

Useful Free Booklets Series

# Why I am Atheist

Truth Does not Need Faith, Lies Do.

By Jean-Georges Estiot

This booklet has been created to encourage open discussion, thoughtful study and careful critical enquiry. It is intended as a resource that invites readers to question, reflect and explore ideas deeply, rather than accept them without consideration. Permission is given to reproduce the content of this booklet for any purpose.

My email is [jgestiot@gmail.com](mailto:jgestiot@gmail.com) and your feedback is welcome.

## **They had to teach me God**

Like every other baby, I was born with no gods, no prayers, and no holy books in my head. I did not arrive quoting scripture or fearing sin. I arrived hungry, noisy, curious, and completely unaware of anything divine. That is the natural state of a human being. Atheism is not something you acquire. It is the default. What comes later is belief, and that has to be taught.

I was told about God the same way children are told about Santa Claus, except no one winked. Everyone around me acted like this invisible character was serious business. He watched everything. He cared about everything. And if I did not behave, there were eternal consequences. Hell was not just a story. It was a threat. The strange part is that if no one had ever told me about their religion, I could never be judged by it. I could never go to their hell. But they insist on spreading it. They knock on doors. They preach on corners. They slip leaflets into your hand. They tell you you are lost, then blame you for not believing what they just made you hear.

It was all about obedience. Not understanding, just obedience. You could ask questions about anything else. Why is the sky blue? How do planes fly? What makes thunder? But not about God. That was sacred ground. Faith meant silence. It meant pretending to know things you were not allowed to question.

At first, I tried to believe. Not because it felt true, but because it was expected. You want to be good. You want to be accepted. But even as a child, I noticed something odd. This god they talked about never showed up. They said he was always there, but I could not see him, hear him, or feel him. He stayed suspiciously absent from everything except their explanations. Everything good was credited to him. Everything bad was blamed on us. What kind of deal is that?

I asked questions. I got vague answers. I asked better questions. I got uncomfortable smiles and irritated replies. The answers began to sound more like excuses. I was told that God had a plan, that his ways were mysterious, that asking too much was dangerous. Eventually, I learned the rule. Belief was not to be examined. It was to be accepted. Even when it made no sense. Especially then.

That was my first lesson in religion. Not that it is true, but that it must not be challenged. And once you learn that, you realise the problem is not you. It is the system that treats doubt as a disease and curiosity as rebellion. You realise that belief

is not built on knowledge. It is built on fear, repetition, and the hunger to belong. And once you see that clearly, you do not go back.

## **The questions they could not answer**

I never set out to disprove God. I was not trying to be clever or rebellious. I just wanted answers. If there really is a being that created the universe, watches every thought, judges every action, and decides whether we deserve eternal reward or endless torture, then the questions should matter. In fact, they should be welcomed. Any god worth worshipping should not fear questions. But strangely, the people who believe in him do.

Why is there suffering? Why are the innocent punished? Why does God need worship? Why create billions of people only to send most of them to hell? Why hide, and then blame people for not believing? Why allow children to die of hunger while answering prayers for football wins and exam results? Why does he seem to care so much about what we do naked, but not about what we do to each other in war?

These are simple questions. A child can ask them. I did ask them. At first, with curiosity. Later, with frustration. Because the people I asked either could not answer or would not. Some looked uncomfortable. Some gave quick, tidy responses that avoided the point. Others became angry, as if I had insulted them by even asking. But I had not mocked. I had not sneered. I had just questioned. And that alone was too much.

I learned early that religion is not built to handle real questions. It is built to silence them. When I asked why suffering exists, I was told that God is testing us. But I had to wonder, what kind of test involves watching a child starve? What teacher hands you a test, offers no help, and punishes you forever for failing? That is not justice. That is cruelty disguised as purpose.

When I asked why belief mattered more than action, I was told that faith is the foundation. Without faith, nothing else counts. So a kind, generous person who doubts is damned, while a cruel, arrogant person who believes is saved. This was not just nonsense. It was deeply immoral. It taught me that religion does not reward goodness. It rewards obedience.

The pattern became clear. The harder the question, the vaguer the answer. At times they quoted scripture. At times they pointed to sunsets and said, "That is proof of God." But the sunset is also proof of the Earth turning. Of physics. Of light

scattering through air. You cannot point to beauty and claim ownership for your god alone. Beauty belongs to reality, not religion.

