

Songs for the Separation of Church and State

a non-linear quilt

for Hy Kornbluh

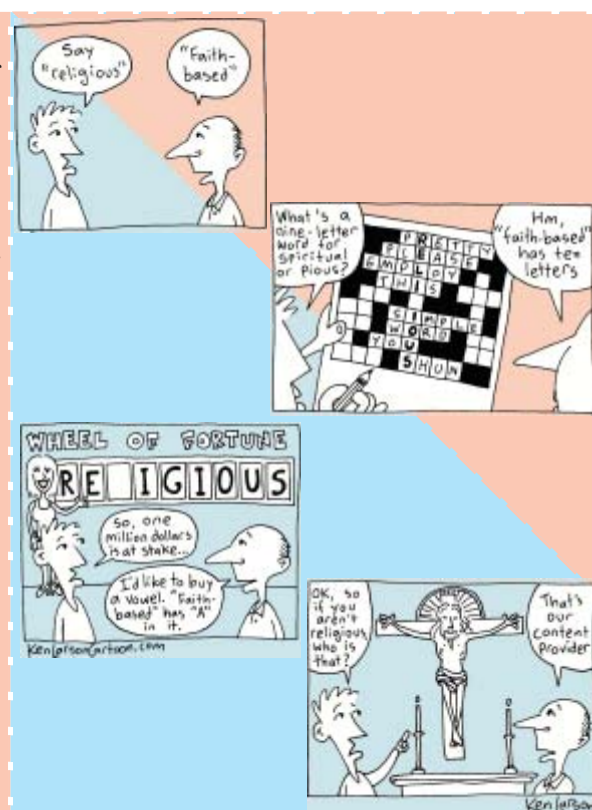
from arwulf arwulf

But one consistent theme, running from cover to cover, is the subjugation of everything female. Near the beginning of this book we are told that Eve, the first woman, was born out of the body of a man. This exact inversion of the natural way of things constitutes a serious flaw, jeopardizing the credibility of the Bible in its entirety.

As for the part of a woman from where every baby demonstrably emerges, the Popes called this the *puendum*, meaning *that of which one should be ashamed*. Women are blamed for most of the ills facing humanity. Eve may be seen depicted in "Renaissance" artworks as a grubby miscreant, clutching portions of her distinctive female anatomy while being herded out of Eden (alongside the poor male victim whom she corrupted) by a sword-waving alien. Why do they hate women so much? These monotheistic, patriarchal desert religions are, in their most extreme and violently distorted forms, bitterly misogynistic.

There is beauty in the Torah, in the Koran and in the Bible. There's also lots to grapple with, if you are a reasoning person who thinks with your own brain. And no book has been so dangerously misinterpreted with such prolonged worldwide consequences as has the Bible.

Altogether a frustrating publication. Over the centuries, many have tried to sort it out. Leonardo da Vinci, in a section of his notebook headed "doubts", ponders two illogical aspects of the biblical flood. First off, where'd the water disappear to? Secondly: fossils. Living clams and snails travel twelve feet per day. He found clam shells in the mountains of Lombardy. Impossible for clams to have traveled 250 miles in 40 days and 40 nights. *Case dismissed*. Leonardo laughs and draws a perfect circle, freehand.



Okay, perspective: 33% of life on earth are beetles. 11% flies. 11% moths and butterflies. 10% bees and ants. 6% bugs. 8% mollusks. 5% vertebrates. Most important biomass: diatoms. Recently encountered for the first time by humans: a 23-foot-long squid living in the very deep ocean; one, two, even three miles below the waves. The deep sea encompasses better than 90% of the biosphere of this earth. We, swaggering about in our wafer-thin layer of troposphere, we just work here.

