

SEX AFTER RELIGION

By Ron Steelman ©2011

Religions claim to be good and good for us. But first they require us to accept a picture of the world the way our religion paints it. The requirements generally are: belief in the god of your religion and his/her creation stories; belief in the published sacred book given to you by your god; belief in your god's explanation of how to seek redemption (because we're always told we've done something bad); belief in your religion's carrot and the stick (the promise of heaven and the threat of hell); belief in peculiar and very specific dietary laws; belief in the way your genitals should be trimmed; belief in the threats made by your god if you don't do his bidding; belief in about twenty-five other things that don't make much sense to you either; and most importantly, belief in what your religion tells you about how and when and with whom to have sex.

I'm sorry it took me 159 words to finally get to the word SEX, but I hope I've got your attention now.

Yes. SEX is very important to gods. It certainly seemed to be important to all of the Christian gods that I ran into growing up. There were so many gods – just within the protestant tent alone – that it was hard to keep track of all known sexual taboos.

From the very beginning, the god in the Bible told me that when Adam messed around with Eve, it was bad, bad, bad. They had to be punished (poor Eve got most of the blame). Therefore, if you have SEX you'd better feel guilty and come back to god and beg for forgiveness, and/or some sort of punishment. Beg, beg, beg. Thus, we have religion to thank for the linking of SEX to guilt. Thank you so much, god. (Next came begging for the SEX.)

SEX continues to be incredibly important to religionists today. From anti abortion to anti homosexual, from Catholic Priest and Nun Celibacy to Priestly pedophilia, anti masturbation to anti sex before marriage – religions seem obsessed with trying to control SEX. I, however, am now a secular humanist. I like to say I'm "Post-Theological." I have exorcised the religious guilt that attempted to inflict itself upon me up until I was 40 years old. I have to admit though, I really didn't know much about sex after religion, except that it seemed to be totally free of all that hideous religious guilt.

Recently I saw a headline that said, "Sex Improves Dramatically After Leaving Religion." That certainly caught my attention. The article was about a new survey/study by Dr. Darrel W. Ray, a psychologist, director of The Institute for Performance Culture and author of the best-selling book, *The God Virus: How Religion Infects Our Lives and Culture*, and author of two books on organizational psychology. The survey title is "Sex and Secularism: What Happens When You Leave Religion." Dr. Ray surveyed over 14,500 American Secularists. That's a relatively large survey and the first of its kind to survey secularists. It's a ground-breaking study of sexuality among the non-religious. The survey gave plenty of data to make some tentative conclusions about the secular community and secular SEX.

Here are some of the key findings: (and to quote)

1. Sex improves dramatically after leaving religion.
2. Sexual guilt has little staying power after leaving religion.
3. Those raised most religious show no difference from those raised least religious in their sexual behavior.
4. Those raised most religious experience far more guilt but have just as much sex.
5. Religious parents are far worse at educating their children on matters of sex.
6. Religious guilt differs in measurable amounts according to denomination.

The most important finding shows dramatic improvement in sexual satisfaction and a decrease in guilt after people left religion. Approximately 55% of respondents (this is a big number!) said their sex life greatly improved to an 8, 9 or 10 (on a 10 pt. scale) after leaving religion while only 2.2% said it became worse.

(more)

. . .The US government has been deeply involved in abstinence only education for almost 10 years. The government's own research shows that such programs do not work or at best, delay the onset of sexual behavior by months. Results of this survey closely mirror those of abstinence only programs. Children from religious homes don't delay sexual activities appreciably but they feel guilty about doing it and probably know less about sex and protecting themselves, than their secular counterparts.

. . .In the US, many religious leaders are against sex education in schools and insist that parents and churches should be primarily responsible. Results of this survey show parents, whether religious or not, are not particularly good at talking to their children. More secular parents do talk to their children 38% of the time compared to a mere 13% of religious parents. People from religious homes felt that their education in sex was poor compared to those from less religious homes."

I suggest that the conclusion we should draw from this new data is: if you want better SEX, become a secularist. Good SEX is part of a good life. Enjoy!

(The press release can be downloaded from <http://goo.gl/60etd> The release has a chart showing how the respondents' SEX lives changed. . .by religion. The chart is at the bottom of that page.)

(And for adults only, for some extra fun, there's a Web Extra: "What do atheists say in bed?" Listen to this radio play, inspired by Jeff Swenson's "Humanists in Love" comic strip to find out: <http://goo.gl/C2l04> . Scroll down most of the page to the link.)

IMPORTANT NEWS FLASH: (AP, The New York Times, Ron Steelman)

Last night (6-24-11) the New York state legislature passed the Gay Rights Marriage Bill and Governor Cuomo signed the bill which will take effect in 30 days.

Gay rights advocates are hoping the vote will galvanize the movement around the country and help it regain momentum after an almost identical bill was defeated here in 2009 and similar measures failed in 2010 in New Jersey and this year in Maryland and Rhode Island.

Though New York is a relative latecomer in allowing gay marriage, it is considered an important prize for advocates, given the state's size and New York City's international stature and its role as the birthplace of the gay rights movement, which is considered to have started with the Stonewall riots in Greenwich Village in 1969.

New York City's Mayor Bloomberg said, "Today's passage in the New York State Senate of legislation recognizing the right of couples to marry regardless of their gender is a historic triumph for equality and freedom. New York has always been a leader in movements to extend freedom and equality to people who had been denied full membership in the American family. By welcoming all people - no matter where they are from, what faith or philosophy they follow, or whom they love - New York became the strongest, most dynamic city in the world. And today, we are even stronger than we were yesterday."

Next, the U.S. government should repeal the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), signed into law in 1996 by President Bill Clinton. On February 23, 2011, Attorney General Eric Holder and President Obama announced their conclusion that DOMA is unconstitutional and would no longer defend DOMA Section 3 in court. This action is important because freedom of religion also means "freedom from religion." Oppressive majorities cannot vote away the constitutional rights of a minority. After all, it still takes a two-thirds vote of all the states to amend the constitution.

THANK GOD!

