

Yx39 – Closing Comments – 4 – Rejection of the God Lie

This is the 39th and final post in a series dealing with what I call “the God Lie”. For this final post, my goal is to add some closing comments on the rejection of the God Lie. When convenient, I’ll illustrate my comments with insights entertainingly created between 1985 and 1995 by Bill Watterson¹ in his Calvin and Hobbes comic strips (which, I remind readers, are still copyrighted and can’t be used for commercial purposes without the approval of Universal Press Syndicate).

Many times in earlier posts of this series, I provided examples of people rejecting both the God Lie and the clerics who promoted it. The first documented example of rejecting the God Lie seems to be the Sumerian statement from approximately 4500 years ago:²

A man without a god – for a strong man it is no loss.

As for rejecting associated clerical con games, it seems that the first documented example resulted in “the world’s first political revolution” led by Urukagina in the Sumerian city of Lagash (modern-day Tell al-Hiba in Iraq) in about 2350 BCE.³ Prior to the revolution, Urukagina described clerical excesses as follows:

In the garden of a humble person a priest could cut a tree or carry away its fruit. When a dead man was placed in the tomb, it was necessary to deliver in his name seven jars of beer and 420 loaves of bread... uh-mush priest received one-half gur {about fourteen gallons} of barley, one garment, one turban, and one bed... priest’s assistant received one-fourth gur of barley...

After his reforms, according to Urukagina:

When a dead man was placed in the tomb, (only) three jars of beer and eighty loaves of bread were delivered in his name. The uh-mush priest received one bed and one turban. The priest’s assistant received one-eighth gur of barley... The youth was not required to work in the a-zar-la; the workingman was not forced to beg for his bread. The priest no longer invaded the garden of a humble person.

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

² See Chapter Yx3 or <http://zenofzero.blogspot.com/2008/08/lies-corruption-in-genesis-1-3.html>.

³ See Chapter Yx4 or <http://zenofzero.blogspot.com/2008/09/basic-ideas-borrowed-for-bible.html>.

Thus, Urukagina managed to curtail some excesses of the ancient Sumerian priests, but as humans have again and again relearned during the subsequent 4350 years, it's damn hard to totally eliminate clerical parasites. Similar occurred in ancient Egypt approximately two centuries later, in what's called "the world's second political revolution".⁴ Prior to this revolution, the Egyptian priests (of course in collusion with political leaders) had promoted the scam that the leaders, buried in their pyramids, would live forever. After the revolution, the priests (wanting to stay in power) permitted people to believe that they, too, could live forever – provided (of course) that they followed the rules prescribed by the priests. What a con game – which continues to this day, e.g., in Christianity and Islam. In Chapter XIII of his 1791 book⁵ *The Ruins* (*Les Ruines, ou méditations sur les révolutions des empires*), Volney⁶ (Constantin François de Chassebœuf, 1757–1820) outlined how similar revolutions, rejecting the God Lie and curtailing clerical excesses, occurred during the subsequent ~4,000 years:

Now, if you take a review of the whole history of the spirit of all religion, you will see that in its origin it has had no other author than the sensations and wants of man; that the idea of God has had no other type and model than those of physical powers, material beings, producing either good or evil, by impressions of pleasure or pain on sensitive beings; that followed the same course, and been uniform in its proceedings; that in all of them the dogma has never failed to represent, under the name of gods, the operations of nature, and passions and prejudices of men; that the moral of them all has had for its object the desire of happiness and the aversion to pain; but that the people, and the greater part of legislators, not knowing the route to be pursued, have formed false and therefore discordant ideas of virtue and vice of good and evil, that is to say, of what renders man happy or miserable; that in every instance, the means and the causes of propagating and establishing systems have exhibited the same scenes of passion and the same events; everywhere disputes about words, pretexts for zeal, revolutions and wars excited by the ambition of princes, the knavery of apostles, the credulity of proselytes, the ignorance of the vulgar, the exclusive cupidity and intolerant arrogance of all. Indeed, you will see that the whole history of the spirit of religion is only the history of the errors of the human mind, which, placed in a world that it does not comprehend, endeavors nevertheless to solve the enigma; and which, beholding with astonishment this mysterious and visible prodigy, imagines causes, supposes reasons, builds systems; then, finding one defective, destroys it for another not less so; hates the error that it abandons, misconceives the one that it embraces, rejects the truth that it is seeking, composes chimeras of discordant beings; and thus, while always dreaming of wisdom and happiness, wanders blindly in a labyrinth of illusion and doubt.

⁴ See Chapter Yx22 or <http://zenofzero.blogspot.com/2009/08/clerical-quackery-2-judgment-after.html>.

⁵ Available at <http://www.english.upenn.edu/Projects/knarf/Volney/volney00.html>.

⁶ See e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comte_de_Volney.

Similar continued during the American, French, and Russian revolutions, which in large measure were revolts against clerical hegemony, the claimed “divine right of kings”, and similar nonsense claimed to be “revelations” from God. For enlightened Americans, the Civil War was a death knell for Christianity: many in the South used the Bible to justify slavery; many in the North were convinced that slavery couldn’t be justified. For enlightened Europeans, WWII horrors perpetrated by the Nazis was a death knell of religions based on the Bible: after 2,000 years of Christian persecution of Jews, the Holocaust finally convinced a significant fraction of all Jews that there was no Yahweh to protect them – and convinced a significant fraction of all Christians that the Gospels contained not “Good News” but evil.

In particular, the Nuremberg trials revealed to both Christians and Jews the evils contained in the Bible’s “revelations”: Moses allegedly came down from the mountain with “revealed” laws from God and proceeded to order the slaughter of those who didn’t believe him (similar to “revelations” claimed by Muhammad); the Levites who allegedly did the slaughtering followed his orders; but at Nuremberg, the judgment of the world was that “**I was only following orders**” didn’t absolve people from their “**crimes against humanity**”, such as those that Moses, Muhammad, and Hitler allegedly ordered. The Nuremberg trials established that, not some god or some “revelation”, but “**we the people**” will judge morality – a lesson yet to be learned by the vast majority of Muslims.

And for many enlightened people throughout the world, September 11, 2001 was a death knell for the concept of ‘faith’. Sam Harris’ book *The End of Faith*, which he started writing the day after 9/11, was seminal. But even the lesser-known author Graham Lawrence (whose book, *The Fallible Gospels*, seems unfortunately to have disappeared from the web) wrote compellingly:

What I am against is stupid religion, not necessarily the idea of religion itself: religion that is not philosophical or sophisticated, but that can only survive by sacrificing common sense and keeping people in the dark. I am against the idea of an educational system without the courage to teach its own children the complexities of a truth that is big enough to stand up to archaeology and psychology and textual analysis.

Truth is not found through ‘faith’. Confusing it with ‘trust’ and making faith into a virtue was one of the biggest mistakes the human race ever made. Having ‘faith’ means uncritically trusting the word of another person absolutely, accepting his or her pronouncements, whatever their nature, as beyond argument.

Anything that is beyond discussion, anything that cannot be disproved, can by definition be used by the unscrupulous. Your faith could be in someone inhumane, misguided, greedy, dangerous, or just deluded. Unquestioning faith flings wide the doors of exploitation of the gullible and persecution of the heretic who disagrees.

If faith is its own justification, there is absolutely no reason that can be given to justify why faith in the words of Saint Paul is superior as an alternative to faith in the words of Muhammad, or Joseph Smith of the Mormons, or the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, or the people who in living memory have been the motivators for gun-battle sieges in Texas and mass suicides in Jonestown and nerve gas in Tokyo subways. Faith provides no defense, no protection against error, and no possibility for development. Faith does not just give us charity and pilgrimages. It gives us holy wars, death sentences and book burnings, and Islamic suicide bombers who have the obscene belief that they go to Paradise on slaughtering a bus-full of innocents, just because somebody told them this was so...

In this final post of this series, however, I don't want to again review the historical development and rejection of the God Lie; instead, I'd like to add a few closing comments on why and how it's being rejected by modern people. In general and in contrast to the bloody revolutions of the past, the current revolution is relatively peaceful and personal – save for bloody reactions by backward Muslims.

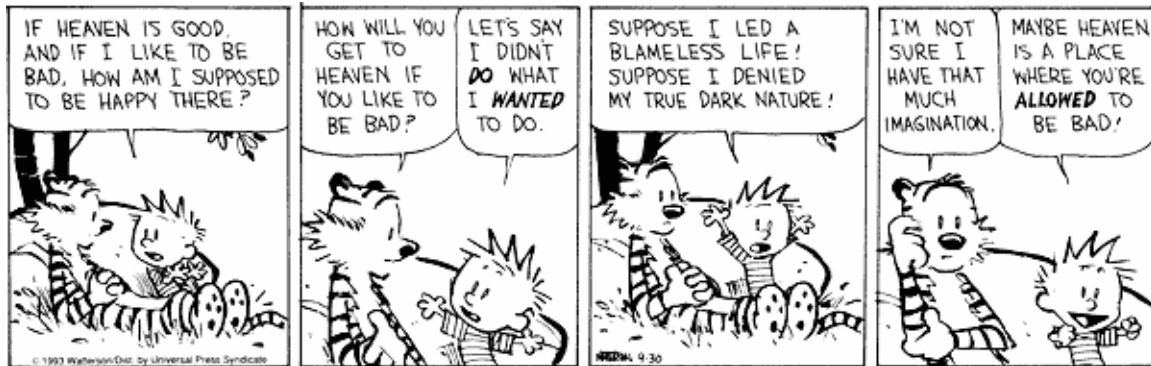
1. The Nonsense about Heaven and Hell

For example, it's rather fun to see that many people are rejecting even the lie of eternal life in paradise, simply because it doesn't make sense. In Chapter **H**, I already addressed the obvious problem that eternal happiness would be psychologically impossible (because we're happy only when we think we're making progress, overcoming obstacles, toward achieving our goals – whereas, in paradise, there would be no obstacles!), but I admit that I rather enjoy the illogic of the concept of heaven illustrated by Bill Watterson:



* Go to other chapters via

And that's not the only problem with the silly idea of heaven:



But although many people have rejected the idea of heaven, because of its silliness, many more people have rejected the idea of hell, because of its hideousness. The damnable clerics of the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Mormonism, etc.) chose to try to rule the people through fear and injustice, threatening people with torture for an infinite time, not only for finite crimes but even for fictitious crimes (such as failing to believe in clerical balderdash). As Robert Ingersoll (a colonel in the American Civil War and later governor of Illinois) wrote more than a century ago:

If there is a God who will damn his children forever, I would rather go to hell than to go to heaven and keep the society of such an infamous tyrant. I make my choice now. I despise that doctrine. It has covered the cheeks of this world with tears. It has polluted the hearts of children, and poisoned the imaginations of men. It has been a constant pain, a perpetual terror to every good man and woman and child. It has filled the good with horror and with fear; but it has had no effect upon the infamous and base. It has wrung the hearts of the tender; it has furrowed the cheeks of the good. This doctrine never should be preached again. What right have you, sir, Mr. clergyman... to stand at the portals of the tomb, at the vestibule of eternity, and fill the future with horror and with fear? I do not believe this doctrine, neither do you. If you did, you could not sleep one moment. Any man who believes it, and has within his breast a decent, throbbing heart, will go insane. A man who believes that doctrine and does not go insane has the heart of a snake and the conscience of a hyena...

