

2. *Don't Ask*

DON'T ask why those old folks made cairns from stones,
 or temples grew to urge epiphanies,
 why precincts of the dead were sacred zones,
 or why Lascaux predicted every frieze.
 Don't ask why Sumer told of Gilgamesh,
 or Homer showed why proud Achilles mourned,
 or Shakespeare's sonnets fathomed more than flesh,
 why Jonathan's desire was never scorned.
 Don't ask me why these lines crawl forth in praise
 for hallowed gifts of love and thews and time,
 why troubled histories become a phrase
 and tumbled mysteries convert in rime.
 Ours is no realm of reasonable things:
 By mortals God is killed, but still Bach sings.

Don't ask alludes to the 1993-2011 "Don't ask, don't tell" policy preventing declared homosexuals from serving in the US military, and also to a phrase in an 1894 poem by Lord Alfred Douglas, cited in an indecency trial of Oscar Wilde. *Todos hecho, nada dicho*, "everything done, nothing said," refers to the practice in many cultures of approving while denying widespread same-sex behavior. *Cairns* are piles of stones erected to mark a powerful spiritual experience, as, for example, Genesis 28:18-22, when Jacob consecrates a stone with oil to mark "this awesome place," which he calls Bethel, the House of God. An *epiphany* is a manifestation of the divine. Even before the evolution of language, the earliest attempts to represent or guide others to such [1] "unitive" experiences of the sacred have been [2] ritual and other art forms, about which [3] myths arose; and finally [4] cognitive descriptions, creeds, and theologies developed the narratives; it is often difficult to discern the unitive experience from the creed. *Lascaux*, in southwestern France, is the site of Paleolithic cave paintings. A *frieze* is an extended painted or carved decoration, usually above the eye, often on the entablature of classical structures. *Sumer* was a city in ancient Mesopotamia; it produced the *Epic of Gilgamesh* which tells the story of a friendship between the king *Gilgamesh* and his male mate Enkidu. Homer's *Iliad* describes the warrior *Achilles* grieving when his companion Patroclus was killed. Most of *Shakespeare's sonnets* of love were written to a fair young man. In the Biblical story (1 Samuel) *Jonathan*, the son of King Saul, became David's covenant friend. (See Chapter 5 of Gary David Comstock's 1993 *Gay Theology Without Apology*.) When Jonathan was killed, David lamented, "your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women" (2 Samuel 1:26) → «Relaxed». *By mortals God is killed* is an allusion to the Christian story of the crucified God-Man Jesus as well as to Nietzsche's famous statement in *The Gay Science* (1882), "God is dead. . . . And we have killed him. Yet his shadow still looms. How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murderers?" In his 1957/1959 *The Sacred and the Profane*, p208, Eliade writes that the secular person "will not be truly free until he has killed the last god." The great church composer Johann Sebastian *Bach* (1685–1750) wrote works such as *Christ lag in Todes Banden* (*Christ Lay in Death's Bonds*), *St Matthew Passion*, *St John Passion*, and the *Mass in B Minor*.