

The Bible

UNMASKED



Joseph Lewis

THE BIBLE UNMASKED

by Joseph Lewis

Author of
"The Tyranny of God,"
"Lincoln the Freethinker,"
"Jefferson the Freethinker," etc.

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated in all seriousness to rabbis, priests and ministers, in the hope that it may bring them to realize the fraud they are perpetrating by preaching the Bible as the Word of God, and as a moral and intellectual guide for the human race.

—*Joseph Lewis.*

“Any system of religion that has anything in it that shocks the mind of a child, cannot be a true system.”

—*Thomas Paine*

“By this time the whole world should know that the real Bible has not yet been written, but is being written, and that it will never be finished until the race begins its downward march, or ceases to exist.

“The real Bible is not the work of inspired men, nor prophets nor apostles, nor evangelists, nor of Christs. Every man who finds a fact adds, as it were, a word to this great book. It is not attested by prophecy, by miracles or signs. It makes no appeal to faith, to ignorance, to credulity or fear. It has no punishment for unbelief, and no reward for hypocrisy. It appeals to man in the name of demonstration. It has nothing to conceal. It has no fear of being read, of being contradicted, of being investigated and understood. It does not pretend to be holy or sacred; it simply claims to be true. It challenges the scrutiny of all, and implores every reader to verify every line for himself. It is incapable of being blasphemed. This book appeals to all the surroundings of man. Each thing that exists testifies to its perfection. The earth, with its heart of fire and crowns of snow; with its forests and plains, its rocks and seas; with its every wave and cloud; with its every leaf and bud and flower, confirms its every word, and the solemn stars, shining in the infinite abysses, are the eternal witnesses of its truth.”

—*Robert G. Ingersoll*

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INTRODUCTION

“The duty of a philosopher is clear. He must take every pain to ascertain the truth; and, having arrived at a conclusion, he should noise it abroad far and wide, utterly regardless of what opinions he shocks.”

—*Henry Thomas Buckle*

In taking as my subject for this book the question of the morality, or rather the immorality of the Bible, I realize at once the importance and delicacy of the subject. This is true, because what is immoral in one age and time, may at some other time, be considered moral, and what we today may consider moral and acceptable, may at some future date be condemned as being immoral.

There is in reality no absolute standard by which we may judge; and in the final analysis our guide in moral affairs should be that which gives to the individual the greatest possible happiness, and which at the same time will inflict no harm upon another individual. Even under this rule there may be instances where a higher and more altruistic principle would be necessary to insure the best interest of the community and to society at large.

Therefore, the subject that I have chosen for my book is as delicate as it is serious, as there is always the possibility of saying something that may be entirely at variance with the conceptions of some of us regarding morality and its phases.

I think I can appropriately quote the poet Moore in his definition of morality, when he says:

I find the doctors and sages
Have differed in all climes and ages,
And two in fifty scarce agree
On what is pure morality.

The utmost discretion must also be used in such a discussion to avoid any injustice to the individual to the preference of society, and with scrupulous integrity the same rule must be applied to society in its relationship to the individual. Science must formulate the principle of a moral guide. We must disregard all past conventions, except to learn from their shortcomings, so as better to avoid similar pitfalls in the future. We must start anew, so to speak, for the rules and guides which now govern our conduct have been proven false and utterly inadequate for the needs of modern existence.

We are still using for our guide, rules which are as obsolete as a belief in the flatness of the earth.

A new order of morality must be ushered in and it must of necessity be just as revolutionary and just as beneficial to the human race as were the scientific discoveries of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which upset all previous conventions and calculations and started mankind upon a career of unparalleled progress.

We must begin the other way round, and instead of our acts being performed solely for divine approbation, we must do our utmost for the benefit of the individual, which in the last analysis is also for the best interest of society. It will be man's relation to man that will become the holy thing. Humanity and not God will be our chief concern. Our acts will not be performed for the purpose of future rewards, but rather for present benefits.

