

Yx37 – Closing Comments – 2 – Promotion of the God Lie

This is the 37th in a series of posts dealing with what I call “the God Lie” and the 2nd of four posts containing some closing comments on 1) Origins, 2) Promotion, 3) Adoption, and 4) Rejection of the God Lie. For these final four posts I’ve decided to have a little fun (☺) by illustrating ideas with some Calvin and Hobbes comic strips, which were created during 1985 to 1995 by Bill Watterson¹ and which (I remind readers) are still copyrighted, requiring permission from Universal Press Syndicate before being used for commercial purposes.

As I briefly reviewed in the previous post, the origins of the God Lie seem to have been a series of mistaken ideas by primitive people, mistakes that clerics later manipulated into lies. These mistakes can be organized into two broad categories. One category includes misinterpretations of experiences and misunderstandings of natural phenomena, including:

- 1) The people’s mistaken idea (probably derived from speculations about their own shadows, images, dreams, and hallucinations) that they possessed a “second self”, “spirit”, or “soul”,
- 2) Their mistaken idea that “the spirits of the dead” were still present (since such “spirits” appeared in their dreams and hallucinations),
- 3) Their mistake that they, too, would experience an “afterlife”,
- 4) Their mistake that everything (animals, streams, mountains, storms, etc.) possessed spirits,
- 5) Their mistake that the spirits of especially powerful natural forces (thunder storms, floods, earthquakes, etc.) could be placated, similar to how powerful tribal leader could be swayed by showing deference, and
- 6) Their mistake of permitting certain members of their tribes to intervene with powerful spirits on their behalf – probably members who could guide the people’s “entrance to the spirit world”, for example by dispensing hallucinogens or by inducing group hypnosis (e.g., by leading rhythmic chants, similar to the those heard in temples, synagogues, churches, and mosques to this day).

This 6th mistake was potentially the most serious, because ancient people thereby permitted their “doctors” or shamans (forerunners of today’s clerics)

¹ See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Watterson.

to gain substantial power over the people (by controlling their imaginations), and as the people eventually learned, power usually corrupts.

A second category of mistakes (illustrated in the previous post) dealt with the purpose of life and how to achieve that purpose, mistakes that are still being made by more than half of all people living today (courtesy clerical lies). Correctly seen, the purpose of life is obvious and was obviously well known (before clerics confused people), namely, for life to continue.² Such knowledge is “programmed” into our DNA; life that wasn’t so programmed is now extinct; a major part of that programming governs reproduction and then (after offspring have matured) discarding aged, temporary hosts of the still-living, billion-year-old DNA in favor of the new hosts, more capable of surviving in ever-changing physical and biological environments.

Perplexing questions for humans, however, have persisted: not whether to keep our DNA alive, but how? In fact, deciding how to ensure that our genes continue is what gives our lives meaning, to ourselves and to others. During our temporary hosting of our DNA, Humanists do what we can to find intelligent, scientifically defensible solutions to human problems, to try to help the human DNA continue. In contrast, essentially all religious people (misled by clerical lies) foolishly and selfishly seek their own survival – for eternity! As Einstein summarized:

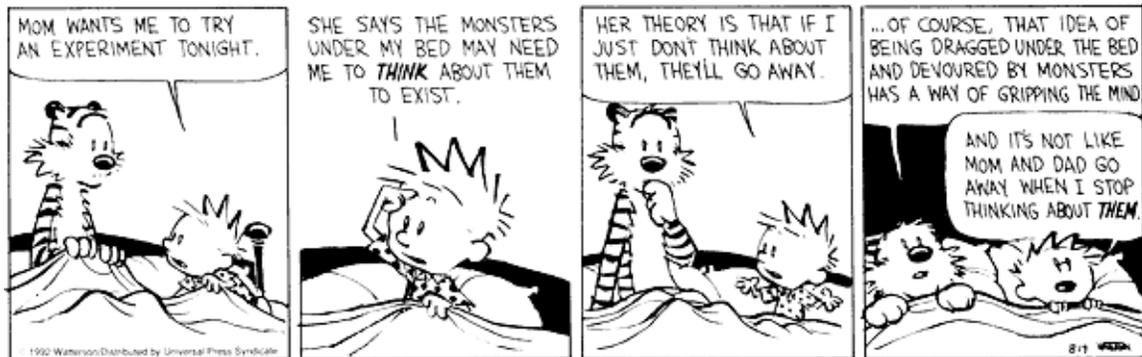
I cannot imagine a God who rewards and punishes the objects of his creation, whose purposes are modeled after our own – a God, in short, who is but a reflection of human frailty. Neither can I believe that the individual survives the death of his body, although feeble souls harbor such thoughts through fear or ridiculous egotisms.

Yet, in their “ridiculous egotisms” (promoted by clerics) more than half of all people living today “believe” (i.e., “wish to be”) that they can continue to host their own DNA forever, in an imagined paradise – provided they do exactly what their clerics say (out to and including crashing hijacked airlines into building, incinerating their own DNA). It’s not only criminally insane; it’s immoral. Such is the wicked control that clerics can gain over imaginations when people immorally hold beliefs more strongly than is justified by relevant evidence.³

² See http://zenofzero.net/docs/P01_The_Purpose_of_Life.pdf.

³ See <http://zenofzero.net/docs/J2JusticeandMorality.pdf>.

Instead of evaluating evidence, religious people “listen to their hearts”, they emotionally “do what feels right”, they “let their imaginations run wild”, they “rely on logic rather than reality”;⁴ thereby, they permit their clerics to gain authority over their lives. Such mistakes have caused (and continue to cause) humanity major harm. Below is an example of how Bill Watterson illustrated such errors:



When people first made such errors is, of course, unknown. In general, it's extremely difficult to establish pre-historic human chronology, especially since different tribes adopted different activities at different times. Further, not only are the time durations enormous (measured in tens of thousands of years!) but archeological evidence of prehistoric religions⁵ is notoriously difficult (and contentious) to interpret: it's always difficult to determine what someone else is (or was) thinking; it's almost impossible to do so when the only available data are from a few trinkets, skeletons, grave sites, and paintings on cave walls!

Nonetheless, evidence suggests that what's now called 'religion' started during the early phase of the Stone Age (i.e., the Paleolithic or Old Stone Age). As examples, evidence for symbolic thought has been found at the Blombos Cave⁶ in South Africa and evidence for belief in an afterlife has been found at the Qafzeh Cave⁷ in Israel, with both sets of evidence dated to be from about 100,000 years ago. Cave paintings,⁸ dating from about 30,000 years ago, have been interpreted as evidence of shamanism and animism.

⁴ See http://zenofzero.net/docs/R_Reason_versus_Reality.pdf.

⁵ See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origin_of_religion_-_Prehistoric_evidence_of_religion.

⁶ See, e.g., <http://cogweb.ucla.edu/ep/Blombos.html>.

⁷ See, e.g., <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qafzeh>.

⁸ See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cave_painting.

