

Poking a Little Fun at Religion

Rhymes, Quotations, & Scriptures
That Invite Your Mind to Think

By
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Published by: Schramm Publications
121 7th Lane
Key Largo, FL 33037

Funded by Dean & Dorea Schramm for educational freethought purposes. Published with the conviction that most people are better than their religion.

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ISBN 978-0-9892215-0-4

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Material from *Church & State in America* edited by Butler and Stout p.11 (1998) by permission of Oxford University Press, USA.

Guest poems published with permission from right holders.

Recommended Readings:

Barker, Dan. *Godless – How an Evangelical Preacher Became One of America's Leading Atheists*.

Dawkins, Richard. *The GOD Delusion*.

Gaylor, Annie Laurie. *Woe to the Woman: The Bible Tells Me So (Revised Edition)*.

Harris, Sam. *The End of Faith*.

Hitchens, Christopher. *god is not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*.

Useful Online Reference:

<http://www.skepticsannotatedbible.com/index.htm>

You can use your own copy of the Bible, Koran, or Book of Mormon to look up religious information and passages cited in this book. A convenient alternative is to visit the above referenced web site. There, you can choose any of the three books and easily access their contents. They are also annotated by categories such as: Absurdities, Cruelty and Violence, Contradictions, Science and History, Family Values, and more.

Websites come and go, of course. If this one disappears, a search of the internet will turn up others. It may also provide you with some entertainment. This author has encountered sites that rightfully excoriate "the other guy's" holy book; then praise to the heavens the virtue of their own, using the same childish logic and apologies indignantly rejected when employed by the competition.

Note: Bible references in this book refer to the King James Version.

DEDICATION and CAUTION

In most de facto theocracies of the world, being a member of a minority religion is a hazardous proposition. Blasphemy, proselytizing, or violating a religious taboo can get one imprisoned, stoned, or condemned to death. In times of political strife, places of worship are destroyed and bombs are placed in sectarian locations.

In America, a strong wall of separation of church and state reduces the tensions that accompany religious differences. Religious oaths can not be a requirement to hold public office; sectarian prayer and the teaching of religion in public schools is not permitted; religious icons may not be displayed on government property. These and similar policies that eliminate religious favoritism have benefited everyone.

But violations have occurred, and when complainants or litigants stepped forward to correct an error, they often paid a heavy price. Many faced death threats and suffered from acts of extreme vandalism—property defacement, house burning, and the loss of cherished pets that were killed out of spite. Families have been shunned by friends and driven from their communities. Students have been bullied, beaten, or forced from their schools. Some unfortunates have been disowned by close relatives.

This book is dedicated to them: the brave, the courageous ones who have fought for the valued American principle of church-state separation and suffered for it.

To those who mistakenly believe that defending this ideal goes without challenge—pick up any copy of the newspaper, *Freethought Today*, published by the Freedom From Religion Foundation (<http://ffrf.org/>), and read the section called *Sharing the Crank Mail*. The published letters reflect the pious arrogance of their authors. They are characterized by bad grammar, terrible spelling, vile profanity, and an assortment of threats and insults. One does not know whether to laugh at them, to cry for their authors' ignorance, or to be afraid.

And travelers—if you plan on visiting foreign lands with heresy restrictions, please leave *Poking a Little Fun at Religion* at home.

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Preface

Poetry is an effective means for making a point or expressing an idea in compact form. Rhymes are especially good, for they are easily remembered. The rhymes in this book are often linked to religious references and relevant quotations, making them informative and poignant.

If you encounter a situation where a relevant poem might be used to make a point—perhaps in a letter to a local newspaper, in a religious forum debate, or in the "Comments" section after a major news article, I encourage you to use it.

To cite a few examples: If government sponsored prayer at your local high school or city hall ever becomes an issue, you can respond with a letter to your local newspaper incorporating the poem, "Pious & Public." A campaign to teach creationism in public schools can be met with "Decline of the Sparerib Era" or "Simple Science." Posting of the Ten Commandments on government property is easily addressed with many of the poems in Section I.

However, I do not automatically extend the right to use this poetry for commercial purposes, and I have no authority to grant you the right to use any of the guest poems in Section VI.

All guest poetry has been published with permission from the authors. We thank: distinguished freethought poet Philip Appleman, Ernie Harburg (President of The Yip Harburg Foundation), and Michael Silverstein (The Wall Street Poet) for granting that permission.

Introduction

Oog was the village chief. Wisest of the tribe, he had seen more seasons than any. He recalled winters so cold that his people had died by the campfire. He had felt the earth shake unaccountably, and he'd seen the sun and the moon leave the sky, only to return moments later. Countless times he had been awakened at night by the angry roar of the gods and watched as they sent fire streaking from the heavens. He'd experienced all these things, and he'd bargained for their change, but now he was baffled.

The rains had not been gifted for so long that the animals had died, and the plants had shriveled. Every member of his tribe scraped the dusty earth for roots. Bitter leaves and dry grass made up most of their diet; even insects had gotten scarce. And now, the only remaining watering hole was a drying patch of mud.

What had they done to anger the gods? The tribe to the north, their cousins, had all perished in the drought. They had burned the finest of their possessions and scarce food in sacrificial offerings, but it had not been enough. One of their members had cursed the gods for their inattention, but they had atoned for that by roasting him slowly over a fire. And why should Oog's tribe suffer? There had been no breach of faith amongst his kin.

Now there was little of value left to offer: Faith, of course, and when his wife died of hunger, Oog had spilled his own blood with an obsidian knife, but still, no rain came. Oog looked across at his sleeping daughter, more bone now than flesh, and he gazed at his son, propped listlessly against a nearby tree. A tear came to his eye. Perhaps what the gods required was a virgin sacrifice, or an only son. Yes, that was it. He heard a voice. Soon he would know.

We can forgive Oog for his ignorance. All he had to work with were the mythical stories of his forefathers and faulty logic—post hoc ergo propter hoc reasoning. He had no science to help steer him from his disastrous conclusions.

But today, in our modern world, things remain much the same. We associate the gods with blessings and misfortunes; we appeal to them with prayers and rituals; we praise them for their miracles, excuse them for disasters. In places, we still burn witches and stone apostates for their heresy, or sinners for their transgressions.

Often, those in highest office reside there because of strong, overt expressions of their faith, not their prowess in science. World leaders of developed and undeveloped countries pray for guidance when they go to war. Generals on both sides claim god's righteous backing. Many top officials and justices in this country attend the Red Mass. One Supreme Court Justice has proclaimed the arrogance of 'being a fool for a god' as a virtue, and freely admits to being weak in science. Let's hope his rulings, and those of many like him, don't take the rest of us down that path with them.

So it goes. When it comes to men in power, one wonders—is it what they don't know that puts us in the greatest danger, or is it what they think they do? But in a hard world, we will always have our Oogs. Once indoctrinated with the equivalent of a thought-virus, few ever change their convictions. It brings to mind the wise observation made by the comic character, Pogo the possum, when he said, "We have met the enemy, and he is us."

The rhymes in this book are meant to be provocative. They invite analysis and bring up taboo subjects. They try to arouse in readers a desire to explore what it is that makes up

the basis of many religions and to question aspects of their own religion to which they may have become desensitized.

Some readers are bound to feel discomfort from some of the poems—believing that they or their religion are under attack. They should pay close attention to what they are objecting to—often it is the content of a particular poem, and that content (frequently footnoted and linked to its source) comes directly from the religion itself. If you feel that discomfort, you should also feel proud; your conscience is telling you something is wrong with that material, and you are someone who wants to do right. You are actually better than your religion, as most, but not all people, are.

If you find you are better than your religion, consider abandoning it. Keeping what you like and ignoring what you don't only helps to perpetuate the negative aspects of most organized religions. It is not helpful to society. You don't have to be religious to be good. You can still be charitable, responsible, and kind. Philosophies such as Unitarianism, Humanism, and Naturalism for example, allow you to think for yourself without adding the baggage of superstition—they just won't be offering you a pie-in-the-sky heaven or consigning you to some arbitrary hell.

Better Than Their Religion:

"Who discovered that there was no such thing as a witch - the priest, the parson? No, these never discover anything. At Salem, the parson clung pathetically to his witch text after the laity had abandoned it in remorse and tears for the crimes and cruelties it has persuaded them to do. The parson wanted more blood, more shame, more brutalities; it was the unconsecrated laity that stayed his hand. In Scotland the parson killed the witch after the magistrate had pronounced her innocent; and when the merciful legislature proposed to sweep the hideous laws against witches from the statute book, it was the parson who came imploring, with tears and imprecations, that they be suffered to stand."

Mark Twain Quotation: from *Bible Teaching and Religious Practice*.

SECTION I:
**The Great Morals. The Great Wall of Church-State
Separation.**

The fifteen poems in this section have been grouped together because they contribute to a common thread—mixing scriptural morality with government functions. The first eleven poems deal with the quintessential example of religious morality—the Ten Commandments. Some hold them to be the basis of our entire legal system and want them posted on public grounds, in court houses, and public schools. Pointing to them with pride, they may claim that America is a Christian nation (or Judeo-Christian, giving grudging credit to the Jews, whose Old Testament scriptures actually produced the Ten Commandments).

So what are the Ten Commandments? It's hard to say, since different bibles have different translations, different sects can't agree on their order or content, and the Bible itself contains three different versions: two popular sets at Exodus 20:1-17 and Deuteronomy 5:4-21, and an additional set that Moses wrote after he threw a fit, slaughtered a few thousand people, and broke up the originals (Exodus 34:10-38). Though some of the commandments are similar, some are very different: For example, "You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk." (Presumably, an insult to the mother goat—and who wants that?)

How moral are the Commandments and the literature that surrounds them? Few stop to think about that. Read the poems and judge for yourself. There are plenty of other commandments on nearby scriptural pages too. Some of them are cited in the poetry and footnotes—read them, consider them, and ask yourself if you would want them coded into our criminal justice system. Amazingly, there are those who would.

Violation of Conscience

Think of the First Commandment,
It's clear on what is said:
"Thou shalt have no other gods ..."
Now get that through your head. *

No doubt you see the problem—
It flaunts the Bill of Rights.
Americans can choose any god,
Or none if we don't like.

So keeping this commandment
Away from government halls
Protects your right of conscience
And discourages holy brawls.

* Your descendents will pay the price if you do—Exodus 20:5 "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;"

And what about family pets? Do they get the "visiting iniquity" treatment also? Scripture is silent on the matter, but if you intend to violate this commandment, it might be wise to move Rover or Tabby to the local animal shelter.

