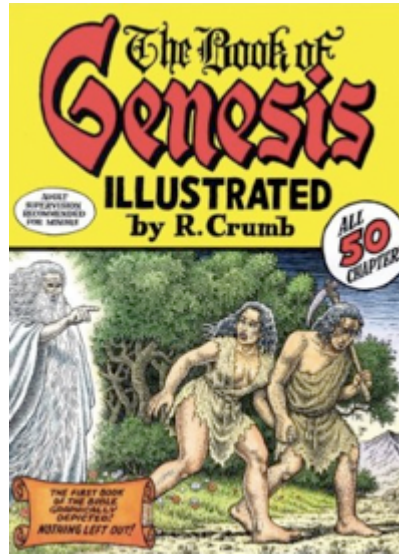




Written by [James Heiser](#) on October 22, 2009

'60s Comic Artist Mocks Book of Genesis

That an “artist” would be accused of publicly assaulting the Christian religion is hardly news; even the obscene scribbles on display recently at the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow, Scotland hardly attracted any attention. Thus, when the Associated Press carries a headline, “Comic-Strip Artist R. Crumb Mocks Book of Genesis,” the “news” in the story is not that yet another “artist” may be cashing in on shock value, but that the aging '60s artist was still alive. For a reader born after 1968 — unless they are “fans” of the underground comix genre — the most immediate reaction they would have to today’s story is: “Who?”



Robert Crumb (or “R. Crumb”) is probably best known for the “Keep on Truckin’” image once popular along the left edge of the “baby boom” generation, and — like listening to a Grateful Dead album or listening to a National Public Radio broadcast — Crumb’s work is likely to evoke a period-appropriate “flashback.” Now, the artist who describes his own religious views as “Gnostic” has decided to turn his attention to the first book of the Old Testament. According to the AP:

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“The Book of Genesis Illustrated by R. Crumb” was published last month, and on Oct. 24 the stunningly detailed, beautifully crafted black-and-white drawings that comprise its 201 pages will go on display at Los Angeles’ Hammer Museum. After the exhibition closes in February it will move on to other cities, including New York and Portland, Ore., a circumstance that has the normally circumspect Crumb shaking his head in disbelief.

“The Bible! Jesus! Incredible,” Crumb says in a voice filled with awe as he reflects on the project that has consumed the last five years of his life.

Indeed, the project does raise an obvious question: Why would the guy famous for drawing voluptuous women and nerdy looking, well-endowed men, who put the phrase “Keep on Truckin’” into the national vocabulary with his posters of a big-footed oddball out for a walk, and who by his own admission owes much of his artistic inspiration to his extensive use of LSD in the 1960s, take on the Bible?

“It’s kind of complicated,” Crumb guffaws during a phone interview from his home in the south of France.

“I don’t think ‘Genesis’ is a good place to look for spiritual guidance or moral guidance,” he continues.

“I don’t believe it’s the word of God.”

“At the same time,” he continues, “I think the stories are very powerful. I’m not out to ridicule them or belittle them.”



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Of course, denying that the book is a “good place to look for spiritual guidance” does not rest easily next to the claim one is not “belittling” Genesis; but Mr. Crumb and his readers have a right to form their own opinions.

As of this writing, Crumb’s *Genesis* is ranked #14 in overall sales at Amazon.com, just above Glenn Beck’s *Arguing with Idiots*, a lucrative place to be, and a correlation the significance of which we will leave to our readers.



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