As far as I know, the first evidence that shamans may have started to abuse their power is from the hilltop sanctuary in southern Turkey called Göbekli Tepe (Turkish for “hill with a potbelly”),⁹ dated to be from the start of the Neolithic (New Stone) Age. It was erected about 11,500 years ago. As summarized in the referenced Wikipedia article:

At present, Göbekli Tepe raises more questions for archaeology and prehistory than it answers. We do not know how a force large enough to construct, augment, and maintain such a substantial complex was mobilized and paid or fed in the conditions of pre-Neolithic society. We cannot “read” the pictograms, and do not know for certain what meaning the animal reliefs had for visitors to the site; the variety of fauna depicted, from lions and boars to birds and insects, makes any single explanation problematic. As there seems to be little or no evidence of habitation, and the animals depicted on the stones are mainly predators, the stones may have been intended to stave off evils through some form of magic representation. Alternatively, they may have served as totems... It is also apparent that the animal and other images give no indication of organized violence, i.e., there are no depictions of hunting raids or wounded animals, and the pillar carvings ignore game on which the society mainly subsisted, like deer, in favor of formidable creatures such as lions, snakes, spiders, and scorpions.

During similar times at other places in the world, however, primitive economies were probably too weak to support a cadre of shamans, who therefore probably couldn't gain substantial power.

I expect, instead, that most primitive people's ideas about animism and their shamans were similar to the following opinions expressed by Native Americans during the most recent few centuries:¹⁰

All things share the same breath – the beast, the tree, the man, the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. [Chief Seattle (1786–1866), leader of the Suquamish and Duwamish tribes]

The Great Spirit is in all things. He is in the air we breathe. The Great Spirit is our Father, but the Earth is our Mother. She nourishes us... That which we put into the ground she returns to us... Great Spirit, whose gifts to us are being lost in selfishness and corruption, help us to find the way to restore our humanity. [Big Thunder (Bedagi)¹¹, late 19th Century, Wabanaki Algonquin]

⁹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Göbekli_Tepe.

¹⁰ From <http://www.legendsofamerica.com/na-quotes.html>.

¹¹ See <http://coyoteprime-runningcauseicantfly.blogspot.com/2009/01/native-american-prayer-big-thunder.html>.

In the beginning of all things, wisdom and knowledge were with the animals, for *Tirawa*, the One Above, did not speak directly to man. He sent certain animals to tell men that he showed himself through the beasts, and that from them, and from the stars and the sun and moon should man learn... [Eagle Chief (Letakos-Lesa), c. 1904, Chief of the Pawnee]

We learned to be patient observers like the owl. We learned cleverness from the crow, and courage from the jay, who will attack an owl ten times its size to drive it off its territory. But above all of them ranked the chickadee because of its indomitable spirit. [Tom Brown, Jr., *The Tracker*,¹² b.1950, student of Stalking Wolf, Apache]

The traditions of our people are handed down from father to son. The Chief is considered to be the most learned, and the leader of the tribe. The Doctor, however, is thought to have more inspiration. He is supposed to be in communion with spirits... He cures the sick by the laying of hands, and prayers and incantations, and heavenly songs. He infuses new life into the patient and performs most wonderful feats of skill in his practice... He clothes himself in the skins of young innocent animals, such as the fawn, and decorates himself with the plumage of harmless birds, such as the dove and hummingbird... [Sarah Winnemucca,¹³ c.1841–1891, Paiute]

From *Wakan-Tanka*, the Great Mystery, comes all power. It is from *Wakan-Tanka* that the holy man has wisdom and the power to heal and make holy charms. Man knows that all healing plants are given by *Wakan-Tanka*; therefore, they are holy. So too is the buffalo holy, because it is the gift of *Wakan-Tanka*. [Flat-Iron (Maza Blaska), late 19th Century, Oglala Sioux Chief]

A wee child toddling in a wonder world, I prefer to their [Christian] dogma my excursions into the natural gardens where the voice of the Great Spirit is heard in the twittering of birds, the rippling of mighty waters, and the sweet breathing of flowers. If this is Paganism, then at present, at least, I am a Pagan. [Zitkala-Sa,¹⁴ 1876–1938, Sioux]

If readers gain the impression that animism and paganism seem a lot more sensible (and provide much more pleasant and uplifting feelings) than the blood, gore, mental slavery, and war of the Abrahamic religions, then welcome to the club!

¹² See, e.g., [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Brown_\(naturalist\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tom_Brown_(naturalist)).

¹³ See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarah_Winnemucca.

¹⁴ See, e.g., <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zitkala-Sa>.

But in any event, the *Göbekli Tepe* site seems to be the first site yet found where the power of “priests” (shamans) might have begun to corrupt. Not incidentally, as stated in the referenced Wikipedia article:¹⁵

Recent DNA analysis of modern domesticated wheat compared with wild wheat has shown that its DNA is closest in structure to wild wheat found on Mount Karaca Dağ 20 miles away from the site, leading one to believe that this is where modern wheat was first domesticated.

It suggests that the long, slow, Agricultural (or Neolithic) Revolution (which started at different times in different locations and possibly started in Turkey near the Göbekli Tepe site) led not only to more secure food supplies but also to more clerical parasites. Later, by the time that writing was developed sufficiently to convey ideas (in about 3000 BCE), the parasitic priests essentially controlled their societies, as illustrated by such “monuments to folly” as the pyramids in Egypt and both stone shrines and brick sanctuaries (see Chapter Yx7) in Mesopotamia. Still later (during the subsequent 5,000 years!), such monuments to folly were followed by all the foolish temples, cathedrals, mosques, etc. that have drained and continue to drain human and economic resources.

All of which is consistent with the assessment by evolutionary biologist Tom Ray that “successful systems attract parasites”. Ray’s concept was illustrated by Matt Ridley in his 2010 book *The Rational Optimist* (as reported in a book review¹⁶ by John Tierney) with some examples of parasites subsequent to the first human parasites, i.e., the priests of the Neolithic Age:

Empires bought stability at the price of creating a parasitic court; monotheistic religions bought social cohesion at the expense of a parasitic priestly class; nationalism bought power at the expense of a parasitic military; socialism bought equality at the price of a parasitic bureaucracy; capitalism bought efficiency at the price of parasitic financiers.

But returning to the Agricultural or Neolithic Revolution,¹⁷ it appears to have been a “mixed blessing”, similar to all subsequent revolutions. As stated in the referenced Wikipedia article:

¹⁵ At http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Göbekli_Tepe.

¹⁶ At <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/18/science/18tier.html>.

¹⁷ See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neolithic_Revolution.

... the Neolithic Revolution involved far more than the adoption of a limited set of food-producing techniques... it would transform the small and mobile groups of hunter-gatherers that had hitherto dominated human history, into sedentary societies based in built-up villages and towns, which radically modified their natural environment by means of specialized food-crop cultivation (e.g., irrigation and food storage technologies) that allowed extensive surplus food production. These developments provided the basis for concentrated high population densities settlements, specialized and complex labor diversification, trading economies, the development of non-portable art, architecture, and culture, centralized administrations and political structures, hierarchical ideologies and depersonalized systems of knowledge (e.g., property regimes and writing). The first full-blown manifestation of the entire Neolithic complex is seen in the Middle Eastern Sumerian cities (ca. 3500 BCE), whose emergence also inaugurates the end of the prehistoric Neolithic period.