Bad Images

"Don't make no graven images!" *

Well you couldn't if you tried.
Gods don't pose for photographs,
They all run away and hide.

For Yahweh, Allah and Mohammed,
Not a single wooden idol.
It keeps the Jews real happy.
Muslims don't go homicidal.

But there *is* one glaring exception,
For in many a Christian house,
Christ on a cross is as common
As an image of Mickey Mouse.

* Part of 1st or 2nd Commandment, depending upon the religion.

Gosh Darn It!

**Don't take the name
Of the Lord in vain, ***
Or you'll find out
The meaning of pain.

There's a high price **
For blasphemy:
You're stoned to death
By the laity.

Since most folks cuss,
It seems so wrong,
To post this law
On a courthouse lawn.

* 2nd or 3rd Commandment, depending upon the religion.

** Leviticus 24:16. "And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the Lord, shall be put to death."

So there you have it. No blaspheming!

Lazy for the Lord

(Trochaic tetrameter—DUM da, DUM da, DUM da, DUM da
—parody of Longfellow's *The Song of Hiawatha*)

Thou shalt surely keep the Sabbath,
For it is the Third Commandment. *
On that very day God rested,
Rested from the big creation.

Is it Friday, Saturday, Sunday? **
It depends on whom you speak with.
Just to play it on the safe side,
All three days you should stay idle.

Certain things are still permitted:
Sex is happily not forbidden.
Eating, praying, even singing,
Praising God from dawn til evening.

There are many things thou shan't do,
Scrape a hide or build a fire.
Useful work is always frowned on:
Clipping toenails, changing diapers.

No more weekend sports on TV.
Shun the tennis court and golf course.
Solemnly these rules do follow.
He shalt die who doth ignore them. ***

Let our government enforce this.
Post the law in all its buildings.
Abandon ye the First Amendment.
To the Lord all must be faithful.

* Or 4th Commandment, depending upon the religion.

** Judaism, Islam, and various Christian sects differ.

*** Exodus 31:15. "Six days may work be done: but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death."

Numbers 15: 32-36. A man who had gathered sticks for a fire on the Sabbath is stoned to death at the Lord's command.

So, they got him for gathering sticks for firewood. Gathering stones for breaking bones is another matter entirely.

Children's Day

Honor thy father and mother— *

State the Bible and Koran. **

But there are times it doesn't seem
Like a very good command.

You can just ask little Suzie,
Whose mama left her at ten.
And her father was no better,
Since he raped her now and then.

Wouldn't it be an improvement
To change that rule's main fault?
Parents should honor their children.
After all, they are the adults.

But kids are held responsible.
The price of the sin is death, ***
When even a justified child
Curses a parent under her breath.

* 4th or 5th Commandment, depending upon the religion.

** Koran 17:23. Bible: Exodus 20:12, Deuteronomy 5:16.

*** Exodus 21:17. "And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death."

Leviticus 20:9 & Deuteronomy 21:18-21 A child who curses a parent shall be put to death. A stubborn and/or rebellious child shall be stoned to death.

Sending kids to bed without supper is fine, but it doesn't necessarily put an end to the problem. Here we have the final solution.

A Critical Look:

We're halfway through the Commandments,
And as you can clearly see,
They're coming up a little short
Of what they ought to be.

Let's take a look at the next five rules.
We'll give them a good inspection.
If they fail to meet high standards,
Let's stamp them with rejection.

To Slay or Not to Slay...

Thou shalt not kill or murder. *

That commandment seems just fine.

Why don't ancient holy books

Live up to their own line?

Exceptions in the Good Book (?),

Make way for biblical fun.

Here are a few examples,

Where you should kill someone: **

Anyone who breaks the Sabbath,

Or a sinful blasphemer.

Man has sex with mother-in-law???

Kill him, his wife, and her!!!

One who steals another's slave,

You must kill his thieving ass.

And you can beat your slave to death,

But he mustn't die too fast.

You must kill friend or family,

Who tempt you with other gods.

Kill anyone whose sex acts

Might seem a little odd.

Kill all witches and wizards,

Gays and adulterers too!

And those who scorn judge or priest—

Well, you know what to do.

Kill kids who curse their parents.
Stone the rebellious son,
The bride who's not a virgin,
False prophets had better run.

Those are folks that *you* can kill,
God gets more kills than you.
Once he murdered everyone,
Except Noah and his crew.

* 5th or 6th Commandment, depending upon religion. Some translations use "kill" while others use "murder." The victims have not been known to care.

** In order of mention: Exodus 31:15, Leviticus 24:16, Leviticus 20:14, Exodus 21:16, Exodus 21:20-21, Deuteronomy 13:6-10, Leviticus 20:15-16, Exodus 22:18, Leviticus 20:27, Leviticus 20:13 & Romans 1:26-32, Leviticus 20:10-12, Deuteronomy 17:12, Exodus 21:17 & Leviticus 20:9, Deuteronomy 21:18-21, Deuteronomy 22:13-21, Deuteronomy 18:20-22. Whew! Lots of god-inspired commands to obey.

Adultery a No-No *

Those who commit adultery,
Put heaven beyond their reach.
Death is the fearsome sentence. **
That's what the Scriptures teach. ***

Divorce provides no pardon.
Remarriage puts you in breach.
Lust is the same as cheating,
That's what the Gospels preach.

If the missus seems unfaithful,
Mix holy water with dust.
See to it that she drinks it.
She'll rot if she's been unjust.

Those who swallow such nonsense
Often ignore it as well.
Many of them are clerics.
Do you think they'll go to hell?

* 6th or 7th Commandment, depending upon the religion.

** The Koran is more lenient: Surah 24:2. "The adulterer and the adulteress, scourge ye each one of them (with) a hundred stripes." Still, under Sharia, adulterers are sometimes stoned to death in Muslim countries.

*** **Heaven** (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). **Death** (Leviticus 20:10-12 & Deuteronomy 22:22). **Divorce/Remarry** (Mark 10:11-12 & Luke 16:18). **Lust** (Matthew 5:28). **Cheating wife test** (Numbers 5:12-31 - note - this biblical cocktail doesn't work on men).

Questions of Theft

Thou shalt not steal—that noble appeal—
It's so simple, what more can be said? *
Some say it's an absolute value.
It's a relative one, instead!

If I sneakily pick your pocket,
Then I'm as guilty of the sin,
As when I walk into a liquor store
And make off with a bottle of gin.

Employers who underpay workers—
It's another man's labor they steal.
But can we condemn the starving waif,
For pilfering food for a meal?

And should the punishment fit the crime,
As it states in the callous Koran? **
Allah would have us punish a thief,
By cutting off both of his hands.

Be cautious of ancient commandments.
They cause trouble on government walls.
We already have better statutes
Designed to protect us all.

* 7th or 8th Commandment, depending upon the religion.

** Koran 5:38 "And (as for) the man who steals and the woman who steals, cut off their hands as a punishment for what they have earned, an exemplary punishment from Allah; and Allah is Mighty, Wise."
(Yes, you have to hand it to Allah!)

Useful Lies

"Thou shalt not bear false witness!" *

That's a very constructive rule.
But when describing infidels,
Most religions treat it cool. **

And while most folks don't slander,
There's another exception too.
Candidates seeking office
Find it's a handy tool.

* 8th or 9th Commandment, depending upon the religion.

** When it comes to religion, everyone qualifies as somebody else's infidel: Christian vs. Mormon, Protestant vs. Catholic, Suni vs. Shiite, Hindu vs. Muslim, etc. These camps excel at excoriating each other for being on the wrong side of some holy book, guru, prophet, or god. All are generous with their scriptural defamation of freethinkers.

Keep Your Eyes in Their Sockets

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife or his other stuff:" *

How does that commandment work ... ?

Your neighbor ...

If he's got a mansion,
Don't drool down your chin.

And

If he's got a sports car,
Don't desire it and sin.

But

If he's got a hot wife,
She's just property. **

So

You can't ogle her,
But she can ogle thee.

* For Catholics & Lutherans: Covet wife = 9th Commandment. Covet everything else = 10th Commandment. These proscriptions are combined as the 10th Commandment for other religions:

Exodus 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

** A good woman is hard to find and worth a lot (up to ten sheckles or two-hundred foreskins). See the poem "Get Your Gal" for more details.

Dueling Rules

**Do unto others,
As you'd have them do unto you—**
That, in a nutshell,
Is the Golden Rule ...

It's admired by religious folks
And the non-religious too.
Confucius really liked it,
And Christ thought it was cool.

But it has some serious problems
About which you should know.
For the masochist and the nitwit,
It's not the way to go.

In all the common holy books,
That nice rule gets rejected.
They hold so many horrid laws
In which it's not respected:

You learn the laws for keeping slaves, *
And when to beat your wife.
And in many shocking cases,
When you should take a life.

That short list of examples
Is enough to let you see
You probably wouldn't desire
Any reciprocity.

To venerate the Golden Rule,
The path for you is plain—
Disregard those holy horrors
Which are clearly so profane.

* The examples that could be given are legion. Only three have been selected: one each from the Old Testament, Koran, and New Testament.

Rules for slavery: Exodus Chapter 21. **Rule for wife beating:** Koran 4:34.
Killing of family: Matthew 10:21.

WARNING!

This is a vicious poem, and no, it is not meant to imply that most Christians and Jews are like Ted Bundy—quite the opposite. To their credit, most religious folks feel disgust at the kinds of ideas expressed here—whenever they hear about them, read about them, or actually stop and think about them. Some people are unaware of the horrors that lurk in holy books; some pick and choose, reinterpret passages, or are in denial that such passages even exist. The dangerous adherents are those who have become desensitized to scriptural terror—the fundamentalists who believe in scriptural inerrancy and have become fanatics in word and deed. Chances are, you won't find much you will like in this poem. If so, congratulate yourself—you are better than your religion!

Teddy's Favorite Book

My name is Ted Bundy,
and they put me in prison.
My crimes were to butcher
Many innocent women.

I beat them, I strangled them,
I took their young lives,
Had sex with their corpses,
It all seemed so nice.

But when I first got here,
Things felt all gloomy.
Then they gave me a Bible,
A book that spoke to me.

There's a passage in Psalms,
That just warms my bones,
About dashing little children
To death on some stones. *

And that is by no means
The book's only pleasure.
A woman is butchered,
Her parts shared wherever. **

It brings back fond memories
Of blood dripping red,
When I used to sever
My poor victims' heads.