Eventually, the answers turned to threats. Hell, punishment, divine wrath. I was told I was too proud, too curious, too stubborn. As if curiosity were a flaw. As if pride in seeking truth were a sin. I saw how quickly the tone changed, from warm smiles to cold warnings. It was never about finding answers. It was about keeping control.

And so I kept asking. Because if your god cannot survive a question, he does not deserve your faith. If your belief collapses under the weight of honest doubt, then it was never strong to begin with. I did not lose faith because I wanted to. I lost it because I asked for truth and they gave me fear.

## **Fear and control**

Religion does not survive on truth. It survives on fear. Not just the fear of hell, but the fear of being wrong, of being alone, of stepping outside the group. Fear keeps people quiet. Fear keeps people loyal. When belief cannot be defended with facts, it is protected with consequences.

From a young age, I was told what God wanted. He wanted me to obey. Not understand. Obey. The rules were clear, even if the reasons were not. Do this, or else. Believe this, or else. The “or else” was always waiting at the end of every sentence. Hell, punishment, disapproval, rejection. And not just from God, but from family, friends, teachers. Religion wraps itself in love and forgiveness, but behind that are threats. If you walk away, you are lost. If you doubt, you are broken. If you question, you are dangerous.

They call it guidance, but it is control. They say it brings peace, but only if you follow the script. Religion does not ask you to explore. It asks you to surrender. And for many, that feels comforting. Someone else has the answers. Someone else has the plan. But that comfort comes at a price. You lose the right to think freely. You lose the courage to ask. You hand over your mind and call it faith.

I began to see how deep the control went. It was in how people spoke, how they dressed, how they thought. It shaped who they could love, what they could study, what dreams were allowed. Even their emotions were regulated. Doubt was shameful. Anger was sinful. Desire was dangerous. Natural human feelings had to be suppressed, confessed, or punished.

And always, there was the need to be watched. God sees you at all times. He hears

every word, every thought. You cannot hide. You cannot escape. There is no privacy, not even in your head. That is not morality. That is surveillance. That is a dictator with perfect access.

I realised that religion does not just ask for belief. It demands surrender. Not just of your actions, but of your mind. You are not allowed to trust yourself. You are taught that your own reasoning is flawed, your own instincts are dirty, your own questions are dangerous. You must rely on someone else's book, someone else's voice, someone else's version of truth. And you must obey it, even when it makes no sense.

This is not how freedom works. This is not how truth behaves. Truth does not need to be enforced with fear. Truth does not require obedience. Truth does not collapse when you question it. Religion does.

## **Why faith is not a virtue**

I was always told that faith was a good thing. A noble thing. Something to be admired. Faith meant trust, commitment, hope. It was described like a light in the dark, something that guided you when everything else failed. But no one ever explained why it had to be blind. Why it had to ignore evidence. Why it was good to believe without reason.

I started to notice a strange double standard. In every other part of life, we are told to question. We are taught to think critically, to test ideas, to look for proof. You do not board a plane flown by someone who has faith in their skills but no training. You do not take a pill because someone has faith it might work. You want knowledge. You want testing. You want evidence. Except when it comes to God.

With religion, the rules change. The more you believe without proof, the better you are. Doubt becomes weakness. Evidence becomes irrelevant. Faith is treated not just as necessary, but as the highest good. The less you question, the more you are praised. The more you accept without thinking, the more you are celebrated.

That is not a virtue. That is surrender.

Faith asks you to stop thinking. It asks you to accept things that would sound absurd in any other context. A talking snake. A burning bush. A man living inside a fish. The Earth made in a week. A virgin birth. People rising from the dead. These are not reasonable claims. They are ancient stories. But the moment you say you do not believe them, you are told your problem is a lack of faith.

And yet faith never means trusting something you know is true. You do not need

faith to believe the sun will rise. You do not need faith to know fire burns or water wets. Faith only enters the picture when the evidence runs out. That should be a warning, not a recommendation.

Worse, faith has been used to justify every kind of cruelty. Wars, torture, executions, slavery. All defended in the name of faith. Not because of what people know, but because of what they refuse to question. You can excuse anything if you wrap it in belief. You can silence reason, suppress compassion, and ignore suffering, all while claiming to serve a higher power.

That is the danger. When you treat faith as a virtue, you no longer need to be right. You just need to be certain. And certainty without reason is a weapon.

I do not admire faith. I admire honesty. I admire people who say, "I do not know," and mean it. I admire the courage it takes to admit uncertainty and live with questions. That is not weakness. That is integrity. Faith demands that you close your eyes and follow. I would rather keep mine open and think.

