

She loves me He loves me not

CJ Werleman reckons the love/hate relationship between God and her customers may be weighted more to one side than the other.

In a new book by CJ Werleman, the proposition is put that *God Hates you Hate Him Back*. Elsewhere in this issue, Geoff Cowan reviews the book, but in this interview, he discusses the themes of the book with the author, to discover why we are scared to upset Christians ... and Creationists.

Q *What's with the name of the book, God Hates You Hate Him Back?*

A Finding the right title was, practically, the hardest thing in producing the book. I believe I went through a dozen or so working titles throughout the writing process, but none captured the true essence of its message. In the final weeks before the due release date, a close mate was talking off the cuff about a scene from *Lethal Weapon 2*, whereby Danny Glover's character says, "I think God hates me!" To which Mel Gibson's (insert your own joke here) character replies, "Well, do what I do. Hate him back." This was the light bulb moment.

The title, I believe, is in synch with the message. That indeed the God of the Old Testament hates any person that is uncircumcised, and he goes to extraordinary lengths to ensure that societies sporting the 'unclean' penis are mercilessly ethnically cleansed at the hands of his wandering, xenophobic, illiterate, misogynistic, and bloody thirsty chosen few. So, if you're not an ancient Hebrew, why not hate him back? I do.

Q *You refer to the Bali bombing in the introduction of your book, how much influence did this incident have on the writing of the book?*

A Well, I was always suspicious of religion, even as a child. From my early perspective, it seems to make otherwise intelligent friends and family say some outrageously stupid things. So made a decision that I didn't need another influence in my life to make a fool of myself. I was already a consistent master of the idiotic statement, as evident by the fact I once tried to convince anyone who'd listen that Tiger Woods would never win a Major.

As for the religiously motivated suicide attacks on Bali in 2005, I guess that that tragic experience was responsible for lighting the motivational fire to dedicating the proceeding several years examining the Abrahamic texts.

Q *What was your motivation in writing the book?*

A My initial motivation was purely to read and understand the Bible. I've always been a voracious reader, almost to a fault, but it had never even crossed my mind to read God's biography. I mean, let's be honest, the book has a reputation for being as boring and tedious as *Mein Kampf*. But what I soon discovered, however, and once I started paraphrasing different passages to friends, is the Bible is a truly fascinating and entertaining read. For starters, there

are more than 200 references to the male genitalia, and who doesn't enjoy a good dick joke?

Ultimately, of all the biblical reference books I had come across, none told the stories, chapter by chapter, in a way that it is entertaining and easy to understand. I believe this is what makes 'God Hates You' unique, and the reason it has been received as well as it has. Phew!

Q *You stated that your intention was to de-mystify the Bible; do you think you have done this?*

A I hope so, as that was certainly the objective when I set out to write it. I've had others comment, "Your book has finally made the Bible accessible to people who ordinarily would never dedicate the time to reading the Holy Book from cover-to-cover." If this sentiment is shared by a majority of my readers, and I'm hopeful that's the case, then I've been successful in what I set out to do.

Q *Have you received any grief from the god botherers?*

A Surprisingly and thankfully, I haven't received an overt death threat. Although, I did hear Christopher Hitchens once commented that the guy who doesn't threaten you, is the one to worry about. So there's that, I guess. But most of the hate mail, or the 'doing God's service' mail, comes typically in the form of, "You're going to burn in hell, asshole" or "You're a disgusting heathen maggot!" But I'm OK with all that. It's the condescending "I'm glad you're on the



forces, while also claiming that he was “not in the business of body counts.” But the General knows that it’s a way of keeping the public up to date without getting too deep into nuanced strategy and so forth.

I included the body count metric at the conclusion of each of the Old Testament chapters as a reminder of the atrocities God committed each step of the journey to the Promised Land. It reminds us that, at least in God’s mind, the ends justify the means.

Q *At the beginning of the chapter on Leviticus, you state that this chapter is pretty much irrelevant today. Do you think the Bible is irrelevant period?*

A Much of Leviticus is irrelevant today because it reads as an ancient Hebrew cooking manual. It includes the minutiae of preparing a grain offering or animal sacrifice, and the correct method for burning incense. (Interestingly, a recent study in the UK has linked the fumes from incense to respiratory ailments. Thanks again, God.)

I would never say the Bible in its entirety is irrelevant, as it remains the most significant book in the history of western civilisation, but it is irrelevant as a guide to modern moral behaviour, unless you think marrying a 12 year old is a swell idea or trading your wife for two camels and a goat is good business. More importantly, it is irrelevant in its ability to help mankind deal with the big issues we face today – global warming, stem cell research, sustainable habitats, economic management, and so forth.