Tales of incest and rape—
Countless lives that are lost,
A God even dies,
Who's been nailed to a cross.

So if you're a sadist,
Who thinks just like me,
Then go buy a Bible,
You'll read it with glee.

* Psalms 137:9. "Happy shall he be, that takes and dashes your little ones against the stones."

** Judges 19:22-29. Two women are sacrificed to a group of sexually depraved men. One is raped to death, and her lover cuts her body into twelve pieces and sends one piece to each of the twelve tribes of Israel. Better than a Stephen King novel. Do you encourage your children to read this book?

Religious Reciprocity

In America's First Amendment,
Religious choice is guaranteed.
It defies the First Commandment. *
It pulls rank on the Hadith. **

Each religion gains the tolerance
That's provided by this law.
When some faiths consider others,
That's a privilege they'd withdraw.

* **Thou shalt have no other gods** God means it too! Check out the Old Testament for what happened to the poor Midianites, Moabites, and other 'ites' when they went sniffing around for other gods. It wasn't pretty ... oh, no!

Read also Christ's self-serving parable in Luke 19 (especially verse 27):
"But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

** **"Whoever changes his Islamic religion, kill him."** Hadith - Sahih Al-Bukhari (9:57)

Prelude to Theocracy U.S.A.

The next poem and its documentation contradict the notion that the United States was founded as a Christian nation—that a singular Christian mindset cobbled together the founding documents of the nation. On the contrary, the colonies were religiously divided and intolerant of different viewpoints.

While public schools teach that many of our early immigrants sought escape from religious persecution, they are less zealous in teaching the extent to which those immigrants were themselves intolerant and persecutory. Popular Christian writers, of course, ignore it too, not wanting to jeopardize book sales by telling devotees what they don't want to hear. The early state of affairs is nicely summed up by this citation from distinguished religious historian Edwin S. Gaustad:

"In 1651 Boston Authorities laid 30 lashes on the bare back of a Baptist from Rhode Island who dared to invade their territory. In 1654 the Dutch Governor of New York (then New Amsterdam) required a small group of Jews who tried to settle there to leave promptly for other lands. Also in 1654, a new government in Maryland decreed that 'none who profess and exercise ... the Roman Catholic religion can be protected in this Province.' In 1659 the first of four Quakers was hanged in Boston Common. In 1707 a Presbyterian minister was thrown into a New York jail for the crime of preaching his version of the Christian gospel. And in Virginia in 1774 some traveling preachers were imprisoned for declaring their religious opinions." (From *Church and State in America*, Oxford University Press, Inc., ISBN 0-19-510679-2)

Today, thanks to the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment, religions get along much better—it helps when you're not vying to become the official state religion or grabbing for a share of the public purse.

Theocracy U.S.A. ?

Some say we're a Christian nation,
That others hold a poorer view.
Let's review their role in history.
What did that religion do?

Christian faiths aren't one but many,
As the colonists soon found out.
If you were the wrong religion,
It didn't help to be devout.

Exile, prison, fines, and floggings—
Execution greeted some.
No sect seemed to like the other.
Hatred was the rule of thumb.

Protestants despised the Catholics.
Anglicans hated Methodists.
Nobody seemed to like the Baptists.
Quakers were reviled pests.

You could be accused of witchcraft.
On the gallows you'd atone.
Taxes helped support religion,
Even if it wasn't your own.

When the U.S. Constitution
Separated Church and State,
Courts began to make things better,
But it was a lengthy wait.

Bible verses shored up slavery,
Obstructed women's right to vote.
As for reproductive planning,
Clerics fought against that hope.

Is it true our founding fathers
Intended for a Christian rule?
Read a couple of their comments.
They would not have thought it cool:

Joel Barlow, George Washington, John Adams – Treaty with Tripoli (signed 1797): *"As the government of the United States is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion ..."*
The treaty was written by Barlow, approved as written by Washington, and signed by President Adams after being ratified by congress.

Thomas Jefferson: *"Is uniformity attainable? Millions of innocent men, women, and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned; yet we have not advanced an inch towards uniformity. What has been the effect of coercion? To make one half the world fools, and the other half hypocrites. To support roguery and error all over the earth." Notes on Virginia.*

James Madison ("Father of the Constitution"): *"Who does not see that the same authority which can establish Christianity in exclusion of all other religions may establish, with the same ease, any particular sect of Christians in exclusion of all other sects. That the same authority which can force a citizen to contribute threepence only of his property for the support of any one establishment may force him to conform to any other establishment in all cases whatsoever? ..."*
"During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What has been its fruits? More or less, in all places, pride and indolence in the clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity; in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution." A Memorial and Remonstrance.

Thomas Paine: *"Persecution is not an original feature in any religion; but is always the strongly marked feature of all law-religions, or religions established by law."* *The Rights of Man.*

Sectional Addendum:

Of course, there were those who liked the notion of a Christian nation. In 1784 in Virginia, for example, legislation was proposed that stipulated: "The Christian religion shall in all times coming be deemed and held to be the established religion of this Commonwealth ..." Clerics and churches would have been supported by taxpayers. Everyone would have paid—churchgoer or not, and the state would have judged which religions met the '*Christian*' criterion. The bill faced fierce opposition, was not popular, and did not pass. (Read *Church and State in America*, Edwin Gaustad.)

Wouldn't it be a hoot if we had that sort of setup today—clerics shaking hands with politicians for a piece of the pie; government officials deciding if you were the '*right*' religion and deserving of our tax dollars?

Well, we're in luck. Today's White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships does just that—providing religious charities with tax dollars, making clergymen smile, and generating votes for politicians. If, as a contributing taxpayer, you want a job with one of those charities you won't necessarily get it—they are allowed to discriminate based on your beliefs, despite your forced contribution. While receiving organizations are not supposed to proselytize with your money, it sometimes takes a lawsuit to stop them. This folly started under the George W. Bush administration and continues under Barak Obama's, despite his promise to stop it.

Can taxpayers sue to stop this mess? It's already been tried. In 2007, a conservative U.S. Supreme Court ruled 5-4 in *Hein v. Freedom From Religion Foundation* that executive orders may not be challenged on Establishment Clause grounds by individuals whose sole claim to legal standing is that they are taxpayers. Sounds a little like taxation without representation, doesn't it? Long live the king!

SECTION II:

Religion vs. Science, Technology, & Skills.

Also Faith, Prayers, Miracles, Contradictions.

Poetry about things that are true and things that aren't true;
about things that work and things that don't work.

Thunder & Lightning

A god roared in the heavens
And sent the torrents down.
And sometimes he shot fire bolts
That tore into the ground.

In fear, men fell upon their knees
In their subservience bound.
What had they done to anger god?
Was it they on whom he frowned?

Would sacrifice appease him?
Perhaps a virgin's death!
Whatever it took to please him,
And halt his vengeful breath.

So precious blood was sacrificed,
And heaven's wheels were greased,
Till the educated weatherman
Replaced the praying priest.

Natural Magic

Not prayer, nor hex, nor ritual dance
could lay Dread Evil low.

It maimed, and killed, and tortured us—
this Supernatural Foe.

The reign of cruelty plagued all life—
the suffering did not cease,

Till Science learned of microbes,
then slew the dreaded Beast.

The pious praised the heavens ...
"God conquers all," they said.

But technicians wearing lab coats
used Nature's laws instead.

... **Size** * ...

With curious minds we view the world,
And wonder, "What the heck?"
Each speck makes up a universe;
Each universe, a speck.

*Inspired by Richard Feynman's address, "The Value of Science," to the National Academy of Sciences (Autumn 1955).

Richard Feynman Quote—reflecting on his Jewishness: "... in fact, I didn't believe anything about that stuff, and was certainly not in any way religious." (From *Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman.*)

Tower of Babel
(Stairway to Heaven)

When the great flood ended,
Construction improved a lot.
The good-old-boys assembled
To build a ziggurat.

It certainly was no mountain,
A pimple on the plain.
From a satellite's point of view,
A simple seed of grain.

But God began to worry.
How tall could this thing get?
It might encroach on heaven.
He wouldn't put up with it.

He scattered all the people,
Messed up their language too.
If you can't understand one another,
There's not much you can do.

Now the moral of this story—
Take care how high you go.
If you start givin' God the jitters,
He'll give you a dose of woe.

Easter Parades

When the Gospels tell of Easter,
Such stories should not conflict.
Yet Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John
Tell tales that contradict.

Who paid Christ's tomb a visit?
Who was waiting when they arrived?
Was the tomb already open?
Had the stone been rolled aside?

And what about the messengers?
What did they have to say?
And what of the women visitors?
Did they listen and obey?

And what about Christ himself?
When did Mary first see Jesus?
Could anybody touch him?
Did he hang around to please us?

To whom and where did he appear?
Was there even an ascension?
On these and many other points,
There's complete and utter dissention.

So be sure to read the Testament. *
Though it has no Easter Bunny,
It's just as unbelievable.
Yes, something sure smells funny.

* Read Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20-21. Also Acts 1:3-12 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-8 (a total of 165 verses). Better yet, save yourself some trouble and read Chapter 24 ("Leave No Stone Unturned") in Dan Barker's book, *Losing Faith in Faith* (Chapter 16 in *Godless*). This seven page synopsis not only lays out the many problems for you in simple, logical fashion, but it points to the relevant passages.

... Places ...

For matters of space-time,
We look to the sky,

While quarks and neutrinos
Just hide from our eye.

But heavens and hells
Have a different domain.

Such products of neurons
Reside in our brains.

Quote—Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow:

"The realization that time behaves like space presents a new alternative. It removes the age-old objection to the universe having a beginning, but also means that the beginning of the universe was governed by the laws of science and doesn't need to be set in motion by some god." (*The Grand Design*).

Decline of the Sparerib Era

The Bible taught us that the earth was flat. *
It seemed like a pretty good call.
Then we learned that it wasn't true—
We were living on a great big ball.

And it was fine when the sun above
Was known to spin around us.
We were pleased that the earth stood still, **
Before Galileo and Copernicus. ***

And God made Eve from Adam's rib,
As every good Christian knew. ****
If only he'd kept on doing that,
Evolution would be untrue.

And the seven-day tale of creation
Was so simple and so grand.
But the physicists' big-bang theory
Takes some thought to understand.

* Luke 4:5 "And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time." (Since you can't see the other side of a sphere from a mountain top, the earth had to be flat.)