More recently, Robert Anton Wilson wrote in his 1999 book *Cheerful Reflections on Death and Dying*:

An idea, which has terrified millions, claims that some of us will go to a place called Hell, where we will suffer eternal torture. This does not scare me, because when I try to imagine a Mind behind this universe, I cannot conceive that Mind, usually called 'God', as totally mad.

I mean, guys, compare that ‘God’ with the worst monsters you can think of – Adolph Hitler, Joe Stalin, that sort of guy. None of them ever inflicted more than finite pain on their victims. Even de Sade, in his sado-masochistic fantasy novels, never devised an unlimited torture. The idea that the Mind of Creation (if such exists) wants to torture some of its critters for endless infinities of infinities seems too absurd to take seriously...

Unfortunately, though, a huge number of brain-damaged people still do take such nonsense “seriously”. For example, a 2007 survey⁷ of 35,000 Americans by the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life found that 74% of those surveyed believe in heaven [84% of all Protestants, 82% of all Catholics, 95% of all Mormons, and 85% of all (American) Muslims – but probably close to 100% of all Muslims living in Islamic countries]. The survey also found that 59% of all Americans believe in hell [73% of Protestants, 60% of all Catholics, 59% of all Mormons, and 80% of all (American) Muslims, although again, probably close to 100% of all Muslims living in Islamic countries]. Such people obviously pay no attention to Nietzsche’s plea in his book⁸ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*:

I beseech you, my brothers, *remain faithful to the earth* and do not believe those who speak to you of extraterrestrial hopes! They are mixers of poisons whether they know it or not. They are despisers of life, dying off and self-poisoned, of whom the earth is weary; so, let them fade away! Once the sacrilege against God was the greatest sacrilege, but God died...

But looking on the bright side of the above-referenced data, approximately 25% of Americans have rejected the silly idea of heaven and 40% have rejected the hideous idea of hell. Probably similar percentages are applicable in Canada and Australia. And although most Muslims throughout the world are still mired in such mindless ideas (as are most Christians in Africa and Central and South America), the percentages of Europeans and Asians who believe in such ideas are almost certainly smaller than for Americans. So, save for the case of the poor Muslim people, some progress is being made – and probably much more will be made during the coming decades. Who knows, it may not be much longer before all the damn clerics promoting the silly idea of heaven and the hideous idea of hell will find themselves in jail, which is where they belong: they’re terrorists:⁹ they terrorize, especially, children and adults with childish minds.

⁷ See <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report2religious-landscape-study-key-findings.pdf>.

⁸ Available, e.g., at <http://philosophy.thecastsite.com/readings/nietzsche3.pdf>.

⁹ See <http://meansnends.blogspot.com/2010/12/all-clerics-are-terrorists.html>.

In fact, progress is being made rejecting the entire God idea, especially among young people living in democracies. For example, a 2010 Pew Forum poll¹⁰ found:

Compared with their elders today, young people [in the U.S.] are much less likely to affiliate with any religious tradition or to identify themselves as part of a Christian denomination. Fully one-in-four adults under age 30 (25%) are unaffiliated, describing their religion as “atheist,” “agnostic” or “nothing in particular”. This compares with less than one-fifth of people in their 30s (19%), 15% of those in their 40s, 14% of those in their 50s, and 10% or less among those 60 and older.

Thanks to such youngsters, things are looking up (!) – even in the religiously backward U.S. (where by “religiously backward”, I mean: compared with Europeans and most Asians – not compared with Muslims, who are the most religiously retarded people in the world).

But even though progress is being made, yet still today, perhaps 10% of the economies of Western societies (and more in Muslim societies) is consumed by clerical quacks promoting lies. Yet to be fair, quite likely the vast majority of today’s clerical quacks don’t purposefully lie. Instead, they are so poorly educated, so thoroughly indoctrinated, or so mentally deficient that they “think” that what they promote is “true”, without knowing even what “truth” means.¹¹

2. More Mythical Nonsense

But the myths about heaven and hell are just part of the silliness of the Abrahamic religions. In total, the myths of all religions have been and continue to be the foundations of all clerical con games. As Joseph Wheless wrote in his 1930 book¹² *Forgery in Christianity*:

Mythology has well been called the Theology of dead religions. The world is a vast cemetery of deceased gods and teeming scrap-heap of decayed and discarded priest-imposed religious beliefs – superstitions. All the dead gods and religions of Paganism, all the yet surviving but fast moribund deities and faiths of the XXth Century world, all (except, the Jews and Christians [and Muslims] say, their own) all were admittedly the fraudulent handiwork of priests and professional god-and-mythmakers.

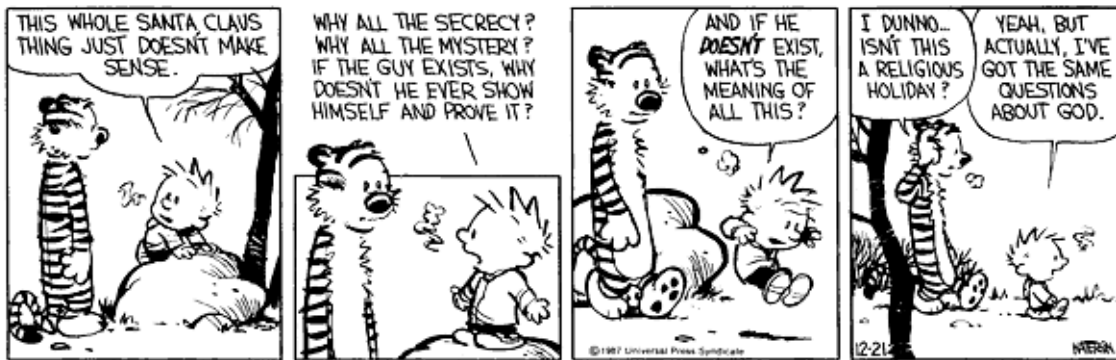
¹⁰ See <http://pewforum.org/Age/Religion-Among-the-Millennials.aspx>.

¹¹ See http://zenofzero.net/docs/T1_Truth_&_Knowledge.pdf.

¹² Available, e.g., at http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/archivos_pdf/forgery_christianity.pdf.

In a word, short and ugly, but true – every priest of every god and religion (saving, for the nonce, the Jewish-Christian[-Muslim] ones) was a conscious and unconscionable falsifier and impostor – a common liar for his god. All plied their artful, unholy priestcraft in the name of gods, for power and pelf...

More and more, though, people are rejecting the clerics' con games, basically because people are seeing that religious ideas just don't make sense. They're all based on mythical nonsense, similar to the Santa Claus myth, as Watterson illustrated:



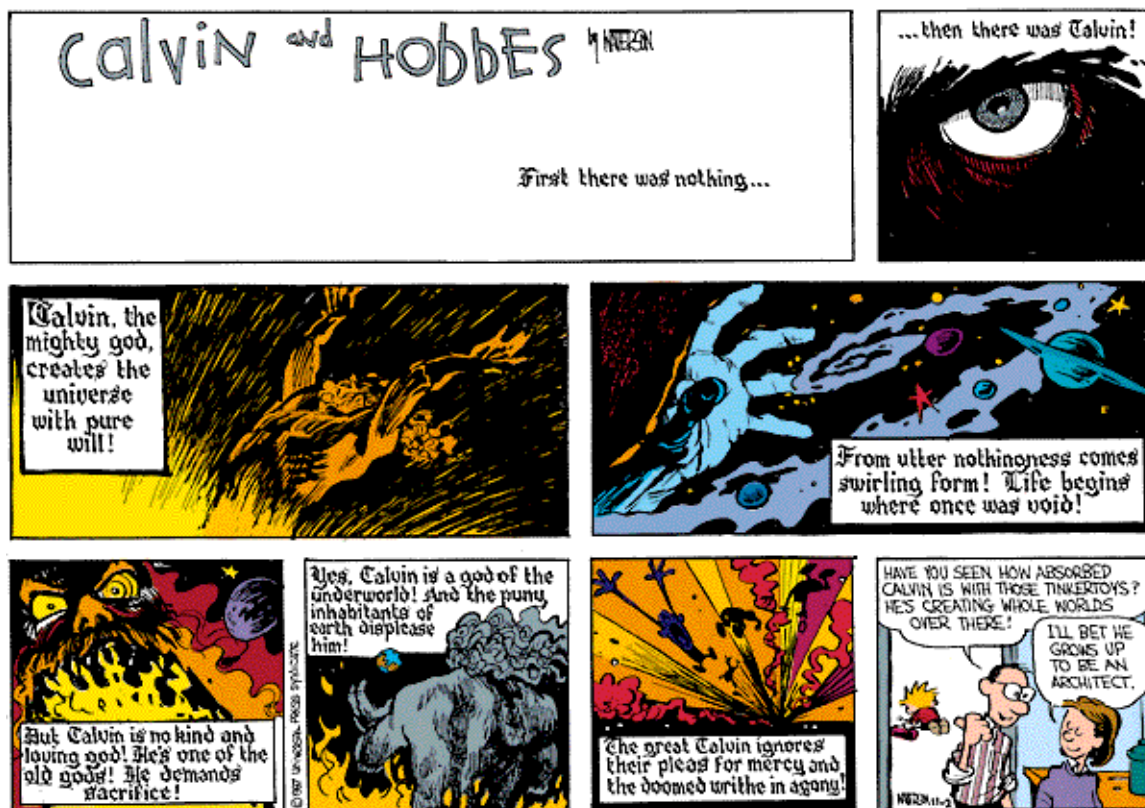
The main myths of all organized religions are wild speculations about how the universe came into existence, what controls nature, how humans came to be, what our purpose is, what happens to us when we die, etc. The fundamental myth deals with creation. Given that, upon encountering some complex device (a watch, a car, a computer), most people normally assume that something intelligent and therefore even-more complicated (e.g., a human) created it, religious people accepted (and still accept) the myth that something even-more complicated (God) created the universe (or, originally, the world, which was thought to be the center of creation) and created humans.