Q *I love the section where you explain, in detail, the section of Leviticus that many Christians cite in regards to homosexuality. You enter into a complete list of all the other things that people are not allowed to do, such as two crops per field, that your son can be stoned for cursing daddy etc. As a result, you use the term “Cafeteria Christian” which indicates that believers select certain items on the menu, rather than others.*

Do you think that Cafeteria Christians undermine the church or demonstrate how the church selects

its own because it knows it cant stone teenagers but it can insult homosexuals?

Do you think that if atheists push these contradictions, that perhaps, some believers will start to question their belief?

A Well, the Cafeteria Christian is borne from the fact that a vast majority of Christians have either never read the Bible or understood it. One particular survey that I cite in the book is one that examined Bible literacy in the United States. The results of that are staggering. While 93 per cent of American households contain at least one copy of the Good Book:

- More than 50 per cent don’t know that Genesis is the first book of the Bible.
- More than 50 per cent can’t name even one of the Gospels.
- More than 60 per cent can’t name at least five of the 10 commandments

It’s fair to conclude that, for a majority of Christians, their understanding of the Bible is limited to the sound-bites heard during Sunday’s prayer group - “Jesus forgives”, “Love thy neighbour”, “Turn the other cheek” and so on. Moreover, I know Christians that have called themselves such for the better part of 30 years or more and they’ve got no clue just how barbaric some of God’s 613 commandments truly are. While they’re familiar with the phrase “the fall of Jericho”, few understand that this was a thorough God-led genocide of the most heinous kind. But what evangelical minister, whose salary is drawn from the tithing of his flock, is going to educate his sheeple with the barbarism of the Old Testament, and the immorality of blood sacrifice within the New?

I absolutely believe that biblical literacy is a fast track path to deconversion. Only a complete ignoramus without a hint of rationality can dismiss the evil contained within the Bible. Ultimately, the more the faithful learn, the sooner they will run out of excuses.

C J Werleman

path to Jesus and the truth” types that really push my blood pressure into the hypertension zone.

Q *The book shows the many contradictions in the Bible. Why do you think there are so many?*

A Simply because it has so many authors, most of whom are anonymous. And no Wikipedia for fact checking. The Old Testament alone has more than 40 different authors, and then we get to the terrible mismatch of irreconcilably varying accounts of the multiple authors of the New Testament, all whose identities remain unknown to us, with the exclusion of Saint Paul.

The further difficulty the New Testament runs into is that the respective accounts (Gospels) of Jesus’ life are dressed up as eye-witness accounts, when in fact, these stories were written 30-70 years after he was alleged to have lived. You can imagine the difficulty this presents. It’s a real hack job, and one that I present in great detail in my next book

Q *At the end of every chapter you give a body count. Why?*

A We love body counts. We try not to, due to the lessons of Vietnam, but we can’t help it. Even General Schwarzkopf, during Gulf War Episode One, gloated at the disparate casualty figures between the Iraqis and Coalition

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Continued...

Q *Many of the sections that you discuss relate to the importance of sex, sex with whores, death by torture, people like King David hacking people apart and the complete killing of entire races. Now, I know that much of this is just plain fiction and never really happened, such as Noah's Ark, but if people want to believe that God loves you, how do they accept this concept when the Old Testament is just one long snuff movie?*

A They accept it because they don't read it. And in not reading it for themselves, they don't believe it or me. I've had Christians debate me on the Bible, and they've flat out said things like, "Oh, it does not say that in the Bible." I then point them to the reference, and they're like "Damn, I've never heard that before!"

The other justification or defence they'll offer is the "it comes down to one's own interpretation" excuse. Well, sorry to burst that bubble, but the laws of the Bible are not metaphorical. For instance, when God says you're to be put to death for raping a goat, but when you rape a woman - you only have to pay 50 shekels to her father, and marry her, there is no clever word play or metaphorical excuse to escape with. It's black and white.

Q *I have read a number of other reviews of your book. One FaceBook friend of mine, Andrew Atkinson wrote that "I wish this book was mandatory reading for all people on earth" and "This book is one that I would have my children read."*

A This is a great review by a well-known atheist book reviewer that I have respect for and who has read 170 books on related sceptic/atheist subjects before getting to yours. How do you respond to that compliment?

How do I respond? I love it! But in all seriousness, I find that kind of praise a little undeserved. I'm not in the same class as a Bart Ehrman or a Richard Dawkins, I'm not even in the same post code. Amusingly, one book review referred to me as a "blue collar intellectual", and I kind of like that, despite its generosity, as I really do see myself as merely a guy that has the ability to summarise religion in a manner that people at the pub would enjoy listening to.