Again, the delicacy of my subject becomes apparent from the fact that certain words and expressions must be used that may shock the sensibilities of certain persons. But this I promise, that any words I may use in this book which may offend or shock any one who reads will not be words or expressions I have purposely selected to designate a character or to express a situation, but will be words and expressions which I have found in the stories as recorded in the Bible.

Let me repeat: if there are words and expressions used which are unfit for refined conversation, these words and expressions will be taken from the Bible which contains the stories I have selected as being, in the light of our present knowledge and progress, immoral, offensive and obscene.

And if you are not acquainted with the words, language, and expressions of the Bible, I ask you kindly to close this book; *do not read it* unless you want to learn the truth about the Bible. I am not concerned with the truth or falsity of the stories from which I shall quote, but with the fact that these stories are in the Bible and that the Bible is considered holy and

sacred—a divinely inspired book. Were it not for this fact my labor would be unnecessary, and I would not engage myself in it.

I am not writing this treatise as a member of any particular creed, for I do not belong to any. I am writing it as a member of the human family, without regard to race or religion, and for the benefit of all mankind.

The Bible has for many ages been considered as the Holy Word of an Ever-Existing God, and no one has been permitted to question its truth in any respect. It has ruled as the supreme authority in every line of thought; in every field of endeavor, and in every human relationship. At one time, to refuse to be bound by its precepts meant death by the most horrible means that perverted minds could inflict upon a human being. In fact, to doubt the divine origin of the Bible was the most flagrant of crimes.

Erasmus declared that heresy was a greater crime than impurity of life. That Christianity cared more for blind faith than uprightness of living is attested only too well by the pages of history. And the charge that religion and morals are synonymous terms is either stupidity or deliberate fraud. By its very precepts, by its expounders, and by its professors, religion has been proven to be the very antithesis of morality.

The first great step in the emancipation of the minds of the people from the ignorance and superstition of the Bible came about when Galileo put a crude telescope to the sky and removed our earth from the center of the universe, as it was supposed to be, to the tiny insignificant speck in a mighty realm of space, that it actually is. The great conflict between

knowledge and superstition began when Astronomy was put upon a scientific basis.

To state briefly this conflict, is to say that the Science of Astronomy has no use for the knowledge, if you can call it such, of the Bible. We all are acquainted with the fact that from the Bible the people became convinced that the earth was the center of the universe, and for centuries no one dared make an attempt to prove the contrary. Oh yes, there were some, but Bruno's heroic statue in Rome bespeaks only too eloquently the price that was paid for matching scientific and philosophic deductions against bigotry and God's Word.

We know that from the Bible ignorant people were convinced that God was sitting in the clouds and for that reason they lifted their hands and raised their voices in appeals for help. Astronomy pointed a telescope to the spot where God was supposed to be and found no such character there. If upon the invention of the telescope God moved to a different abode, he left no trace of his former occupancy. Astronomers, using the most powerful telescopes, telescopes that can scan the universe for millions of miles, testify they can find no trace of such a being, and that God must be some crafty creature to have made his getaway under the circumstances. For there are stars within the domain of man's exploration whose light-rays require thousands of years to reach us, and if God is beyond the region of these stars he is certainly useless to us, because in less time than would be required for him to come to our assistance the human race might be no more.

But God for the moment is not our subject; neither is prayer, nor the Science of Astronomy. We are concerned for the moment with the fact only that the Science of Astronomy, which should find some benefit in the Bible, since it is supposed to deal with the region of space in which Astronomy is interested, rejects that book completely, by saying: the Bible may be perfectly satisfactory as a moral guide, but it contains nothing of value to Astronomy.

The Geologists, the Naturalists, the Zoologists, the Botanists, the Biologists, the Physicists, the Physiologists and in fact all the Scientists are perfectly willing you should use the Bible as a moral guide, so long as you do not insist that they accept it as a standard of truth in their respective spheres. They all come to the same conclusion, that the Bible does not contain a solitary scientific truth.