What such a summary doesn't address (but it's addressed later in the same Wikipedia article) are the many new problems faced by the people: not only the problems caused by the priests with their “**hierarchical ideologies and depersonalized systems of knowledge**” but also overpopulation, pollution (e.g., of water supplies) with associated diseases, and diseases spread from domesticated animals to humans (including influenza, smallpox, and measles), diseases that subsequently decimated, for example, Native Americans who were inadvertently infected by European carriers. As stated in the referenced Wikipedia article:

It is often argued that agriculture gave humans more control over their food supply, but this has been disputed by the finding that nutritional standards of Neolithic populations were generally inferior to that of hunter gatherers, and life expectancy may in fact have been shorter, in part due to diseases. Average height, for example, went down from 5'10" (178 cm) for men and 5'6" (168 cm) for women to 5'3" (165 cm) and 5'1" (155 cm), respectively and it took until the 20th Century for average human height to come back to the pre-Neolithic Revolution levels.

In sum, it seems that, the further the agricultural revolution progressed, the more the people's troubles increased, apparently consistent with the ecological principle that the population of any species grows to meet and then exceed natural carrying capacities, a process that's subsequently corrected with starvation, disease, and (in the case of people) wars.

Simultaneously, what seems to have happened (and continues to this day!) is that the people mistakenly thought that “the gods” controlled not only natural phenomena but also the fates of individuals and their societies. From those faulty premisses (that gods exist and that they were in control), the people apparently concluded (using sound logic but from faulty premisses!)

that their instinctively known prime goal (their genetic survival) could be best achieved if they could gain favor of the controlling gods. The essence of that error was well illustrated by Bill Watterson in a comic strip that I also used in the previous post:



People then made the enormously grievous mistake that “the gods” were “[out to get me](#)” because the people had (somehow or other) offended the gods, which to this day, clerics call “sins”. Unfortunately, though, the people didn’t know what they might have done to offend the gods – although, if they had (at some time and in some manner) violated cultural norms, they probably did feel some guilt, since the DNA of humans (and monkeys, dolphins, whales, etc.) also contains the “programming” to be social animals. And as Bill Watterson illustrated, the resulting guilt probably made the people feel even worse:



Worse still, the people were then “ripe for the picking” by con artists whom we now call clerics: for the price of freeloading on producers, the con artists were more than willing to tell the people not only how they had “sinned against the gods” but also what “goodies” the people should give to the gods to appease them.

Further, being the self-proclaimed, altruistic spokesmen for the gods, the clerics assigned themselves the “onerous task” of “collecting the goodies” for the gods – and what the gods didn’t consume, the clerics did. It’s the most widespread, longest running, and most-lucrative con game the world has ever known – and it continues to this day!

It’s a con game – based on lies (as are all con games) – because in fact, no cleric (or anyone else, for that matter) “knows” what any god wants. Perhaps surprising to more than half of all people in the world today, that fact is amazingly consistent with the most certain knowledge that humans have been able to gain, namely, that there are no gods (and never were any).¹⁸ Yet, all con-artist clerics (to this day) have claimed that they know what their gods want – which turns out to be amazingly similar to what the clerics want: a free ride on the backs of producers. As Robert Ingersoll wrote:

Religion supports nobody. It has to be supported. It produces no wheat, no corn; it ploughs no land; it fells no forests. It is a perpetual mendicant. It lives on the labors of others, and then has the arrogance to pretend that it supports the giver... Ministers say that they teach charity. That is natural. They live on alms. All beggars teach that others should give...

In addition, by the way, the ideas of all clerics are also ridiculous: an omnipotent, omniscient god (for example) can’t have an unfulfilled want. Consequently (I want to add), the collapse of all such clerical con games could be expedited if all religious people would inform their clerics that they no longer want to deal with any god (such as Yahweh, Jesus, or Allah) who is so pitiful as to have an unfulfilled want!

Anyway, as far as I know the first clear evidence of the con games run by all clerics (claiming to know what their gods want) is contained in the written version of the Mesopotamian genesis myth entitled *Enuma Elish* or *Enûma Eliš*,¹⁹ the title of which is the first two words of the myth, translated to be: “**When on high**”. The available version of this myth (written on clay tablets) is from the time of ancient Babylon (about 1800 BCE, more than a 1,000 years before the oldest writings in the Bible), since it describes how the patron god of Babylon (*Marduk*) rose to preeminence among the gods, becoming “lord of lords”, “leader of the gods”, and “reviver of the dead”.

¹⁸ See <http://zenofzero.net/docs/iiIndoctrinationinIgnorance.pdf>.

¹⁹ See, e.g., <http://www.ancienttexts.org/library/mesopotamian/enuma.html>.

The oral form of the original myth is of course lost in antiquity, but it's presumably derived from Sumerian mythology (probably from before 3000 BCE). The existing written version of the *Enuma Elish* contains the following “explanation”²⁰ of the purpose of man, as promoted by parasitic priests:

Now that *Marduk* [the chief god, who had conquered the original “saltwater mother”, *Tiamat*] has heard what the [other] gods are saying, he is moved with desire to create a work of consummate art...

Blood to blood I join,
Blood to bone I form an original thing;
Its name is Man,
Aboriginal man is mine in making.

All his occupations are faithful service,
the gods that fell have rest,
I will subtly alter their operations,
divided companies equally blest...

That is, according to the clerics who concocted this myth, man's purpose was to serve the gods: “all [man's] occupations are faithful service, [so] the gods that fell have rest...” Similarly, Calvin²¹ (and Muhammad!)²² decided that his purpose in life was to have others serve him:



²⁰ See, e.g., <http://zenofzero.net/docs/Ix04FloodedbyFrozenMyths.pdf>.

²¹ Recall that Watterson named Calvin after the (fanatical, Christian) 16th-century theologian John Calvin and Calvin's plush-toy tiger Hobbes – whom Calvin (alone) saw as an intelligent, full-sized tiger – was named after the (atheistic) 17th-century political philosopher Thomas Hobbes.

²² See Chapter Yx33 or <http://zenofzero.blogspot.com/2010/07/pathetic-muhammad-pbuh.html>.

But even the maniacal tyrant Calvin encountered limits (just as parasitic clerics sometimes experience constraints from their superiors, e.g., anyone not wallowing in make believe):



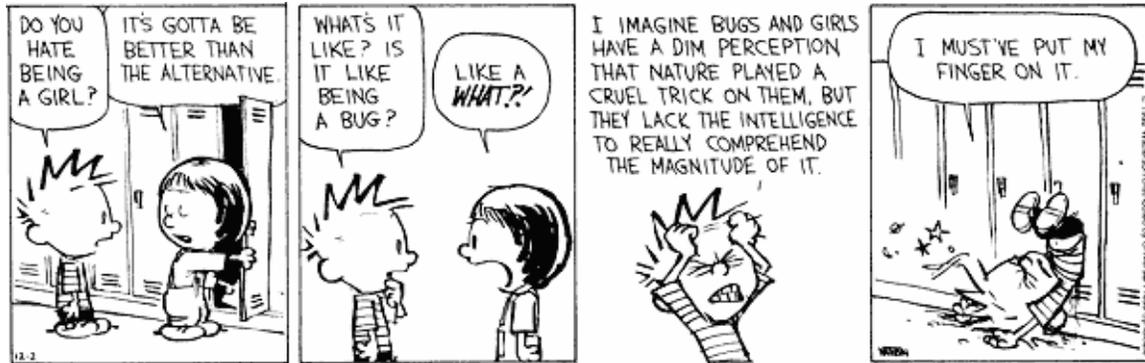
Thereby, the alleged statement by Jesus, both in the synoptic gospels (e.g., at *Luke 14, 25*) and in the (Gnostic's) *Gospel of Thomas* (at 55), becomes more understandable:

Whoever does not hate father and mother cannot be my disciple...