** 1 Chronicles 16:30 "...the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved." See also, Psalms 104:5 & Ecclesiastes 1:5. Martin Luther also referred to Joshua 10:10-15, and called Copernicus, "a fool who went against Holy Writ."

*** Galileo was tried in 1633 and put under house arrest by the Catholic Church for espousing the Copernican system. He was speedily absolved of heresy in 1992, however - less than four centuries later.

**** Genesis 2:22

Medicinal Prayer

The oncologist diagnosed cancer.
The surgeon cut it out.
The renovated patient claimed
His prayer had all the clout.

Chains

We're commanded to heed the scriptures.
Church bells sound the knell.
The punishment for unbelief
Is eternity in hell.

But shun those calls for fearful faith
That nail you to a cross,
For your mind will be chained to dogma
And your reason forever lost. *

* Maybe not forever. Many clerics become nonbelievers, then search for a way out of the ministry. This happens with such frequency that the Clergy Project was formed to help support these individuals. Moving beyond faith is a difficult proposition for anyone, but in addition to the potential alienation of friends and family, preachers have angry congregations and career loss to consider. Dan Barker's books *Godless* and *Losing Faith in Faith* provide an illuminating example of this, recounting his own difficult journey from preacher to atheist.

The Right Skill

The mayor and the council
Had trouble with the budget.
They sought a local preacher
In hopes that God would fudge it.

They prayed before each meeting
And asked for holy guidance.
But the budget did not balance,
For they lacked a skill called finance.

And when their terms were over,
They were not re-elected.
God's holy intervention
Had not worked as expected.

Then new folks took their places—
Better financial scholars.
They didn't call a preacher,
Or pray to God for dollars.

'Twas then the budget balanced,
And debits equaled credits.
Accounting, not divinity,
Removed the need for edits.

Prayer Views:

1. It Doesn't Work

Spin the prayer wheel forward.
Spin the prayer wheel back.
No matter how you spin it,
It will not give you jack.

Spin the prayer wheel fast.
Spin the prayer wheel slow.
The prospects for the outcome
Simply will not grow.

2. It Needs a Little Help

You can pray for sunshine,
And you can pray for rain.
Just check the weather forecast,
So your prayers won't be in vain.

You can pray for many things,
Fast cars, good food, and wine.
But get yourself a job first,
Then your prayers will work just fine.

3. It Can't Fail

A million hopeful prayers were said,
A million tickets sold.
The guy who hit the lotto said
That prayer had brought him gold.

So nine hundred ninety-nine thousand,
Nine hundred ninety-nine
Prayed and knew their lotto picks
Would hit the mark next time.

Simple Science

The science in religious texts—
You study it with ease.
Just read the lovely fairy tales—
You've earned your PhDs.

It doesn't take no physics,
It doesn't take no math.
Adam, Eve, and a sneaky snake
Will start you down the path.

If you can't tell truth from fiction,
You're already way ahead.
Stay away from heavy thinkin',
But believe the stuff you've read.

When Ya Gotta Go ...

In the bygone Bible days,
Folks stepped in their poo.
They got to wondering,
Whatever could they do?

The Lord was disgusted.
He hated messes too.
But despite his reputation,
He couldn't build a loo.

So he declared an edict *
For doing number two:
"Carry around a shovel,
And cover up what you do!"

But digging all those holes
Left the people discontented.
So that's how the modern
Toilet got invented.

Now don't fault God
For his dismal lack of skill.
Cuz if your toilet stops working,
Your shovel still will.

And aren't we very lucky
He wasn't out of sorts?
Then he might have handed us
A big box of corks.

* Deuteronomy 23:12-14 (in part): "And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee:"

A Good Choice

Faith designs to fool us—
Better to let reason rule us.

Albert Einstein Quote: "A man's ethical behavior should be based effectually on sympathy, education, and social ties and needs; no religious basis is necessary. Man would indeed be in a poor way if he had to be restrained by fear of punishment and hope of reward after death." (Religion and Science, N. Y. Times Magazine, Nov 9, 1930.)

Ordinary Miracles

Two planes had a near miss on takeoff.
It was a very close call.
The pilots declared it a miracle.
No one had been hurt at all.

A plane had an engine malfunction.
It came down in a flash.
"It certainly was a miracle,"
Said those who survived the crash.

A bomb was placed on an aircraft,
And everyone was slain.
"A miracle," said those on the next flight,
Who might have been on that plane.

Now don't you find it amusing,
How often we hear such claims?
Survivors all declare miracles,
While the dead would dispute the same.

... Faith ...

Faith is belief without evidence.
Faith is in conflict with common sense.

Faith disregards much reality.
Faith contradicts our mortality.

Faith was the basis for gods said and done.
Faith will be lifeblood for gods yet to come.

Faith gets respect, for its lies offer hope.
Faith deserves scorn; it treats truth like a dope.

Faith is like playing a dangerous game.
Faith takes dark paths that can drive folks insane.

Ben Franklin Quote: "The way to see by Faith is to shut the eye of Reason." *Poor Richard, 1758.*

Mark Twain Quote: "Faith is believing what you know ain't so." *Following the Equator, Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar.*

Pious & Public

Everyone knows of Christians who
Insist on government prayer
At football games and meetings,
In schoolhouses here and there.

Though the Constitution bans it
In a First Amendment clause, *
With ignorance and arrogance
They break established laws.

It isn't as if they can't pray
At home and in their church.
But they want to flaunt their piety.
It's an audience for which they search.

It's time they read Saint Matthew,
And heeded Christ's own words: **
He taught them to pray in private,
Not as "hypocrites" in herds.

* "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion ..."
In public schools, students are free to pray on their own, but officials can not participate. Generally, legislative prayers must not be sectarian and can not proselytize.

** Matthew 6:5-6 (**Christ**) "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

**SECTION III: Whacky, Dangerous, & Disgusting
Theology.**

Poetry that speaks for itself.

Christian Pseudoscientists

I hope you do not tell me that
I'm being too specific.
But I think Christian Scientists
Are terribly unscientific.

It's widely known that they prefer
Prayer to penicillin—
Even when a dangerous strain of
Microbe tries to kill 'em.

But I'd much prefer a doctor
To a preacher with a Bible,
If my heart stops pumping blood,
Or my brain goes suicidal.

And if my child lies stricken
With a case of appendicitis,
I will not callously risk her life
To prove that I am pious.

If the day should dawn when faith can
Plug your teeth with fillings,
I might consider signing up.
I'd certainly be more willing.

But even then, before I'd think
To join that congregation,
I'd see my shrink, and down my meds,
And take a long vacation.

Knocking At Your Door

I had Jehovah's Witnesses
Come visit me at dusk.
They told me I should join them,
Or my soul would turn to dust.

So I asked if I got injured,
And I lay there bleeding out,
Would they give me a transfusion? *
Did they have that kind of clout?

But they turned pale, and shook their heads,
And slowly walked away.
So I wrote them off as crackpots,
Who had nothing good to say.

Try to recall this sage advice
Whenever they pester you:
Those so eager to honor your soul,
Should honor your body too.

* See Acts 15:28-29 as the silly basis of their objection to blood transfusions. There, you will learn that you mustn't eat any meat offered to idols, either. So stop it!

A Brief History of Mormonism

In the Mormon religion
Jews got the strange notion
They'd come to America—
Crossing the ocean.

And when they arrived,
They became new additions
To indigenous tribes—
American Indians.

Then Christ paid a visit,
And got their attention—
Made them all Christians,
Without much dissention.

But differences tore them,
Twas hell and high water!
A fellow named Mormon
Was killed in the slaughter.

He wrote the odd history
On a set of gold plates.
His angel-son, Moroni,
Kept track of their fates.

In 1827
The con-man, Joe Smith,
Was chosen to translate
This ridiculous myth.

The plates were all written
In odd hieroglyphics.
Smith put them to English.
To give the specifics.

He gave back those plates
To the angel Moroni,
And that is the essence
Of Mormon baloney.

Historians refute this.
Archaeologists do too.*
And DNA evidence
Shows it's not true.

* Those affected, American Indians and Jews, seemed blissfully unaware of this story as well, until old Joe showed up and enlightened them on their history.

One Way Street

If you want to be a Muslim,
It's an easy thing to do.
You just recite the Shahada, *
And your life begins anew.

But take that step with caution.
There is no going back.
Apostasy is a terrible crime,
And the punishment is black.

If you commit that outrage,
You're judged by the Hadith. **
The sentence under Sharia law—
Execution for unbelief.

But your woes won't yet be over.
You're judged by the Koran. ***
Eternal torment awaits you:
It's into the frying pan.

Now, if such Islamic justice
Is something that you hail,
Don't put it into practice.
They'll throw your butt in jail.

* Shahada: "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah."

** "Whoever changes his Islamic religion, kill him." Hadith - Sahih Al-Bukhari (9:57)

*** Koran 3:86-91 & 3:85 (on apostates and blasphemers—summarized): Allah is going to kick your butt—really kick it, and nobody will help you. A world full of gold will not save you. Koran 10:4 (summarized): Disbelievers—they shall drink hot water and suffer a painful doom (more butt kicking).

Hate Is Great!

*(Trochaic tetrameter—DUM da, DUM da, DUM da, DUM da
—parody of Longfellow's "The Song of Hiawatha")*

Oh how mighty Allah hates them.
It is written in the Koran:
Infidels like Jews and Christians,
Idolaters like Buddhists, Jains.

To the pious Suni Muslim,
A Shiite is an infidel.
To the pious Shiite Muslim,
A Suni is an infidel.

Any kind of disbeliever
Gets his share of denigration.
Volumes of Koranic versus
Deride them with such hate and scorn.

Penalties are very gruesome.
Infidels must bear the torture: *
Stoning, burning, flogging, drowning,
Eternity in blinding pain.

Read the book if you can stand it.
Your options there are very plain:
Join us now; become a sadist.
Join us not and you'll regret it.

* If you qualify as an infidel (and everybody does, according to somebody else), take a look at the Koran, so full of hate it almost makes the Old Testament look good. Sam Harris lists sixty grinding Koranic quotations covering over five full pages of text in the chapter, "The Problem With Islam," in his book, *The End Of Faith*. These only take you through Surah 6 (see below). If you enjoy the tedious paranoia and hatred, read through Surah 114 for more of the same. For those who would like a synopsis of Islam, Harris's summary is excellent.