Such an argument (by analogy) has, however, at least three major inadequacies. One is that, as the philosopher David Hume demonstrated, no “argument by analogy” is logically sound: analogies can serve to illuminate an argument, but never to prove one. A second inadequacy with the argument is that it leads to the obvious (but unanswered) question: **How was the creator god created?** I’ll address that inadequacy in a later paragraph. And the third inadequacy of this “argument-from-design analogy” is that, it’s now known that such is not how nature operates: in nature, complexity arises not from even greater complexity, but from simplicity.

* Go to other chapters via

There are innumerable examples. Something as complicated as a tree is created by a seed, something as complicated as a seed is created from a sequence of molecules in a genetic code, something as complicated as a molecule is created by arrangements of atoms, something as complicated as an atom is created by arrangements of elementary particles, and something as complicated as elementary particles is created by arrangements of packets of energy – and the first appearance of energy seems to have been created by a single, symmetry-breaking quantum-like fluctuation in the original “total nothingness”, not from total nothingness suddenly popping a unbelievable complex god into existence, capable of creating trees, humans, and everything else!

Yet, the silly creation myths persist. Illustrative is Calvin’s creation story, which is similar to Zarathustra’s seven-period creation myth (which was subsequently adopted by Persians, Jews, Christians, Muslims, et al.):



[1. First there was nothing... 2. ...then there was Calvin! 3. Calvin, the mighty god created the universe with pure will! 4. From utter nothingness comes swirling form! Life begins where once was void! 5. But Calvin is no kind and loving god! He's one of the old gods! He demands sacrifice! 6. Yes, Calvin is a god of the underworld! And the puny inhabitants of Earth displease him! 7. The great Calvin ignores their pleas for mercy and the doomed writhe in agony! 8. Calvin's Dad: "Have you seen how absorbed Calvin is with those tinkertoys? He's creating whole worlds over there!" Calvin's Mom: "I'll bet he grows up to be an architect." {or more likely, a cleric!}]

It's sad to see that so many people still believe such silliness. Their concepts of the universe and their place with in it are childish. But of course, even a child asks: “Where did the creator god come from?”

And if the response is “God always existed”, then why don't they just assume that the universe always existed? Or if they claim that their god was created, then how? The probability that a creator god (the grand architect!) would pop into existence from total nothingness is vanishingly smaller¹³ than the probability that a symmetry-breaking, quantum-like fluctuation in total nothingness created the first separation of energy into positive and negative components, leading to the Big Bang, elementary particles, atoms, stars, their remnants (subsequently forming planets), and eventually life, including humans. But religious people aren't to think about such things; they're to have faith; they're to believe – in the dogma promoted by lame-brain clerics with the collection plates.

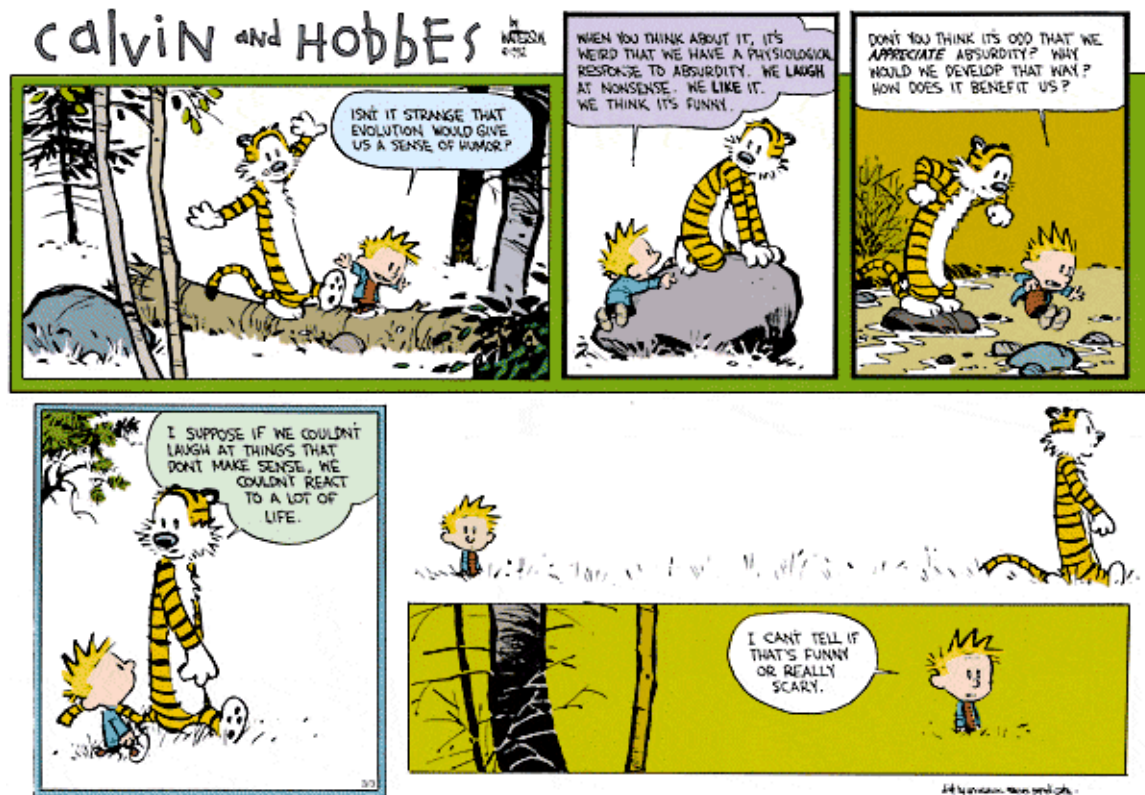
As for life on Earth starting¹⁴ possibly *via* autocatalytic reactions of complex hydrocarbon molecules becoming encased in semi-permeable membranes, then storing information about their environment, reproducing, and eventually leading to “evolutionarily perfect” humans – well, Hobbes had something to say about that:



Actually, upon thinking more about evolution, even Calvin was perplexed:

¹³ See <http://zenofzero.net/docs/TiIndoctrinationinIgnorance.pdf>.

¹⁴ See, e.g., http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5mIZvkR1m4&feature=channel_page.



[1. C: "Isn't it strange that evolution would give us a sense of humor?" 2. C: "When you think about it, it's weird that we have a physiological response to absurdity. We laugh at nonsense. We like it. We think it's funny." 3. C: "Don't you think it's odd that we *appreciate* absurdity? Why would we develop that way? How does it benefit us?" 4. H: "I suppose if we couldn't laugh at things that don't make sense, we couldn't react to a lot of life." 5. {Calvin is dumbfounded.} 6. C: "I can't tell if that's funny or really scary."]

Talking about absurdities, consider this. All organized religions are remnants of the biggest blunders science ever made! Religions are the remnants of ancient "reasons" or "explanations" for creation, astronomy, biology, geology... nature's violence and benevolence, life and death, illnesses and infirmities, social organizations and moralities, people's purposes, and so on. Yet, during the most recent few hundred years, competent scientists in the many responsible scientific disciplines have debunked every single one of such wild speculations. As Sam Harris recently wrote in an article for the Los Angeles Times entitled "God's Dupes":¹⁵

Indeed, it is time we broke this spell *en masse*. Every one of the world's "great" religions utterly trivializes the immensity and beauty of the cosmos. Books like the Bible and the Koran get almost every significant fact about us and our world wrong.

¹⁵ From http://www.samharris.org/site/full_text/gods-dupes1/.

Every scientific domain – from cosmology to psychology to economics – has superseded and surpassed the wisdom of Scripture. Everything of value that people get from religion can be had more honestly, without presuming anything on insufficient evidence. The rest is self-deception, set to music.

But because clerics tell people what they want to hear (e.g., that they'll live forever in paradise if they just do what the clerics say), people adopt the debunked religious myths and reject the best explanations that science has been able to provide. It's absurd – but understandable.

3. Clerical Dogma

It's understandable, also, why clerical con artists and colluding politicians promote their nonsense, namely, to gain and maintain power over the people. As the Greek historian Polybius (c.200–118 BCE) wrote, writing about even more ancient clerics and politicians:

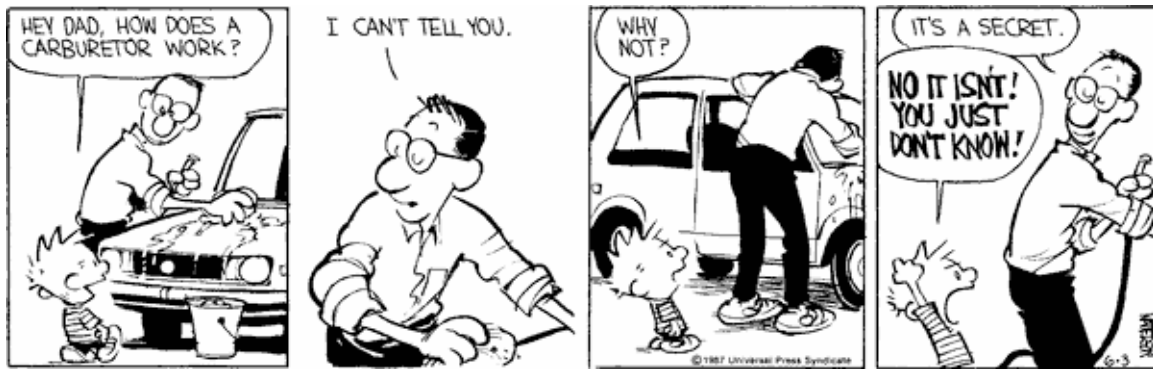
Since the masses of the people are inconsistent, full of unruly desires, passionate, and reckless of consequences, they must be filled with fears to keep them in order. The ancients did well, therefore, to invent gods and the belief in punishment after death.

For Polybius, “the ancients” to whom he referred (who had “[invent\[ed\] gods and the belief in punishment after death](#)”) were probably the ancient Egyptian clerics, from ~2,000 years earlier. Later, ~2,000 years after Polybius, d'Holbach wrote similar in his 1761 book¹⁶ *Christianity Unveiled*:

Religion is the art of inspiring mankind with an enthusiasm, which is designed to divert their attention from the evils with which they are overwhelmed by those who govern them. By means of the invisible powers with which they are threatened, they are forced to suffer in silence the miseries with which they are afflicted by visible ones. They are taught to hope that, if they consent to become miserable in this world, they will for that reason be happy in the next.

But now, more than 4,000 years since such ideas were “[invent\[ed\]](#)” to control the people, a significant percentage of all people in the non-Muslim world are beginning to question clerical dogma, finally realizing that clerics (and brainwashed parents) don't know what they're talking about:

¹⁶ Available at http://www.reasoned.org/dir/lit/cu_holb.pdf.



