

J's Q: On page 192 of the EYF textbook it implies that the Catholic Catechism says that Atheists and Muslims can make it to heaven. Is that really in the Catechism?

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A: The exact wording from the Catechism is this:

841 *The Church's relationship with the Muslims. "The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims; these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day."*

842 *The Church's bond with non-Christian religions is in the first place the common origin and end of the human race: All nations form but one community. This is so because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth, and also because all share a common destiny, namely God. His providence, evident goodness, and saving designs extend to all against the day when the elect are gathered together in the holy city...*

843 *The Catholic Church recognizes in other religions that search, among shadows and images, for the God who is unknown yet near since he gives life and breath and all things and wants all men to be saved. Thus, the Church considers all goodness and truth found in these religions as "a preparation for the Gospel and given by him who enlightens all men that they may at length have life."*

844 *In their religious behavior, however, men also display the limits and errors that disfigure the image of God in them: Very often, deceived by the Evil One, men have become vain in their reasonings, and have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and served the creature rather than the Creator. Or else, living and dying in this world without God, they are exposed to ultimate despair.*

845 *To reunite all his children, scattered and led astray by sin, the Father willed to call the whole of humanity together into his Son's Church. the Church is the place where humanity must rediscover its unity and salvation. the Church is "the world reconciled." She is that bark which "in the full sail of the Lord's cross, by the breath of the Holy Spirit, navigates safely in this world." According to another image dear to the Church Fathers, she is prefigured by Noah's ark, which alone saves from the flood. "Outside the Church there is no salvation."*

846 *How are we to understand this affirmation, often repeated by the Church Fathers? Re-formulated positively, it means that all salvation comes from Christ the Head through the Church which is his Body: Basing itself on Scripture and Tradition, the Council teaches that the Church, a pilgrim now on earth, is necessary for salvation: the one Christ is the mediator and the way of salvation; he is present to us in his body which is the Church. He himself explicitly asserted the necessity of faith and Baptism, and thereby affirmed at the same time the necessity of the Church which men enter through Baptism as through a door. Hence they could not be saved who, knowing that the Catholic Church was founded as necessary by God through Christ, would refuse either to enter it or to remain in it.*

847 *This affirmation is not aimed at those who, through no fault of their own, do not know Christ and his Church: Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience - those too may achieve eternal salvation.*

This section obviously can be interpreted in different ways. And while paragraph #846 seems to say Christ is necessary for those who have heard of him, #847 seems to say those who haven't heard of him may be saved by a sincere heart and good actions. To me, this seems to deny the clear Scriptural teaching that Christ is the only way to heaven ([link](#): John 14:6, Acts 4:12, John 3:16-18, 1 Timothy 2:4-5, John 10:9, 1 John 5:12, 1 John 2:23, John 12:48, etc.).

On pages 16-17, we have seen how the current Pope Francis interpreted it in response to a question by the son of an atheist. And on page 69, we saw how the Pope views all of mankind, and that his encyclicals seem to point to a belief in [universal salvation](#), which justifies his [ecumenical overtures](#) to [Muslims](#) as well as leaders of many religions. Then in 2018 he initiated quite a stir within Catholicism when he reportedly ([website](#)) said, "There is no hell; there is the disappearance of sinful souls." Finally, on page 137 we saw how Mother Teresa famously [said](#), "I do convert. I convert you to a better Hindu, a better Muslim, a better Protestant, a better Sikh. Once you have found God it is up to you to do with him as you wish."

## J's Q: Do the additional books in Catholic bible speak on purgatory?

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**A:** On page 58 we've seen that purgatory was first formulated in Catholicism in AD 593. The best *defense of* purgatory that I've seen by a Catholic source is here: [website](#). It points to a single passage in 2 Maccabees (an apocryphal book) and several passages in the New Testament. To me, you really have to *read purgatory into* those passages, which is not the way Protestants interpret Scripture. A good explanation on why Protestants do not agree is found in an online article ***Purgatory and 2 Maccabees 12:39-45***, by Luke Wayne ([link](#)).

The Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory teaches that people who die while in God's grace but who are not sufficiently purified of their sinfulness to enter God's presence must undergo a time of purification through temporary suffering in the torments of purgatory. Unlike hell, purgatory is not a final judgment on the wicked but rather a finite period of purging for the insufficiently righteous. It is a place where one suffers for one's own remaining sin before entering into heavenly bliss. Such a doctrine would seem to imply that Christ's sufferings were insufficient to sanctify the believer, and so the issue is no small matter. Roman Catholics will often claim that purgatory is affirmed even before the time of the New Testament in the Jewish Apocryphal book of 2 Maccabees. Contrary to Roman Catholic dogma, the Apocrypha should not be considered authentic Scripture, so finding the doctrine of purgatory there would not grant it biblical authority. If the claim that 2 Maccabees teaches purgatory were correct, however, this would at least demonstrate the idea of Purgatory to be an ancient tradition rather than a late innovation developed centuries after the time of the New Testament, as it otherwise appears to be. Unfortunately for the Roman Catholic apologist, however, the passage in 2 Maccabees doesn't say anything about purgatory, nor does it in any way imply the Roman Catholic dogma.

In the passage, the Jewish leader Judas Maccabeus leads his army into battle. God grants them victory, though some of Judas' men were struck down by the enemy. When during the preparation for burial, they discover that each of the dead was secretly an idolater who was wearing amulets of devotion to pagan gods under their clothes:

*"Then under the tunic of each one of the dead, they found sacred tokens of the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the Jews to wear. And it became clear to all that this was the reason these men had fallen. So they all blessed the ways of the Lord, the righteous Judge, who reveals the things that are hidden; and they turned to supplication, praying that the sin that had been committed might be wholly blotted out,"* (2 Maccabees 12:40-42a).

The relevance of this passage to our discussion begins here, as the Jews pray to God to blot out the sins of men who have already died. To someone reading with Roman Catholic assumptions already in place, the mention of people praying about the sins of the unrepentant dead can only be a reference to the doctrine of purgatory. Already, however, we have details here that do not fit the Roman Catholic doctrine. Purgatory is only for those who have died in God's grace. If someone dies while guilty of a mortal sin for which they have made no absolution, they die outside of God's grace and under His wrath. They will not receive purification in purgatory. They will be justly punished in hell. Roman Catholic teaching regards willful idolatry committed in full knowledge of God's moral law to be a mortal sin. The passage is clear that these were not ignorant pagans. They were Jews who knew that what they were doing was forbidden by God's law. These men died in unrepentant, willful idolatry and active devotion to false gods. Therefore, on Roman Catholic teaching, they died outside of God's grace. That they were under God's wrath is further exemplified by the repeated emphasis on the death of these men as a direct judgment from God on them for their sin.

*"The noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened as the result of the sin of those who had fallen,"* (2 Maccabees 12:42b).

So, even in the situation presented in the narrative, we see that this story does not quite fit in the context of the Roman Catholic teaching of purgatory. Further, the mere act of praying that God would forgive a dead person's sins does not imply that there is a place in which that person temporarily suffers to pay for their sins before being allowed into heavenly bliss. The passage goes on to explain itself more fully:

*"He also took up a collection, man by man, to the amount of two thousand drachmas of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. In doing this he acted very well and honorably, taking account of the resurrection. For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, so that they might be delivered from their sin."* (2 Maccabees 12:43-45)

Judas Maccabeus collects money from all the men in his army. They send the money to Jerusalem to buy the appropriate sacrificial animals to make offerings for the atonement of the sin of these fallen soldiers. Why? According to the text, it is because of the expectation of a future resurrection. It is not because these men were presently confined to the sufferings of purgatory and hoping for release. Not only is there no indication that any such consideration ever entered the mind of either Judas or the author of the book, but there is a clear statement of exactly what was in mind. Judas wanted these men to share in the reward of the righteous on the day of resurrection. He was not considering the present reality of their death and any suffering their souls might currently be enduring. His focus was the future hope of their physical life.

What's more, Judas' action doesn't imply that these men's sin would eventually be atoned for by their own sufferings in purgatory. Instead, Judas sought to atone for them through temple sacrifices. The text praises this as a noble act because it embodies Judas' faithful hope in the day of resurrection. It speaks of a splendid reward for "those who fall asleep in godliness." Judas desired for his men to share in this reward, and so he prayed and made offerings in hope that "they might be delivered from their sin." If they are not, then they will face judgment rather than reward when the resurrection comes.