Yet, despite his mother's guidance, Calvin (similar to Jesus) found ways to continue to rule, behaving as if he were god, similar to the depicted madmen Moses (see Chapters **Yx12** & **Yx13**) and Muhammad (see **Qx25** & **Yx33**):



Fortunately, though, as illustrated in the above strip's final panel, some people didn't buy into the clerics' claims. In particular, it's relevant to mention that the source of the snowball in the final panel (above) is Calvin's archenemy, his next-door neighbor Susie – a dreaded female! Similarly, at least since the time of the ancient Babylonians, most clerics of all the Abrahamic religions have been misogynists:



In reality, though, the misogyny of clerics of the Abrahamic religions seems to have been derived from goals of earlier clerics. Thus, in Mesopotamia (from which the Abrahamic religions evolved) another major goal of the earlier Akkadian and Sumerian clerics (besides avoiding working for a living) was apparently to eradicate the still-earlier, more-peaceful, matriarchal (or at least matrilineal) culture, with its goddesses, when the Earth was considered to be the mother of all life and when “Mother Nature” was treated with loving respect.

As I suggested in an earlier, speculative chapter,²³ during the first phase of the agricultural revolution, living conditions in these areas were probably quite idyllic – especially for males! Probably similar conditions are described as follows in a proverb of the Native American Cherokee tribe:²⁴

When the white man discovered this country, [we] were running it. No taxes, no debt, women did all the work. White man thought he could improve on a system like this!

Later during the Neolithic Revolution in the Middle East, population pressures and agricultural methods apparently strained natural resources. An example of the straining of natural resources seems to have been the salinization of Mesopotamian soil caused by irrigation. The salinization may be the meaning of the metaphor in the *Enuma Elish* of *Marduk* killing the saltwater mother *Tiamat*. As another example, perhaps readers of this series of posts recall that the moral of the original *Atrahasis Epic* (which later Jewish priests plagiarized to form the Noah myth)²⁵ was that the gods flooded the earth in response to the population explosion.

²³ At <http://zenofzero.net/docs/Ix09ChangingGods.pdf>.

²⁴ From <http://www.legendsofamerica.com/na-nativeamericans.html>.

²⁵ See <http://zenofzero.net/docs/Ix06Gilgamesh.pdf>.

In any event, the method used by the Mesopotamian misogynist clerics seems to have been to promote an unwritten, secret law (subsequently adopted by clerics of all Abrahamic religions) that basically said:

If you men will obey us clerics, then we'll approve your ruling your women.

Thereby the misogynist little boys (the clerics) started up their various, secret clubs:



Currently, similar “secrecy” seems to be a prime attraction of Islam to poorly educated Westerners, who revel in “secret”, Arabic “code words”, “secret names”, and so on. Maybe Pope Benedict is catching on: there are suggestions that he will permit Catholic masses to again be performed in Latin.

But in addition to secrecy, to define themselves any “in group” of course needs an “out group”, and the most appropriate “out group” for male clerics was obviously all females:



To this day, similar continues in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, etc., although once their con games were up and running (raking in the gold), they could afford more elaborate chapeaux and regalia, e.g., see the following photo taken this week by Giuseppe Giglia, ANSA (and posted here *via* European Pressphoto Agency and the 2010/11/20 issue of *The New York Times*) showing Pope Benedict XVI in his golden chapeau, on his way to pass out red hats to his 24 new cardinals:

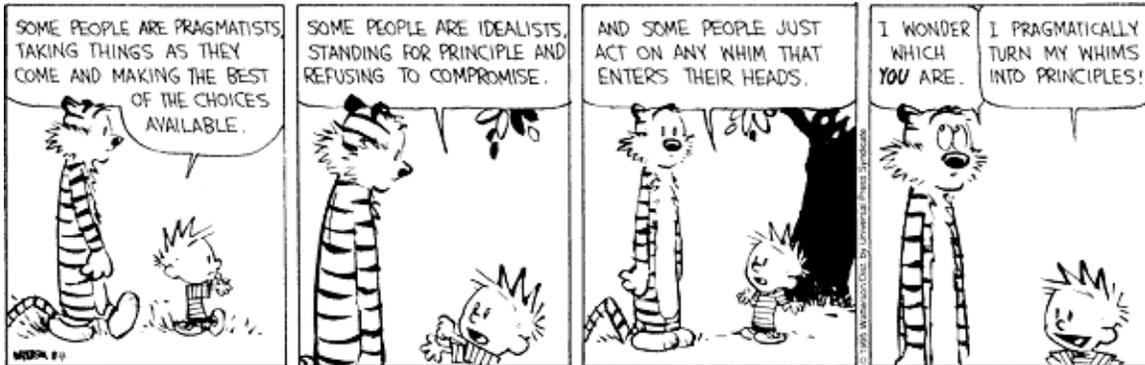


But getting back to Calvin and Hobbes (whose hats were made from paper rather than gold), Watterson proceeded to illustrate how misogynist religions were (and are) concocted and promoted (by maniacs such as Ezra, Constantine, Muhammad, and all subsequent chief rabbis, popes, ayatollahs, and grand muftis):

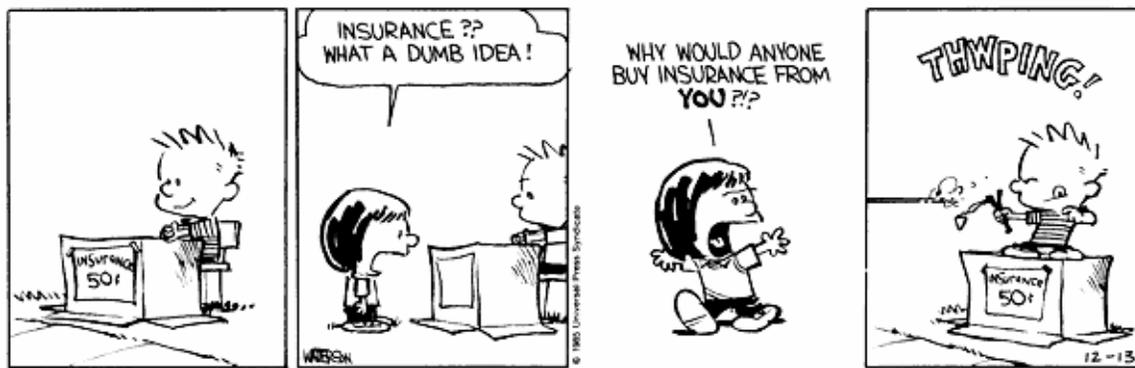


* Go to other chapters *via*

They claimed (and still claim) authority to define principles:



Principles claimed to be able to protect people (better known as “protection rackets”):



They manipulate the concepts of morality and virtue to serve themselves (so the people will serve them):



Starting from the people’s understanding of “the spirit of the law”, which humans learned (and still learn) the same way that all social animals learn

about justice and empathy,²⁶ the clerics claimed (and still claim) authority to define “the letter of the law” – while studiously avoiding the spirit of the law:



They define what's “sacred” and “divine”:



And, of course, they bundle it all in rituals:



²⁶ See <http://zenofzero.net/docs/KindnesswithKeeness.pdf>.