But we do have some fossils of our own; literary strata. Greek lyric poetry. "Aeolian" is between extremes of tight and loose strung lyre. To me that spells Temperance and Equilibrium. This is the planet of the Lyre. This planet strums, and purrs. If you listen closely, you'll hear everything that's happening on the skin of this earth. And you might catch the voice of that which is beneath, where seismic sighs move gradually and water stretches its arms to include so much of the stone below. Listen closely: this planet is alive and there's too many of us on the face of it. So many in fact that it's sometimes hard to hear anything besides talk. Right now I hear olivine in veins beneath the lime and granite. You'll hear it too when you switch off all those toys.

Now look what I found in the journals of Claire Clairmont, on the road with Mary & Percy Bysshe Shelley. (Florence, Italy, 1822):

"In the reign of Charlemagne, a student by the name of Loup Ferrieres was much persecuted by the clergy on its being detected he admired Homer and applied himself seriously to the art of writing well. Still later, under the reign of Philip Augustus, poetry was inserted in a list, officially published by the clergy, of 'futile and criminal arts'."

Futile and criminal!? Speaking as a poet, let me ask you this, in the interest of cosmo-poetic comprehension: if God is a Metaphor, what's God a Metaphor for? Don't get rank with me, now. I mean of course that Metaphor is a living, breathing entity. Nothing affects humans so powerfully as our own Metaphoric reasoning. We, with our flawed and perpetually suspect codes of communication so jealously main-

Without intelligent reasoning, it gets very ugly. I can hear them now—if they would use these words it would be ticklishly interesting. "Our Metaphor is the one true Metaphor. Cast aside all other Metaphors, for they are false Metaphors. Thou shalt have no other Metaphors before the one true Metaphor. Our Metaphor is a jealous little Metaphor. All other Metaphors are evil. All who use those Metaphors are doomed to eternal damnation. So sayeth the Metaphor. And I and my people will overrun the territory adjacent to our own space, and we shall burn all the houses to the ground and kill every living thing, for theirs is the kingdom of the false Metaphor. Anyone believing in and applying a Metaphor too different from our one true Metaphor must be punished with something stronger and more tangible than language. We are the Truth. We are the Pure. For we live in the light of the Metaphor of might and right, so let them suffer from pox and blight, for they do not follow our own correct conduit of certitude, our straight and narrow straits. We are the true believers in the one true Metaphor, our Metaphor has all the chips, all the cards, all the power there is to be had, for ours is the one true Metaphor, and no matter how culturally different these heathens may be from us, they should have our Metaphor (the one we sewed together from various other pre-existing Metaphors)—without our Metaphor, these people are *shit*. We shall cleanse the world of this human sewage, for there is no room for mistaken Meta-

With each Christian I ask: what is the Metaphoric aspect of your Jesus? So much depends on how the Metaphor is applied. Periodically over the past 2000 years, Jesus has existed as a Metaphor for malice, torture and greed. Christianity as a Metaphor for colonialism, for the brutal persecution of Africans, Asians, Apaches, Arabs and Jews alike. At best, the Jesus Metaphor denotes benevolence, clear-sightedness, even-keel temperance and possibly even the ability to mind one's own business, although this last trait is most often absent from the mannerisms of the devout.

Christianity is a pastiche of aspects stolen from many pre-existing belief systems. The older ways were then condemned and demonized as *Pagan*. *Heathen* means "of the heath" which means don't be too earthy or we'll burn you in the middle of the village on a heap of logs. Satan, the shadow of Yahweh, Jesus and Mohammed alike, became a multi-purpose tag to hang on anything insufficiently in line with the dominant paradigm. The Hebrew word *satan* means *adversary*. That could be anybody! Example of Christian logic: "Either you're with us or you're with the terrorists." It is the mentality of an 11th Century crusader.