'Moderate' Muslims (Can anyone who does not renounce this stuff be considered moderate?) like to point to three verses that supposedly allow disbelievers their right to disbelief: Koran 2:256, 18:29, & 109:6. Unfortunately, the Hadith still condemns apostates to death, and the crime of disbelief is in no way excused by the Koran. These verses are empty vessels. For instance, 2:256 says in part, "There is no compulsion in religion," and the very next verse states that disbelievers are going to hell.

Koran: 2:6, 2:15, 2:24, 2:85, 2:89, 2:90, 2:98, 2:105, 2:114, 2:122, 2:126, 2:142, 2:154, 2:162, 2:168, 2:172, 2:175, 2:176, 2:190-93, 2:216, 2:217-18, 2:258, 2:264, 2:270, 2:272, 3:5, 3:10 3:12, 3:19, 3:28, 3:118, 3:140, 3:149-51, 3:156, 3:169, 3:178, 3:195-96, 4:46, 4:50-51, 4:55-56, 5:57, 5:65, 5:67, 5:69, 5:80-82, 5:86, 6:5, 6:5-8, 6:21, 6:23-27, 6:29, 6:35, 6:39, 6:43-45, 6:49, 6:70, 6:93, 6:107-12, 6:121-25, 6:125.

Gee! Scientology!

If you want a new religion,
Scientology is hard to beat.
With all its nifty features,
It really is quite neat.

It doesn't have a virgin birth,
Or even a passion play,
But there are lots of other things
That it will throw your way.

You can become a *thetan*—
A whiz-bang of a soul.
For that you'll need an auditor
To help achieve your goal.

If you pay him lots of money,
He'll use a nutty device.
It's like a lie detector,
But just not quite as nice. *

And if you're into devils,
You're bound to like Xenu—
A naughty old space alien,
An ancient, old guru.

His hobby was a strange one.
Shipping humans down to earth.
Then he blew them all to hell,
To satisfy his mirth.

If that doesn't do it for you,
I assure you there is more.
They throw in reincarnation
To ante up the score. **

* Called an E-meter, it measures skin conductivity and falls short of the standard polygraph or lie detector (itself a pseudoscientific device) which can measure additional functions such as blood pressure, pulse and respiration.

** No, I'm not making this up. L. Ron Hubbard made it up, and he was a science fiction writer. (Can you tell?) His imagination was right up there with the great ones - Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Mohammed, Mary Baker Eddy, Joseph Smith Jr., and all the rest. Lest you scoff at the religion's adherents, you should know that many celebrities have bought into it (just as they have in other religions).

Join the Club

For decades Scientologists
Made efforts to discern
If their religious standing
Met government concerns.

When it comes to *controversial*,
You don't have far to search.
They've had as many issues
As the Roman Catholic Church.

There's a very long list of charges:
Violence, death, intimidations,
Harassment, fraud, racketeering,
And further accusations.

Detractors call the religion
"a nesting spot for loons,"
Attracting gullible people,
While the sane are all immune.

But several different governments
Gave the cult its due.
When considering religions,
It really wasn't anything new.

Circumcision

In the first pious experience
Of his tender, young life
They cut off his foreskin
With a ritual knife.

And genital mutilation—
A young Muslim girl's fate,
Without anesthesia,
Should double your hate.

The health considerations for male circumcision are controversial and too long to go into here. However, if this procedure were delayed until a mature age and based on informed consent, you can bet the incidence would decline greatly.

Snacks for the Gods

When European Catholics
Gave the Aztecs advice,
They expressed horror
Over prisoner sacrifice.

But prisoner sacrifice
Was surely not new.
It occurred often
In their holy book too. *

Yes, there was the story
Of Isaac's nasty jam.
He was nearly roasted
As a sacrificial lamb. **

But Jephthah's poor daughter
Was not quite so lucky.
Burned as an offering,
Her fate was more yucky. ***

* For example Numbers 31:7-18 - the fate of the Midianites - every man, woman, and child ordered slaughtered to please a deity (except female children who were virgins). The Old Testament is full of such tales.

** Genesis 22:1-13. God orders Abraham to sacrifice his only son Isaac for a burnt offering. God, at the last moment, tells Abraham he was just funnin' with him and that he really has a taste for lamb. Good news for Isaac; disastrous for nearby ram. For eons, top Jewish and Christian scholars have hotly debated if Isaac looked truly unappetizing, or if God just preferred a broader menu. No one can really say with certainty.

*** Judges 11:29-39. God helps Jephthah kill Ammonites in return for a burnt offering. In a surprising move, his daughter becomes that offering. Well, a deal is a deal, but it does remind one of Faust.

Slavery and the Anti-Union Book

(Double pun intended)

In the nineteenth century,
To determine slavery's fate,
Preachers from the North and South
Got into hot debates.

The Bible offered clear support,
For slavery was no crime. *
People could be bought and sold.
They didn't earn a dime.

The South held the advantage.
The scriptures gave them cheer:
Christ approved of punishing slaves.
His message had been clear. **

Northern preachers gagged on that,
Though they were clearly right.
Not *BECAUSE* of their holy book,
Instead, it was *IN SPITE*.

* Genesis 9:25, Ex. 21:2-11 (**detailed rules for owning slaves**). Exodus 21:20-21 (**rules for beating slaves**). Leviticus 25:44-46 (**who can be bought**). Joel 3:8, Ephesians 6:5 (**obey & serve**). Colossians 3:22 (**obey**). 1 Tim. 6:1-2 (**honor & serve**).

** Luke 12:47-48 (**Jesus speaking**): "And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." (Any grade school child might have pointed out that it was wrong to own people, you should pay them for their labor, and if you didn't like their work you should fire them, not beat them ... but it took a war.)

Note: In 1995, in a speedy act of contrition, the Southern Baptist Convention officially renounced and apologized for the stances it had taken on slavery, segregation, and racism after its formation in 1845.

Be Fruitful and Multiply??? *

Can you tell me why it is
The Pope does not extol
Even a single method
Of effective birth control.

For in the Holy Bible
A version *is* endorsed.
Castration is a virtue; **
Though it is not enforced.

Yet all the Catholic priests
Take vows to give up sex.
So child molestations
Are one of the effects.

And we should all remember
The holy Apostle Paul.
He did not want *anyone*
To have any sex at all. ***

So for a healthy sex life—
One that is less perverse—
Avoid all associations
With pious men in skirts.

And *if* sex is so dirty,
That God prefers to wean us,
Whatever was he thinking
When he gave man a penis?

* Genesis 1:28

** Matthew 19:12 (**Christ speaking**): "For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it." OUCH!

The early Christian theologian, Origen, and certain monastic orders castrated themselves in accordance with this verse. Today, there are victims of sexual abuse from most religious faiths who probably wish the practice had become more popular with the clergy. (Check out the *Black Collar Crime Blotter* column in *Freethought Today* (<http://ffrf.org/>) for a never ending parade of naughty clerics who have committed heinous crimes. It usually fills two full pages, no denomination is exempt, and while all forms of crime are well represented, sexual crimes seem to be the ones favored by God's chosen emissaries. The devil (who takes frequent aim at the crotch and the wallet) *made* these ethics-expounders *sin*, of course and lives up to his role as perennial scapegoat. Fallen clerics never seem to possess free will of their own (except when they repent).

*** 1 Corinthians 7:1-2 & 7:5-9. In a nutshell: Be like me (Paul)! Don't have sex with a woman, and it's better not to marry. But if you just gotta do it, then get married or you'll fry.

Note: Read Revelations 14:1-5 (the book appears to have been written by a paranoid schizophrenic), and you can see why men might want to abstain or castrate themselves. It appears that only 144,000 male virgins will be redeemed by God. Women don't seem to count here and are good only for defiling. Are you male? Have you been naughty (defiled) or really, really nice (castrated)? Will you be among the chosen few?

Get Your Gal

Don't you miss those grand old days
When you could buy or sell a woman?
For a couple of hundred foreskins,
You could really get a good 'un. *

If you raped an unbetrothed maiden,
You were not considered a heel.
You paid a fine to her father,
Then a marriage sealed the deal. **

And when your army won a battle,
Hapless virgins were your booty.
You could plunder all you wanted,
Then hunt for a raving beauty. ***

Yes, women in those bygone days
Knew just what they were worth: ****
About half as much as menfolk,
And they couldn't speak up in church. *****

* 1 Samuel 18:27.

** Deuteronomy 22:28-29 (rape regulations).

*** Judges 5:30 - A mother worries that her son has not yet returned from battle: "Have they not divided the prey; to every man a damsel or two?"

**** Leviticus 27:3-7 - gives you an appraisal in sheckles (do your own conversion to dollars, yen, euros, or foreskins). Five to twenty-year-old females fetch ten sheckles in the marketplace. Other ages, not so much.

***** 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. (Basically—Shut up and ask your husbands.)

The attitude toward women in the Old and New Testaments was appalling, and Islam simply piled on with its books and teachings. There are far too many examples to list here.

For the best account of holy attitudes towards women (rape, prostitution, motherhood, biological functions, etc.) read Annie Laurie Gaylor's book, *Woe to the Woman - The Bible Tells Me So*. Archaic religious teachings have impeded women's rights throughout history. Also covered in the book are homosexuality, marriage and divorce, adultery, abortion, and similar topics, along with useful reference guides.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton Quote: "In the early days of woman-suffrage agitation, I saw that the greatest obstacle we had to overcome was the Bible. It was hurled at us on every side." (Interview with the Chicago Record, June 29, 1897.)

Pat Robertson Quote: "I know this is painful for the ladies to hear, but if you get married, you have accepted the headship of a man, your husband. Christ is the head of the household and the husband is the head of the wife, and that's the way it is, period." (The 700 Club, Jan. 8, 1992.)

Punishment by Proxy

Should someone else be punished
For another person's crime?
If a criminal is found guilty,
Would you want to serve his time?

It's prevalent in the Bible.
King David comes to mind.
He killed a man to steal his wife,
When lust left him morally blind.

David's son paid the penance. *
God sentenced him to death.
His wives were raped in public—
The injustice takes one's breath.

Though Proverbs speaks to fairness: **
"It is wrong to punish the just,"
Other folks still pay God's price. ***
Does it fill you with disgust?

What an ironic affront to justice—
The crucifixion of God's son:
Atonement for us sinners?
Or a gift from Attila the Hun?