Perhaps no culture succumbed so completely to priestly rituals as ancient Egypt. An illustration is the following quotation (to which I've added the italics and some notes in brackets) from Bob Brier's book entitled *Ancient Egyptian Magic*.²⁷

The House of Life [in ancient Egypt] was a building, or perhaps a small group of buildings, where the library of the temple was kept and where the *custodians of the knowledge* of the temple studied [what a misuse of the word 'knowledge'!]. Here the layman would come if he had a problem and needed a magic spell or charm. The priests could interpret dreams, supply incantations to make someone fall in love, cure an illness, dispense magic amulets, or counteract malevolent influences. *To maintain their powers*, the priests kept their books away from the few laymen who could read. *Indeed secrecy was an important part of their business*. In the Book of the Dead prepared for the priest Nebseni, one of his titles is given as "presiding over the *secrets* of the temple."

Their treasure papyri were kept in a secluded section of the House of Life, often in niches dug into the walls of the temple. There was an important House of Life at Edfu, a great temple dedicated to Horus [the mythical son of the god Osiris and the goddess Isis]. Edfu is the best preserved temple in all of Egypt, as it was covered in sand until recent times. On one of the walls of the temple is engraved a list of the sacred books kept in the House of Life. Along with the books on rules of the temple, inventories of the temple holdings, and religious calendars, there were numerous books on magic. These give us an idea of the powers supposedly possessed by *priest-magicians* of ancient Egypt:

- The Book of Appeasing Sekhmet [the goddess of healing, whose name means "she who is powerful", and who is usually portrayed as a woman with the head of a lioness – opposite from the Sphinx!]
- The Book of Magical Protection of the King in His Palace
- Spell for Warding Off the Evil Eye
- The Book of Repelling Crocodiles
- The Book of Knowledge of the *Secrets* of the Laboratory
- The Book of Knowing the *Secret* Forms of the God.

If readers sometime have a few hours (or days or...) with little else to do, they might want to explore on the internet using such search words as "Ancient Egyptian Magic", "Medicine in Ancient Egypt", "the gods of Ancient Egypt", and similar. And if the enormous amount of information found should cause headaches, then maybe inflicted readers would want to

²⁷ Available at <http://www.amazon.com/Ancient-Egyptian-Magic-Bob-Brier/dp/0688007961>.

try an Ancient Egyptian cure for headaches (here taken from the web page “Sekhmet & Ancient Egyptian Medicine”):²⁸

This is the remedy which Auset (Isis) prepared for her father [the Sun god] Ra [even gods apparently get headaches!]. Take equal parts of each of these: berry of the coriander, berry of the poppy plant, wormwood, berry of the sames-plant, berry of the juniper plant, and honey. Mix the ingredients together, and a paste will form. Smear the afflicted person with the paste, and he will instantly become well.

Who knows, that treatment might even work! Yet, I recommend against readers using the following “remedy” (obtained from the same internet source) for curing skin lesions:

After the scab has fallen off, put on it a scribe’s excrement. Mix in fresh milk, and apply it as a poultice.

Imagine it: even the feces of the lowest-level priests (the scribes) were promoted (by the priests) as being of value to the people! Talk about arrogance! Talk about ignorance! The hallmark of all clerics: arrogant ignorance.²⁹

Similar to all clerics, the real understanding of the priests of ancient Egypt (buried beneath their secrecy and rituals) was extremely meager. Yes, there are at least 42 aspects of how to live “morally”, but there never were 42 gods (each of whom allegedly represented one of those principles). And yes, the Nile River did flood every year when the star Sirius (the goddess Isis) appeared, but Isis’s appearance identified the time – she didn’t cause the flood! The little that the priests knew had engendered in the people some confidence in the priests’ abilities. Subsequently, over centuries, the priests exuded confidence that they could interpret dreams, cure illnesses, and so on – even to the extreme that the lowest priest’s excrement had medicinal value! And thus, the con game continued.

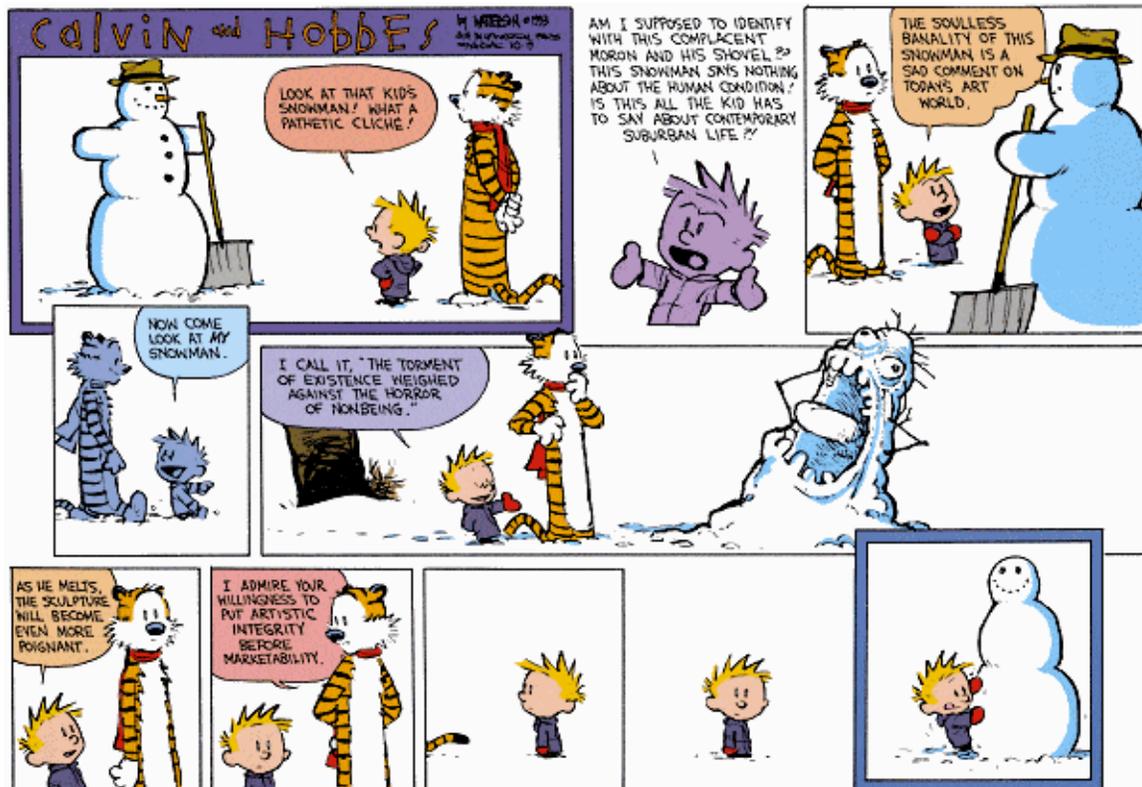
The range, variation, and mutually contradictory nature of such ritualized “esoteric knowledge” concocted (out of thin air!) by clerics of the world are mind-boggling. In one case, it was the names of the 42 Egyptian gods; in another, it was “knowledge” of the multiple names of the single god (e.g., *Marduk’s* 50 names); in another, it was “knowledge” of the names of the 1600 (!) Aztec gods; in still another, it was “knowledge” of the purpose of

²⁸ At <http://showcase.netins.net/web/ankh/sekhmet1.html/>, which unfortunately, now seems unavailable.