I think I'd like Allen Ginsberg for a Rabbi. But I'm not Jewish and he's not in his body any more. Anyway: Judaism, whence the Christian religion took choice bits of wisdom and lore, is a highly developed system of ethics and justice, particularly when the Rabbi is progressive and free-thinking. A truly hip Rabbi is a joy to behold, a force against hatred, narrow-mindedness and fascism. A socially enlightened Rabbi might respect my saying that Islam is a tonality parallel to Judaism, and even this: that monotheistic religions need to change the fact that they are potentially dandy constructs for the oppression of women. That all of these old belief systems are yet too often filled with ancient chancres of intolerance for Others, and all on account of Metaphor badly applied.

phor in this world. All have sinned in the eyes of the one true Metaphor. All other Metaphors must be scrapped, along with they who conceive of them. Our conception of reality is the only conception of reality. Everything else is wrong. We will correct their mistakes. We know what's right. So sayeth our one true Metaphor."



And some have a penchant for blowing up paired structures. Months before the Towers there were the ancient stone Buddhas. Lessons in impermanence: "Bye bye," said the Twin Buddhas, "bye bye."



New York Times
Friday September 28, 2001
page B1
'A Nation Challenged'
excerpt from article headed:
**In Stopping to Save Woman,
Rescuers Saved Themselves**

"Captain Jonas figured the fire had probably spread as low as the 80th floor. He had to pace his men or they would be too spent to help. Every 8 or 10 floors they rested. When they reached the 27th floor, the entire building shook. The other tower had collapsed. 'OK, if that building can go,' the captain announced, 'this building can go. It's time to head down.' Descending, Bill Butler noticed a man who he thought looked middle eastern, clutching a stuffed animal, possibly a lion. Police officers grabbed him, handcuffed him, and hustled him down the stairs. The stuffed lion fell on the ground." Next to this article, another piece, **School Colors Become Red, White and Blue** describes nationalistic fervor in public schools. I'm asking what became of the man who someone 'thought looked middle eastern'? Did he make it out alive? Or did he die, with his hands cuffed together? What did the lion mean to him? Why were the police mean to him? What kind of a people are we?

For a man to cry in this time is essential. Cry for those who step on landmines. Cry for the dead. Cry for the maimed. For the raped, cry. Cry 'til you're exhausted. Then we can talk and get busy. Once we've let it out where it can breathe. We can change the course of change. That is the work. Alleviation of suffering is the great work. Step one is to cry. It comes from full body-understanding of reality. A true glimpse and comprehension of the state of things in this world is almost necessarily followed by a good cry. To cry is good. Step one is to cry. Then we can talk. And get busy.

Book-burning is a Christian tradition, famously adopted by the Nazis, a team of flag-worshipping Anti-Semites. Book-burning and flag-waving, flag-waving and book-burning. These go together like peanut butter and jelly. In New Mexico (not to be confused with Mother Mexico, the Old Mexico) Christians recently had a bonfire of books. They burned Harry Potter and Shakespeare. This occurred during a time of frenzied nationalism. Schoolchildren proudly raised funds to rebuild the Pentagon, as if the Pentagon isn't getting a blank check already. Anti-intellectualism and know-nothing-ism. Book-burning and flag-waving. You're soaking in it. Personally I'd rather wave books and burn flags. A burnable flag is the ultimate symbol of freedom.

There is always a perfect voice in the arrangement of unopened copies of the Wall Street Journal, each in its plastic wrapper, systematically delivered but gradually decomposing in the mud beside the curb. This morning, a completely disintegrated newspaper vomited out of the tattered sheath onto the pavement, stared up at me in flaking wormy flecks. Your system is speaking. 'Tis the voice of the ringworm. The mildew and sour rot voice, a perfect voice in the mud outside. Your system is speaking. I can hear it this morning. And too, echoes of a systemic moratorium—stopping the war in Vietnam—October 15th 1969, walking across the Diag. We wore black arm bands, some of the teachers in school wore them too in solidarity. We skipped school to assemble in the streets. A year earlier I'd straightened the wooden crosses painted white like Flanders Field, stuck in the Diag mud for the 'Nam war dead.

