

Yx36 – Closing Comments – 1 – Origins of the God Lie

This is the 36th in a series of posts dealing with what I call “the God Lie”. For the final four posts of this series, I want to add some closing comments dealing with 1) the Origins, 2) the Promotion, 3) the Adoption, and 4) the Rejection of the God Lie. In the first post of this series (Chapter **Yx1**), I defined the God Lie as follows.

The Mountainous God Lie – Lingering social evils from initial misunderstandings and then subsequent deliberate falsifications of records, plus manipulations of ignorant people by power mongering clerics and politicians:

- That gods exist,
- That people have immortal souls imbued by the gods,
- That birth of children is controlled the gods,
- That the dead are ruled by the gods,
- That people have souls, which are judged by the gods,
- That stars and their constellations are signs from the gods,
- That movements of stars tell stories of gods,
- That dreams contain messages from the gods,
- That magic displays the mystery of the gods,
- That mysteries conceal the secrets of the gods,
- That sacrifices are needed to placate the gods,
- That rituals reveal knowledge of the gods,
- That mistakes are ‘sins’ against the gods,
- That sins offend and are punished by the gods,
- That clerics can forgive sins on behalf of the gods,
- That clerics are in contact with the gods,
- That clerics exercise authority on behalf of the gods,
- That clerics are spokesmen for the gods,
- That clerics preach the wills of the gods,
- That clerical “knowledge” is direct from the gods,
- That clerical hierarchies are established by the gods,
- That rather than serving themselves, the clerics serve the gods,
- That paying the clerics placates the gods,
- That prayers have power to persuade the gods,
- That tithes are collected on behalf of the gods,
- That “oracles” and “prophets” speak for the gods,
- That “truth” is told about prophets and gods,
- That a “race” of people was chosen by the gods,
- That oaths are binding when sworn to the gods,
- That covenants can be established with the gods,
- That morality is defined by the gods,
- That customs are created by the gods

- That laws are dictated by the gods,
- That leaders are chosen by the gods,
- That rulers know right by the grace of the gods,
- That justice is the jurisdiction of the gods,
- That order is ordained by the gods,
- That punishment is performed by the gods,
- That judges are judged by gods,
- That leaders rule by the grace of the gods,
- That kingdoms are established by the gods,
- That fates of societies are controlled by the gods,
- That human rights are endowed by the gods,
- That people should put their trust in the gods,
- That believers gain grace as a gift of the gods,
- That wars are waged on behalf of the gods...

If readers wonders why the number of lies listed (I think 46 are listed above) exceeds the number of posts “completed” (i.e., 35), I can offer two major reasons / excuses: 1) some posts outlined the historical development of more than one lie (e.g., the lies dealing with “sin”), and 2) I already addressed some of the lies earlier in the book (e.g., the faulty logic¹ and misinterpreted evidence² that led to the mistaken ideas that souls and gods exist, the nonsense that led to the myths³ “that stars and their constellations are signs from the gods” and “that movements of stars tell stories of gods”, and the unjustified speculations that justice⁴ and morality⁵ have anything to do with any gods). Yet, I admit that I didn’t address some of the lies in appropriate detail – my excuse for which is the following.

1. Less than I wanted, but more than I expected

Originally, I had planned on reviewing the most recent 2,000 years of the history of the God Lie more completely. I came to realize, however, that the task would require at least another 35 posts – and the return on the investment of at least two more years of my life was insufficient to impel me, especially when so many excellent reports written by competent historians are readily available.

¹ See <http://zenofzero.net/docs/IfFindingImmortalFallacies.pdf>.

² See <http://zenofzero.net/docs/IfHypothesesandProbabilities.pdf>.

³ See <http://zenofzero.net/docs/Ix07StarStories.pdf>.

⁴ See <http://zenofzero.net/docs/J2JusticeandMorality.pdf>.

⁵ See http://zenofzero.net/docs/M4_Morality_without_Gods.pdf.

If I (trained as a physical scientist, not as a historian) were to write more about the most recent 2,000 years, I could have provided more recent examples of the lies “**that kingdoms are established by the gods**”, “**that wars are waged on behalf of the gods**” (I did provide examples of those lies in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia), and importantly, more recent examples of the blatant lie “**that human rights are endowed by the gods**” (a lie that’s still promoted to this day). In the case of human rights, some examples are briefly illustrated below.

An ignominious illustration of the lie “**that human rights are endowed by the gods**” (rather than the more realistic appraisal that people have had to wrestle what they consider to be their rights from clerics and politicians, who have colluded to rule the people)⁶ is the response by Pope Innocent III (1161–1216) to the Magna Carta,⁷ by which British land owners forced King John to admit⁸ that he was constrained by law, unable to arrest and punish a free man without judgment “**by judges ruled by the law of the land or by one’s peers in a trial by combat.**” Thus, claiming to be God’s representative on Earth, the despicable Pope Innocent proclaimed:

Consequently, in the name of God Almighty, by the authority of the Apostles Saints Peter and Paul, and by our Own, We reprove and condemn this Charter; under pain of anathema We forbid the King to observe it or the barons to demand its execution. We declare the Charter null and of no effect, as well as all the obligations contracted to confirm it. It is Our wish that in no case should it have any effect.

