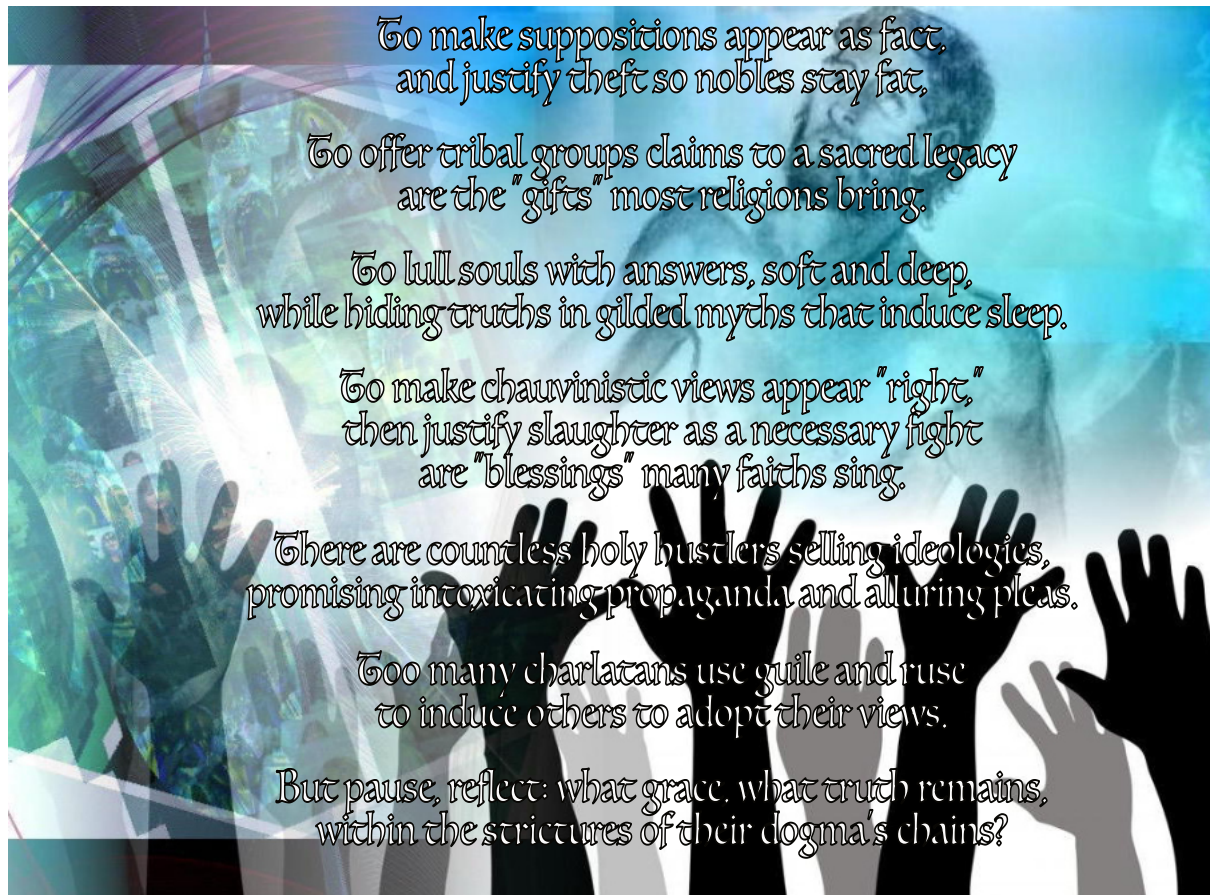


# HOLY HUSTLERS:

*A critical examination of religions*



To make suppositions appear as fact,  
and justify theft so nobles stay fat,

To offer tribal groups claims to a sacred legacy  
are the "gifts" most religions bring.

To lull souls with answers, soft and deep,  
while hiding truths in gilded myths that induce sleep.

To make chauvinistic views appear "right,"  
then justify slaughter as a necessary fight  
are "blessings" many faiths sing.

There are countless holy hustlers selling ideologies,  
promising intoxicating propaganda and alluring pleas.

Too many charlatans use guile and ruse  
to induce others to adopt their views.

But pause, reflect: what grace, what truth remains,  
within the strictures of their dogma's chains?

**Carlos :** (shaking his head, a wry smile playing on his lips) Sounds like someone's preaching from the secular pulpit. A call to atheism, perhaps?

**Brice :** (leaning forward, eyes alight with conviction) Not a sermon, Carlos, but a simple truth: every sacred scroll, every whispered prayer, deserves the sharpest scrutiny. Too much darkness unfolds in the name of "faith."

**Anya :** (pausing while munching some sour grapes) If you're going to anchor your soul to something, you'd better be damn sure it's an unyielding rock, not shifting sand. Real religions shouldn't be scared of questions.

**Brice :** (eyes narrowing) Yes, but more often than not, religions and cults fear open questioning. They attempt to deflect criticism in ingenious ways. Indeed, I fear religious belief is the main cause of brain ossification.

**Devani :** (a soft sigh, heavy with resignation) It needn't be that way. . .

- G Newfields

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