And now, today: We demand the return of Lake Huron! What's currently there in its place bears little resemblance to our water *ikonas* previously experienced. See how we bubble to make our point. Where is Lake Huron and what have you done with her? Erie cries at night but you don't hear it. And we are calling out her names. She is all of the lakes and we are calling.

Subvert the power structure as they control us with language. I say harm to none but subvert their attempts to control us using Words. Look instead to the real bodies. Tennyson: "The Earth has light of her own. So has Venus. Perhaps all the other planets. Electrical light or what we call Aurora. The light edge of the dark hemisphere of the Moon. The old Moon in the new Moon's arms." Some would call this (and Goethe's Color Theory) "bad science"—but it's not there for practical verity so that you may build another highrise, or five more malls, or even hospitals. No. This is about different ways of seeing.

Alexander Zemlinsky [1871-1942] explains how I tune my brains: "One voice moving naturally and consistently allows freedom for the other five." And there is no separation. This is why "one" is such an important word in Judaic life. It is there in the morning, it is there during the day, and very present at night. "One" is the last word one pronounces before leaving one's body. All is one. Jewish longing for unity is the root of Einstein's lifelong quest for a unified field theorem that would encompass all physical phenomena. Also Karl Marx searching for an all-embracing historical method. Also very present in Arnold Schoenberg's musical universe. Schoenberg, who advocated searching for the sake of the search itself. This is all from Jewish spirituality. (I'm getting these insights from a book called *Arnold Schoenberg: the Composer As Jew* by Alexander L. Ringer, 1990 Clarendon Press, Oxford)

Unity—Oneness—Indivisibility. Judaic manner of celebrating interconnectedness. Where monotheists get into trouble, says Lindsay Forbes, is looking at cosmic unity through the distorted vision & thoughts of a linear mind. The universe, for all of its pretty lines, is wonderfully non-linear. Question of interpreting existence without getting stuck in desperate states of mind born of scarcity and brutal competition. Listen to the Mother: every sentient being is divine. Practice your disciplines. Do not force them on others. Do not corrupt the laws in order to appease the God of your discipline.

We should demand that Christian ideology not be permitted to influence the laws of this nation, and its states. The State of Michigan should not be permitted to offer specially made license plates bearing the phrase "Choose Life". This is not a benign statement. It's bad enough as a bumper sticker, existing as it does in an atmosphere of coercion and intimidation. (What sort of a person tells other people what to choose? Especially inside of one's own body! How fucking boorish and presumptuous can you possibly get?!) As a state-sponsored fundraising plan for Christian-approved, anti-Choice clinics, these license plates are an abomination against all women. Whether or not young Republican females recognize its significance, the fact remains that they as women possess the power to give life or not to give life. It's the greatest power imaginable, a power of which the Church and the State have been jealous for thousands of years. The Church-State has always resented the fact that women have the power of life and death. Gradually rendering it difficult & dangerous for women to be informed about or have access to safe pregnancy termination is exactly in line with the Christian lie which states that Eve came out of Adam's body. It is monstrously nonsensical.

Intolerance is inseparable from Christian history. Any portions of the Bible which slander entire groups of people must be placed in historical context. This is something that increasingly few seem to have the intelligence or the inclination to do. Let's visit a handful of choice moments in this very obviously contrived Gospel:

THE NEW TESTAMENT IS BOUND TOGETHER WITH ANTI-SEMITIC CALUMNIES

JOHN 8:44 In which Jesus, a Jew, tells the Jews that they are children of the Devil. Very clever—who wrote this garbage? Someone with a vested interest in the slandering of Jews, obviously. How obvious does it need to be before you question it? And listen, there's no shortage of knuckleheads who read this shit and use it to justify all kinds of idiotic violence. Martin Luther wrote a nice long book specifically degrading the Jews. So did Richard Wagner. They based their hateful spew on passages like these.

