life was sacrosanct and inviolate. Where the Greeks had identified the beautiful and the good, had thought ugliness to be bad, had shrunk from disease and imperfection and from everything misshapen, horrible, and repulsive, the Christian sought out the diseased, the crippled, the mutilated, to give them help. Love for the ancient Greek, was never quite distinguished from Venus. For the Christians who held that God was love, it took on deep overtones of sacrifice and compassion." (Palmer)

"The history of Christianity is inseparable from the history of Western culture and of Western society. For almost a score of centuries Christian beliefs, principles, and ideals have colored the thoughts and feelings of Western man. The traditions and practices have left an indelible impression not only on developments of purely religious interest, but on virtually the total endeavor of man. This has been manifest in art and literature, science and law, politics and economics, and, as well, in love and war. Indeed, the indirect and unconscious influence Christianity has often exercised in avowedly secular matters—social, intellectual, and institutional—affords striking proof of the dynamic forces that have been generated by the faith over the millenniums. Even those who have contested its claims and rejected its tenets have been affected by what they opposed. Whatever our beliefs, all of us today are inevitable heirs to this abundant legacy; and it is impossible to understand the cultural heritage that sustains and conditions our lives without considering the contributions of Christianity.

"Since the death of Christ, his followers have known vicissitudes as well as glory and authority. The Christian religion has suffered periods of persecution and critical divisions within its own ranks. It has been the cause and

> the victim of war and strife. It has assumed forms of astonishing variety. It has been confronted by revolutionary changes in human and social outlooks and subjected to searching criticism. The culture of our own time, indeed has been termed the most completely secularized form of culture the world has ever known. We live in what some have called the post-Christian age. Yet wherever we turn to enrich our lives, we continue to encounter the lasting historical realities of Christian experience and tradition." (Bainton).
>
> ". . .[T]he greatest religious change in the history of mankind took place under the eyes of a brilliant galaxy of philosophers and historians who disregard as contemptible powerful moral lever that has ever been applied to the affairs of men." (Lecky, *History of European Morals*).

Hope this helps answer your question, _____.

Jimmy Williams
Founder, Probe Ministries

P.S. I'll have to dig out the reference sources for Palmer and Bainton, but wanted to get this to you now.

"Are the Ideas of the Jesus Seminar Now Catholic Doctrine?"

I am a philosophy major at Oregon State University where Marcus Borg is a professor. Many of the churches in our community ascribe to his teaching.

Here is my question…I have a dear friend that grew up in an

evangelical Catholic home and knows Christ as her personal savior. She has been attending the local Catholic church here in Corvallis and recently has been strongly confronted by one of the deacons on issues surrounding the literalism of the Bible (i.e. the ideas of the Jesus Seminar, taught by Borg). The deacon has been telling her that Biblical non-literalism as Borg teaches is part of Catholic doctrine and part of the Catechism. Is this accurate? Is this indeed an international Catholic teaching or does it depend on the individual parish or person?

I would appreciate any wisdom you might have on this topic. Honestly, it's been really heated here lately, as Borg's new book has just been released. We would love it if either of you (or other speakers from Probe) could come out and do a presentation for all of the confused Christians. There is a strong evangelical movement in Corvallis, but unfortunately, it tends to be strongly anti-intellectual and isn't well respected in the university community. As a student, I want to be able to better understand the critical issues at hand and be able to represent Christ in grace, truth, and love.

Send me whatever thoughts you have…I read article on the Jesus Seminar through Leadership University and that helped, but I really would love even more detailed information if you have any.

Thank you so much for serving as a resource for students of the Word!

Thank you for your recent e-mail concerning the Jesus Seminar. I can empathize with your "dilemma" under the shadow of Marcus Borg at your university.

I don't know if you have checked the Probe Website (www.probe.org) or not, but I would direct you to at least two essays: one that I wrote is called The Jesus Seminar, and a second was written by my colleague, Rick Wade, entitled The

Historical Christ. You will find good bibliographical info for further study.

I would rather doubt that the tenets of the Jesus Seminar are now officially sanctioned by the Roman Catholic Church worldwide. I would recommend that your friend ask for official, written documentation from this priest for his assertion that this is true. I am 99% positive that no such position has been taken by the Catholic church and its biblical scholars. There is too much at stake for the church to take such a radical stand which undermines much of what they have held to be true about Jesus Christ.

If you are looking for someone to come and debate Borg, I would suggest that you contact my good friend Dr. J. P. Moreland and/or Michael J. Wilkins at Talbot Seminary in southern California. They edited a book entitled *Jesus Under Fire* which was published by Zondervan in 1995. Each chapter is written by a evangelical scholar, each of which develops and refutes the major arguments of the Jesus Seminar position.

I have been studying this topic for several years, and following the literature, but these men, as New Testament Scholars, are current on this issue and have devoted the kind of study and depth necessary to give good account of themselves with a fine scholar like Borg.

I can appreciate your frustration with the general Christian community. Most are not "armed" for the battle of ideas which we face. That is why I left Campus Crusade in 1973 and began Probe Ministries. At the time I gave oversight to the Campuses in the Southwest U.S. The worldview America has come to embrace generally now once existed only on a few campuses: UC Berkeley, San Francisco State, U. of Wisconsin (Madison), Columbia U., and U. of Colorado.

