

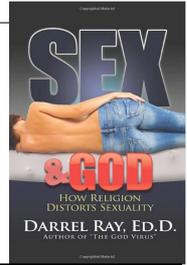


Books

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The Joy of Godless Sex

Sex and God • Darrel Ray • IPC Press • 2012



IF YOU WANT to understand how religion distorts and influences our sexuality in order to control us, then look no further than *Sex and God*, a wonderfully positive, humane, and healthy book. The fact that many common beliefs, including those about our sexuality, are founded in religious indoctrination and can impact on us without our knowledge, is something that even the atheist may not be aware of. In fact we can all be affected by religion to various degrees. Psychologist Dr Darrel W. Ray, has produced an outright classic which will benefit anyone with an open mind. And I do mean anyone.

Within its mine of helpful information, and what the author stresses above all else, is that religion (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc) is poisonous to your sex life. "God and sex don't mix" is the message. Sex is better and richer without the feelings of guilt and dirt often associated with religion. "Guilt is a key tool by which religion controls people. Guilt impedes effective communication and undermines sexual confidence and enjoyment" (Alex Comfort in *The Joy of Sex*). This important lesson is constantly played down and ignored in religion, for obvious reasons.

In chapter 2 – *You can take Religion out of Sex, But you can't take Sex out of Religion* – Ray says, "Religious sexual morality is fundamentally meaningless. Any instruction is largely negative". Holy books such as the *Bible* or the *Koran* don't instruct us in 'ways to give a woman an orgasm', for example. The joys of oral sex and the pleasures of masturbation are not important in such books. As Mark Twain ironically observed: "Of all the delights of this world, man cares most for sexual intercourse. He will go to any length for it. Risk fortune, character, reputation, life itself, and what do you think he has done? He has left it out of his heaven! Prayer takes its place" (*Notebook*, 1906). Sex is certainly the weak spot of religion.

Ray makes this humorous comment about the Catholic Church: "What would happen if sexual restrictions were taken out of the equation? Can you imagine the Pope waking up one morning and saying, 'Wow, I had the best wet dream last night. I think we will make masturbation legal in the Catholic Church'?" Now, if only that were true. And he makes the point, in chapter 4 – *Did Jesus Masturbate? And Other Interesting Thoughts*: "The idea of God watching you during sex, knows when you are masturbating and sees you when you look lustfully at another person comes from early Christian writings that are influenced by a strong anti-sexual mythology". To have a puritanical god watching you at all times is clearly not designed for those of us who enjoy sex.

On masturbation, the Christian religion teaches that it is wrong or at best questionable. The author makes so many important points here. He says that "Jesus' idea that lust in the heart is the same as adultery feeds right into the guilt around masturbation" (Matt. 5:27-28). It most certainly does, as any ex-evangelical Christian will tell you. Since masturbation involves the imagination and visualisation, such teaching is absolute poison for anyone who enjoys this harmless activity. As an ex-Christian, it was more than enough to make me feel like a rapist.

In chapter 3, *Screwing With Religious Myths*, Ray informs us further that many myths are built into our sexual ideas, and that many of us never question or examine them. They include the following. God is watching as you have sex. Homosexuality is a far greater sin than adultery. Women should cover themselves for modesty in the sight of the Lord. Women should be sexually available to their husbands under almost any condition. Sex outside of marriage is wrong. Religious leaders are equipped to counsel you on sex and marriage. Teaching children and adolescents about sex will encourage them to do it. Teaching children about Jesus' plan will help them resist sexual temptation. Fantasising about sex is wrong. No one else feels the sexual feelings you feel, so you must be sinful. Too much sex in marriage is wrong. Women don't enjoy sex. All men want from women is sex. Women who have had a lot of sex partners are sluts. Men who have a lot of sex partners just use women. Women should be subservient to men. Anal sex is repulsive and wrong in the sight of god. Women are the tempters and lead men astray. Oral sex is unnatural. And ministers who go astray deserve forgiveness just as Jesus commands. Ray says: "These myths and many more are part of the larger map of sex that we carry around in our heads. You may not believe most or any of these, but many people do". The pernicious influence of religion is something we need to be aware of for our own good.

So much of this great book is an education. Chapter 13, *Modern Religions And The Misogyny of God*, deals with how religions have sanctioned violence against women for thousands of years. Islam, Judaism, Buddhism and of course Christianity all claim that their laws and rules are needed to control the 'evils of sexual sin'. Such religious restrictions in reality are harmful and unnecessary. It's all about pious control and not having any positive sexuality. In the New Testament, Paul's ideas are that women should keep their mouths shut and heads covered and defer to men in all things (1 Corinthians 11:1-9, 14:34-35, 1 Timothy 2:11-14, Ephesians 5:22-24). Even from the earliest Christian writings of the Anite-Nicene fathers, sexual repression was a recurring theme. Tertullian (150-230 CE), the great Christian apologist from Carthage, makes hundreds of sex-negative references about women. "Do you not know that you are each an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age. The guilt must of necessity live too. You are the Devil's gateway... You destroyed so easily God's image, man. As you deserted the law, even the Son of God had to die". This sexist ignoramus is often called the father of Latin Christianity and a revered saint of the Catholic Church. Such ideas set the pace for sexual distortion, reflecting the already misogynistic environment of the New Testament.

Those of us who have left religion are given a chapter of our own in *Sex and God* – chapter 16, *What Happens When You Leave Religion*. For many, and I'll be succinct, sex is better and hotter! When the sexual guilt (or the idea of a puritanical god who's always watching you) experienced in religious training starts to go away, or lose its grip, the fun and joy of sex is let loose. This great book has so much more to offer than what I've touched on. I cannot recommend it enough.