Q *When I was at the Atheist Convention in March 2010, the lead speaker Richard Dawkins delivered a brilliant assessment of religion. I will quote one of his better lines: "The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty unjust, unforgiving control freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully."*

After reading your book I had a greater understanding of that statement than before. When you consider what is stated in the Bible with the conclusions stated above, such as Dawkins, why do you think that religion, especially the creationists who are strictly for the Old Testament, is allowed to operate?

Are we as a society so scared of these people that we would rather allow them to push this fiction rather than countering it with rationality, science and reason?

A I think they're allowed to operate, as you call it, because secularists and those on the social left are terrified of calling bullshit on their barbaric ancient mythologies. Political correctness has gone too far. For instance, I think criticising or denouncing Islam should be a free for all. The Koran and the hadiths are morally repugnant doctrines. While I don't deny the right of Muslims to believe or practice their religion, calling much of their belief reprehensible, however, should be fine. On the proviso, of course, one can support their criticism with textual understanding.

It all comes down to the silliness of supporting the mantra, "respect the beliefs of others". What utter rubbish. I acknowledge the right of Muslims to practice their faith wherever and whenever they want, but I don't respect it. The same goes for Nazis, white supremacists, social conservatives, creationists, gay bashers, etc.

Q *I was recently reading how creationists in Queensland are teaching kids in scripture the following:*

- *That Noah collected dinosaur eggs just before the big flood*
- *That people and dinosaurs lived together*
- *That the great flood skewed all the data and subsequently carbon dating is useless*
- *That DNA was not invented at the time of Adam and eve, that is why they were allowed to inbred*
- *That Adam and Eve had a spell that prevented the dinosaurs from eating them*

The fact that these statements are being taught in state schools, in fact any school in Australia, is scandalous. These statements fly in the face of science, evidence such as fossils, carbon dating, geology, the list goes on and on.

What is your opinion of these creationists?

How should atheists, sceptics and rational thinkers go about dealing with these people (besides reading your book)?

A Well, I make the distinction between religious believers and religious believers who believe in the creation story. The latter, simply, are morons. What else can you say about a person who can look at all the evidence available to mankind today, and then still think we descended from a single pair of DNA? I having nothing but contempt for a person who believes a 900 year old man ushered two of every species onto a boat and then encouraged them to have sex for the next forty days. Does this make me an asshole? Probably. But life is too grand and too short to concern myself with the opinions of dimwits.

Ha ... yes, reading my book is a

good start for the Ark believers. But the best way to confront their insidiously sneaky campaign of championing 'intelligent design' into our classrooms is to confront them. But they will win, because once again we're terrified of not being politically correct. We're afraid of being called a bigot or intolerant for opposing their stupidity. Stupidity that will only serve to retard our school systems, putting today's youth at an unnecessary disadvantage to the educational pace setters of the world. So, wherever you see such nonsense being taught in your child's classroom, do something about it. Make noise, be heard.

Q *I recall in March this year, Richard Dawkins was on the ABC Show Q&A. He was talking to a Minister in the Rudd government and the Minister stated he believed that the Earth was less than 10,000 years old. Dawkins was astounded that a person who makes decisions on behalf of the Australian*

public would believe that the Earth was less than 10,000 years old.

After writing a book on the Bible and providing analysis, how would you have responded to such a statement by a minister in government?

A I watched that particular episode and, for someone such as myself who has lived outside of Australia for a number of years, I was shocked that a member of the Australian parliament could present his ill-found beliefs in such an appallingly clumsy and ill thought manner. This is a guy elected by his constituents to think about things, but even when it came to his own faith, which he proudly thrust forth, he hadn't even examined what it was he believed in.

In many ways, we as Aussies like to think we're more socially progressive than the United States, but then you have this guy elected. This should concern us.

Q *Finally, can you give us an insight about your next book?*

A I always love a question like this. My next book is titled *Jesus Lied. He Was Only Human*. It is more or less a line-by-line debunking of the New Testament and therefore Christianity. It examines the origins of Christianity, the origins of the New Testament, the conflicting accounts and irreconcilable discrepancies of the Gospels, historical flaws, and the hack job manner in which the entire religion was pieced together. I like to think this book leaves no place to hide for Christian apologists. ■

Note: *Further details of Werleman's books can be found at www.cjwerleman.com*

About the interviewer:

Geoff Cowan is a member of the Australian Sceptics and an active member of the Western Sydney Freethinkers.



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