I found myself hard pressed to respond to the questions of these students. So I decided the Lord was calling upon me not

to “curse the darkness”, but rather “light some lamps!” The early Christians, it is said, were effective because they OUT-THOUGHT and OUT-LOVED the ancient world! In fact, for 250 years after the apostles died off, the church did nothing but try to survive and answer/refute/respond to all the doctrinal challenges which came from the Jewish and Pagan communities without, and from sects and heresies within. They were so busy doing this, that it was not until 325 A.D. (Council of Nicea) that the addressed/clarified the doctrine of the Trinity! The FIRST theology of the early church was APOLOGETICAL theology, and we find ourselves facing the same kind of circumstances and challenges today.

So you hang in there! And tell your friend to do the same. Challenge the priest and don’t be bullied by him. If it IS an official position, tell her that I requested that it be documented so I will be able to confirm to others who ask that this is truly official. If I were a betting man (and I am ::::SMILE!::::), your friend will find that no such affirmation of this policy will be forthcoming.

With Warm Regards in Christ,

Jimmy Williams, Founder
Probe Ministries

Education: The Three-Legged Stool

In the late 80’s when the Communist walls were coming down in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, columnist Jack Anderson commented: “I don’t mean to minimize the Soviet danger, but while spending trillions of dollars on the military, we’ve

completely neglected our economic defenses, while the Japanese have been assaulting our economic citadel . . . Japan is a nation of engineers and producers. We're a nation of lawyers and consumers. Japan sacrifices today for tomorrow. And we sacrifice tomorrow for today."

After the Revolutions, the possibility of armed aggression (time will tell) upon the U. S. seems at present even more remote than Anderson noted. But the second part of his comment focuses upon the present concerns of the Clinton Administration and others with respect to America's flagging educational endeavors. That is, we are told we must upgrade learning at all levels so we might again compete economically with Japan and the European Community and reclaim our "rightful" place as "Number 1" in the world.

Competition is a healthy thing to a point. But I submit that whatever Herculean measures undertaken by educational agencies might actually produce the mathematicians, engineers, and scientists needed to bring us back up to global "par," we would still be woefully short of proper educational goals for the nation. The educational crisis of the 90's has shown to be a supreme failure, as it is driven mostly by economic concerns, ignoring Jesus' reminder that man simply cannot live by bread alone. We must therefore insist that the educational establishment do something beyond cranking out human "hardware"—graduates who perform acceptably in the market place in the production of competitive goods and services, but have chests with no hearts.

It is one thing to teach young Americans how to make a living; it is quite another to teach them how to live. This is the "software" part of the educational process. The tension between intellectual and moral development in educating the young is as old as civilization. Aristotle spoke keenly to this point in the fourth century B.C. when he said,

"Intellectual virtue is for the most part produced and

> *increased by instruction, and therefore requires experience and time; whereas moral or ethical virtue is the product of habit . . . . The virtues we acquire by first having practiced them, just as we do the arts. It is therefore not of small moment whether we are trained from childhood in one set of habits, or another; on the contrary it is of very great, or rather of supreme, importance."*

The real question educationists must answer was posed by Jack Fraenkel: "It appears important to consider, therefore, whether we want values to develop in students accidentally or whether we intend to deliberately influence their value development in directions we consider desirable." It goes without saying that the "values clarification" approach of today never intends to accomplish the latter, and there is no guarantee that even the former is being achieved among today's young!

Our Founding Fathers faced clearly the necessity of providing an educational experience that encompassed both the cognitive and moral spheres. As early as 1787, Congress passed the Northwest Ordinance, setting aside land for educational purposes with these words: "Religion, morality, and knowledge being essential to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."

This three-legged stool upon which children could learn and a vibrant, strong society could be built encompassed the inter-relatedness and necessary cooperation of the church, the home, and the school. Sadly, today the "stool" is largely missing a couple of legs. And the third (public education) has assigned to itself (with our increasing encouragement) the task of providing all three! This is neither possible, nor is it desirable. By its very nature, pluralistic public education dictates a methodological approach that of necessity dilutes religious and moral teaching to abstract speculation with no

direction or call for personal commitment to a point of view. Rather, the goal is simply that everyone should *have* a point of view! The paralysis of this approach with respect to religion and moral values spills over to the knowledge "leg" as well. Deprived of metaphysical and moral certitude, information proliferates and expands like so much pizza dough; it is swung wildly around classrooms, but it won't stick to anything!

No wonder learning is such a chore, such uninteresting, laborious work for our sons and daughters. Bombarded with information, many youngsters face life on "perpetual overload," stunted and numbed in the process because they lack the intellectual, skeletal framework upon which they can separate and arrange the truly important from the trivial.

We who have children must increasingly look to ourselves to remedy this situation. And we are in good company. Most of the best education throughout history has not occurred in public educational arenas. Its has emerged from the hearts of caring parents who refuse to sacrifice their children upon the altars of popular educational notions and experiments. Dr. Ronald Nash's penetrating analysis of this struggle in *The Closing of the American Heart* charts a path that you and I can follow in identifying the real roots of the American educational crisis and what to do about it.

> *"And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; And you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. . . . And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. And shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." Deuteronomy 6:6-9*

©2000 Probe Ministries.