* 2 Samuel 12:11-14

** Proverbs 17:15, 17:26

*** Exodus 12:29, Numbers 31:17, Deuteronomy 2:34, Deuteronomy 3:6, Deuteronomy 28:53, 2 Kings 2:23-24, Isaiah 14:21-22 - to list just a few. Every time God throws a hissy fit, large numbers of people pay the price, including women and children. And in Exodus 20:5, in characteristic style, he punishes innocent descendents to the 3rd & 4th generation for their ancestors' crime.

Passion Plays

Remember Osama bin Laden,
Who had his pious way?
When it comes to lunatics,
He even outdid McVeigh.

The two had much in common—
Fanatical causes so just,
They turned the mighty Twin Towers
And a Federal Building to dust.

Many were shocked by their actions.
Doesn't scripture proscribe such fates?
Read the fanatics' books closely;
They revel in violence and hate!

Yes, any defective person
Can flip through their pages and see,
Archaic, duty-bound verses
That led to some killing spree.

SECTION IV: Fun Stuff, Goofy Logic, Children's Tales.

(Or God's Word—depending on your point of view.)

**Naughty Serpent!
Bad God!**

Why blame Adam?
And why blame Eve?
When 'twas the serpent,
Who'd deceived.

If eating that apple
Caused the fall,
Why put the tree
In the garden at all?

'Cuz if tempting man
Is a sin to hate,
God and the serpent
Share a common trait.

Merry Martyrs

Cheers and hooray for Mama,
Strappin' on her suicide belt.
She plans on joinin' Papa,
Who'd told her how he felt.

Papa's already a martyr.
He blew himself sky-high.
Where seventy-two virgins awaited,
For Allah would not lie.

Mama might feel let down tho',
In what she'll likely find.
With all those hot new yum-yums,
She's gonna hafta wait in line.

The Jewish Question

If the God of all creation
Was the Bible's Jewish Lord,
Isn't it true that Adam and Eve
Were created in his accord?

And surely we have descended
From the spawn of Adam's seed.
That's how God created us,
Unless we've been deceived.

So if we're Jewish decendents,
As the facts would seem to say,
From where did all we gentiles come,
With our different DNA?

Profitable Pareidolia *

Christians travel from afar
To look at a window pane,
If a Mary or Jesus likeness
Is the subject of its stain.

Bird poop, pots and griddles,
Turtles, tree stumps, drains—
All have drawn the faithful
For blessings in God's name.

But Muslims ignore simulacra— **
Allah or Mohammed on a wall.
In Islam it is a sacrilege—
Any image of them at all.

So if Christ shows up on your sandwich,
Sell it for a decent buck.
But if it's a shot of Mohammed,
Well, then you're out of luck.

* Pareidolia = vague images or shapes perceived as significant.

** Simulacra = likenesses which represent another thing (in this case, religious figures).

Whale Of A Tale

You mustn't doubt Jonah's story,
For it is surely true.
The whale had gotten a toothache,
And so it could not chew.

It has been rightly said that if the Scriptures stated Jonah swallowed the whale there are those who would believe it.

Ghost Story

The Story

Everyone has heard of him—
The rascally Holy Ghost.
He stalked the Virgin Mary
And became her Holy Host.

When Mary had her baby,
It truly was divine.
The Ghost then joined the Trinity,
And everything was fine.

The Options

Exalt him, don't insult him.
There's no way you can win.
Consult the Christian Bible—
It's the unforgivable sin. *

Or check out the Koran.
The sin has been reversed.
Muslims can't accept the Ghost—
A crime for which they're cursed. **

The Dilemma

If you choose the losing option,
Then things will not go well.
You'll become the Devil's plaything
In a toasty place called hell.

The Solution

Hell and ghosts do not exist,
And fairy tales aren't true.
Throw away those holy books.
Don't let fiction worry you.

* Matthew 12:31-32, Mark 3:28-30, Luke 12:8-10. Basically: You can rape and murder from coast to coast, but you better not mess with the Holy Ghost.

** Koran 5:73, 4: 171, 112:1-4, 2:97. (In Islam, Jibreel or Gabriel is God's top-dog communicator. No, greedy one, you can't have both. You must choose: What will it be? Ghost or angel?)

Who's the Devil?

The Devil said to God, one day,
"You've treated Job too well.
I want to give him misery
And a little bit of hell.
"I'm sure Job will desert you.
Just you wait and see.
When it finally happens,
You'll be less smug with me."

"That's what you think," God replied,
"You go right ahead.
Do whatever you want to him.
Just don't strike him dead.
"Yes, I will let you torture Job.
He won't even care.
Just be ready to grit your teeth,
And pull out all your hair."

So the Devil killed Job's children,
But that wasn't bad enough.
He covered him with boils,
And then he stole his stuff.
Job was very puzzled,
Suddenly everything stunk.
The horrible situation,
Had left him in a funk.

Job's friends then gathered round him,
And said he'd done some wrong.
But Job was sure he hadn't,
He wouldn't sing that song.
And so he prayed to heaven:
"God why'd thou screwest me?"
His kindly Lord just grumbled,
"I need not answer thee."

Still, Job to God stayed loyal,
And God knew he had won.
But the Devil was a-smilin',
For he'd had lots of fun.
He'd proved God vain and evil.
He'd tempted God to sin.
The Devil had put one over,
On his sanctimonious twin.

666

Six, six, six - the sign of the beast.
It should strike your heart with fear!

Six, six, six - divided by two:
Now two bad numbers to worry you.

Six, six, six, divided by three:
Oh my goodness, it's scaring me.

Six, six, six times two:
Twice as bad - scares the Devil out of you.

Six, six, six times three:
That huge number just terrifies me.

Six, six, six times four:
Oh ... to hell with it.

..... Noah's Lark

Noah built his
Ark to float,
But a brontosaurus
Sank the boat.

So then a second
Ship was born.
But Noah forgot
The Unicorn.

And the dodos suffered
A horrible fate:
One was eaten.
One lost its mate.

Let's not forget
The fossils, too,
That never made it
To the zoo.

Noah's problems
All started, I think,
When he had a little
Too much to drink.

When from his stupor
He finally awoke,
He knew his dream
Was a silly joke.

.... Fast Food *

Transubstantiation—
It's very hard to beat.
You drink a little blood,
And you eat a little meat.

So praise the thirsty vampire,
And praise the famished ghoul,
And praise Hannibal Lecter,
As you stand in line and drool.

Lets hear it for the Eucharist,
For the wafers and the wine,
For the cannibals getting blessings,
As they commune to drink and dine.

* I can't exempt myself from the barbs in this little rhyme, having partaken in the Ritual of the Holy Snack at a younger age. I sometimes peeked out of the corner of my eye to see if it made others uncomfortable. If it did, they weren't letting on. The biggest challenge here is for strict vegetarians: Is that cracker really vegetable material, or should it be considered meat?

The Right Help

For IRS problems you should see your accountant.

To handle a drain clog, send for your plumber.

To purchase your prescriptions, go to a pharmacy.

If you get sued, hire a lawyer.

When you get sick, visit your doctor.

For questions of ethics, consult with a preach ...

... wait

... strike that

... check with your conscience.

Happy Trails

You fanatics who blow yourselves up—
That's not what most people object to.
They'll wish you a most happy trip ...
If no one gets injured except you.

Mother's Day Card

For a loving phrase on Mama's card
That will fill her heart with glee,
Just write the words: "Woman,
What have I to do with thee?" *

Tho some will think this message
Should have been a little brighter,
This quote from Christ will prove to them,
He was not a Hallmark writer.

* What? You were expecting more sentiment from a family values guy like Jesus? Despite the church elevating his mother to saintly status, nowhere in the New Testament does Christ come close to saying, "Hey Mom, you're the greatest. I love you!" The quote in the rhyme is from John 2:4.

In Matthew 12:48 Christ asks, "Who is my mother?" And in Luke 11:27-28, a woman bystander tries to complement Mary: "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou has sucked." He snottily replies "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." Maybe he just didn't like to share the stage.

Oops!

A Hindu named Avilash-the-Wise,
Reviewed his current reincarnation.

Imagine his shocking surprise.
He'd returned as a born again Christian.

Grammatical Taxonomy

"Religious Truth" & "Science Fiction"
Are oxymorons, conflicting diction.

But "Religious Fiction" doesn't cut it.
It classifies as clearly redundant.

Perverse Love

There once was a god,
A crusty old boss,
Who nailed his unfortunate
Son to a cross.

"I must show my love
For mankind," he said.
"So I'll torture my offspring,
Until he is dead."

Now if God's strange logic
Seems sensible to you,
Then follow his example.
It's easy to do:

To prove your devotion
Is as true as you say,
Just murder your child
In a hideous way.

Gods ... they certainly aren't known for their fine sense of justice, are they? But where can you turn? The demons are no better.

Goin' Along With It

Shall we all take pity
On our good friend, Nell?
For though she was a skeptic,
She really hid it well.

Singing loudly in the choir,
Attending church buffets,
Friends all gathered round her
On religious holidays.

The church made up her social life.
She didn't want to quit.
So she bowed down to the goofiness,
And put up with the ____.*

* Readers may fill in the blank.

SECTION V: Gods or No Gods. The People and the Books That Claim to Speak for Them.

"Brother, you say there is but one way to worship and serve the Great Spirit. If there is but one religion, why do you white people differ so much about it? Why not all agreed, as you can all read the Book?"

Red Jacket, chief of the Wolf Clan and Seneca orator—from a famous 1905 speech "Religion for the White Man and the Red." His sage response to the words of missionary Jacob Cram could still be asked of any cleric today.

Searching

God always hides,
So he's very unperceivable.
It's only faith
That makes him believable.

But how the heck
Can you really know?
Since things that don't exist
Always are not so.

Thomas Jefferson Quote: "Question with boldness even the existence of a God; because, if there be one, he must more approve of the homage of reason than that of blindfold fear."
(To Peter Carr, nephew, August 10, 1787.)

Pious Politics

Oh, you know the crap's a-comin',
When the politicians pray.

They are out to raid your pocketbook,
And pander votes their way.

If you promise most clerics a piece of the pie, you will probably get their support. But should the government support any religion because it claims to be a good one?

Well, they all claim to be "good ones," so pay heed to the wisdom of founding father, **Ben Franklin**:

"When a religion is good, I conceive it will support itself; and when it does not support itself, and God does not take care to support it so that its professors are obliged to call for help of the civil power, 'tis a sign, I apprehend, of its being a bad one."

Works, Vol. XIII, p. 506

Guard your purse, and beware of those with the longest reach!