Let us now examine and discover for ourselves whether the moralist has any use for the Bible, a book that is not only supposed to contain all the knowledge of the world, but that has been held over the heads of the people and sacredly worshipped for so many hundreds of years. I will not dwell upon, nor go into the details of the gross immorality that the Bible has caused; but rather I will discuss those phases of morality which deal with the social or sexual relation of man to society, such as rape, adultery, licentiousness, unfaithfulness and things universally condemned as being opprobrious. The evidence from the Bible itself will destroy its value as a moral guide.

It is a common experience to come in contact with persons who tell me that if the Bible has stood the test for so many years it is good enough for them. I reply that slavery stood the test as an existing institution for a longer period than the Bible has been revered, and yet chattel slavery does not exist today. Even so great a mind as Aristotle said that without slavery civilization could not exist. And since the physical slave has been emancipated, let us break the spell of the Bible and its attendant enslaving superstition and liberate completely the mind of man. Freedom of the mind is surely equal in importance to freedom of the body.

And as I am asked from time to time similar questions as to why the Bible still persists, I of course give different instances of long-established standards that are no longer followed by the progressive world. History records many “sacred” books that were once held in awe and reverence, but which are now looked upon as ancient curiosities. The Bible is but another of these “sacred” volumes and is unfortunately far inferior to most of them in moral precepts.

The insane are no longer tortured. We now treat them as mentally diseased. Witchcraft, once so commonly prevalent, is now known to have been religious superstition carried to its ultimate end. Religious mania triumphant! John Wesley spoke the truth when he said, “The giving up of witchcraft is, in effect, the giving up of the Bible.” At one time the belief was prevalent and religiously maintained that onions caused cancer; that beads could cure scarlet fever, and that to shave the upper lip was to impair your eyesight!

For ages the adage “Spare the rod and spoil the child” prevailed in the treatment of children. Tender tots were unmercifully beaten by cruel parents. The wide leather strap was an essential part of the household. If there were no family skeleton in the closet, you would be sure to find the child-beating strap there. “If we did not beat the child and put ‘fear’ into him, how else were we to make him ‘good’ and have ‘respect for his elders’?” was the argument that triumphantly maintained this brutal system. In the days gone by, and I am not so sure that they have passed, the religious-minded could not conceive of any other method of correction. To spare the rod and spoil the child was a sacrilege and an unpardonable act in the sight of God.

Part and parcel with this method went the fear implanted in the imagination of the child by the weird and frightful tales of the “bogey man” and the terrifying ghosts. This fear implanted in the mind of a child is just as poisonous as the venom of a snake. Today psychology has corrected this brutal and barbarous method in connection with the training of children. Intelligence and its application were the solution, and no greater triumph has been achieved by science than has been accomplished in the realm of child training. And although there are many still tainted with the Biblical notion of physical punishment in the treatment of children, no truly civilized man or woman today would use such a heinous method.

And yet in the *New York Times* for August 22, 1925, the Reverend R. M. Bradner, assistant minister, St. George’s Church, New York City,

made a plea to go back to this barbarous custom in the treatment of children.

And just as the child does not need something to put fear into him as a corrective, neither do adults need the “fear of something” to keep them good.

Fear, “fear of God” or any other fear, is a negative and destructive force no matter how it is applied. Courage is the watchword and intelligence the key to proper conduct. In the larger realm of human misconduct, punishment as a corrective to fit the crime is an altogether different principle from fear as a deterrent with the subsequent “forgiveness” after the act without the slightest understanding of wrongdoing or of rectification.

The knowledge of the right and the mental strength to follow that right is the ultimate end and goal of education. To commit your crime, “to confess your sins and be absolved of the deed,” may be a satisfactory religious doctrine, but it is inimical to justice and human welfare.