For example, more people are seriously questioning the clerical dogma that any god dictated morality – as well as other crazy concepts, such as the Jewish/ Persian/ ancient Mesopotamian and Egyptian silliness about the first two people, the Islamic silliness that we're being tested, and the Christian silliness of original sin:



More people are also questioning all, so-called “signs” and “revelations”, especially upon finding that science provides better explanations:



More people are beginning to develop more realistic expectations of how the future can be predicted and influenced – well, at least, some people are:



In fact, the doubts of an increasing percentage of all people have emboldened them to challenge even god:



[1. {Calvin, dejected, with his sled on grass rather than snow} 2. C {disgruntled}: "If *I* was in charge, we'd never see grass between October and May." 3. C {shouting at the sky}: "On 'Three', ready? One... two; three!" 4. "Snow!" 5. {Calvin frustrated} 6. "I said 'Snow!' C'mon! Snow!" 7. {An angry Calvin} "SNOW!" 8. {A belligerent Calvin} "Ok, then, **don't** snow! See what *I* care! I *like* this weather! Let's have it forever!" 9. {Calvin on his knees}: "*Pleeease* snow! Please?? Just a foot! Ok, eight inches! That's all! C'mon! Six inches, even! How about just six??" 10. {Calvin, frustrated} "I'm *waaaiiting*..." 11. {Calvin, furious} "RRRRGGHHH" 12. {Calvin, exhausted} 13. "**Do you want me to become an atheist?**"]

Undoubtedly, substantial doubt is appropriate. As Volney also wrote:¹⁷

And what is doubt... that it should be a crime? Can man feel otherwise than as he is affected? If a truth be palpable, and of importance in practice, let us pity him that misconceives it. His punishment will arise from his blindness. If it be uncertain or equivocal, how is he to find in it what it has not? To believe without evidence or proof, is an act of ignorance and folly. The credulous man loses himself in a labyrinth of contradictions; the man of sense examines and discusses, that he may be consistent in his opinions. The honest man will bear contradiction, because it gives rise to evidence. Violence is the argument of falsehood; and to impose a creed by authority is the act and indication of a tyrant.

As more people become more aware of more aspects of the mountainous God Lie, as more people realize that they've been duped by clerical quackery, as more people withdraw their trust in clerics, I suspect that all organized religions will collapse. I expect that this collapse will occur amazingly rapidly, as rapidly as Catholics are now abandoning their religion, because of the way their priests raped children. Trust takes years to build and yet can be lost almost instantaneously. As science expands, religion contracts. I expect that, perhaps within a few decades in the U.S. and within a century in Muslim countries, all ideas about all gods will be confined to those who are mentally ill or “mentally challenged” (viz., imbeciles).

4. Connecting the Dots Differently

Doubting the existence of any god and angry at how clerics had manipulated them, people have started to search for different ways to “connect the dots”:

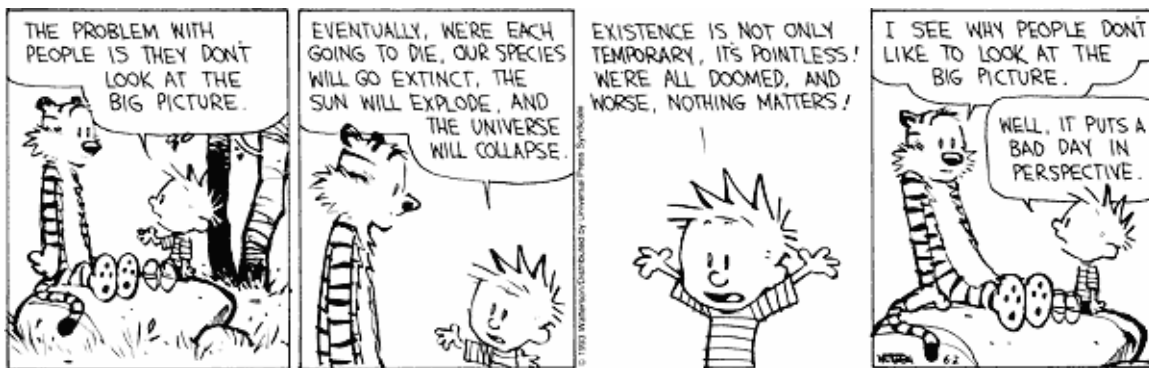


Although it has taken thousands of years, people have slowly begun to connect the dots themselves, developing more realistic worldviews – yet, not without some lingering (and sometimes, rather dangerous) doubts:

¹⁷ From <http://www.english.upenn.edu/Projects/knarf/Volney/volney00.html>.



In fact, realism can lead not only to doubts but a dour outlook on life:

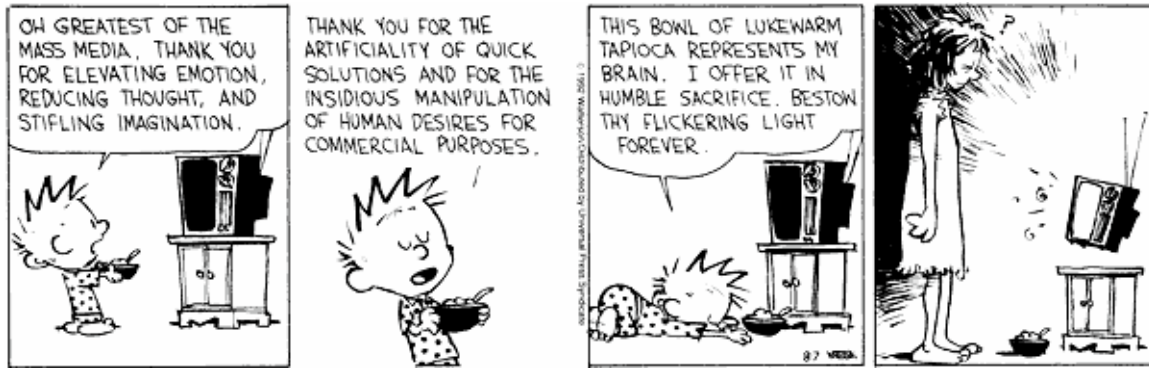


5. Some New Religions

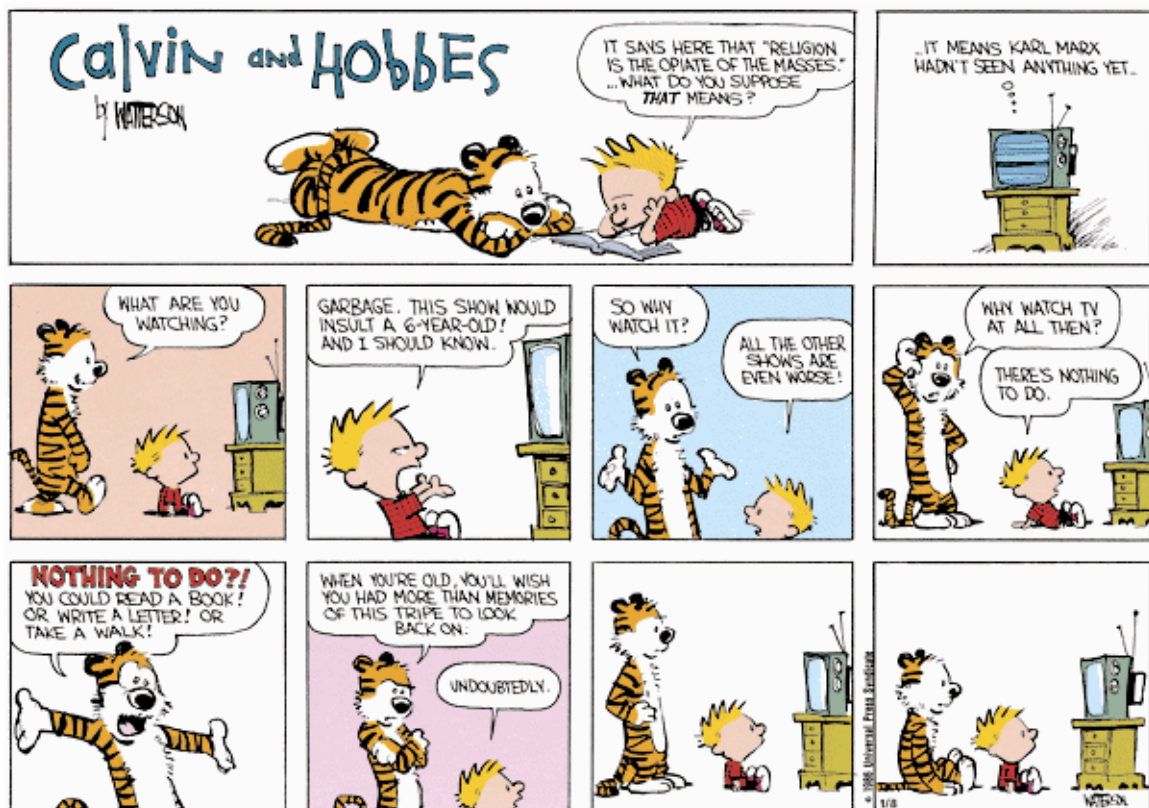
Without doubt, many people have rejected the old religions, but in many cases, when previously accepted worldviews begin to collapse, the ruins can be hazardous. For example, a significant fraction of all people have replaced organized religion with other distractions from reality, such as watching TV:



For some people, “religiously” watching TV can become obsessive:

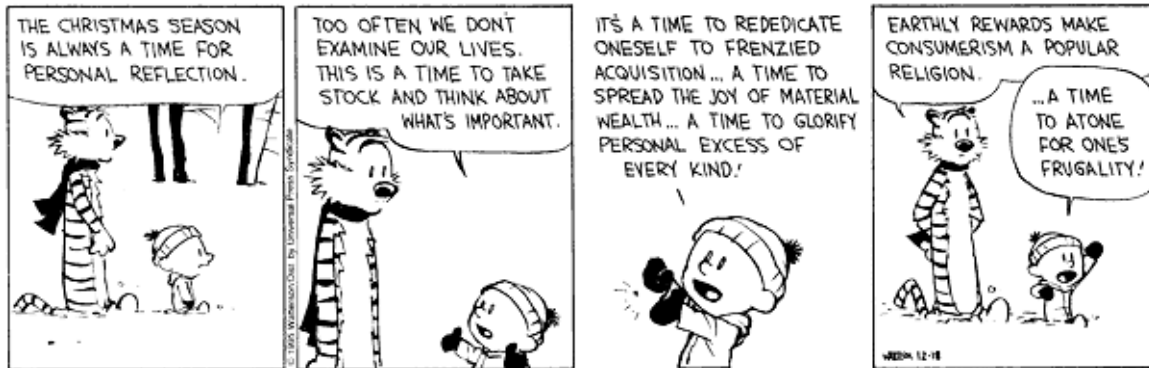


Yet, in the end, organized religions can't compete in the modern world: they can't capture children's imaginations so completely as can cartoons, sitcoms, movies, etc. available on TVs, DVDs, the big screen, the internet, etc. Unfortunately, though, the myths of these "new religions" can become as mind numbing as the old, even for Hobbes:

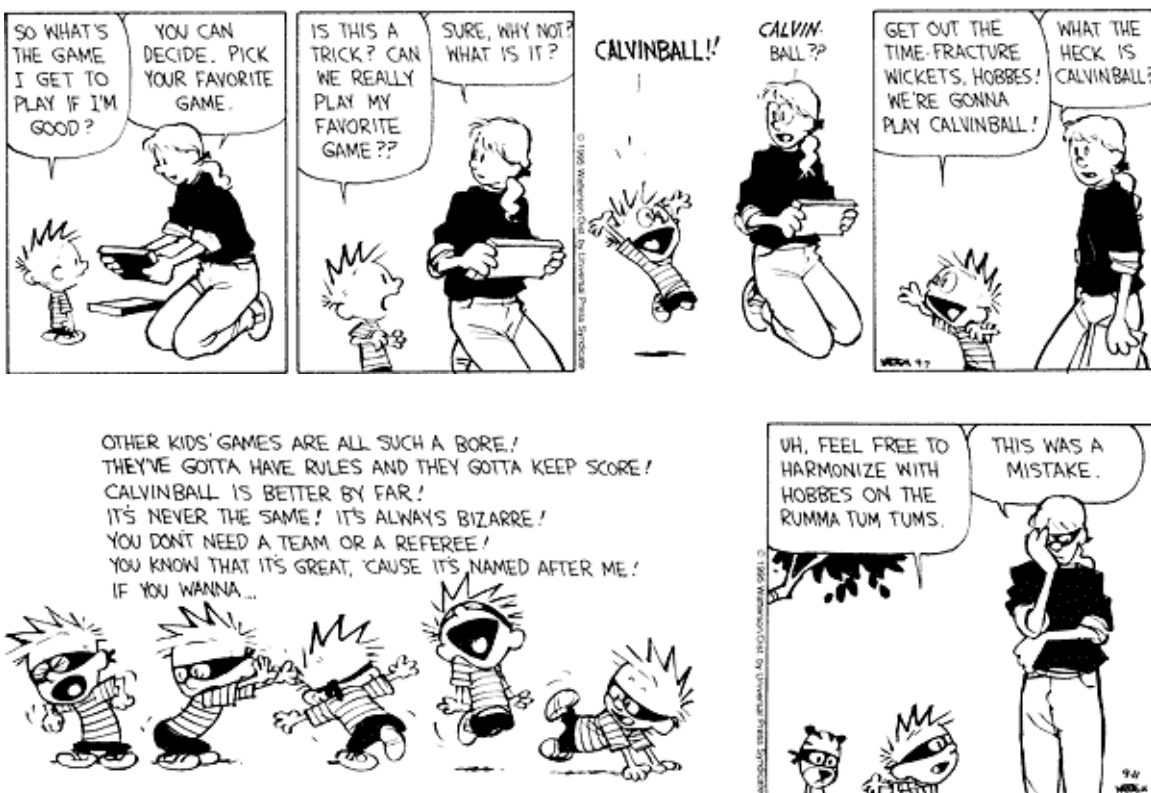


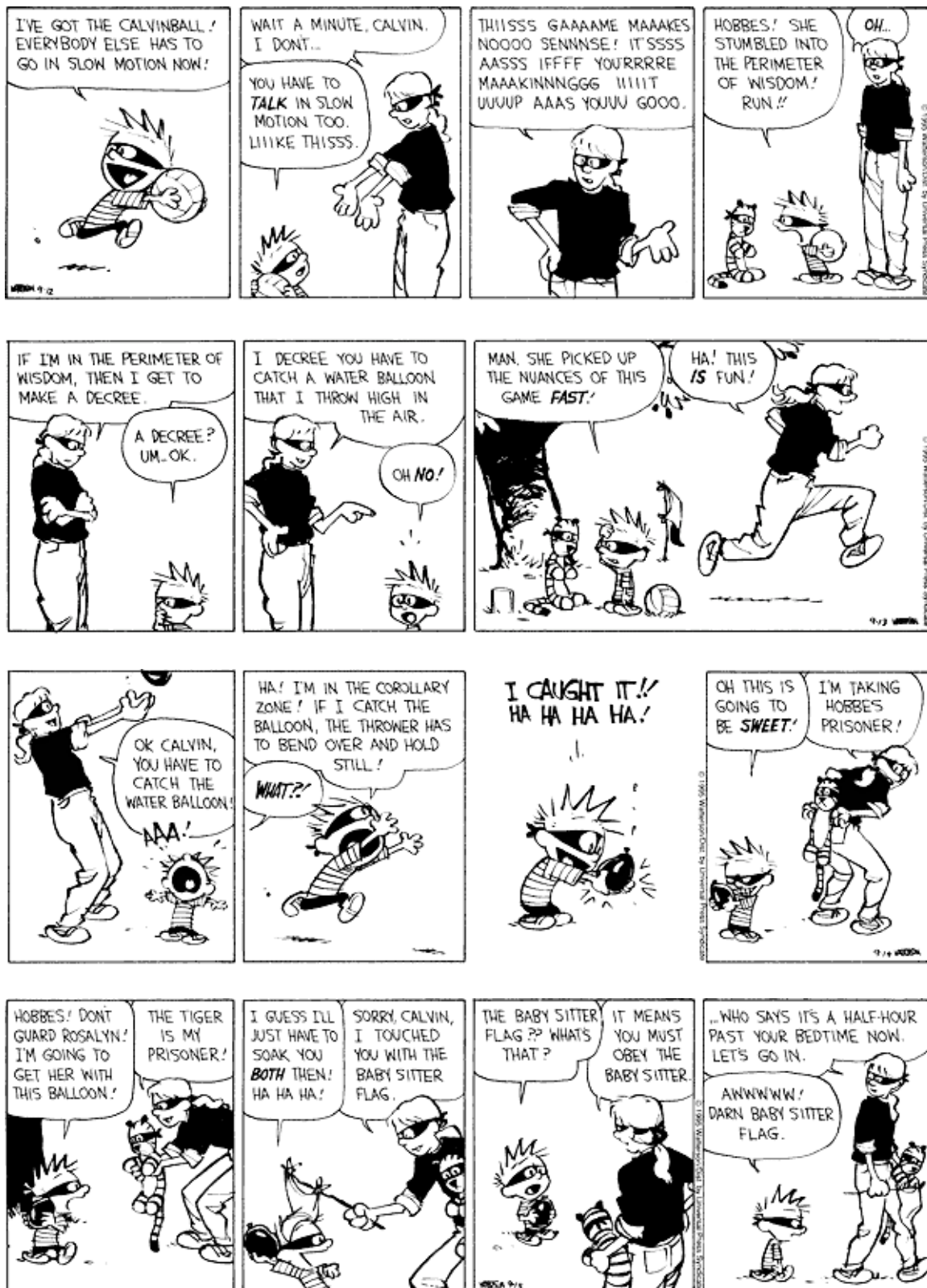
[1. C: "It says here that 'Religion if the opiate of the masses.' What do you suppose *that* means?" 2. {A sarcastic comment from an apparently sentient TV}: "It means Karl Marx hadn't seen anything yet." 3. H: "What are you watching?" 4. C: "Garbage. This show would insult a 6-year-old! And I should know." 5. H: "So why watch it?" C: "All the other shows are even worse!" 6. H: "Why watch TV at all then?" C: "There's nothing to do." 7. H: "**Nothing to do?! You could read a book! or write a letter! or take a walk!**" 8. H: "When you're old, you'll wish you had more than memories of this tripe to look back on." C: "Undoubtedly." 9. {What's on TV intrigues Hobbes} 10. {Hobbes also succumbs}]

Recalling the truism that half of the people have below-average intelligence, we then shouldn't be surprised that, along with mindless TV (and "escapism" movies, internet porn, etc.), a large fraction of all people in "wealthy" countries have also succumbed to TV's conquering ally, unthinking consumerism:



And along with addictions to mind-numbing entertainment and frenzied consumerism, a large fraction of all people throughout the world are placated as spectators of professional sports, such as baseball, basketball, football, and so on. In contrast, Calvin wasn't just a spectator but engaged in his favorite sport, Calvinball! In fact, he invented it:







6. *The Painfully Slow Process of Civilizing Males*

Actually, there's a lot more to the story that Watterson illustrated in the above strips (and which he also illustrated in still other strips). In total, it's the long tale of the painfully slow process of civilizing males. To civilize males requires that their two primary instinctive drives be channeled into enterprises less destructive for themselves and more productive for their communities. Those two primary instinctive drives are sex and power, with the latter instinctively codified in males *via* the law of the jungle, might makes right.

Correspondingly, all organized religions have undertaken two primary functions. The first has been to manipulate and try to control the sex drive of especially men. Details range from the idiocy of Christian abstinence (which hasn't worked, even in their own clergy; as Voltaire said, "*It is one of the superstitions of the human mind to have imagined that virginity is a virtue*") to Islam's licentiousness (which includes abominable treatment of women, treating them essentially as cattle). The result is that no other animal is as sexually confused as are religious fundamentalists, and with their perfectly normal and natural sexual urges frustrated by clerical stupidity, testosterone-sodden men have then sought relief by raping children, by treating the women in their lives as subhuman, and even by going on murderous and suicidal rampages, e.g., to finally gain sexual satisfaction from the promised 72 perpetual virgins awaiting them in Islam's fictitious version of paradise.

And the second primary function of all organized religions has been to claim superior force, i.e., that their omnipotent ("all powerful") god is in control (e.g., not only judging people's sex lives but also their fates in fictitious "afterlives"). If people would reject the oxymoronic idea of "life after death" (do words no longer need meaning?) and would adopt the mantra

* Go to other chapters *via*

“**make love not war**” (relieving natural concupiscence using contraceptives, essentially as soon as teenagers reach sexual and psychological maturity), then rather than continue to drive their youths and their communities crazy, all organized religions (and especially fundamentalist Christianity, Islam, and Mormonism) would immediately collapse, literally overnight.

Meanwhile, though, progress civilizing males has been made (and can still be made) by women: of course they can satisfy men’s sexual drives (customs willing), but they can also channel male’s desire for power, e.g., into gaining power over that which threaten women (such as threats from poverty, the environment, or other people). In total, the history of how women have been able to defang men (and the clerics’ omnipotent god) is a very long story (yet to unfold in Muslim countries). Here, I’ll mention just a few points illustrated by Bill Watterson.

For example, with the above Calvinball sequence, Watterson cleverly illustrated how Calvin’s babysitter Rosalyn outsmarted, constrained, defeated, redirected and generally civilized Calvin’s excesses. As I illustrated in earlier posts, Watterson similarly illustrated that the women in Calvin’s life (his mother, his neighbor Suzie, and his teacher Miss Wormwood) were able to (at least partially) civilize him. As an additional example, notice in the following strip not only Calvin’s craziness but also his mother’s careful rebuke of his repugnant forecasts, referring instead to the pleasure of spring flowers.