In contrast to this pope’s claim of “**authority**” (from “**God Almighty**” and the “**Apostles**”) to withhold elementary judicial rights from the people, in reality, the only authority he possessed (and similarly, the only authority possessed by any religious leader who has ever lived) is that he and his henchmen had captured, hoodwinked, and controlled the imagination (the delusions) of the people. As George Carlin put it:

I have as much authority as the Pope; I just don’t have as many people who believe it.

As another example, more than 700 years later the damnable Pope Gregory XVI (1765–1846) made the following proclamation about rights won by the people as a result of the American and French Revolutions:

⁶ See http://zenofzero.net/docs/X11_EXpropriating_Rights.pdf.

⁷ See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna_Carta.

⁸ See <http://www.crf-usa.org/foundations-of-our-constitution/magna-carta.html>.

The unrestrained freedom of thinking and of openly making known one's thoughts is not inherent in the rights of citizens and is by no means worthy of favor and support.

In his 17 March 1814 letter to Horatio Spafford, Thomas Jefferson summarized it well:

In every country and in every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty. He is always in alliance with the despot, abetting his abuses in return for protection to his own.

For an illuminating description of how, as late as 1860, the pope (Pius IX) attempted to thwart democracy, I encourage readers to study the ex-priest Joseph McCabe's *Rome's Syllabus Of Condemned Opinions – The Last Blast Of The Catholic Church's Medieval Trumpet*.⁹ Unfortunately for Muslims (and for the world), Islamic clerics are still “trumpeting” such anti-human lies, claiming to speak for their fictitious god.

Additional examples dealing with human rights for women and minorities are readily available – at least in the non-Muslim world (since little progress attaining such rights has yet been made by Muslims). For example, as McCabe wrote in his 1929 book *The Story of Religious Controversy*:¹⁰

This is the stark truth about the redemption of woman from all the injustices which Christianity had brought upon her. Not one single Christian clergyman the world over raised a finger in the work until it had so far succeeded that the clergy had to save their faces by joining it. No amount of pulpit rhetoric, no amount of strained apology from Christian feminist writers, can lessen the significance of that fact. And to it you must add another of equal significance: The men and women who started the revolt against the injustice and carried it to the stage of invincibility were non-Christian in the proportion of at least five to one.

Even as recently as the 1960s, in his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*,¹¹ Martin Luther King (MLK) responded to clerics advising him to “go slow”:

Perhaps I have once again been too optimistic. Is organized religion too inextricably bound to the *status quo* to save our nation and the world? Perhaps I must turn my faith to the inner spiritual church, the church within the church, as the true *ekklesia* and the hope of the world.

⁹ At http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/joseph_mccabe/condemned_opinions.html.

¹⁰ At, e.g., http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/joseph_mccabe/religious_controversy/.

¹¹ At, e.g., http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html.

Thereby, MLK acknowledged (perhaps unwittingly) that, similar to other social animals,¹² humans possess inherent, instinctive understanding (“**inner spiritual... ekklesia**”) of justice, which leaders of organized religions have commonly subverted (“**inextricably bound to the *status quo***”) to keep their con games going, protecting their own parasitic existences.

Additional illustrations of how parasitic leeches known as clerics sucked the lifeblood of the people during the Dark Ages of Europe were given by William J. Robinson, quoted here from *The Necessity of Atheism* by D.M. Brooks:¹³

We are told by the Church apologists that during the Middle Ages the priests and monks kept up the torch of learning, that, being the only literate people, they brought back the study of the classics. Historically speaking, this is about the most impudent statement that one could imagine. It was the Church that retarded human progress at least one thousand years, it is the Church that put a thick, impenetrable pall over the sun of learning and science, so that humanity was enveloped in utter darkness, and if the priests and monks later learned to read and write (from the Arabs, Jews, and Greeks exiled from Constantinople after 1453), it is because they wanted to keep the power in their hands; the people they did not permit to learn either to read or write. (Even the reading of the Bible, bear in mind, was considered a crime.)

We are told that the priests and monks built hospitals and gave alms to the poor. Having gotten enormous tracts of the best land into their hands, so that the people were starving, they were willing to throw a bone occasionally to the latter. It cost them nothing and it gave them a reputation for charity. They built enormous monasteries with well-filled cellars, and lived on the fat of the land, while the people lived in wretched hovels, working their lives away for a crust of bread. The beasts, the domestic animals lived a more comfortable life than did the men, women, and children of the people. And the Church never, never raised a finger to ameliorate their condition. It kept them in superstitious darkness and helped the temporal lords – for a long period the spiritual were also the temporal lords – to keep them in fear, subjection and slavery.

To this day, similarly, parasitic Islamic clerics live in relative luxury by leeching the lifeblood of the poor Muslim people, who live in “**fear, subjection and slavery**”, because the clerics have captured, hoodwinked, and control the people’s imaginations / delusions.

¹² See <http://zenofzero.net/docs/KindnesswithKeeness.pdf>.