## **The God I was supposed to love**

They told me God was love. That he cared for me, watched over me, and wanted what was best for me. But in the same breath, they told me that if I disobeyed him, doubted him, or failed to believe in him properly, he would punish me forever. That was my introduction to divine love. A love full of conditions, threats, and surveillance. A love you do not get to question. A love that does not feel like love at all.

I was supposed to worship this god. Not because he was kind, but because he was powerful. Not because he earned my respect, but because he demanded it. I was told he created me, and that alone meant I owed him everything. As if being created without consent puts me forever in debt. As if existence itself is a favour I am not allowed to question.

And when I did question, I was told that God's ways are above mine. That I cannot judge him. That morality does not apply to him the same way it applies to us. He can drown the world, slaughter cities, command obedience, and still be called good. If a human did what God is said to have done, we would call him a monster. But because it is God, we are expected to praise him. We are expected to call genocide justice and fear mercy.

I read the stories. I listened to the sermons. And I noticed a pattern. God is always right, even when he is cruel. God is always just, even when he is unfair. God is always

good, even when nothing about his actions makes sense. The message is simple: stop thinking and start worshipping.

But I could not. I could not love a being who demands fear. I could not respect a god who ties love to submission. I could not accept that eternal torture is justice, or that blind obedience is virtue. If this god exists, he is not good. If he does not exist, then people are worshipping an idea of control, wrapped in the language of devotion.

They said God is a father. But what kind of father threatens to burn you forever if you do not say you love him? What kind of father creates you flawed, then punishes you for being exactly as he made you?

I was supposed to love this god. Instead, I saw through him. I saw the fear behind the praise, the control behind the commandments, the cruelty behind the glory. And once I saw it, I could not unsee it. Love, real love, is not demanded. It is earned. And this god never earned mine.

## **Heaven, hell and other fairy tales**

One of the first things I was taught was that heaven is where the good people go and hell is where the bad people burn. It sounded simple, until you asked what made someone good or bad. Suddenly, it was not about kindness or honesty. It was about belief. It was about obedience. It was about saying the right words, worshipping the right god, and following the right rules. You could live a generous life and still be punished forever. You could be cruel, hateful, and arrogant, but still be rewarded if you believed correctly.

That was my first clue that heaven and hell were not really about justice. They were tools. Rewards and threats used to control behaviour. And like any good story, they were told early, repeated often, and never questioned out loud.

The promise of heaven is always vague. It is perfect, they say. Eternal peace, eternal joy, eternal love. But what does that even mean? No conflict, no mistakes, no surprises. No freedom to choose wrongly. That does not sound like life. That sounds like a frozen painting. A place where nothing ever goes wrong because nothing ever really happens. Perfection, when you think about it, is just another word for boredom stretched into forever.

And then there is hell. The favourite invention of religions that need obedience but lack good arguments. Eternal punishment for temporary mistakes. Burning, screaming, suffering, forever. Not for murder or cruelty, but often for thinking the

wrong thoughts or believing the wrong god. You are told that this is fair. That this is love. That this is justice.

But it is not. It is abuse dressed up as holiness.

If a parent said, "Love me or I will burn you," we would call it monstrous. If a government did it, we would call it a crime. But when religion does it, we are told it is sacred. The logic is twisted. If you end up in hell, it is your fault, even if you were lied to, misled, or never heard the right message. If you end up in heaven, it is God's mercy. If you are punished, you deserved it. If you are rewarded, you were lucky. Either way, God wins.

And yet, for all the talk of eternity, it is always this life that religion wants to control. What you wear. Who you love. What you read. What you say. The afterlife is the bait. The hook is planted here and now.

The truth is simple. If heaven and hell were real, they would not need to be sold like products. They would not need children to be scared into believing them. They would stand up to questions. But they do not. They fall apart the moment you stop being afraid. They shrink the moment you ask who benefits from making you believe.

Heaven and hell are not places. They are stories. And like all fairy tales, they reveal more about the storyteller than the world.

## **The joy of not knowing**

One of the things religion tries hardest to destroy is uncertainty. It tells you that not knowing is weakness. That doubt is dangerous. That the only safe place is inside a story where everything is planned, everything is explained, and everything happens for a reason. And people cling to that story because uncertainty feels like chaos. It feels like standing on the edge of a cliff, looking into a fog, with no map and no one to hold your hand.

But here is the truth. Not knowing is not chaos. It is honesty.