Divine Guidance

To serve God's will,
That noblest quest,
Drives the actions of the bigot
And the terrorist.

Adolf Hitler Quotes: "I believe today that I am acting in the sense of the Almighty Creator. By warding off the Jews I am fighting for the Lord's work." (Speech, Reichstag, 1938).

"And so I believe today that my conduct is in accordance with the will of the Almighty Creator. In standing guard against the Jew I am defending the handiwork of the Lord." (*Mein Kampf*)

Osama bin Laden Quote: "I'm fighting so I can die a martyr and go to heaven to meet God. Our fight now is against the Americans." Quoted by Al-Quds Al-Arabi newspaper, quoted in CBS News, "Bin Laden: I Didn't Do It" (September 12, 2001).

Danger

The ignorant savage
Should fill you with dread.

A gun in his hands,
And a god in his head.

The Practical Deist *

I feel God lives within me,
Yet I'm not what you'd call devout.
I avoid all priests with scriptures,
For they will surely drive him out.

* Probably describes many of today's freethinking Unitarian Universalists.

Pascal's Witless Wager

Now you have very likely heard
Of Pascal's famous Wager.
It was a little logic game
Religious folks would favor:
"You should bet on God," it said,
"Though he can not be proved."
There was everything to gain
And nothing at all to lose. *

But a problem with that logic
Was its basis for decision.
For since it disregarded truth,
It also lacked precision.
Believing in what you wanted
For hopes of personal gain
Was more than just bad logic.
It was a little bit insane.

So treat yourself to the belief
That you're a billionaire—
But if you are not wealthy,
The cash still won't be there.
And it's not a simple wager.
Which god will treat you well? **
If you make the wrong selection,
You might wind up in hell.

*** Who says we have nothing to lose? In a gentle rebuke to His Nibs, Richard Dawkins states:** "The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully." Dawkins (*The God Delusion*). See Chapter 3, "Arguments for God's Existence," for an excellent rebuttal to Pascal's Wager and other shopworn arguments.

**** In terms of god selection, Pascal himself seemed confused:** "If there is a God, He is infinitely incomprehensible, since, having neither parts nor limits, He has no affinity to us. We are then incapable of knowing either what He is or if He is...." (Pascal's *Pensées*).

Pascal then goes on to contradict that statement by concerning himself with scripture (which claims to know quite a lot about God). I'll wager Pascal wanted to have it both ways.

Song of the Clergy

"God will do this.
God will do that.
I know his mind
Like the back of my hat.

So listen to me,
Hear what I say,
Do what I tell you,
Be righteous today!

God gives you no choices,
To select what you will.
I interpret his voices:
You follow the drill.

Avoid false prophets,
who are everywhere found.
Tho they contradict me,
Their ways are unsound.

Now look at my face,
And you'll see who I am.
God's image shows through me,
I am more than a man."

Evangelist, rabbi,
Priest, mullah, or Pope,
Minister, holy man,
All know the ropes.

The titles are many
In this faithful array.
But one thing is certain,
Each alone knows God's way.

Mark Twain Quote: "The easy confidence with which I know another man's religion is folly teaches me to suspect that my own is also." *a Biography*

**From a Tiny Mustard Seed
(Think Big) ***

You will need a valid license,
If you start a new profession.
Doctors, plumbers, even barbers
Know that very basic lesson.

But there is a way around it.
Start a church and be a preacher.
There are simply no requirements
To become your brother's keeper.

You don't need an education.
Decent morals are not required.
Governments do not restrict you. **
Insanity won't get you fired.

Tax laws are a big incentive.
Housing benefits are tax-free.
Churches don't pay income taxes: ***
They're considered charity.

Find a holy book to guide you.
Any popular one will do.
Or if you are feeling picky,
Print a new one, written by you.

Get yourself a place to worship.
Herd a willing flock of sheep.
It's not difficult to fleece them.
Cry for alms, and they will bleat.

If you have the right charisma,
You might get a TV show.
Build yourself a big cathedral.
Watch your wealth and power grow.

Once that megachurch is humming,
You'll be known as God's Top Man.
Politicians seeking office
Will become your biggest fans.

* Mark 4:30-32

** You are protected by the Free Exercise clause of the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ..." You can claim God is an alien bedbug and heaven is located in an empty bean can. Get a congregation to believe it, and nobody can prosecute you for fraud. (And you probably will get a congregation.)

*** A church can lose its tax exempt status if it endorses political candidates. Some members of congress would like to change that. The IRS is lax in its enforcement.

Finding The Right Path

I know just what God wants.
And you can find out too!
Any primitive holy book
Will tell you what to do.

With so many contradictions,
The advice might not seem sage.
So if you do not like it,
Just turn to another page.

If you're still disappointed,
No matter where you look,
Just change to another religion,
And read a different book.

Pray and Pay

When Sunday mornin' rolled around,
 We filled up all the pews.
A week's worth of sin had piled up,
 So our flock was feelin' the blues.

The pastor cussed us from the stage.
 He jumped around and yelled.
And we was all a-feelin' down—
 We knowed we was goin' to hell.

But then he told us 'bout God's plan
 To avoid that fiery fright.
We didn't havta do too much—
 Just repent and see the light.

So we prayed for God's forgiveness,
 And we was feelin' great.
The pastor soon caught wind of this.
 He went and passed the plate.

Apologies for Awful Stuff *

They'll tell you it's not in there,
But it's right there on the page.

They'll say it's out of context,
When it clearly sets the stage.

They'll claim a different meaning,
Yet the words are clear to you.

They'll cite a conflicting passage. **
Only one of them can be true!

They'll try to expunge the horrible
And reinterpret the oblique.

But why do we need apologists?
Doesn't God know how to speak?

* **Examples:** New Testament—Luke 14:26 (**Christ**): "If any [man] come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

Old Testament—Deuteronomy 25:11-12: "When men strive together one with another, and the wife of the one draweth near for to deliver her husband out of the hand of him that smiteth him, and putteth forth her hand, and taketh him by the secrets: Then thou shalt cut off her hand, thine eye shall not pity [her]."

Koran - Surah 6:137 (summarized for brevity): Let the idolaters kill their children. It is Allah's will.

** **Compare, for example,** Proverbs 26:4—"Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him," with Proverbs 26:5—"Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." Choose whatever viewpoint you prefer, whenever you like. Holy books let you have it both ways on a great many issues. For an excellent sampling of bible contradictions, read Chapter 13, "Bible Contradictions," in ex-preacher Dan Barker's book, *Godless* (Chapter 23 in *Losing Faith in Faith*). But why stop there? Enlighten yourself—read the entire book.

Was Bad Once Good?

There are many Christians
Who shun the Old Testament,
Its contents so horrible,
It causes embarrassment.

They claim it all changed
With the coming of Christ.
As if his mere presence
Made everything nice.

But those who believe that
Are badly mislead.
Just read in Saint Matthew,
That's not what Christ said. *

And if you still argue
Christ tamed the brutality,
Then you are insulting
His father's personality.

* Matthew 5:17-18 (**Christ**): "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

Gods & Guidance

Thomas Jefferson: "It does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg."
(Notes on the state of Virginia.)

Thomas Jefferson didn't care
If you believed in god.
You can plainly see
From the quote above,
He'd still give you
The nod.

But there was another factor
He omitted from his note:
The harms that attend
Such convictions
Are missing in
That quote.

The holy books that validate gods
Decree what you must do.
They claim to teach
God's history and
What he wants
From you.

They speak of slavery and sacrifice,
Of punishment, murder, and rape.
Instead of valid science,
You find ignorance,
Intolerance,
And hate.

And believers accept too readily
The contents of those books.
We need to study them critically,
Not embrace them like
Innocent
Schnooks.

Bertrand Russell Quote: "So far as I can remember, there is not one word in the Gospels in praise of intelligence; and in this respect ministers of religion follow gospel authority more closely than in some others." *Education and the Social Order*

To Be (Hidden) Or Not To Be

Did a hidden god create all things?
That's a tired old debate.
And no one can ever win it.
It has an unresolvable fate.

Those who favor a creation tale
Must make a hard concession,
For they violate that rule of logic
Known as begging the question.

Those who dispute the mythology
Reach a similar impasse too.
They can point to the creator's absence,
But a negative cannot be proved.

So there is no decent answer
For who might have made a maker.
And no one can search everywhere
To disprove a hidden hider.

We'll never settle that argument,
So let's go with what we've got.
Forget the empty supernatural world.
Our natural world explains a lot.

Mind Control

Something sure smells fishy!
Doesn't it seem like fraud?
When we're taught to write to Santa Claus *
And told to pray to god.

* (With Santa, at least the milk and cookies are gone in the morning, but unless the family dog was hungry, your burnt sacrificial offering will still be there.)

Forevermore ...

There are some things that rarely change:
Brands burned in cattle, on the range.

The name your parents gave to you—
It wears like paint and bonds like glue.

Religion planted in your child's head—
That stunts his thoughts until he's dead.

God of the Naturalist

God is Nature
Pure and simple.
Has the cosmos
For a Temple.

Gives earth life thru
Complex measure.
Evolution
Is that treasure.

Math and logic,
Science, reason:
These are some of
Nature's beacons.

Minds fall short of
Understanding.
Nature's ways are
Too demanding.

Simple tales and
Holy stories
Concoct reasons
For her glories.

Such accounts may
Seem so useful,
But can not be
Held as truthful.

Godly myths are
Not transcendent.
Nature needs no
Superintendent.

Forward March! About Face! *

Oh listen to the faithful
Express their disillusion,
While reviewing other religions
For purpose of abusion.

But they commend their own faith
And gladly stretch conclusions,
To fabricate apologies
In support of their delusions.

* Dedicated to all the religious who hold logic to a double standard.
You've got it half right.

Mine Is Better (Clerics' Views)

Contents of an unflushed toilet—
What I think of when I read it.

How it fills my heart with anger,
When I see that fools believe it.

My religion is free of blame.
Flush those others down the drain.

Martin Luther: "Jews and papists are ungodly wretches; they are stockings made of one piece of cloth." (*Table Talk*).

Koran 9:30: "And the Jews say: Ezra is the son of Allah, and the Christians say: The Messiah is the son of Allah. That is their saying with their mouths. They imitate the saying of those who disbelieved of old. Allah (Himself) fighteth against them. How perverse are they!"