That Calvin’s excesses were constrained by the women in his life is, I think, especially relevant for the rejection of the brutality and misogyny of all the Abrahamic religions, now especially prevalent in Islam but still present in Judaism, Christianity, Mormonism, etc. As I’ve written extensively

elsewhere,¹⁸ I'm certain that the key to freeing the world from religious balderdash (especially Islamic balderdash) is realization of basic human rights by women – so that, then, they can civilize men!

That's not to suggest that an unfortunately large percentage of all religious women don't display even more irrational attraction to their imagined heroic "prophets" and gods than do similarly emotional men. Yet, in general, women seem to be more willing than men to cooperate (rather than compete), to show love (rather than hate), to include (rather than exclude), and to provide (rather than demand) services. After all, after all supernatural silliness is subtracted, all religions are basically just organizations of communities, at which women generally excel. And fortunately for humanity, women have been able to civilize some males:



Actually, Watterson went even further in his comic strips, illustrating his apparent view that, in the end, secular philosophers will be victorious even in all the silly games that clerics of the world have concocted, out of thin air. Recall that he named Calvin after the theologian John Calvin (1509–64), who concocted his own Calvinball, making it up as he went along. That is, similar to the founders of all religions (Zarathustra, Hilkiah, Ezra, Paul, Muhammad, et al.), Calvin simply pulled his religious dogma out of thin air (to put it politely) – or actually, out of thick air, polluted with clerical avarice and the people's ignorance. But as Watterson illustrated (e.g., in the Calvinball strip that I used two posts ago), Hobbes invariably outsmarted Calvin even at his own game. Recall that Hobbes was named after the secular philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), creator of the concept of "the social contract", i.e., the idea that the bases of interpersonal morality are simply rules that help us live together productively in our societies.

¹⁸ See, e.g., http://zenofzero.net/docs/X23_EXpanding_Women's_Liberation.pdf and <http://zenofzero.blogspot.com/2008/06/some-new-old-wives-tales.html>.

In contrast, the Abrahamic religions promote atrocious immoralities. Of course, moralities have meaning only relative to some objectives, but rather than choosing the personal objective of thriving by using one's brain as best one can and the interpersonal objective of living together productively in society, the Abrahamic religions are based on absurd objectives, such as placating a fictitious, tyrannical god, gaining entrance to a fictitious, illogical heaven, and avoiding an equally fictitious hell. Consequently, most of the moralities promoted in the Abrahamic religions are absurd. True (as I tried to show in early posts of this series), some of the interpersonal moralities (such as not to steal, lie, kill, etc.) are simply restatements of prehistoric cultural norms (finally recorded by the ancient Sumerians, Egyptians and Indians more than a thousand years before the earliest books of the Bible), but more significantly and damningly, the Abrahamic religions require people to replace their reasoning power with authoritarian power of numbskull clerics. Yet, abandoning one's reasoning to anyone, abandoning one's own ability to evaluate the evidence, is the depth of personal immorality, resulting in atrocious interpersonal immoralities. Therefore, at their bases, all the Abrahamic religions are deeply immoral.

7. Rejecting “Holy Books”

In sum, an increasing percentage of all people have applied their most important personal moral imperative (to use their brains as best they can) to reject the God Lie promoted in the world's “holy books”. Robert Ingersoll lamented:

How long, O how long will mankind worship a book? How long will they grovel in the dust before the ignorant legends of the barbaric past? How long, O how long will they pursue phantoms in a darkness deeper than death?

Illustrative is the idiocy that has raged during my entire life between the Israelis and the Arabs. If their DNA codes are read, the people are found to be close cousins, but they proceed to kill each other, because they have different covetous clerical hierarchies reading and preaching from different “holy books”. Maybe the end of such stupidity could be hastened if all such “holy books” carried warnings on their covers, something similar to:

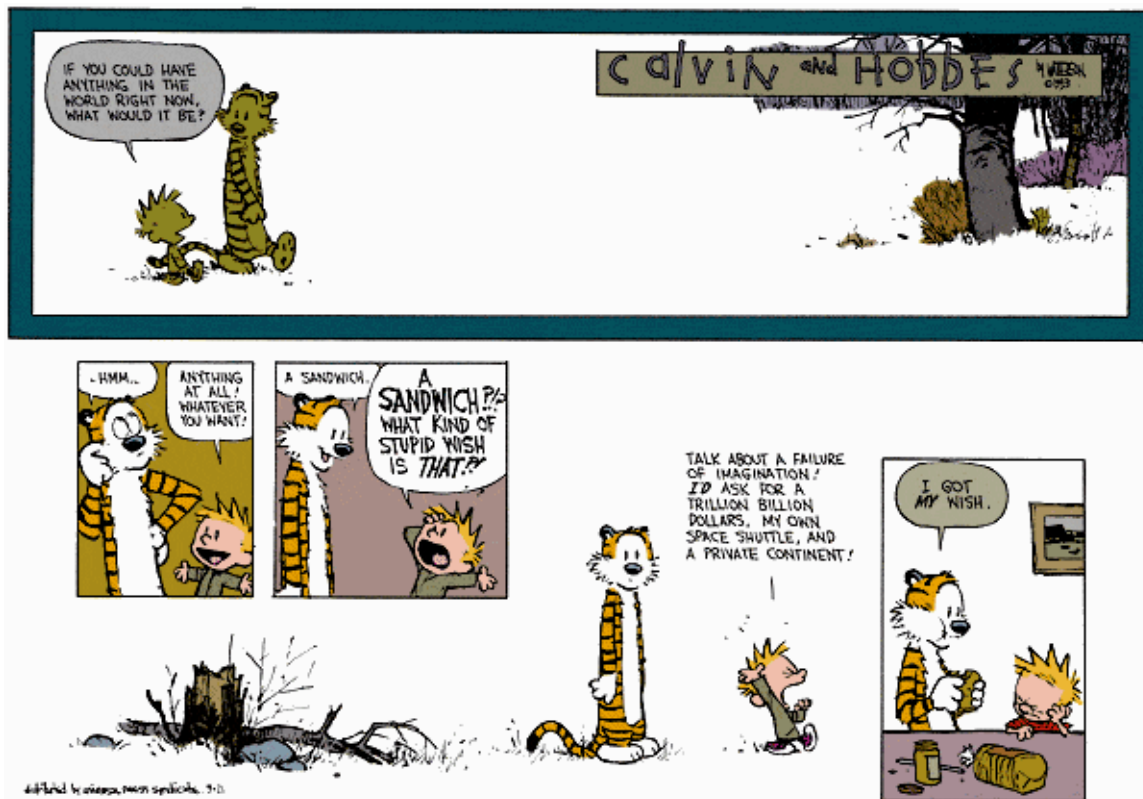
WARNING:
This “holy book” is bad.
It will mess with your mind.
It should never be taken seriously.

* Go to other chapters via

<http://zenofzero.net/>

If taken seriously, severe mental damage will occur.
 Keep this book out of reach of children and those who are childish.
 As antidotes, require extensive study in logic, science, and critical thinking.

But the chances, anytime soon, of having such a warning on all the world's "holy books" are slim, because the world's clerics are powerfully entrenched. They've captured the imagination of more than half of all people in the world, convincing them that they're special, because they believe what the clerics say (despite the total lack of evidence to support the clerics' crazy claims) and convincing them to abandon their minds to their clerics' whims, in large measure because, most unfortunately, a substantial fraction of all humans are wild dreamers and schemers, similar to Calvin:



[1. C {addressing Hobbes}: "If you could have anything in the world right now, what would it be?" 2. H {contemplating}: "...Hmm..." C: "Anything at all! Whatever you want!" 3. H: "A sandwich." C: "**A sandwich?!? What kind of a stupid wish is that?!**" 4. C: "Talk about a failure of imagination! *I'd* ask for a trillion billion dollars, my own space shuttle, and a private continent!" 5. H: "I got *my* wish."]

Wild dreamers and schemers that they are, clerics claim that the universe didn't create itself (e.g., by a symmetry-breaking quantum-like fluctuation in the original total void) but was created by a giant magic-man in the sky, and if only the people will follow the policies promoted by the con-artist clerics

(policies that of course include paying the parasite clerics to keep preaching their nonsense), then the people will live forever in paradise with their fictitious god in the sky. What a racket! What evil!

In a recent article¹⁹ in *Scientific American*, John Horgan relayed an appropriate term to describe such people. It was coined by the biologist Peter Medawar in his 1984 book *The Limits of Science*: they're “**bunkrapt**”, i.e., such people are raptured by bunk! In contrast, as Confucius (or K'ung fu-tzu, 551–479 BCE) said,

When you know a thing, to hold that you know it; and when you do not know a thing, to allow that you do not know it – this is the beginning of wisdom.

At about the same time in China, Lao Tzu (who documented Daoism in *Dao De Ching*) stated the concept more forcefully:

To pretend to know when you do not know is a disease.

Socrates (469–399 BCE) reportedly said similar:

... the most reprehensible form of ignorance [is] that of thinking one knows what one does not know...

That one concept (expressed by Confucius, LaoTzu, or Socrates) is worth more than all the statements in all the “holy books” of the world!

8. Dangers of Believing Balderdash

In this series of posts, I've tried to show that, in the main, the “holy books” of all the Abrahamic religions were all derived from Zarathustra's wild speculations (which, in turn, were probably derived from even earlier speculations by ancient Egyptians and Indians) that some god created the universe, the alleged role of people in “the scheme of things”, and their assumed rewards or punishments in a nonexistent afterlife. Therefore, all the “Abrahamic religions” (or more accurately, all the “Zarathustrian religions”) were and still are based on ignorance: balderdash based on totally arbitrary dogma, i.e., assumptions “pulled out of the air”, with none based on principles derived from data and whose predictions have been (or even “can be”) tested.

¹⁹ See <http://www.scientificamerican.com/blog/post.cfm?id=freeman-dyson-global-warming-esp-an-2011-01-07>.

Consequently, as people slowly become reliant on their own brains, as people slowly become more educated in critical thinking and in science, and as more men are civilized by women, all the Abrahamic religions (and all religions built on similar balderdash) will collapse into a rubble of primitive speculations that they are, just as other religions collapsed when their adherents learned that gods weren't responsible for earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, thunder and lightning, etc.