¹³ From <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/20248/20248-8.txt>.

Originally, also, I had planned to provide more details about the lies in Mormonism, even though I covered some of the lies in earlier chapters (see **Qx21** through **Qx24**). In earlier posts of this series (see **Yx21** & **Yx22**), I did address Joseph Smith's lie that he could translate anything with his "peep stone", a lie that became the *Book of Abraham*, but I was planning to provide more evidence in support of the assessment that Sidney Rigdon wrote the *Book of Mormon*. Subsequently, however, I found that, in his on-line book,¹⁴ Craig Criddle has done a great job marshalling relevant evidence, and I encourage interested readers to peruse his contribution to exposing still another foundational lie of Mormonism.

In sum, although this series of posts has been less than I wanted, it's also more than I expected – in that, innumerable times during the past more-than-two years of reading and writing, I was on the verge of quitting, with thoughts such as: “**Why am I trying to do this? Leave it to the historians! Look at what tremendous reports are already available!**” In that regard, if readers desire further details about the God Lie (including lies in addition to those that I've addressed), I encourage them to explore the tremendous resources available at the library and kiosk of the Secular Web¹⁵ – and if you're so inclined, financially contribute to the non-profit sponsoring organization (the Internet Infidels Inc.), “**dedicated to promoting and defending a naturalistic worldview...**”

2. Mistakes of the “supernatural” worldview that led to the God Lie

As I mentioned both in the introduction to the above list of lies and several times in these posts, the God Lie almost certainly wasn't originally a lie but a series of mistakes by primitive people. They didn't realize (and still today, more than half of all people in the world don't realize) that there is no such thing as “the supernatural”: if something exists, perforce it's natural; therefore, supernatural things such as gods don't exist.¹⁶

As a result (i.e., because the resulting God Lie is based on the mistaken idea that anything supernatural exists), many times during the writing of these posts, I wrestled with the question: **Should I call it “the Mountainous God Lie” or “the Mountainous God Mistake”?**

¹⁴ See <http://www.i4m.com/think/history/Book-of-Mormon.pdf>.

¹⁵ At <http://www.infidels.org/>.

¹⁶ See <http://zenofzero.net/docs/IiIndoctrinationinIgnorance.pdf>.

Eventually I chose the term “God Lie”, because clerics deliberately manipulated the mistakes into lies. For the rest of this post, my goal is to briefly review some of the mistakes made by primitive people; in the next post, I’ll emphasize how clerics (for their own parasitic and power-mongering benefits) morphed the mistakes into lies.

In an earlier chapter,¹⁷ I provided a brief review of how the god idea probably began. My review primarily relied on the analysis by the ex-priest Joseph McCabe, given in his excellent 1929 book *The Story of Religious Controversy*.¹⁸ In outline, anthropological studies suggest that primitive people first adopted the idea of “spirits” from trying to understand their own shadows, their images (e.g., in pools of water), their dreams (in which one’s “other self” seemed capable of leaving one’s body to engage in various activities), and their hallucinations (stimulated by starvation and/or by ingesting various hallucinogens).

Such experiences and their interpretations seemed to have led primitive people to assume that each person possessed a second self (a “spirit”) and to acknowledge (and eventually revere) alleged spirits of their dead ancestors (whose spirits seemed to visit the people in their dreams) and alleged spirits in the natural world (i.e., the idea, known as *animism*, that animals, streams, forests, mountains, etc. had spirits). Such mistakes led people to fear and to associated worship of the most powerful spirits, thereby “deifying” their most famous ancestors (e.g., probably Osiris, Isis, Horus, and Thoth in ancient Egypt) and those “spirits” that were assumed to control the most powerful natural forces, such as volcanoes, thunder and lightning, etc.

The essence of such mistakes can be seen in the following Calvin and Hobbes¹⁹ comic strip produced by the brilliant Bill Watterson.²⁰ [NB: all comic strips in these posts are copyrighted and cannot be used for commercial purposes without the approval of Universal Press Syndicate.] Watterson named Calvin after the (fanatical, Christian) 16th-century theologian John Calvin; Calvin’s plush-toy tiger, Hobbes – whom Calvin (alone) saw as an intelligent, full-sized tiger – was named after the (atheistic)

¹⁷ At <http://zenofzero.net/docs/Ix02SpiritsSoulsandGods.pdf>.

¹⁸ At http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/joseph_mccabe/religious_controversy/.

¹⁹ See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calvin_and_Hobbes.

²⁰ See, e.g., http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Watterson.

17th-century political philosopher Thomas Hobbes. In the strip below, Calvin is (once again) in a confrontation with his father.