There is joy in not knowing. There is wonder in admitting that the universe is vast and strange and beyond full understanding. There is freedom in saying "I don't know" and not having to pretend otherwise. I do not know how life began. I do not know what, if anything, happens after death. And I am fine with that. I do not need a made-up answer to feel better. I do not need someone else's ancient guess to calm me down. I would rather live with open questions than closed lies.

Religion rushes to fill the gaps. If you do not know, it does. If you are afraid, it has a



solution. But the solution is not knowledge. It is comfort disguised as truth. It is a guess passed down for generations, told with authority, and sealed with threats. Once you step back, you realise how much of it is designed not to explain the world, but to protect people from feeling small in it.

But we are small. That is the beauty of it. We are tiny, fragile creatures on a floating rock in a universe so large we cannot measure it. And yet, here we are. Able to think, question, imagine. Able to explore without knowing everything. That is not weakness. That is strength. That is what it means to be human.

The more I learned to let go of the need for certainty, the more I felt at peace. Not the false peace of pretending to know, but the real peace of living honestly. I do not have all the answers, and I do not need to. What matters is how we live now, how we treat each other, and how we make sense of this one life we know we have.

Religion tells you that uncertainty is a gap to be filled. I see it as a space to grow. I would rather search with questions than settle for answers that cannot be questioned. That is not emptiness. That is freedom.

## **Why I speak out**

I stopped believing from around the age of 14. For a long time, I stayed quiet. I thought it was enough just to stop believing. I thought people had the right to believe what they wanted, and I still think that. But I also saw what those beliefs were doing. To children. To women. To science. To truth. I saw that religion is not happy just staying in people's hearts. It wants to be in schools, in governments, in hospitals, in laws, and even in people's bedrooms. It does not stop at belief. It wants power.

That was the moment I understood that remaining silent only supports the falsehood. By saying nothing, I was unintentionally giving power to something I believed was untrue. So I began to write about religion, choosing to confront it openly through words. Over time, I found myself engaging in debates with people who held extreme religious beliefs. These individuals often spoke with great certainty, but their arguments consistently fell apart under scrutiny. Their reasoning could not withstand close examination because it was built on flawed foundations. It reminded me of a castle of cards, easily toppled by the slightest pressure. The truth has a strength of its own, and when someone defends a position that lacks truth, it becomes difficult for them to sound convincing. When a person is wrong, no matter how confident their tone, their words ring hollow.

If religion stayed inside churches, mosques, temples, and private homes, I would leave it alone. But it does not. It comes into classrooms and tells lies about how the world works. It wants to tell people who they can marry, what they should wear, what books they can read, and how they must live or die. It asks for money, respect, and special treatment. And when you question it, it says you are the problem.

I speak out because children are being raised in fear. Not the kind that keeps you safe, but the kind that keeps you quiet. Fear of hell. Fear of being bad. Fear of invisible sins. I speak out because girls are told to stay silent, cover up, and obey. I speak out because boys are told not to cry, not to feel, and always be in charge. I speak out because gay people are told they are wrong, women are treated like they belong to men, and people who question anything are told they deserve to suffer.

I speak out because religion is treated like it is too special to criticise. You can joke about politics, you can question science, but if you say anything about faith, people get angry. But faith is not above question. If it hurts people, it needs to be questioned. If it spreads lies, it needs to be challenged. If it stands in the way of truth, it needs to be pushed back.

I do not speak out to hurt people. I do not hate those who believe. I hate the system that teaches people not to think. I hate the rules that punish honest questions and reward blind obedience. I hate the fear that keeps people tied to ideas they did not choose for themselves.

Some say I should leave people alone and let them believe whatever makes them happy. But when those beliefs shape how people vote, how they treat others, and what they teach their kids, then it is no longer private. It is public. And it matters.

So I speak. Because truth matters. Because silence helps lies. Because I wish someone had spoken up earlier.

## **Belief or truth**

Some people think atheists just want to be different. Or that we are angry at God. Or that we want to live without rules. None of that is true for me. I do not believe in God for one simple reason. I care too much about what is true to pretend.

If someone tells me something amazing, I ask for proof. If they say there is treasure buried in my backyard, I do not just grab a shovel and start digging. I want to know how they know. I want to see the map. That is not being negative. That is being honest. And if someone says there is a powerful being who made the whole

universe, watches my every thought, and has a plan for my life, then that deserves even more questions, not fewer.