As ignorance decreases, so does worship of any god. Thus, when people understood the nature of volcanoes, the Sun and Moon, winds, thunderstorms, etc., people no longer worshiped such “gods”. And when people understand how the universe began²⁰ (possibly from a symmetry-breaking quantum-like fluctuation in a total void)²¹, how life might have begun²² and seems to have evolved,²³ and even that the “post-modern” religious, existential philosophers’ “ground of being” is probably total nothingness²⁴ – that is, once people’s ignorance is dispelled – then all gods of all organized religions will vanish. All were just aberrations derived from ignorance. As Lemuel Washburn rhetorically asked a century ago:

Where are the sons of gods that loved the daughters of men? Where are the nymphs, the goddesses of the winds and waters? Where are the gnomes that lived inside the earth? Where are the goblins that used to play tricks on mortals? Where are the fairies that could blight or bless the human heart? Where are the ghosts that haunted this globe? Where are the witches that flew in and out of the homes of men? Where is the devil that once roamed over the earth? Where are they? Gone with the ignorance that believed in them.

In his *Letters from the Earth*, Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens, 1835–1910) said it well:²⁵

Man is a marvelous curiosity. When he is at his very very best he is a sort of low grade nickel-plated angel; at his worst he is unspeakable... Yet, he blandly and in all sincerity calls himself the “noblest work of God.” This is the truth I am telling you. And this is not a new idea with him, he has talked it through all the ages, and believed it. Believed it, and found nobody among all his race to laugh at it!

²⁰ See, e.g., <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ImvIS8PLIo>.

²¹ See <http://zenofzero.net/docs/Awareness.pdf> and http://zenofzero.net/docs/Z_The_Zen_of_Zero.pdf.

²² See, e.g., http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h5mIZvkR1m4&feature=channel_page.

²³ See, e.g., <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUu5hBp1AU8&feature=related>.

²⁴ See <http://meansnends.blogspot.com/2010/02/god-is-total-nothingness.html>.

²⁵ From <http://www.positiveatheism.org/hist/twainlfe.htm>.

Moreover – if I may put another strain upon you – he thinks he is the Creator’s pet! He believes the Creator is proud of him; he even believes the Creator loves him; has a passion for him; sits up nights to admire him; yes, and watch over him and keep him out of trouble. He prays to Him, and thinks He listens. Isn’t it a quaint idea?

In reality, though, it’s not just a “quaint idea”: the universal weakness of basing beliefs on balderdash is the reason why every organized religion has led to dissension, division, and bloodshed. People who are conned or forced into adopting pure, unadulterated balderdash (usually when they are still children) divorce themselves from basing decisions on evidence and reason. Their opinions are unsound, because they’re based on unsound premisses; i.e., in reality, just silly speculations. And from such silly speculations, their actions can be irrationally emotional. The result is a plague of irrationality and therefore immorality, such as: “kill the infidels”, “burn the witches”, “abortion is murder”, “*Allahu akbar*.” As Voltaire said:

Those who can make you believe absurdities can make you commit atrocities.

Thereby, it’s a fair assessment to say that all clerics, missionaries, and their religious followers are, not only bonkers, they’re dangerous. Not only do they claim to know what’s unknown, but again and again, they’ve promoted open hostility toward those who debunk their claims to knowledge – or toward those who just say they’re bonkers.

In contrast, people with a naturalistic worldviews (such as the ancient Greek philosophers Democrates and Epicurus) offered the not-so-appealing prospect that when you die, you’re dead. The naturalistic worldview, however, did (and does!) provide liberation from fear of death and from clerical parasites. Yet, because science didn’t develop sufficient strength and because the vast majority of the people remained uneducated and superstitious, then as the Greeks fell to the Romans and the Romans succumbed to Christianity, the supernaturalists won the battle, plunging Europe into centuries of Dark Ages, similar to the Dark Ages maintained by supernaturalists in today’s Muslim countries. And even after the Enlightenment in the West, the war between naturalists (e.g., the Brights)²⁶ and the supernaturalists continues – although in most of Europe today, the supernaturalists have finally and thankfully lost the high ground.

²⁶ See <http://www.the-brights.net/>.

9. Religion Without Gods

The myths of organized religions are slowly being rejected and replaced with scientific ideas, but every step of the way, clerics have fought the advancement of science. As Thomas Jefferson wrote in his 11 April 1820 letter to Correa de Serra:

Priests... dread the advance of science as witches do the approach of daylight and scowl on the fatal harbinger announcing the subversions of the duperies on which they live.

But although many of us have rejected “the ignorant legends of the barbaric past” and the “revelations” in all “holy books”, we haven’t rejected (and don’t intend to reject) religion – in the broadest sense of the word.

The narrow sense of the word ‘religion’ is as given in the first three of four definitions in the *New Oxford American Dictionary*:

- the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power...
- details of belief as taught or discussed...
- a particular system of faith and worship...

With such meanings for ‘religion’ it’s easy to agree with Robert Ingersoll:

Religion makes enemies instead of friends. That one word, ‘religion’, covers all the horizon of memory with visions of war, of outrage, of persecution, of tyranny, and death. That one word brings to the mind every instrument with which man has tortured man. In that one word are all the fagots and flames and dungeons of the past, and in that word is the infinite and eternal hell of the future...

It’s similarly easy to agree with Joseph Lewis:

Let me tell you that religion is the cruelest fraud ever perpetrated upon the human race. It is the last of the great scheme of thievery that man must legally prohibit so as to protect himself from the charlatans who prey upon the ignorance and fears of the people. The penalty for this type of extortion should be as severe as it is of other forms of dishonesty.

But meanwhile, in the process of rejecting the old religions, the word ‘religion’ has come to mean, in its broadest sense, what’s given by the fourth definition in the same dictionary:

- a pursuit or interest to which someone ascribes supreme importance...

Thus, when humans reject god-based religions but are still religious, it means that individuals select and try to adhere to a set of principles and behaviors the each individual considers to be important – though not necessarily of “supreme importance”, because relatively few people who reject ideas about any god are fanatics (although exceptions, such as Stalin and Mao, obviously occur).

Most of us who reject “the god idea” (because insufficient evidence supports it) protect our individuality, but we’re pleased to engage in cooperative activities. Individually, we religiously pursue a huge number of activities (from sports to star gazing); collectively, too, the range of our activities is enormous (from politics to participating in the production of goods and services). Generally in our view, communities of believers are just too myopic, “thinking” that they’re special, confining their cooperative activities to those who think similarly, following some living or long-dead leader as if he (or, in some cases, she) knows (or knew) how to live any better than we can evaluate by ourselves.

In particular, we reject basing our beliefs on fear of hell and greed for heaven; instead, we hold religiously to the concept that all beliefs should be held only as strongly as relevant evidence justifies. We reject the concept that morality has anything to do with any gods; instead, we religiously adhere to the personal moral code of always using our brains as best we can (which of course includes evaluating evidence) and to interpersonal moral codes that promote human progress toward less violence and more sustainable development.

And because of lack of evidence to support the idea of the existence of any god and the vast evidence that supports the indictment that belief in any god curtails human progress (e.g., stimulating violence among humans and destruction of the natural environment), we reject all god ideas; yet, we’re thankful for opportunities to participate in our economies, we’re especially thankful for the progress that a few brilliant humans have already accomplished, and we’re in awe of our great good-fortune to have had a chance to participate in this glorious natural experiment called life. As Robert Ingersoll wrote in his 1872 book *The Gods*:²⁷

²⁷ From http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/robert_ingersoll/gods.html.

We are not endeavoring to chain the future, but to free the present. We are not forging fetters for our children, but we are breaking those our fathers made for us. We are the advocates of inquiry, of investigation and thought. This of itself, is an admission that we are not perfectly satisfied with all our conclusions...

Nature, so long as we can discern, without passion and without intention, forms, transforms, and retransforms forever. She neither weeps nor rejoices. She produces man without purpose, and obliterates him without regret. She knows no distinction between the beneficial and the hurtful. Poison and nutrition, pain and joy, life and death, smiles and tears are alike to her. She is neither merciful nor cruel. She cannot be flattered by worship nor melted by tears. She does not know even the attitude of prayer. She appreciates no difference between poison in the fangs of snakes and mercy in the hearts of men. Only through man does nature take cognizance of the good, the true, and the beautiful; and, so far as we know, man is the highest intelligence...

Philosophy has not the egotism of faith. While superstition builds walls and creates obstructions, science opens all the highways of thought. We do not pretend to have circumnavigated everything, and to have solved all difficulties, but we do believe that it is better to love men than to fear gods; that it is grander and nobler to think and investigate for yourself than to repeat a creed. We are satisfied that there can be but little liberty on earth while men worship a tyrant in heaven. We do not expect to accomplish everything in our day; but we want to do what good we can, and to render all the service possible in the holy cause of human progress. We know that doing away with gods and supernatural persons and powers is not an end. It is a means to an end, the real end being the happiness of man...

If abuses are destroyed, man must destroy them. If slaves are freed, man must free them. If new truths are discovered, man must discover them. If the naked are clothed; if the hungry are fed; if justice is done; if labor is rewarded; if superstition is driven from the mind; if the defenseless are protected and if the right finally triumphs, all must be the work of man. The grand victories of the future must be won by man, and by man alone.

10. Back to the Beginning

As I've tried to convey in these posts, I'm opposed to all organized religions – because all are just organized ignorance, claiming to know what isn't known. And although no one can know with certainty whether any god exists or not, yet based on the evidence (or rather, the lack thereof) it's clear that the most certain knowledge that humans possess (even more certain than the assumption that we exist) is that no god exists or has ever existed and, further, that this life is the only life that each one of us will experience. In contrast, organized religions posit wild speculations that gods and after-lives exist, and as a result, propose a variety of personal and social policies that have zero scientific bases, relying only on whims of clerical con artists.

* Go to other chapters *via*

<http://zenofzero.net/>

In his book *The World As I See It*, Einstein provided an apt summary for this entire series of posts:²⁸

Everything that the human race has done and thought is concerned with the satisfaction of felt needs and the assuagement of pain. One has to keep this constantly in mind if one wishes to understand spiritual movements and their development. Feeling and desire are the motive forces behind all human endeavor and human creation, in however exalted a guise the latter may present itself to us.

Now, what are the feelings and needs that have led men to religious thought and belief in the widest sense of the words? A little consideration will suffice to show us that the most varying emotions preside over the birth of religious thought and experience. With primitive man it is above all fear that evokes religious notions – fear of hunger, wild beasts, sickness, death. Since at this stage of existence understanding of causal connections is usually poorly developed, the human mind creates for itself more or less analogous beings on whose wills and actions these fearful happenings depend. One's object now is to secure the favor of these beings by carrying out actions and offering sacrifices which, according to the tradition handed down from generation to generation, propitiate them or make them well disposed towards a mortal. I am speaking now of the religion of fear.

This, though not created, is in an important degree stabilized by the formation of a special priestly caste, which sets up as a mediator between the people and the beings they fear and erects a hegemony on this basis. In many cases the leader or ruler whose position depends on other factors, or a privileged class, combines priestly functions with its secular authority in order to make the latter more secure; or the political rulers and the priestly caste make common cause in their own interests.