Similarly, it's easy to imagine that primitive people living near volcanoes, for example, worshiped “the volcano god”, worshiping ignorance, “thinking” that they could propitiate the powerful volcano god, similar to how they would try to win favors from powerful tribal leaders by showing deference. A tragic example of such ignorance occurred the other day, during the eruption of Indonesia's Mount Merapi, as reported in a 2010/10/27 Associated Press article by Slamet Riyadi entitled “Indonesia volcano kills 30 including spirit keeper”:²¹

Among the dead was Maridjan, an 83-year-old man who had been entrusted by a highly respected late king to watch over the volcano's spirits. “We found his body,” said Suseno, a rescue worker, amid reports that the old man was found in the position of praying, kneeling face-down on the floor. Maridjan, who for years led ceremonies in which rice and flowers were thrown into the crater to appease spirits, has angered officials in the past by refusing to evacuate even during eruptions. They accused him of setting a wrong example, stopping other villagers from leaving, but Maridjan always said he would only go if he got a sign from the long-dead king who appointed him.

Likewise, ancient northern Europeans (and ancient Mesopotamians) worshiped the wind god (among other gods), worshiping ignorance, convinced that the wind represented the rushing of souls through the air – and it was “thought” to be wise to be in good favor of the god who controlled the souls of the dead. Calvin's father similarly confused Calvin:

²¹ From http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20101027/ap_on_re_as/as_indonesia_volcano.



The ancient Greeks (and similarly, the ancient Mesopotamians and northern Europeans) worshiped the god of thunder and lightning, worshiping ignorance, for surely it was “wise” to display obeisance to the god who controlled such powerful storms. The ancient Egyptians (and many others, including ancient Americans and Babylonians) worshiped the Sun, worshiping ignorance, because it seemed to control the crops; so, the people tried to win favor from the Sun god through bribery. The ancient Arabs (and other desert nomads) didn’t worship the Sun (the Sun was a daily enemy); they worshiped the (Egyptian) Moon god (Lah), worshiping ignorance, because it seemed to govern the blessed, cool nights; so, the people tried to gain control over their environment by bribing the Moon god (Al-Lah).

As their thoughts expanded with their empires, the ancient Egyptians, Mesopotamians, Persians, and Indians worshiped – and following them to this day, religious Jews, Christians, Muslims, Mormons, etc. still worship – the creator of the universe and of life, worshiping ignorance, because they “thought” and still “think” it wise to be in the good favor of such a powerful god. And if recent data interpretations are found to be valid, leading to the suggestion that the universe actually created itself (perhaps by a symmetry-breaking quantum-like fluctuation in a total void),²² then religious people will finally be able to worship what, in their ignorance, they’ve actually been worshiping all along, namely, total nothingness!²³

3. Mistakes about life that exacerbated the God Lie

Even more egregious (than the mistakes that morphed into lies about forces governing nature) were the mistakes made by our ancient ancestors about the forces and factors governing life.

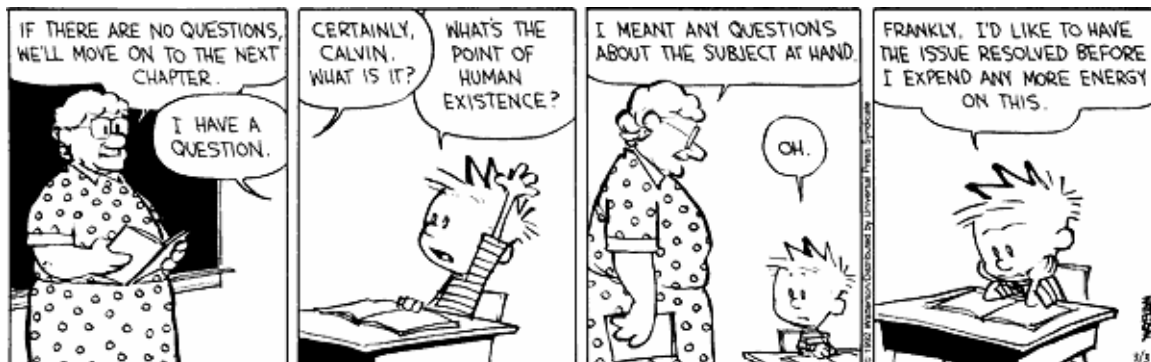
²² See <http://zenofzero.net/docs/Awareness.pdf> & http://zenofzero.net/docs/Z_The_Zen_of_Zero.pdf.

²³ See <http://meansnends.blogspot.com/2010/02/god-is-total-nothingness.html>.

For example, although it was a personal evil to believe that some volcano was controlled by a volcano god (i.e., **the personal evil of holding beliefs more strongly than relevant evidence warrants**),²⁴ yet it was a more serious mistake (an interpersonal evil) to assume that the volcano god would be placated by pushing a virgin girl into the volcano's crater (i.e., **the evil of not acknowledging that everyone has an equal right to claim one's own existence**).²⁴ In turn, such evils were derived from ignorance, consistent with the assessment by Socrates: "**There is only one good, knowledge, and one evil, ignorance.**"