²⁹ See, e.g., http://zenofzero.net/docs/P09_Prblms_Rlgns_Cse_Societies.pdf.

the gods; and in still another, it was “knowledge” of how the “one true god” chose to populate America.

Looked at differently, however, all such “knowledge” is identical: none of it is knowledge;³⁰ none of it has a scientific base;³¹ none of it has sufficient data to support its being called even a hypothesis;³² all of it is mere speculation;³³ none of it is “true”;³⁴ it’s a mountain of lies; in fact, it’s not just a mountain of lies, it’s mountain range after mountain range of lies – sold for clerical profit. Watterson summarized it well:



[In case the captions are too difficult to read, they follow (with “C” identifying Calvin and “H”, Hobbes): (1) C: “Look at that kid’s snowman! What a pathetic cliché!” (2) C: “Am I supposed to identify with this complacent moron and his shovel?? This snowman says nothing about the human condition! Is this all the kid has to say about contemporary suburban life?!” (3) C: “The soulless banality of this snowman is a sad comment on today’s art world.” (4) C: “Now come look at my snowman.” (5) C: “I call it, ‘The Torment of Existence Weighed Against the Horror of Nonbeing.’” (6) C: “As he melts, the sculpture becomes even more poignant.” (7) H: “I admire your willingness to put artistic integrity before marketability.” (7) {Questioning look} (8) {Questioning thought} (9) {Revised plan!}]

³⁰ See http://zenofzero.net/docs/R_Reason_versus_Reality.pdf.

³¹ See http://zenofzero.net/docs/S_Science_and_Models.pdf.

³² See <http://zenofzero.net/docs/Ib1BasicScience.pdf>.

³³ See <http://zenofzero.net/docs/IaAwarenessofIdeas.pdf>.

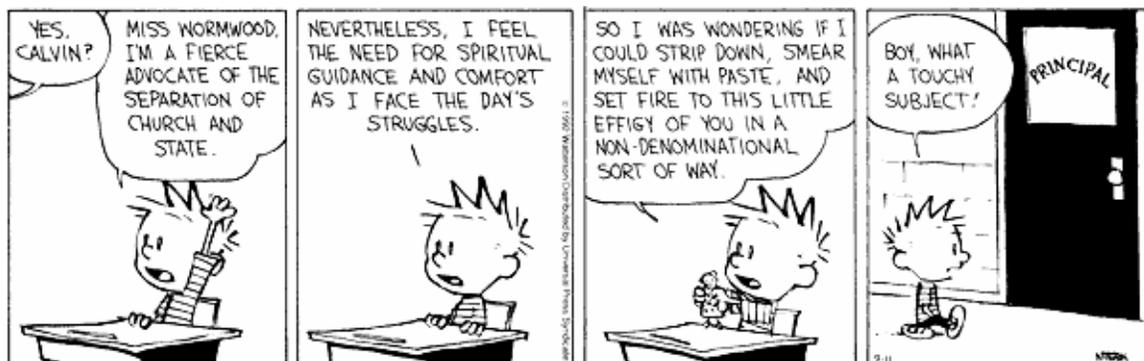
³⁴ See http://zenofzero.net/docs/T1_Truth_&_Knowledge.pdf.

That such idiocy and craven cupidity continue was recently illustrated in the 2010/11/13 report³⁵ in *The New York Times* by Laurie Goodstein that the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S. held a conference this month to “prepare more priests and bishops to respond to the demand... for exorcists.”

According to Bishop Thomas J. Paprocki of Springfield, Ill., who organized the conference:

Not everyone who thinks they need an exorcism actually does need one... It’s only used in those cases where the Devil is involved in an extraordinary sort of way in terms of actually being in possession of the person... The ordinary work of the Devil is temptation... and the ordinary response is a good spiritual life, observing the sacraments and praying. The Devil doesn’t normally possess someone who is leading a good spiritual life.”

Bizarre! Simultaneously, I expect that those “possessed” Catholics and their clerics would be adamant in criticizing the “foolish” 2.8 million Muslims who this week are circumambulating the *Kaaba*, “Islam’s holiest site”, casting stones at Satan.³⁶ But as Watterson saw, treading on what others imagine to be sacred is a “touchy subject”:



Yet, not only most people but also most priests (past and present) are probably too poorly educated to realize that they’re involved in con games: they’re just pawns in some high priest’s game. Some junior priests, however, probably eventually saw (and see) through the con game, realizing that the claimed “knowledge” is mere speculation.

But rather than “ex-communicate the dissidents”, senior priests learned how to use the demonstrated intelligence of a few junior priests to strengthen

³⁵ At http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/13/us/13exorcism.html?src=ISMR_HP_LO_MST_FB.

³⁶ See, e.g., <http://arabnews.com/saudiArabia/article195300.ece>.

their (Egyptian-style) “pyramid scheme”: senior priests provided (and still provide) junior priests who see through the silliness the opportunity to “move-up in the hierarchy”, to the next level of the conspiracy. In this next level, the more intelligent priests were (and still are) told that they’re right about their assessments of the claimed “knowledge” incorporated in their rituals – and so, they’re “initiated” to “deeper knowledge”. And so on it goes, layer after layer: in every religion a hierarchy of clerics develops, with not only power increasing at each successive “inner layer” but also the hilarity, laughing all the way to the bank.

More than two centuries ago, in his book³⁷ *The Ruins*, Volney summarized it well:

... among all nations the spirit of the priesthood, their system of conduct, their actions their morals, were absolutely the same:

- That they had everywhere formed secret associations and corporations at enmity with the rest of society; [Footnote #1]
- That they had everywhere attributed to themselves prerogatives and immunities, by means of which they lived exempt from the burdens of other classes;
- That they everywhere avoided the toils of the laborer, the dangers of the soldier, and the disappointments of the merchant...
- That, under the cloak of poverty, they found everywhere the secret of procuring wealth and all sorts of enjoyments;
- That under the name of mendicity they raised taxes to a greater amount than princes;
- That in the form of gifts and offerings they had established fixed and certain revenues exempt from charges;
- That under pretence of retirement and devotion they lived in idleness and licentiousness;
- That they had made a virtue of alms-giving, to live quietly on the labors of others;
- That they had invented the ceremonies of worship, as a means of attracting the reverence of the people, while they were playing the parts of gods, of whom they styled themselves the interpreters and mediators, to assume all their powers; that,

³⁷ Available at, e.g., <http://emotional-literacy-education.com/classic-books-online-a/ruins10.htm>.

with this design, they had (according to the degree of ignorance or information of their people) assumed by turns the character of astrologers, drawers of horoscopes, fortune-tellers, magicians [Footnote #2], necromancers, quacks, physicians, courtiers, confessors of princes, always aiming at the great object to govern for their own advantage;

- That sometimes they had exalted the power of kings and consecrated their persons, to monopolize their favors, or participate their sway;
- That sometimes they had preached up the murder of tyrants (reserving it to themselves to define tyranny), to avenge themselves of their contempt or their disobedience;
- And that they always stigmatized with impiety whatever crossed their interests;
- That they hindered all public instruction, to exercise the monopoly of science;
- That finally, at all times and in all places, they had found the secret of living in peace in the midst of the anarchy they created, in safety under the despotism that they favored, in idleness amidst the industry they preached, and in abundance while surrounded with scarcity; and all this by carrying on the singular trade of selling words and gestures to credulous people, who purchase them as commodities of the greatest value.