The social feelings are another source of the crystallization of religion. Fathers and mothers and the leaders of larger human communities are mortal and fallible. The desire for guidance, love, and support prompts men to form the social or moral conception of God. This is the God of Providence who protects, disposes, rewards, and punishes, the God who, according to the width of the believer's outlook, loves and cherishes the life of the tribe or of the human race, or even life as such, the comforter in sorrow and unsatisfied longing, who preserves the souls of the dead. This is the social or moral conception of God.

The Jewish scriptures admirably illustrate the development from the religion of fear to moral religion, which is continued in the New Testament. The religions of all civilized peoples, especially the peoples of the Orient, are primarily moral religions. The development from a religion of fear to moral religion is a great step in a nation's life. That primitive religions are based entirely on fear and the religions of civilized peoples purely on morality is a prejudice against which we must be on our guard.

²⁸ From <http://www.cyjack.com/main/cognition.html>.

The truth is that they are all intermediate types, with this reservation, that on the higher levels of social life, the religion of morality predominates.

Common to all these types is the anthropomorphic character of their conception of God. Only individuals of exceptional endowments and exceptionally high-minded communities, as a general rule, get in any real sense beyond this level. But there is a third state of religious experience which belongs to all of them, even though it is rarely found in a pure form, and which I will call “cosmic religious feeling”.

It is very difficult to explain this feeling to anyone who is entirely without it, especially as there is no anthropomorphic conception of God corresponding to it. The individual feels the nothingness of human desires and aims and the sublimity and marvelous order which reveal themselves both in nature and in the world of thought. He looks upon individual existence as a sort of prison and wants to experience the universe as a single significant whole.

The beginnings of cosmic religious feeling already appear in earlier stages of development, e.g., in many of the Psalms of David and in some of the Prophets. Buddhism, as we have learnt from the wonderful writings of Schopenhauer especially, contains a much stronger element of it. The religious geniuses of all ages have been distinguished by this kind of religious feeling, which knows no dogma and no God conceived in man's image; so that there can be no Church whose central teachings are based on it. Hence it is precisely among the heretics of every age that we find men who were filled with the highest kind of religious feeling and were in many cases regarded by their contemporaries as Atheists, sometimes also as saints. Looked at in this light, men like Democritus, Francis of Assisi, and Spinoza are closely akin to one another.

How can cosmic religious feeling be communicated from one person to another, if it can give rise to no definite notion of a God and no theology? In my view, it is the most important function of art and science to awaken this feeling and keep it alive in those who are capable of it.

We thus arrive at a conception of the relation of science to religion very different from the usual one. When one views the matter historically one is inclined to look upon science and religion as irreconcilable antagonists, and for a very obvious reason. The man who is thoroughly convinced of the universal operation of the law of causation cannot for a moment entertain the idea of a being who interferes in the course of events – that is, if he takes the hypothesis of causality really seriously. He has no use for the religion of fear and equally little for social or moral religion. A God who rewards and punishes is inconceivable to him for the simple reason that a man's actions are determined by necessity, external and internal, so that in God's eyes he cannot be responsible, any more than an inanimate object is responsible for the motions it goes through. Hence science has been charged with undermining morality, but the charge is unjust.

A man's ethical behavior should be based effectually on sympathy, education, and social ties; no religious basis is necessary. Man would indeed be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear and punishment and hope of reward after death. It is therefore easy to see why the Churches have always fought science and persecuted its devotees.

On the other hand, I maintain that cosmic religious feeling is the strongest and noblest incitement to scientific research. Only those who realize the immense efforts and, above all, the devotion which pioneer work in theoretical science demands, can grasp the strength of the emotion out of which alone such work, remote as it is from the immediate realities of life, can issue. What a deep conviction of the rationality of the universe and what a yearning to understand, were it but a feeble reflection of the mind revealed in this world, Kepler and Newton must have had to enable them to spend years of solitary labor in disentangling the principles of celestial mechanics!

Those whose acquaintance with scientific research is derived chiefly from its practical results easily develop a completely false notion of the mentality of the men who, surrounded by a skeptical world, have shown the way to those like-minded with themselves, scattered through the earth and the centuries. Only one who has devoted his life to similar ends can have a vivid realization of what has inspired these men and given them the strength to remain true to their purpose in spite of countless failures. It is cosmic religious feeling that gives a man strength of this sort. A contemporary has said, not unjustly, that in this materialistic age of ours the serious scientific workers are the only profoundly religious people.

You will hardly find one among the profounder sort of scientific minds without a peculiar religious feeling of his own. But it is different from the religion of the naive man. For the latter, God is a being from whose care one hopes to benefit and whose punishment one fears; a sublimation of a feeling similar to that of a child for its father, a being to whom one stands to some extent in a personal relation, however deeply it may be tinged with awe.

But the scientist is possessed by the sense of universal causation. The future, to him, is every whit as necessary and determined as the past. There is nothing divine about morality; it is a purely human affair. His religious feeling takes the form of a rapturous amazement at the harmony of natural law, which reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection. This feeling is the guiding principle of his life and work, insofar as he succeeds in keeping himself from the shackles of selfish desire. It is beyond question closely akin to that which has possessed the religious geniuses of all ages.

Which then brings me back to concept of awe that I addressed in this book's first chapter, entitled Awareness. Rolf Edberg summarized it beautifully:

* Go to other chapters *via*

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On a little speck in the universe, there is a species in which billions of years of evolution have led up to a mind through which the cosmos can experience itself, and nature can investigate her own nature.

Stated differently, Alan Watts' succinct summary is not only sufficient and scientifically accurate,²⁹ it's inspiring: *Each of us is the Universe "I'ing"*.

And of course it's not just the physical universe that can be awe-inspiring: inspiration is also available from understanding the biological world, as has recently been ably and admirably described in many lectures and writings by Richard Dawkins. As a specific example, rather than seeking inspiration in the silly Adam and Eve myth of the Bible, consider science's own Adam and Eve story, which Doug Linder sketched as follows:³⁰

Dr. Lynn Margulis thinks humans are, essentially, a colony of closely associated bacteria. When she first proposed her theory in *The Origin of Eukaryotic Cells* in 1970, the ideas proved so controversial that they "could not even be discussed at respectable scientific meetings." Today, however, the theory that most scientists rejected out of hand has earned, in the words of biologist Richard Dawkins, "triumphant near-universal acceptance."

The human story, as Margulis first saw it, began about 3.2 billion years ago when the only inhabitants on earth were bacteria. About that time, two primitive species of bacteria, a "mother" bacteria (*Bdellavibrio*) and a "father" bacteria (*Thermoplasma acidophilum*) started "exchanging energy" in a stable and dependable way that led to the formation of all subsequent life forms. This happened when the free-living bacteria took up residence in large "eukaryotic" cells. Confined within the large cells, the bacteria transformed into swarming elliptical membrane-filled bodies called mitochondria. With the formation of mitochondria began the flow of a river of DNA that sweeps through three billion years to include us all.

According to Margulis, each one of the hundred trillion cells in the human body is an enclosed garden of specially tamed and always multiplying bacteria. Not only is every man not an island, in the vision of Margulis, he is in essence a community of communities. The mitochondria perform essential functions, such as allowing chain reactions to occur that are critical to breathing and digestion. As Richard Dawkins notes, "Without our mitochondria, we'd die in a second."

Mitochondria, with their own simple DNA that is not affected by sexual mixing, come from our mothers only. Your mitochondria came exclusively from your mother's mother's mother – and so on, back generation after generation, to the beginning of our species. The culture of mitochondria in the female egg seeds a

²⁹ See <http://zenofzero.net/docs/Awareness.pdf>.

³⁰ From <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/frtials/scopes/gen1st.htm>.

newborn's body, while whatever mitochondria might be in the sperm are lost with the tail at the time of egg fertilization. The female-only transmission of mitochondria, coupled with its slow rate of genetic mutation, make its DNA ideal for tracing and dating maternal ancestry.

Researchers in the 1980s used computers to analyze samples of DNA drawn from 135 diverse women from all over the globe – Chinese, African tribeswomen, Australian Aborigines, Native Americans, Europeans. The researchers discovered that the family trees of these women all led back to Africa. Remarkably, the analysis demonstrated that genetic differences among the various people within Africa all are twice as great as the differences between all other population groups. This strongly suggests that all the population groups outside Africa are descended from a small band of humans that left Africa – probably about 50,000 to 80,000 years ago. In a sense, we are all Africans.

The ancestral human population that lived in Africa started to split up roughly 150,000 years ago, when the mitochondrial tree makes its first branches within the African continent. The very root of the mitochondrial tree seems to lie in the northwestern Kalahari Desert in southern Africa. The true home of Eve – Mitochondrial Eve – is not a lush Garden of Eden, but a hot African desert. The mitochondrial research matches nicely with recent genetic research using the Y chromosome, transmitted exclusively by males, which also points to southern Africa as the home of Adam. Unlike the Genesis version of human origins, however, the Y chromosomal Adam and Mitochondrial Eve that our genetic trees trace back to did not have the planet to themselves – there probably, in fact, were thousands of other humans living at the time. Moreover, other humans had lived and died long before they did. All we know is that these two humans, alone among the population of their time, can claim an unbroken line of sons and daughters that persists to this day.

Biologist E. O. Wilson sees the human story, as revealed by genetic research, as the possible basis for spiritual values. “We need to create a new epic based on the origins of humanity,” Wilson asserted, adding: “Homo sapiens have had one hell of a history! And I am speaking of deep history –evolutionary, genetic history – and then, added on to that and interacting with it, the cultural history recorded for the past 10,000 years or so.”

Evident in that “[cultural history](#)” (as I tried to sketch in this series of posts) are the major mistakes by primitive humans of supposing that such things as gods exist, which led to the mountainous god lies still promoted by the numbskull clerics of the world.

But the mistakes and lies will soon be discarded and rejected by most humans, and it seems to be fitting to close this “Yx-excursion” with that

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thought – save to again relay some thoughts conveyed by Bill Watterson in his 1990 Commencement Address at his Alma Mater, Kenyon College:³¹

Your preparation for the real world is not in the answers you've learned, but in the questions you've learned how to ask yourself... Reading those turgid philosophers here in these remote stone buildings may not get you a job, but if those books have forced you to ask yourself questions about what makes life truthful, purposeful, meaningful, and redeeming, you have the Swiss Army Knife of mental tools, and it's going to come in handy all the time... Selling out is usually more a matter of buying in. Sell out, and you're really buying into someone else's system of values, rules, and rewards... To invent your own life's meaning is not easy, but it's still allowed, and I think you'll be happier for the trouble...

³¹ From http://bridgerack.com/index.php/Brain_Rain/bill_wattersons_philosophy.html.