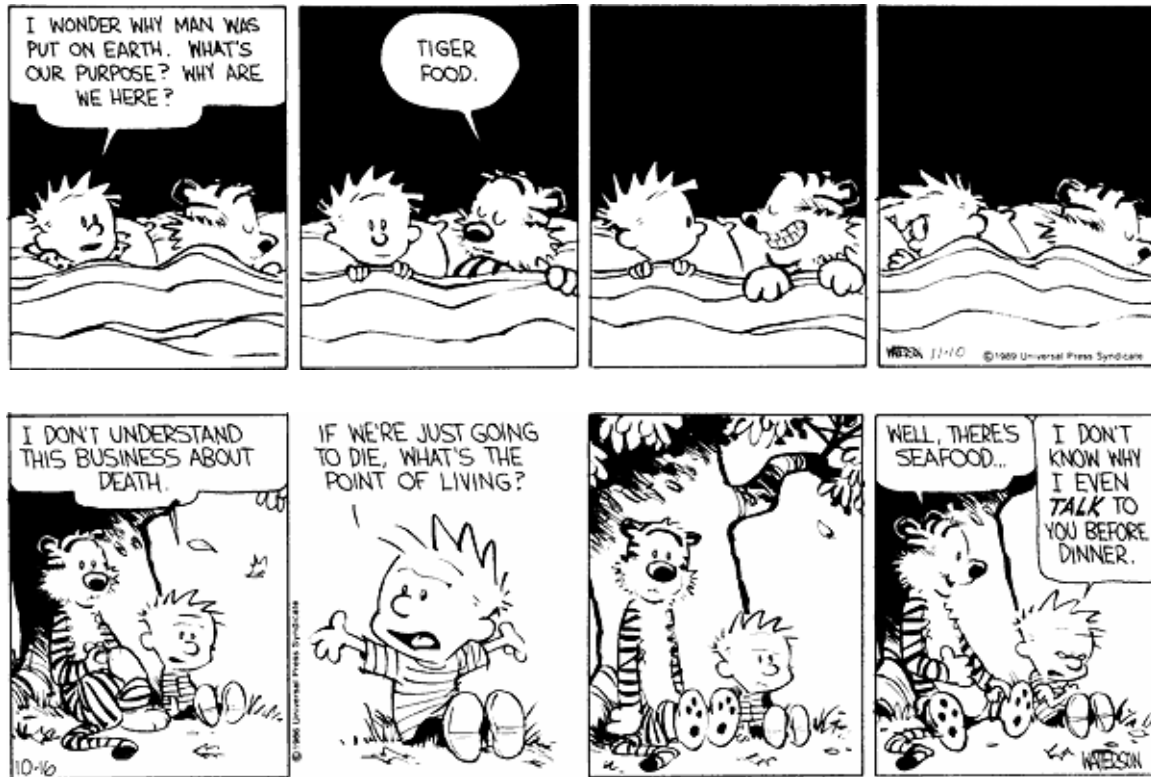
And in turn, because moral values (as with any values) have meaning only relative to some objective,²⁴ the fundamental ignorance was (and, for the majority of people living today, continues to be) failure to identify sensible answers to the fundamental question: **What's the purpose of life?**

In a number of strips, Bill Watterson brilliantly addressed this fundamental quandary, e.g., as follows.



²⁴ See the introduction to the previous post for a summary of (and references for) these ideas.

In addition, Watterson provided at least hints for solutions to the fundamental question about the purpose of life:



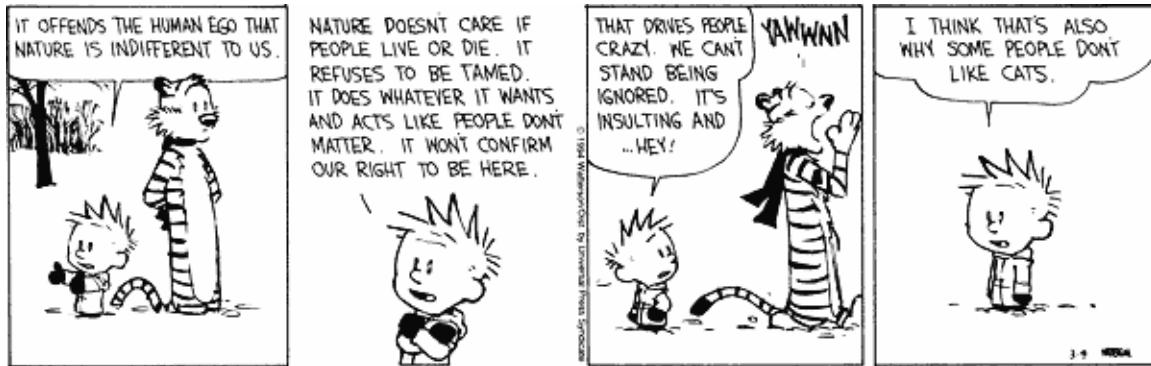
Calvin was obviously dissatisfied with Hobbes' answers. His answers, however, at least contained humor and common sense.

In contrast, it's sad to realize that more than half of all people living today "think" (usually as a result of childhood indoctrination) that their purpose in life is to placate some "creator god" – rather than realize that the fundamental purpose of all life is "just" to live.²⁵ Those of us who have rejected the God Lie are then free to choose additional purposes, including enjoying a good lunch.

Dismissing Hobbes' answers, Calvin compounded his confusion by considering other factors that influence one's choices about how to live, such as the following.

²⁵ See http://zenofzero.net/docs/P01_The_Purpose_of_Life.pdf.