I care about what is real. I care about evidence. I care about asking questions, even when the answers are uncomfortable. Religion says, "Just believe." I cannot do that. Not because I am stubborn, but because I have learned that truth does not fear questions. Only lies do.

Truth is not afraid of being tested. Truth stands up when you push it. Truth makes sense, fits with reality, and stays the same no matter how you feel. But faith is different. It changes depending on the religion, the preacher, the book, or the country. It relies on feelings, not facts. It tells you to stop asking, to just trust. I cannot call that truth. I call that giving up.

I have heard all the arguments. That God is real because people feel him. That prayers work because someone once got better. That the universe needs a creator because it is too perfect. But feelings are not proof. Stories are not facts. And the universe is not perfect. It is full of chaos, suffering, and accidents. It looks exactly like what we would expect if no one were in charge.

If there is a god, I want to know. I am not afraid of that. But I want more than a book, more than a sermon, more than a feeling. I want something real. And until then, I will live without belief, not because I enjoy saying no, but because I care too much about saying yes only when it is true.

That is not cold. That is not empty. That is honest. And for me, that is enough.

## **One life, no second chance**

Religion teaches you that this life is just a test. That the real life comes later, after death. That heaven is waiting if you pass, and hell if you fail. So people spend their lives worrying about the next one. They waste time trying to please a god they cannot see, following rules they do not understand, hoping for rewards that never come in this world.

But what if there is no next life?

What if this is it?

That is not a sad thought. It is a wake-up call. It means your time matters. Your choices matter. This life is not a waiting room. It is the only stage you get. There are no rehearsals. No extra turns. No undo button. Once it is gone, it is gone.

That idea scares some people. It used to scare me. But then I realised something. A

single life makes everything more precious. A single chance makes love more urgent, kindness more important, and honesty more powerful. You do not need to fear hell to be good. You do not need a reward to show compassion. You just need to care. About others. About truth. About the world you are in right now.

Religion often tells you that without God, life has no meaning. But meaning is not something you are given. It is something you create. It comes from what you do, what you build, who you help, and how you live. I do not need a god to give me purpose. I make my own. And I do not need a forever to make this moment matter.

People spend their lives trying to earn something after death. I would rather spend mine trying to make something during life.

No god. No script. Just one chance to live honestly, to think clearly, to love fully, and to leave this world a little better than I found it.

That is enough for me.

## **Final thought**

I did not choose to be an atheist to be difficult. I did not walk away from religion because I wanted to rebel. I walked away because the stories stopped making sense. The answers were not answers. The rules were not fair. The god I was told to love looked more like a ruler who demanded fear than a being who deserved respect.

What I found instead was honesty. I found the courage to say, "I don't know," and mean it. I found the freedom to ask questions without feeling guilty. I found value in life itself, not in the promise of something after. I stopped pretending. I stopped making excuses for ideas that did not hold up. And I started thinking for myself.

I know many people believe because it brings them comfort. But comfort is not truth. A soft lie is still a lie. And I care more about what is real than what is easy. If that makes me an outsider, so be it. I would rather stand alone in truth than sit quietly in a crowd of believers who are too afraid to ask why.

I am not angry. I am not lost. I am not empty. I am awake.

And I am not going back.

When I die, I will be dead. That is all. No light, no tunnel, no judgement. Just stillness. It will be a quiet and welcome end to a story that never truly began, because I was never the start. I was the continuation of a continuation of a continuation. A long thread made from other lives, other choices, other accidents. I did not arrive with purpose. I was not sent. I simply appeared, like every other creature, shaped by time,

chance, and blood. And when I am gone, the world will go on without me, just as it did before I was here. Even when mankind becomes extinct, the world will still go on. That is not something to fear or celebrate. It simply is reality.

What makes life truly remarkable is not the idea that it serves as some sort of trial to determine whether we are worthy of a place beyond this world. What stands out as most astonishing is the simple fact that we are all alive at the same moment, sharing this brief experience together. The chance of any of us being born is so astronomically small that it defies all attempts to calculate it. Think of how easily things could have gone differently. If even one of your ancestors had chosen a different path, perhaps turning left instead of right five thousand years ago, your entire existence would have vanished before it ever began. You would not just be absent from this world, you would never even have existed as a thought in someone's imagination. Being alive is a rare and precious opportunity. Rather than letting your life be weighed down by the myths and explanations passed down from ancient people who lacked the tools to understand the world properly, embrace the sheer wonder of being here. Recognise the gift that is your existence and live it fully. You are in Paradise.