Footnotes [emphasizing the lies in Christianity, but similar could be written about all religions]:

#1: That we may understand the general feelings of priests respecting the rest of mankind, whom they always call by the name of the people, let us hear one of the doctors of the church. “The people,” says Bishop Synnesius, in *Calvit*, p. 315, “are desirous of being deceived, we cannot act otherwise respecting them. The case was similar with the ancient priests of Egypt, and for this reason they shut themselves up in their temples, and there composed their mysteries, out of the reach of the eye of the people.” And forgetting what he has before just said, he adds: “for had the people been in the secret they might have been offended at the deception played upon them. In the meantime how is it possible to conduct one’s self otherwise with the people so long as they are people? For my own part, to myself I shall always be a philosopher, but in dealing with the mass of mankind, I shall be a priest.”

“A little jargon,” says Geogory Nazianzen to St. Jerome (*Hieron. ad. Nep.*) “is all that is necessary to impose on the people. The less they comprehend, the more they admire. Our forefathers and doctors of the church have often said, not what they thought, but what circumstances and necessity dictated to them.”

“We endeavor,” says Sanchoniaton, “to excite admiration by means of the marvelous.” (*Proep. Evang. lib. 3*)

Such was the conduct of all the priests of antiquity, and is still that of the Bramins and Lamas who are the exact counterpart of the Egyptian priests. Such was the practice of the Jesuits, who marched with hasty strides in the same career. It is useless to point out the whole depravity of such a doctrine. In general every association which has mystery for its basis, or an oath of secrecy, is a league of robbers against society, a league divided in its very bosom into knaves and dupes, or in other words, agents and instruments. It is thus we ought to judge of those modern clubs, which, under the name of Illuminatists, Martinists, Cagliostroists, and Mesmerites, infest Europe. These societies are the follies and deceptions of the ancient Cabalists, Magicians, Orphies, etc., “who,” says Plutarch, “led into errors of considerable magnitude, not only individuals, but kings and nations.”

Footnote #2: What is a magician, in the sense in which people understand the word? A man who by words and gestures pretends to act on supernatural beings, and compels them to descend at his call and obey his orders. Such was the conduct of the ancient priests, and such is still that of all priests in idolatrous nations; for which reason we have given them the denomination of Magicians.

And when a Christian priest pretends to make God descend from heaven, to fix him to a morsel of leaven, and render, by means of this talisman, souls pure and in a state of grace, what is this but a trick of magic? And where is the difference between a Chaman of Tartary who invokes the Genii, or an Indian Bramin, who makes Vichenou descend in a vessel of water to drive away evil spirits? Yes, the identity of the spirit of priests in every age and country is fully established! Everywhere it is the assumption of an exclusive privilege, the pretended faculty of moving at will the powers of nature; and this assumption is so direct a violation of the right of equality, that whenever the people shall regain their importance, they will forever abolish this sacrilegious kind of nobility, which has been the type and parent stock of the other species of nobility.

Of course, all priests and most religious people would probably object to the above descriptions. But from my perspective, anyone is either lying or insane who claims to know the names of the 42 or 1600 different gods, or claims to be aware of the purpose of the “one-and-only true god”, or claims to have been instructed by an angel, or in some way or other has perpetuated his (or sometimes her) version of the God Lie. All are claims to “fake knowledge” – and for at least the past 5,000 years, clerics have grabbed power based on nothing but fake knowledge.

But the people “bought it”, which is what the clerics wanted – while audaciously claiming to serve the people, rather than themselves:



“But”, defenders may object, “the end justifies the means: clerics use their power not for personal gain but to help the people – to guide them spiritually and morally. Even if there aren’t 42 gods, promoting them is a way to promote the people to observe 42 principles of morality.”

No, the end doesn’t justify the means. Looked at one way, there are no ends: never yet has there been an end; all previously claimed “ends” have merely been additional means.

Or looked at another way, the means are ends in themselves – and the question that must be addressed is: which end is most important? That is, it’s a question of values.

In turn, any question of values is a question of objectives, because values can be measured only with respect to some objective. And if one’s objectives include the foolish notion of placating some god, then since gods don’t exist, one can do what one pleases, including raping little boys and girls, treating bigger girls like dirt, and sending older boys off to fight in “holy wars”.

Looked at still another way, there’s the assessment by Socrates, “There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance”, and what all clerics do is promote ignorance – and therefore, evil.

Further, since all religions (similar to Calvin’s) were and still are based on whims and wild speculations, completely divorced from data, then disagreements among clerical con artists inevitably occur, leading to animosities and turf wars:



It would be hilarious if it weren't for the horrors that have occurred (and are still occurring) with crazy members of childish, religious clubs killing and being killed by crazy members of other, childish, religious clubs. Each club promotes the lies that their way is the only way, that their god is the "true" god, and that dying for their god (to keep their club's clerics in power) guarantees instant access to paradise.

Such craziness isn't new. For example, the following illustrates how Hindu priests manipulated soldiers to fight in their "holy war" by trying to convince a soldier (Arjuna, who didn't want to engage in war) that he had an "indestructible soul". The quotation is from the "sacred" Hindu scripture

The Bhagavad Gītā (“the song of god”),³⁸ composed sometime between 300 BCE and 300 CE. It was allegedly written by Lord Krishna (who, similar to claims about Jesus, is claimed to be a manifestation of God):

There is no existence for that which is unreal; there is no non-existence for that which is real. And the correct conclusion about both is perceived by those who perceive the truth. Know that to be indestructible which pervades all this; the destruction of that inexhaustible principle none can bring about. These bodies that pertain to the embodied self which is eternal, indestructible, and indefinable, are said to be perishable; therefore do engage in battle, O descendant of Bharata! He who thinks it to be the killer and he who thinks it to be killed, both know nothing. The self kills not, and the self is not killed. It is not born, nor does it ever die, nor, having existed, does it exist no more. Unborn, everlasting, unchangeable, and primeval, the self is not killed when the body is killed.