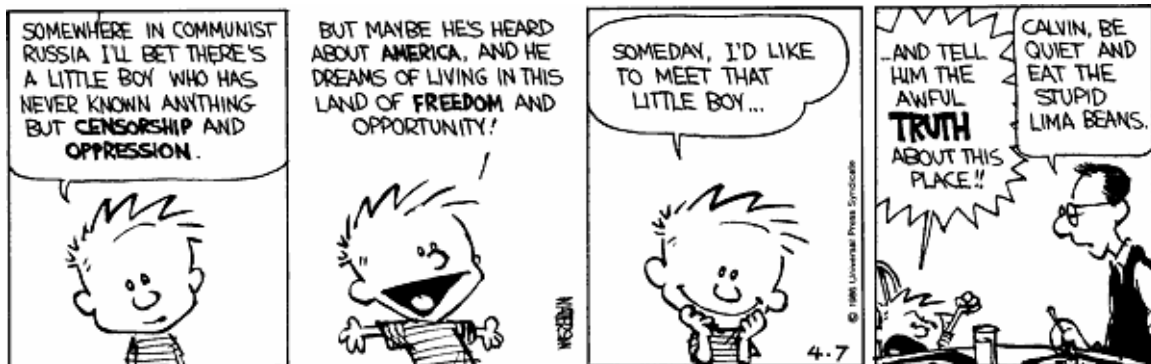
Nature's indifference:



Life's injustices:



Tyrants of various types:



And even immediate threats to one's survival:

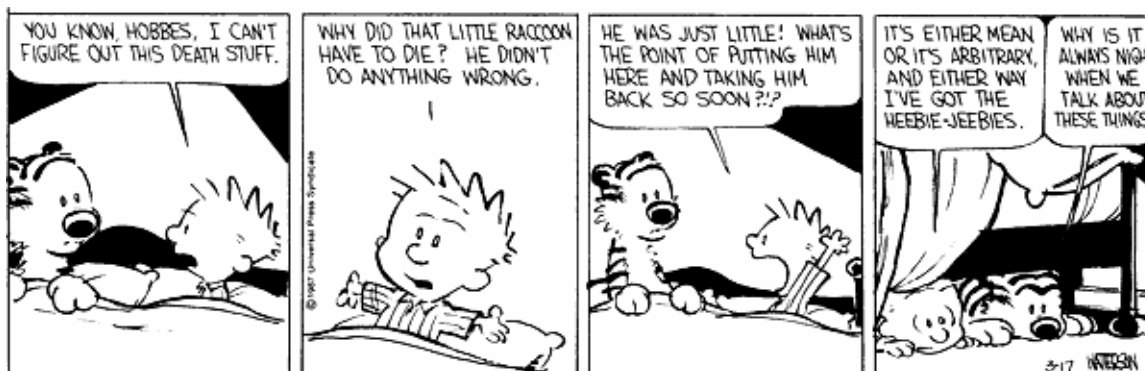


Such factors led (and still lead) people to additional quandaries, such as those illustrated by Watterson as follows.

About death:



About the reason for death:



And about what happens after we die, either good:



Or not so good:



About the existence of any god:



And about the source of evil:



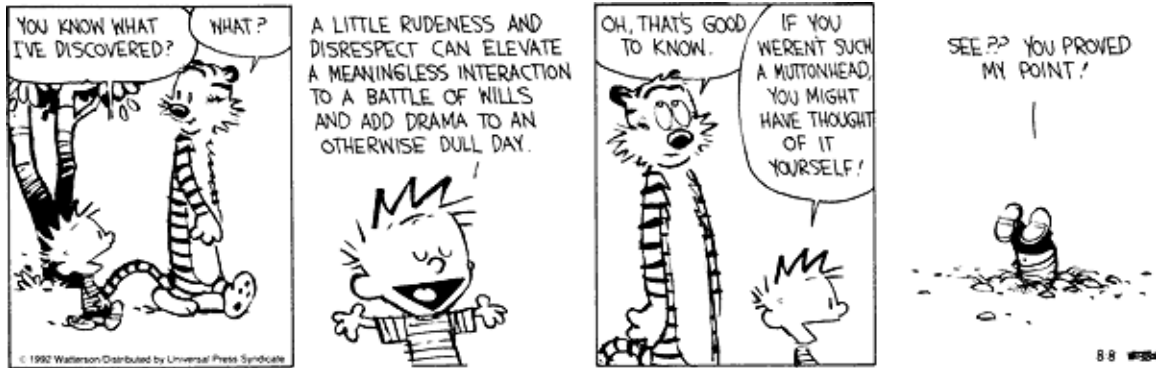
As a result of so many unanswered questions about the natural world and our place within it, primitive people concocted myths, and as President John F. Kennedy said:

The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie – deliberate, contrived and dishonest, but the myth – persistent, persuasive and unrealistic. Belief in myths allows the comfort of opinion without the discomfort of thought.