Thus, this isn't talking about purgatory. It reports the act of a general who loved his men and believed in the resurrection of the dead, and so he offered atoning sacrifices at the temple in hopes that God might accept them, forgive these men, and grant them eternal life and reward instead of a future of suffering. His hope was not to shorten their stay in some form of purgatory but rather to mediate their release from sin, death, and hell. If this points to any New Testament teaching at all, it points forward to the true and ultimate atoning sacrifice of Jesus Himself, who offered His own life at Jerusalem for the sins of many, even many who had died before He came. This text preserves a Jewish tradition that God might accept a sacrifice from the righteous on behalf of the wicked rebel who can make no offering of his own. In as much as there is any truth to that hope, it is fulfilled in Christ. Christ was the only truly righteous person, and all who are in Adam are dead idolaters without any hope in ourselves for salvation or life to come. Judas wanted his offering to count for his men. He wanted to make atonement at the temple in their place. Thus, what we find in this old Jewish tradition is not a belief in purgatory. What we find instead is a belief in the possibility of vicarious, substitutionary atonement. Even the apocryphal 2 Maccabees doesn't teach that the dead can be purged of sin through their own purgatorial suffering. It does express a hope that maybe a righteous person can atone on the helpless sinner's behalf. What the true Scriptures show us, however, is that neither the nobility of a man like Judas Maccabeus, the value of his silver, nor the blood of the sacrificial animals he bought is truly enough to atone for sins. At best, they point as an imperfect parable to the only thing that really is enough: Jesus Christ and His all-sufficient offering of His own perfect self on the cross of Calvary.

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**Mark's Q. What free, online videos do you recommend when I'm in the mood to spend more productive time than an evening on Netflix?**

A. You ask the best questions, Mark! I have run across a number of videos that I think provide more depth than we've covered in this class, or present other interesting ways to deepen or explain your faith. Some of these may have been mentioned earlier; you and I may not agree with everything in them; but I still think they would be worth your time. In no particular order:

- Leonardo De Chirico's video series of 5 lectures, 3-hours (but 2 hours listening at 1.5 speed) here:  
• [Same Words, Same Gospel?](#) • [Why "Roman" and Why "Catholicism?"](#) • [Where Is the Roman Catholic Church Going with Pope Francis?](#) • [Can Evangelicals Be United with Rome?](#) • [Communicating the Gospel to Roman Catholics](#) and a full set of lectures is here: • [foclonline.org/user/8244/webinars](#)
- A 1-hour Vimeo video: "Catholicism: Crisis of Faith" by James McCarthy, author of the book and diagram *The Gospel According to Rome* ([link](#))
- A 3-hour YouTube video: "What is the Catholic Church" ([link](#)). Some **great** historical background. A couple quibbles though: I don't agree the Catholic Church is 90-95% good (see the EYF textbook's page 150) or the defense of his Calvary Bible Church's acceptance of some Charismatic practices.
- A 1-hour YouTube video summarizing the Reformation, Interview with John MacArthur ([link](#)). **Great!**
- A 1.3-hour YouTube video: "Are Catholics Saved" by J. MacArthur ([link](#)).
- A 7-minute YouTube video: "Praying to Mary? Is Catholicism a Valid Expression of Christianity?" by R.C. Sproul and J. MacArthur ([link](#)).
- Two 2-minute YouTube videos: "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" by J. MacArthur ([link](#) and [link](#)).
- A 1-hour YouTube video: "Using Questions in Evangelism" by Randy Newman ([link](#))
- A 6-minute YouTube video: "The Offense of the Cross: Mother Theresa and Jeffrey Dahmer" by Mike Abendroth ([link](#))
- Numerous YouTube videos by former Catholic of 37 years, Mike Gendron ([link](#))
- Numerous YouTube videos from the John Ankerberg Show addressing the book: "Protestants and Catholics: Do They Now Agree?" ([link](#))
- A 3-minute YouTube video: "Quit Quoting CS Lewis" by M. Abendroth ([link](#))
- Numerous videos exposing the modern Charismatic movement: [link](#), [link](#), [link](#), [link](#), and [link](#).
- And of course, the **15 videos that accompany this course**, 7-hours ([tinyurl.com/eyf-vids](#))

For a \$5-10 fee, again I recommend:

- The *American Gospel* series: *Christ Alone* ([link](#)) and *Christ Crucified* ([link](#)).

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Bonus tips for your online research:

- I just discovered a nice search site for the English Standard Version of the Bible: [tinyurl.com/eyf-verses](#)
- A new Bible translation, the *Legacy Standard Bible*, that looks promising: [tinyurl.com/eyf-legacy](#)

## A's Q. Since Protestants do not believe in a centralized church to officially interpret Scripture for us, how should we handle differences among ourselves, and determine who is right?