I know a man who used to beat his child. The strap was used with much force and vigor without the slightest feeling of compunction. And when I told him he was committing a grave wrong in beating his child he looked at me in blank amazement. I had actually astounded him. He was stunned and speechless. He thought that the beating of his child was as right and as essential as the rising and the setting of the sun and as natural as that night should follow day. His father beat him and no doubt his father was beaten by his paternal ancestor and so it was established beyond the peradventure of a doubt that the

corporal punishment of children was not only the only possible method, but was a parent's inalienable and unforfeitable right.

I analyzed his case and told him to make a “pal” and confidant of his boy. I told him he could accomplish much more by kindness and with love in a spirit of understanding than by any other method. Although his face still wore that amazed and stunned look, he promised to try my suggestions; and now after a lapse of nearly three years he boasts of never having struck his child during that period and confesses he owes me a debt that he can never repay. And yet—and this is the humorous part—he still looks upon my “infidel” opinions as being something beyond the realm of understanding, despite the fact it was an “infidel” who brought the light of understanding to his “enlightened” Christian mind. History proves that it has invariably been the infidels who have been the humanitarians, the torchbearers, the pathfinders not only of progress but also of human understanding, of love and of sympathy. And if Progress is the aim of mankind, if Liberty is its goal, and Freedom its destiny, then the Bible as a sacred book must go, religion as superstition must cease, and the church as an institution must be abandoned.

Are not the words of Professor Garrett P. Serviss, worth quoting here?

“The only real road to settled peace is that of science; politics will never hit it, nor dogmatic religion either. Science is, in its very nature, universal. It interests all civilized nations alike. It has no favorites, and no preferred views. Its aim is absolutely single, viz, the uncovering of the

truth. Knowledge is power—not partial but complete power, which cannot make war upon itself.

“Mankind has tried the other two roads to peace—the road of political jealousy and the road of religious bigotry—and found them both equally misleading. Perhaps it will now try the third, the road of scientific truth, the only road on which the passenger is not deceived—like a skittish horse with blinders. Science does not, ostrich-like, bury its head amidst perils and difficulties. It tries to see everything exactly as everything is.”

Abundant evidence and prison statistics are available to prove the prevalence of the moral and ethical misdeeds of the religious elect. Reference to them is constantly found in the daily papers.

Let us, as a matter of comparison, assume that Freethinkers were guilty of the same crimes as religious believers; the charge would be made that it was their “infidel” books, teachings and examples that were responsible for their criminal acts; and there would be a hue and cry over the length and breadth of this land to suppress and destroy all “infidel” literature. We would never hear the end of the “direful influence” such teachings would have upon the minds of people.

If we apply this rule to Freethinkers, let us use the same measurement to religious believers and determine whether or not their books, teachings and examples are responsible for their crimes. Let us be honest. Let us be fair.

What would be said if a prominent Freethinker were to use the words that were so boldly and defiantly uttered by Father Phelan in the “Western Watchman” of June 27, 1913:

“Tell us we are Catholics first and Americans or Englishmen afterwards; of course we are. Tell us, in the conflict between the church and the civil government we take the side of the church; of course we do. Why, if the government of the United States were at war with the church, we would say tomorrow, To hell with the government of the United States; and if the church and all the governments of the world were at war, we would say, To hell with all the governments of the world. Why is it that in this country, where we have only seven percent of the population, the Catholic church is so much feared? She is loved by all her children and feared by everybody. Why is it that the Pope has such tremendous power? Why, the Pope is the ruler of the world. All the emperors, all the kings, all the princes, all the presidents of the world, are as these altar boys of mine. The Pope is the ruler of the world.¹”

As I said before, no one can claim absolute law in the matter of morality, but there are some things repugnant to all of us and which will not be tolerated in the relationship of man to man. These repugnant acts are so self-evident that everywhere, in no matter what strata of society they exist, they are met with condemnation and censure.

