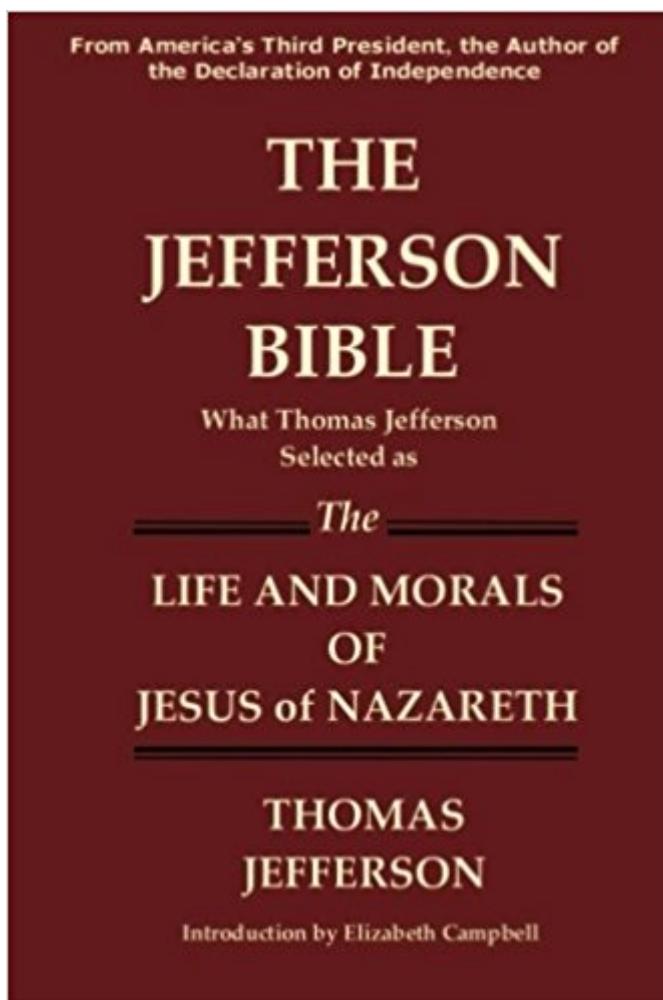


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THE JEFFERSON BIBLE What Thomas Jefferson Selected As The Life And Morals Of Jesus Of Nazareth



Synopsis

In 1820, Thomas Jefferson worked for months, often by candlelight, carefully cutting the pages of several Bibles to remove the teachings of Jesus. He then reorganized those verses and pasted them into a new book that he called simply, "The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth." Jefferson believed that the words of Jesus were "the most benevolent code of morals which has ever been offered to man," and he wanted to study his teachings apart from the rest of the Gospels. With a boldness that would have shocked many of his contemporaries, Jefferson eliminated anything that he felt was unsupported by history or science, including the virgin birth, Jesus' miracles and the resurrection. He then rearranged the remaining passages chronologically and in parallel translations in English, French, Greek and Latin, combining parts of all four gospels into a narrative that begins in Bethlehem with Jesus' birth and ends with his burial. Too controversial to be published during Jefferson's lifetime, *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*, now usually called *The Jefferson Bible*, was reprinted by an act of Congress in 1904, and for fifty years all freshman congressmen were given a copy when they took their oath of office. *The Jefferson Bible: What Thomas Jefferson Selected as the Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*, includes Jefferson's original English text, as well as a new introduction that examines his life and complicated religious beliefs. There is also an index listing Jefferson's selections from each gospel and how he chose to reorganize them. Jefferson's clear narrative, nicely formatted in this edition, makes this book a good introduction to Jesus' life and teachings for both adults and younger readers. It will also be of special note for anyone interested in ethics, Christianity, American history, or the religious ideas of one of America's most influential Founding Fathers, and is recommended as a worthy and very readable companion to the Smithsonian's recent facsimile edition. Highly recommended.

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Customer Reviews

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) was America's third president and the author of the Declaration of Independence.

Simply a beautiful book that includes an exact replica of Thomas Jefferson's handcrafted work in which he cut apart Greek, Latin, French and English New Testaments and pasted them together to highlight the "Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth extracted textually from the Gospels." A thorough introduction by two scholars tells why and how this was done. Jefferson's careful, hand-written preface to his work, complete with strike-outs and interjections, illustrates the attention to detail that our third President brought to this endeavor. And we can't fail to appreciate the color plates and a tipped-in map of the Holy Land.

I bought this because there have been so much made of the "Jefferson Bible" from left- and right-leaning people with left-leaners using it to bolster their calls for separation of church and state and right-wingers using it to bolster their claims that there is no such call. The well-written, thoroughly documented articles at the beginning of the book make Thomas Jefferson's positions clear (neither extremist viewpoint gets it right) and the digital pictures of Jefferson's book itself gave me the chance to see just what he had done. Thank you, Smithsonian, for making this available to the public at large.

The Smithsonian's reproduction of TJ's remade bible is a welcome volume in my library of Founding Fathers' writings. Its deteriorated condition meant major conservation work--all carefully explained in the preface sections--and, assuming an accurate reproduction, now makes this work available to non scholars and interested readers. Unlike some in previous reviews, the source of printing did not bother me--it is the ideas presented that are the important work. I found the book to be sturdy and well printed. The introductory sections on the history of the book and the conservation efforts undertaken were interesting (to me) and worked well with an online course I was taking at the time

of acquisition. The introductory remarks followed by a thorough reading of the abridged bible, give a unique look into Jefferson's very private and almost unshared views on his religious beliefs. This was a worthwhile purchase. Disclaimer: it is (apparently) the same physical size as TJ's original but I find the reproduced type very small for these older eyes. Needs to be read with a good light over the shoulder. While I do not really want a large print edition, one or two points of type size would have made this a "5".

amazing to hold a facsimile of jefferson's work in my hands. the book itself is beautiful and inside you can actually see the time and work he took with this very personal project. an insight into his thinking/reasoning. i love all things old and historical and for that reason alone it would make this a great purchase, but it is also the smithsonian edition and that makes it even more special. a great addition to any library.

Jefferson threw out all the myths and fabrications and left the guiding principles in place. If Americans lived by these few morals America would be Greater Again. This cuts to the chafe.

This was more than I'd anticipated, and much better. This rendition by the Smithsonian gives the feel of what Jefferson created by piecing together parts of the New Testament, right down to his notes in the margin and glued in notes--and you can see the power of his thinking. Jefferson took out the miracles and left the "Life and Morals," that which could be experienced without the Devine, and which shows a life well lived and teachings that are relevant today. But to me, the biggest bonus is the front-matter, telling of the times in which the writing was done--and showing how much Jefferson's time was like today. A worthy read both from a spiritual and historical viewpoint.

Jefferson was the one-man version of "The Jesus Seminar" of his time. In fact, in their rendition of the New Testament, "The Five Gospels," "The Jesus Seminar" pays tribute to our third president. Anyone wanting to know what one of the preeminent founders of this country thought about Jesus, Christianity and the Bible, must read this book. This is a beautiful book. You can actually see Jefferson "cuting-and-pasting," in four languages no less, as he separated the "diamonds" of wisdom from the "dunghill," as he expressed it.

If you like top quality books, the Smithsonian Edition is beautiful. If you just want to know about Jefferson's Bible, there are less expensive options that should satisfy your interest.

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