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A. First, all Christians are indwelt by the Holy Spirit ([link](#): 1 Cor 3:16, 1 Cor 6:19, Romans 8:9). And the Holy Spirit himself will teach us ([link](#): John 16:13, John 14:26, 1 John 2:27). The Spirit also gives the spiritual gift of teaching to certain believers and we can learn from them ([link](#): 1 Cor 12:7, 1 Cor 12:28, Eph 4:11, Romans 12:7, 2 Tim 2:2, 1 Cor 11:1). In these passages, the gift of teaching is often closely linked to that of shepherding or pastoring, e.g. "Shepherds and teachers. These two words go together to refer to a single office. It is an individual who not only shepherds the church body of believers but also instructs them in the Word of God. The title can literally be read as the *shepherd-teachers*." ([link](#))

In Protestant churches, we typically look for a pastor who is one who is well trained in Scripture and can effectively "expound the Word" to us, that is to be a good teacher. One of the principles re-discovered in the Reformation is that the pastoral role is primarily one of teaching, not one of mediating between God and man, forgiving sins, or administering sacraments. So differences of opinion are often brought to fellow believers who may have more training or expertise in the matter in question, with the understanding that Scripture alone is our ultimate authority. Even the newest believers have a right to challenge the most senior persons in a church if they believe their position is more biblical. That is why the Bereans were described as being *noble*—because they searched the Scriptures to validate what even the Apostle Paul taught them ([Acts 17:11](#)).

Having said all that, 2 Timothy 2:15 says, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who **correctly handles the word of truth**." As we read and study Scripture on our own, we need to correctly handle it. The methodology of how to properly interpret Scripture is a very important skill and is taught in seminaries under the name *hermeneutics*. Not only should you demand that your pastor/teacher understand hermeneutics well, but you too should really understand the basics of it for your own Bible study. And our churches should teach this skill on a regular basis...but most of our churches fall short in this (in my opinion).

I think a **fantastic** website on hermeneutics can be found here: [alwaysbeready.com/hermeneutics-rules-and-guidelines/](#) (you can simply ignore the ads that are interspersed with the excellent content).

Finally, one famous suggestion when debating controversial matters is: "In essentials, unity; in nonessentials, liberty; in all things, charity [or love]." I heartily agree with this. However, to me, the rub is knowing which doctrines are essential and which are nonessential. Some of the most prominent leaders of Evangelicalism have failed miserably in answering this question, but I think the absolute best take on this is given at [reformingcatholicconfession.com](#) (if you look at the *Signatures* section, you'll even see my name!). Its title is *A Reformed Catholic Confession*, which I think is a bit confusing, but I like its subtitle better: A "Mere Protestant" Statement of Faith. Grace Bible Church has recently modified its *Statement of Faith* to separate out what we view are our *Essential Beliefs* ([here](#)) and our *Further Beliefs* ([here](#)).

## Mark's Q. Tell me again why this course is so important?

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A. I just saw a new post that said, "almost 70 percent of born-again Christians believe one can get to Heaven through Jesus Christ or another religion." Holy. Moley. Dattoli is exasperated! If you and I really believe what we have learned in this class, then we are in a very, very, very small minority. And our message desperately needs to be communicated not just to the "pagans" we know, but to many of those who see themselves as "born again." **Oh, brother!**

The post is [here](#), and it refers to a detailed study dated October 16, 2021 [here](#).

## Mark's Q. Could GBC's *Spiritual Growth Model* help me help others assess where they are at spiritually?

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A. Great question, Mark! In some circumstances I think it could be very helpful. The diagram itself is shown on the next page, and the webpage that supports it and links to related helpful resources is available here: [gbcelm.org/steps](#). A full explanation of the process of spiritual growth is available here: [tinyurl.com/eyf-steps](#).

# Spiritual Growth Model

*These days I find myself...*



## E's Q. How might I start a spiritual conversation with a group of friends—all Catholic—where religion and beliefs rarely come up?