MATTHEW 27:25 The Jews are quoted as saying "His blood be on us, and on our children." This self-curse constitutes what I call the Pogrom Clause. Note that the blood of Jesus is not on the hands of the Romans, who crucified thousands of people, but on the hands of the Jewish people, a group which included Jesus of Nazareth. An obvious example of slander, and one which has resulted in murder & oppression. Who killed Jesus? The Italians. This is probably why Rome has had such a complex about it ever since Constantine brought Church & State together.

MATTHEW 28:13 Here we are told that "the Jews" bribed the soldiers to spread the story that the disciples came and stole the body of Jesus overnight, and that "this saying is commonly repeated among Jews to this very day." How interesting (and pathetic!) to assign this logical explanation to Jews specifically. I first encountered the body-snatching theory (when I was 13) in the writings of the Marquis de Sade.

[Giotto's frescos in the Arena Chapel of Padua are lovely to gaze upon. That is until we see the Betrayal of Christ by Judas. The very name "Judas" was placed in the Gospel as an obvious code for "Judaea". Judas wears a yellow robe. His features are rendered as a caricature of the Jew; the sort of propaganda of which Dr. Joseph Goebbels would have approved]

HEBREWS 8:13

Here these arrogant fuckers declare Judaism obsolete! Just like that.

HEBREWS 9:15

Jesus died as a *ransom*. Kurt Vonnegut was right! It's the Kidnapped Jesus.

HEBREWS 13:1

This section is actually very cool for a minute. Love each other. Be kind to strangers. When anyone is in jail we are all in jail. When anybody's abused we are all abused. Sounds like Buddha nature.

But it keeps souring on me. Peter of course suggests that **SLAVES SHOULD SUBMIT TO THEIR MASTERS, WIVES SHOULD SUBMIT TO THEIR HUSBANDS.** This is stated more or less in the same breath, clearly a prescription for **DOMESTIC SLAVERY. IT'S IN THE BOOK.** I spit it out in disgust.

So then: must we have a World War between major patriarchal religions? I never felt anger after the jets burned into the Towers. Only misery. But there's some really vicious shit in the air ever since. And what's the difference between a pogrom and the razing of Palestinian homes by Israeli bulldozers? Without empathy we are rabid dogs, we are. So back, then, into the stench of the Iliad: Achilles eventually regrets his anger. If only to chuck some of the angst. Eradicate madness and rage. We're crazy when pissed. Treacle, born of the sneering spleen. Grimace the bitter gall, brightly boiling cauldron, snarl in your ribs. Burn it up and smoke in your eyes, can't see where you're going and still madder than wet hens. Enough of it, enough, says he. Gone is gone is done. Bye-bye, that's enough. As flipped as he is he's gonna smother it back down by force, says he, into his stomach. Woe unto they who get in the way of it when it re-emerges, for this is a brutal culture, where Hockey Dads kill and eat other Hockey Dads. There was a photo last year in the paper of a hockey player grinning with crimson running down his face. The caption read: **BLOODY GOOD.** So you see it's condoned. Murder is the logical outcome. Why are you acting surprised? This is all the same problem.

From "Will"
(G. Gordon Liddy's
1980 autobiography)
pages 12-13:

"...authority. First, God. And then: the flag. After morning prayers at school, we all pledged allegiance to the flag. We stood at rigid attention facing the flag in lines straight enough to rival those of massed SS in Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*. I pledge allegiance... we began. At the words to the flag we shot out our right arms in unison, palms down, straight as so many spears aimed directly at Italy and Spain... Oddly enough, while I worried constantly about my ability to salute the flag, it was more than just the absence of divine punishment for poor performance; it was a positive thing. I enjoyed the mass salute and performed it well, unexcelled in speed of thrust and an iron-shaft steadiness throughout the remainder of the pledge. That habit became so deeply ingrained in me that even today, at assembly where the pledge is made or the national anthem played, I must suppress the urge to snap out my right arm."