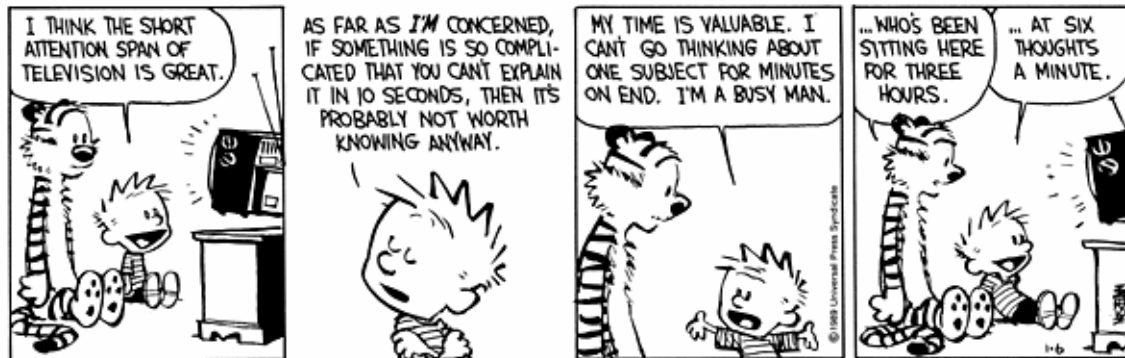
Additionally, Watterson provided insight into why humans find the “explanations” contained in myths to be attractive. Among the reasons, maybe foremost is that myths are almost invariably simplistic – similar to much on TV and talk-radio (e.g., in the U.S., the “shows” put on by Glen Beck and Rush Limbaugh, “heroes” of the current, mindless, American “Tea Party Movement”):



In addition, though, people mesmerized by myths are typically pugnacious:



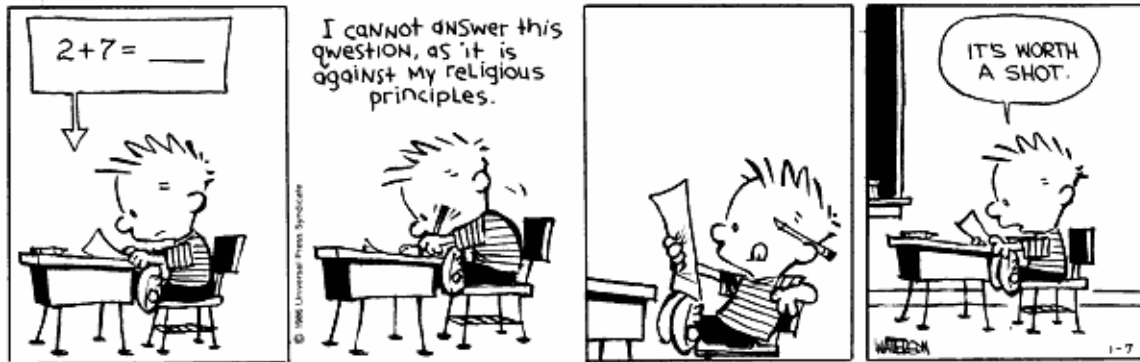
More generally (and in more ways than one) myths “are made” for those who don’t (or can’t) think for themselves; they want all concepts simple:



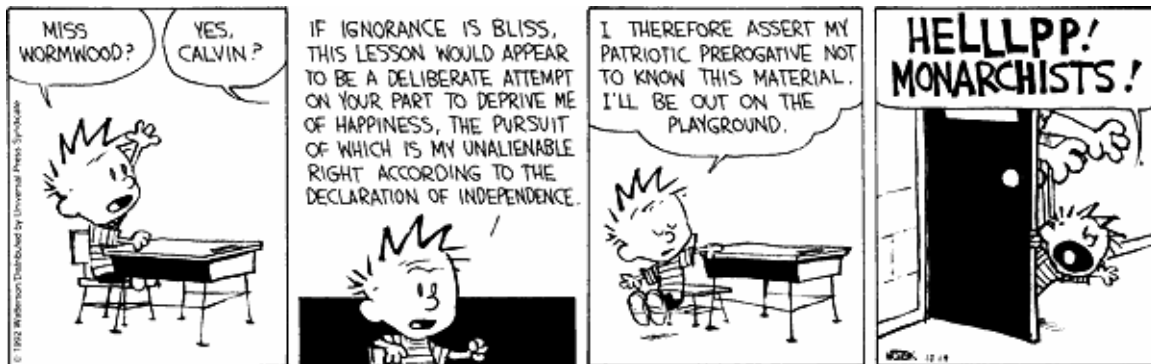
Thereby, myths attract those who “justify” avoiding new ideas:



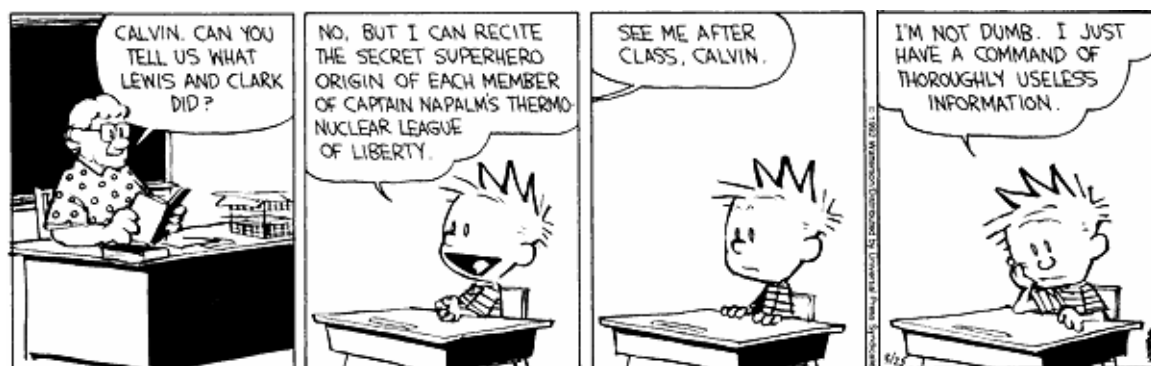
Those who take refuge in their religions:



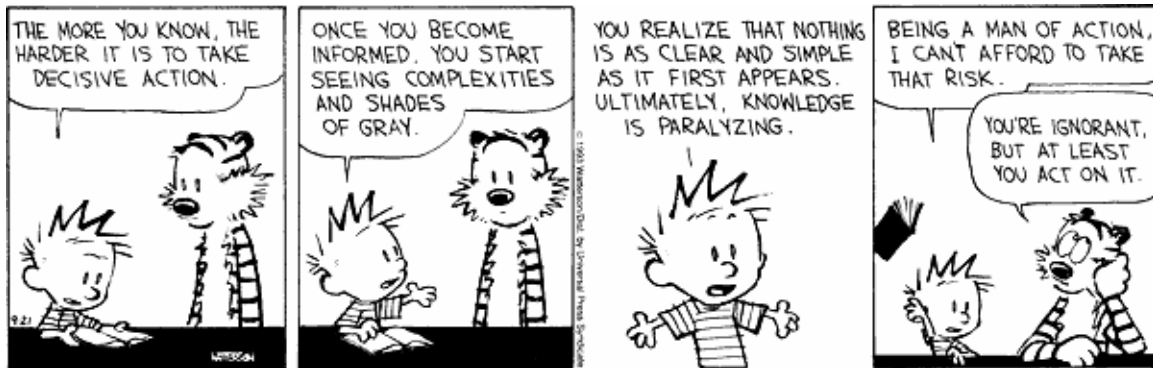
And those who find comfort in their ignorance (a fundamental American right, held tenaciously by members of the Tea Party Movement):



They even revel in their ignorant ideas:



Ignorant ideas that lead them to ignorant actions:



And yet, they're convinced that they should be running the world:



Even though they refuse to accept responsibility for their actions:



All of which is unfortunately now being illustrated as part of the mid-term elections to be held in the U.S. in the next few days.

In this election, the influence of America's Tea Party threatens to be significant. In a recent *New York Times* "opinionator" column entitled "Building a Nation of Know-Nothings", Timothy Egan described the situation well:²⁶

Take a look at Tuesday night's box score in the baseball game between New York and Toronto. The Yankees won, 11-5. Now look at the weather summary, showing a high of 71 for New York. The score and temperature are not subject to debate.

Yet a president's birthday or whether he was even in the White House on the day TARP [the Troubled Asset Relief Program] was passed are apparently open questions. A growing segment of the party poised to take control of Congress has bought into denial of the basic truths of Barack Obama's life. What's more, this astonishing level of willful ignorance has come about largely by design, and has been aided by a press afraid to call out the primary architects of the lies...

Climate-change denial [a fundamental "plank" of the Tea Party's "platform"] is a special category all its own. Once on the fringe, dismissal of scientific consensus is now an article of faith among leading Republicans, again taking their cue from [Rush] Limbaugh and Fox [Network TV, e.g., host of the Glen Beck farce].

It would be nice to dismiss the stupid things that Americans believe as harmless, the price of having such a large, messy democracy. Plenty of hate-filled partisans swore that Abraham Lincoln was a Catholic and Franklin Roosevelt was a Jew. So what if one-in-five believe the sun revolves around the earth, or aren't sure from which country the United States gained its independence?

But false belief in weapons of mass-destruction led the United States to a trillion-dollar war. And trust in rising home value as a truism as reliable as a sunrise was a major contributor to the catastrophic collapse of the economy. At its worst extreme, a culture of misinformation can produce something like Iran, which is run by a Holocaust denier.

It's one thing to forget the past, with predictable consequences, as the favorite aphorism goes. But what about those who refuse to comprehend the present?

The above is also an appropriate summary for all religious people: they both ignore the past and refuse to comprehend the present.

In sum, during the past 10,000-and-more years and continuing to this day, mistaken answers to questions about the nature of the universe and about the purpose of life led to a host of simplistic myths.

²⁶ From <http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/08/25/building-a-nation-of-know-nothings/>.

Subsequently, as I'll briefly review in the next post, such mistakes provided con artists (commonly called "clerics") opportunities to profit from the people's ignorance, fear and greed, by promoting the God Lie.