1 Quoted from Upton Sinclair’s “Profits of Religion,” page 119.

The question of morals; the question of sex; the question of the relation of the individual to society, and of the relation of society to the individual, are all questions of such tremendous importance that each one, to be discussed properly, would require a book for itself. But this much we know: those who have the broadest and most liberal attitude upon these questions generally live the highest and most upright lives. And those who have set dogmatic rules and seek to impose them as guidance for others, are often the ones who lead the most questionable lives.

If it has taken so many centuries to convince the people of simple truths in the scientific realm, one can realize how difficult it will be to bring the people's minds out of the mass of misinterpretation and ignorance that has so long befogged them in the sphere of morality, where the scientific base, as in many other fields, is not so apparent.

To the Puritans, it was not only breaking a moral law, but also a disgrace to kiss one's wife on Sunday. A breach was also established, for which a penalty was exacted, if one were to kiss even his child on this "sacred day." To be seen on the streets on Sunday, except to "walk reverently to and from Church," was so flagrant a violation of the moral code that the perpetrator paid the penalty by a public ducking!

The mockery of it all! It was immoral for any one to be seen upon the public streets on Sunday, except on his way to church, to listen to a preacher "expounding" and "explaining" some of the incongruities, stupidities and immoralities of the Bible!

But this religious insanity did not exist only among the Puritans. It is found wherever Biblical teaching takes precedence over reason and intelligence. It is the inevitable consequence of permitting “instruments of God” and “divinely inspired men” to make our laws and govern our affairs. It reaches its highest form whenever this vile superstition rules the land, as was the case in the days of the Spanish Inquisition.

In Scotland, where the Scotch Presbyterian long held sway, it was a sin for any one to hold market on Saturday or Monday because both days were near Sunday. It was also sinful to go from one town to another, however pressing the need. It was a sin to visit a friend, or water the garden, or to shave, or to walk in the meadows, or to sit in the doorway to enjoy the weather, or even to sleep on the “Lord’s Day.” Bathing, being pleasant and wholesome, was a particularly grievous offense and therefore was prohibited on Sunday. In fact, it was doubtful whether public bathing was lawful for a Christian at any time. To be clean was considered a sacrilege; and to enjoy one’s repast was proof of a sinful nature. But to continue to repeat these hallucinations would be to fill an entire volume. These fanatics went so far as to admonish the people, that on Sundays in particular they should never think of benefiting others; and on that day it was even sinful to save a vessel in distress; and that it was a proof of religion—for it was God’s will—to let the ship sink and the crew perish.²

2 Buckle, “History of Civilization in England,” vol. III, pages 265 to 276.

I suppose they received the inspiration for their acts from the sabbath of the Jews, who on Saturdays in particular and on sacred days in general, are not “allowed” to perform labor of any kind. What a tragedy it is to be under such a fearful spell of superstition!

To many people even today, it is highly immoral for a woman too expose her leg beyond a certain point. And only recently we read an account of a Catholic priest who refused to “bless” his congregation because a woman, kneeling in front of him, wore a waist which, when she bent over for “blessing,” did not cover the shapeliness of her bosom.

What right the priest had to look at the woman’s bosom so exposed I will not discuss. For the life of me, I cannot see what the unintentional exposure of a woman’s bosom, particularly to a priest, has to do with blessings from a direct messenger of God. And the *New York Times* of August 11, 1924, in a cable from Bergamo, Italy, quotes the Mgr. Marelli, Bishop of Bergamo, on women who “lewdly expose their nudity,” as saying, “Women must enter church decently dressed, with head and breast covered, without décolleté and with arms covered. Their gowns must be sufficiently long and without indecent transparencies.”

Bishop Marelli has also ordered nuns in monasteries who conduct laundries to refuse to wash any articles of clothing which are “indicative of indecency.”

If a priest or any one else has any objection to the form, dress or acts of any one as being immoral, what must we say when we examine the Bible in our search for a moral guide?