O son of Pritha, how can that man who knows the self to be indestructible, everlasting, unborn, and inexhaustible, how and whom can he kill, whom can he cause to be killed? As a man, casting off old clothes, puts on others and new ones, so the embodied self, casting off old bodies, goes to others and new ones. Weapons do not divide the self into pieces; fire does not burn it; waters do not moisten it; the wind does not dry it up. It is not divisible; it is not combustible; it is not to be moistened; it is not to be dried up. It is everlasting, all-pervading, stable, firm, and eternal. It is said to be unperceived, to be unthinkable, to be unchangeable. Therefore, knowing it to be such, you ought not to grieve.

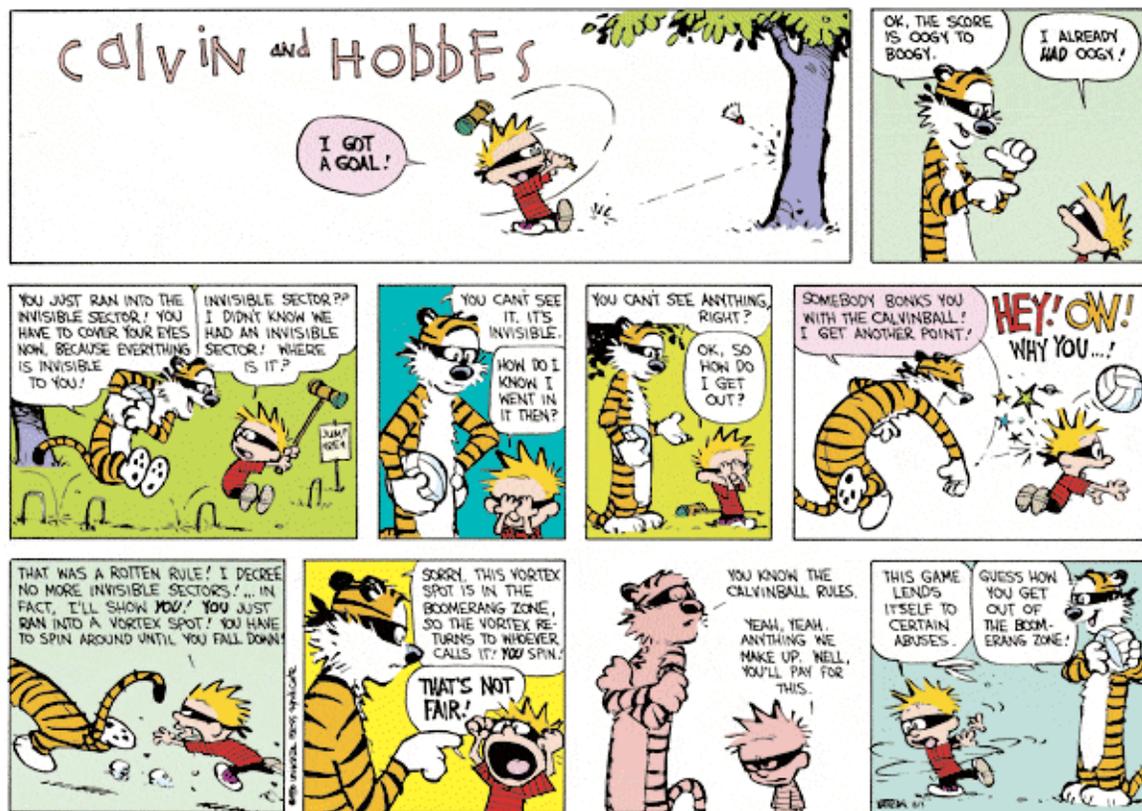
But even if you think that the self is constantly born, and constantly dies, still, Arjuna, you ought not to grieve like this. For to one that is born, death is certain; and to one that dies, birth is certain. Therefore, you should not grieve about things that are unavoidable. The source of things, Arjuna, is unperceived; their middle state is perceived; and their end again is unperceived. Why lament over them? One looks upon it as a wonder; another similarly speaks of it as a wonder; another, too, hears of it as a wonder; and even after having heard of it, no one does really know it. This embodied self, Arjuna, within every one’s body is always indestructible. Therefore you ought not to grieve for any being.

Having regard to your own duty also, you ought not to falter, for there is nothing better for a Kshatriya than a righteous battle. Happy those Kshatriyas, O son of Pritha, who can find such a battle to fight – an open door to heaven! But if you will not fight this righteous battle, then you will have abandoned your own duty and your fame, and you will incur sin. All beings, too, will tell of your everlasting infamy; and to one who has been honored, infamy is a greater evil than death. Warriors who are masters of great chariots will think that you abstained from the battle through fear, and having been highly thought of by them, you will fall down to littleness. Your enemies, too, decrying your power, will speak much about you that should not be

³⁸ See, e.g., <http://www.thenagain.info/Classes/Sources/Gita.html>.

spoken. And what, indeed, is more lamentable than that? Killed, you will obtain heaven; victorious, you will enjoy the earth. Therefore arise, O son of Kunti, resolved to engage in battle. Looking alike on pleasure and pain, on gain and loss, on victory and defeat, then prepare for battle, and thus you will not incur sin.

Clerics have used similar jabberwocky about “indestructible souls” to manipulate people for thousands of years, including the Christian clerics who manipulated followers to fight in their “holy war” against the Muslims during the Crusades and the Islamic clerics who (still today!) manipulate Muslims to become *mujahideen* (“holy warriors”), dying for the *jihad* (“holy war”) to gain instant entrance to a fictitious paradise. All are just modified versions of CALVINBALL:



[In case the captions are too difficult to read, they follow: (1) C: “I got a goal!” (2) H: “OK, the score is oogy to boogy.” C: “I already had oogy!” (3) H: “Your just ran into the invisible sector! You have to cover your eyes now, because everything is invisible to you!” C: “Invisible sector?? I didn’t know we had an invisible sector! Where is it?” (4) H: “You can’t see it. It’s invisible.” C: “How do I know I went in it then?” (5) H: “You can’t see anything, right?” C: “OK, so how do I get out?” (6) H: “Somebody bonks you with the Calvinball! I get another point!” C: “Hey! Ow! Why you...!” (7) C: “That was a rotten rule! I decree no more invisible sectors! ...In fact, I’ll show you! You just ran into a vortex spot! You have to spin around until you fall down!” (8) H: “Sorry. This vortex spot is in the boomerang zone, so the vortex returns to whoever calls it! You spin!” C: “That’s not fair!” (9) H: “You know the Calvinball rules.” C: “Yeah, yeah. Anything we make up. Well, you’ll pay for this.” (10) C: “This game lends itself to certain abuses.” H: “Guess how you get out of the boomerang zone!”]

A particular result is the trouble Muslim terrorists cause the rest of us today. To be sure, a significant part of that trouble is to defeat the terrorists without causing ourselves even more problems, similar to the problems Calvin created, fighting his terrorists:



Which, of course, leads to new schemes to promote “homeland security”:



In the next post, I plan to add some summary comments on why people adopted (and still adopt) the crazy idea that gods exist, when the most certain knowledge that humans have been able to gain (even more certain than the knowledge that we exist) is that there are no gods (and never were any).³⁹ Then, for the final post, I plan to add a few closing comments on the possibility that we may yet be able to get religious people to smarten up, to get them to turn on their own lights – without our burning down our own houses in the process.

³⁹ See <http://zenofzero.net/docs/IdoctrinationinIgnorance.pdf>.