Franklin Graham: (*NBC Nightly News, 11/16/01*): "The God of Islam is not the same God. He's not the son of God of the Christian or Judeo-Christian faith. It's a different God, and I believe it [Islam] is a very evil and wicked religion. I don't believe this is a wonderful, peaceful religion. When you read the Koran and you read the verses from the Koran, it instructs the killing of the infidel, for those that are non-Muslim." (Surprise! Graham read the Koran and he got it right. Pity he can't spot the problems in his own little book of horrors.)

Reverend Bob Jones Sr.: (founder of Bob Jones University): "I would rather see a nigger in the White House than have Al Smith president." (Al Smith was the Catholic presidential candidate who opposed Herbert Hoover.)

Pat Robertson: "You say you're supposed to be nice to the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians and the Methodists and this, that, and the other thing. Nonsense, I don't have to be nice to the spirit of the Antichrist." (The 700 Club, January 14, 1991.)

Hmmm ... could there be a link between the depth of hatred for the other guy's religion and the quantity of explosive packed in the suicide belt?

Divine Proxy

Imagine my delight!
How happy could I be?
The stunning revelation,
That God thought just like me.

My word now held authority
For family and for friend.
Whene're I spoke, God willed it.
No mortal dared contend.

Susan B Anthony Quotation: "I distrust those people who know so well what God wants them to do because I notice it always coincides with their own desires." at a meeting of the National-American Woman Suffrage Association 1896 Convention.

Benevolent Bigotry

Those who spew a bigot's hate
Society will denigrate.
And those who would discriminate,
Receive that same unwanted fate.

But you may still defame someone.
Yet keep respect that you have won.
Yes, have no fear, it can be done.
Theology promotes such fun.

For any Ultra-Orthodox Jew
The Testament is Old, not New.
His enemies, God did run through.
Of him, God took a better view.

And Christians are another lot
Whose god lets unbelievers rot.
For Hell, not Heaven, is the plot
For those who think that Christ was not.

The Koran that Islam holds so dear
Gives unbelievers much to fear.
God's punishment is quite severe
It ends an infidel's career.

So ...

If scorning others gives you pleasure,
Since others do not meet God's measure,
Embrace religion as your treasure.
The world applauds *that* hate endeavor.

SECTION VI:

Guest Poems by Distinguished Authors.

Philip Appleman

My Sickening Things
Fleas
Intelligent? Design?

Yip Harburg

Realist
Lead Kindly Light
Three Bolts, No Strikes
Federal Reserve

Michael Silverstein

A Biblical Politics Critique

Philip Appleman is a distinguished poet, author, and Professor Emeritus at Indiana University. He has won numerous awards, and his work has appeared in prestigious publications. The following three poems appeared in his regular *Heads Up* column in *Freethought Today*, and are published with permission.

My Sickening Things

(To the tune of "My Favorite Things")

Muslims kill Jews and the Jews murder Muslims,
Sunnis kill Shiites, then die by the dozens,
Christian explosions make Irish ears ring:
These are a few of my sickening things ...

"On, Christian Soldiers!" defies "Allah Akbar!"
Pork rinds are banned from a Syrian snack bar.
Our sirens shrieking while *their* rockets zing:
These are a few of my sickening things ...

Hindu kills Buddhist, and Buddhist kills Hindu,
Neither will reconcile, for it's a sin to.
Infidels tortured and sent to the grave:
Faith all that sickening's simply depraved ...

When *they're* praying
And *they're* saying
That the heretics must die,
Then I remember I'm not one of *them*,
And I know I'm a lucky guy.

Fleas

*I form the light, and create darkness:
I make peace, and create evil:
I the Lord do all these things.
Isaiah 45:7*

I think that I shall never see
a poem as ugly as a flea,
a flea whose hungry mouth is pressed
against a buttock or a breast,
a flea that spreads disease all day
and lifts its little claws to prey:
poems are made by you and me,
but only God can make a flea.

I think that no one ever made
a poem as powerful as AIDS,
or plagues that may in summer kill
half the bishops in Brazil
and share the good Lord's Final Answer
with clots and cholera and cancer—
for God concocted pox to mock us,
staph and syph and streptococcus:
poems are made by bards or hacks,
but only God makes cardiacs.

I think that I shall never smell
a poem as pungent as a hell,
where grinning devils turn the screws
on saintly Sikhs and upright Jews,
giving them the holy scorcher,
timeless, transcendental torture:
poems can make you want to yell,
but only God can give you hell.

Intelligent? Design?

(To the tune of "Battle Hymn of the Republic")

Your eyes have seen a blurry scene
That's only known to man:
Your optic nerves are backward and
Have been since time began,
That's what the preachers tell you is
God's very special plan:
Intelligent Design!

Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!
The Great Designer knows what's due ya.
Nothing else can stick it to ya
Like Intelligent Design!

You wish a guy's urethra did
The jobs that were proposed:
Both lover's clout and waterspout
Is what you had supposed.
Alas the Great Designer squeezed
A prostate 'round your hose:
Intelligent Design!

Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!
Nowhere does the Bible clue ya
That your glands would soon subdue ya:
Intelligent Design!

Your tummy's sick, your heart goes tick,
Your hips are giving in.
Childbirth is a horror 'cause
Your pelvis is too thin.
When your appendix ruptures, the
Designer only grins:
Intelligent Design!

Glory, Glory, Hallelujah!
Making-do will have to do ya.
Flimflammers cooked this up to screw ya:
Intelligent Design!

Rhymes for the Irreverent

The rhymes on this page are a selection from the book, *Rhymes for the Irreverent*, written by lyricist **Yip Harburg**, master of the terse verse and author of the lyrics to "Over the Rainbow," "It's Only a Paper Moon," "Brother, Can you Spare a Dime?" and other well known songs. Published with permission.

Realist

"For what we are about to receive,
Oh Lord, 'tis Thee we thank,"
Said the Cannibal as he cut a slice
Of the missionary's shank.

Lead Kindly Light

Where Bishop Patrick crossed the street
An "X" now marks the spot.
The light of God was with him,
But the traffic light was not.

Three Bolts, No Strikes

When lightning struck the steeple
Of the Church of San Jose,
It barely missed the brothel
That was just across the way.

Federal Reserve

In '29 when the banks went bust,
Our coins still read "In god We Trust."

Wall Street Poet **Michael Silverstein** has an impressive background in the fields of business, economics, and finance. He is the author of several humorous fiction novels, and he specializes in writing satirical financial and political poetry. This poem was written in response to a politician who was pandering to his, anti-science, creationist constituency. It was taken from www.wallstreetpoet.com and published with permission.

A Biblical Politics Critique

When seeking for the evidence
To gauge the age of earth,
The science of geology
Is where most start their search.

And they turn to biology
When seeking to resolve,
A riddle of humanity,
How did our kind evolve.

Should we disdain such disciplines
Because they do not fit,
Some passages appearing in
A book of Holy Writ?

I'm not a person who sets out
To be a faith maligner,
But really folks, the Bible ain't
'Bout all things the best primer.

The End

These rhymes have teased religion.
Some are a little rude.
But that is fully justified,
When the subject is mean or crude.

So ...

Don't let some cleric tell you
That he "gets it" straight from God.
For what he'll try to sell you,
Is bound to be quite odd.

But ...

Study those ancient holy books.
And question what they tell.
Hearts and minds are better guides
For getting things done well.

And ...

If you analyze religions,
And you make it through the list,
Reason might persuade you
To become a Naturalist.

So, after reading *Poking a Little Fun*, don't you find that you are better than your religion (and the other guy's, too)? If you are, the reclusive gods and those who claim to represent them with scriptural authority should be looking to you for guidance, instead of the other way around. The **Afterword** will explain why.

Afterword

Confused? Wondering why holy morals don't seem all that moral? Wondering why the content of holy books seem so bizarre?

Some holy literature was written by severely deluded individuals or by charlatans for personal gain. Some was simply an effort by primitive people to understand and define the moral and political nature of the simple agrarian world they lived in, framed by the edicts of their gods.* Common and statutory law gradually replaced severe tribal governance in much of the world, and science rolled back many of the mysteries of nature. While morality and enlightenment evolved over time, the content of holy books did not.

It is important to view holy books in that context. They will make far more sense to you. In some places, their influence is as great and destructive as it ever was. Today, even in advanced countries, many clerics cite scriptural references that endanger the health and welfare of citizens. Often, they hinder enlightenment and social progress, substituting mythical fictions and willful ignorance in place of sound science, empathy, and reason.

And what should you do from a personal standpoint? It is an unnerving thing, to question one's faith. Faith is the lifeblood of all gods; religions know that, and from cradle to grave they pound you with the prospect of godly disfavor and eternal damnation if you abandon it. There are even adherents, bolstered by scripture, who conclude it is their godly duty to punch your ticket early. But remember this:

You do the concept of your god no justice if you reduce him to the status of a morally deficient moron. And when it comes to the threat of hell for doubt or apostasy, you can never escape that. Your cleric will assure you that your faith keeps you safe and elevated, while your neighbor's cleric points to you as a deluded specimen, waiting for a bad end. Ignore the scriptures. **

The scope and objectives of this little book are limited. For those who want to explore religion and its related subjects, there are many secular resources. The Barker, Dawkins, and Hitchens books listed under Recommended Readings contain bibliographies or recommendations of their own. Dawkins' book also contains "A partial list of friendly addresses, for individuals needing support in escaping from religion." He keeps it updated at www.richarddawkins.net.

* Some of the poems in this book have demonstrated just how primitive that worldview was (or still is): Thunder and Lighting, When Ya Gotta Go, Natural Magic, Decline of the Sparerib Era, and Tower of Babel (Stairway to Heaven) are examples. The science and technology of the gods reflect the limited knowledge of the people who create them. Faith often causes us to cling to that ignorance, and restricts our ability to improve the human condition.

**** A devil's advocate position—say a judgmental god actually does exist:** The argument that unquestioning faith is the basis for your entry into heaven can be turned on its head.

What if god's criterion turns out to be reason instead of faith? Picture yourself standing at the pearly gates: God says, "Hey, Jack, how could you buy into a book that made me look like a malicious buffoon? I gave you a brain to think with. Sorry, no keys to the executive washroom for you." Saint Peter pulls a lever and you find yourself falling!

About the Author:

Dean Schramm has degrees in psychology and accounting from the University of Minnesota. He is retired and lives with his wife Dorea on a mangrove bay in the Florida Keys.

If you enjoy fantasy novels, you might like *Dreamtrial – The Complete Series* (in one volume), also written by this author.