A. This is clearly a different situation than the typical one-on-one, but does present a great opportunity to find out who may be most open to further conversations. I'd suggest starting with current events that may be on everyone's mind, yet I'd steer clear of topics that may be contentious and only lead to arguments, such as partisan politics. I think it helps to recognize that people today get their news from different sources and end up with totally different views of the world: your *CNN* viewers are likely to see the world differently than your *Fox News* viewers, and all of them may disagree with your libertarian friends, or *alt-right* friends. You'll never get these people to agree—they each have their own set of 'facts.' So, I'd avoid bringing up the President, vaccine policies, local school board issues, etc. Rather, in today's environment, you might say something like:

- *Did you all see in the news that the hypersonic missile that China tested means that they could nuke any place in the world within 60 minutes? Is that scary to you?*
- *Did you hear that China is threatening to invade Taiwan soon and that it might lead to World War III?*
- *With the current volatile conditions in the world, more and more people seem to be saying that we are approaching the 'end times.' What do any of you think about that?*
- *If the US were to be nuked back to the stone age, but you survived, how would that affect you? What would you do differently if you feared for the survival of the US or your own survival?*

If/when the conversation gets back to you, you might be prepared to say something that might cause others to think that maybe they need to ask you some questions in a more intimate setting. For example:

- *Well, of course, I'd be sad. But, honestly, I'm not afraid because I know just where I'm going when I die.*
- *I used to be quite a worrier, but I'm not anymore. I have an internal peace now that nothing can shake.*
- *Well, you guys know that I believe the Bible, and I believe it has predicted a time exactly like this, so I'm not really surprised at what's going on. It just confirms to me that the Bible is really the Word of God.*
- *Some of you have heard me say that I'm 'born-again.' And because I am, I am much more fascinated by these events than afraid of them. I know that God is still in control and that he is my loving Father, who promises to bring me home when I'm done here, things will only get better. I sleep well no matter what.*

## Mark's Q. A lot of GBC teens have been to the 'Dare2Share' seminar and loved it. What is it all about?

A. It is a great ministry to teens that teach them how to simply share the gospel using the *G.O.S.P.E.L.* mnemonic. The "Life in 6 Words" website is here: [lifein6words.com](http://lifein6words.com). Two videos of the "6 Words" are here:

- The 'Official'/'Rap' Version: [store.dare2share.org/products/life-in-6-words-the-gospel](http://store.dare2share.org/products/life-in-6-words-the-gospel)
- A 'Calmer' Version: [facebook.com/glenbaptistgsm/videos/956223311459105](http://facebook.com/glenbaptistgsm/videos/956223311459105)

More resources for students (contemporary issues): [li6w.com/additional-resources/](http://li6w.com/additional-resources/) and apps to share the gospel: [li6w.com/app/](http://li6w.com/app/) and [dare2share.org/apps/](http://dare2share.org/apps/). Also, the *Dare2Share* website (for youth groups and leaders): [dare2share.org](http://dare2share.org). [Dare2Share made a **huge** impact on one of my daughters. My only beef is that their 'Gospel Journey Maui' curriculum provides overviews of many false religions but fails to address Catholicism.]



## Mark's Q. When you explain your faith, do you fear rejection and criticism?

A. Here are a few thoughts to help you with that:

### *When you explain your faith, do you fear rejection and criticism?*

- **Remember God is with you.** 1 Corinthians 3:16. Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?
- **Remember God's protection.** Proverbs 18:10. The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.
- **Don't worry; be prayerful.** Philippians 4:6. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.
- **Expect persecution.** 2 Timothy 3:12. Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.
- **Remember God's promises.** Matthew 5:10-12. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. Matthew 10:32. So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven. 2 Corinthians 1:5. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too. 1 Peter 4:13-14, 16, 19. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you...if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name...Let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. James 1:2, 12. Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds...Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.
- **Remember your glorious future.** Romans 8:18. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.
- **Share your hurts and celebrations with your church family.** 1 Corinthians 12:25-26. That there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

**A Quote ►**“Everything you've ever wanted is on the other side of fear.” —George Addair

## Mark's prayer for students/readers of *Explaining Your Faith*

**Colossians 2:2-23 (NLT) ►** “I want [you] to have complete confidence that [you] understand God's mysterious plan, which is Christ himself. In him lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I am telling you this so no one will deceive you with well-crafted arguments...And now, just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. Don't let anyone capture you with empty philosophies and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the spiritual powers of this world, rather than from Christ. For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body. So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority...You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against [you] and took it away by nailing it to the cross. So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. For these rules are only shadows of the reality yet to come. And Christ himself is that reality. Don't let anyone condemn you by insisting on pious self-denial or the worship of angels, saying they have had visions about these things. Their sinful minds have made them proud, and they are not connected to Christ, the head of the body...You have died with Christ, and he has set you free from the spiritual powers of this world. So why do you keep on following the rules of the world, such as, “Don't handle! Don't taste! Don't touch!”? Such rules are mere human teachings about things that deteriorate as we use them. These rules may seem wise because they require strong devotion, pious self-denial, and severe bodily discipline. But they provide no help in conquering a person's evil desires.”