

Let's breakup, for good

Religion is possibly the most inspirational idea, the most confident and self assuring influence man has ever cast over himself. Unless of course, there truly is a God- that would wildly complicate things. It's time for humanity to have a reckoning; for us to truly look back, assimilate what we can, and make sense of it. There needn't necessarily be a feeling of wonderment, an uprising of hate, or a stalwart defensive of the one-above-all (or the one inside us all if that's more your thing). All there needs to be is a rational and anthropological view of where we are, and where we used to be. How we've progressed from times where we had no concept of religion at all to an age where it has become an extremely divisive issue when it absolutely shouldn't be so.

Keep in mind, however, the arguments many defenders of faith employ- one such argument typically fashioned says that findings of archaeology and many fundamental sciences including that of evolution are false or do not carry enough proof. Similar logic (if that can be called logic) leads individuals to conclude that the Earth is flat- or that gravity perhaps, is just a conspiracy. Suffice it to say that not every argument and facet of the topic will be covered in this short piece, but I will do my best to not leave giant gaping holes that can't be filled with the help of our ever friendly if nearly omnipresent watcher, Google. Also understand that gravity, and evolution among others are considered "fact" based on centuries of research, and consequently there has been research done based on these "theories". It's simply the most likely reality of our existence- You ask, what if gravity does not exist? We cannot trust NASA or any other space agency, of course- what if there is just a lower god sitting at the center of the Earth(or below the surface, if flat earth is your cup of tea) and pulling everything towards him? That could be true. Especially if it could fit in with all the other findings and measurements used to describe gravity. If it could be a theory powerful enough to convince those darned physicists coming up with string theory and more complicated ideas, yet, yet rooted in the most fundamental laws of our universe. Till then, trust science where you can understand it. Where you cannot, ask someone for help- I guarantee you'll find someone far more easily than many people on this globe attempting to find food.

Enough tarrying, it's time to think and wonder about our creator. I'd like to start by looking at the old gods, the old ones, the famous ones, the ones we now refer to as myths, even. The greek and roman gods are very similar, because most of them are the same. While the Greeks called the god of war Ares and the sky god zeus, the Romans preferred Mars and Jupiter. The Indian gods- there are way too many, but talking about some of the most recognized ones such as Vishnu, Shiv and Indra are some of the oldest to have ever existed in our memories. All of them, largely share some similarities. There are many Indian legends, the most notable epics being Mahabharatha and Ramayana, while the Greeks had the Iliad and Odyssey, detailing tales of brave heroes, often demigods or godly incarnations humbling humans or participating in long wars and weaving in and out of stories so intricate, they simply could not have not existed. While Hinduism is still alive and well, though not as pervasive as the major abrahamic religions

largely due to the lack of a push towards converting other people, the Greek and many other gods, such as the Chinese and Aztec are largely only considered myths now. The earliest gods, and many from the more comprehensive faiths related to forces that controlled human life- The sun, wind, moon, earth, fire, water are some terms that if given to a student of religion, will trigger an outpouring of godly names. Most of these gods were perhaps hence done away as myths, gods created and assigned a department since worshipping a religious deity could of course shower you with good fortune, a good harvest, and keep away disease. Today, we have supermarkets, vaccines and therapeutics, and systematic investment in luck, the lottery. Humans in this era of civilization had major concerns of survival- the forces of nature, seemingly whimsical and cruel, which must have a master at their helm. So they created masters and worshipped them; many have postulated that man is a very insecure creature. The cleverest of them all- and since he understands so much, he cannot bear to live and know that what he understands only barely elevates him from, say, a rabbit, in the large scheme of things. It must have been a lot more comforting to have exist a much more powerful entity, someone much smarter and fantastical, who could be appeased by offerings so things went man's way. Have you ever wondered if at that point, and henceforth no human ever conceptualised a God, and we didn't have the concept of religion? We may not have survived, for religion served a lot of purposes and had a great many benefits too. As a cunning animal, humans may have noticed patterns in the tides, or when the monsoon is expected- but not knowing why, paid homage to invisible overlords to make sure the rain was plenty but did not provoke a flood- that would mean they've angered the gods. But anyway, let us move past simpler times and grow further and face the major way religion is recognized today- the Abrahamic faiths, the monotheistic faiths, the all powerful omniscient creator faiths that demonstrate less proof, more discrimination and a lot more hypocrisy and selfishness; but spoke a language that social humans craved and brought social order and purpose of sorts, another one of our defining needs. It was just serendipity that it usually came from an earthly prophet- after all, could you really expect an all powerful God to prove his existence to every single human(of that time, mind you, which wasn't that many at all)? Nope, it'd much more convenient to pick a few chosen ones to spread his message everywhere- He did of course exist, and finally man was intelligent enough to comprehend his existence, which is the only reason why he hadn't chosen to reveal himself before. Or some other reason perhaps, I don't think one can truly, truly ever know.

It is likely you follow one of the faiths being broadly spoken about. Then again, perhaps if you're reading these words, you might not be, and that's part of the problem. Widely, (in 2020) these religions and their tenets are controversial and touchy topics. So touchy, in fact, that opinions that stem usually in some base or form from the faiths in question, cast their influence on topics of policy ranging from technology to healthcare to animals and sanitation and extend unto them a similar shield. This shield is typically composed of a misguided sense of choice, self-importance, community assurance and preservation of status quo. If you're unfamiliar, a quick google search enlightens one on what a gaurakshak is, and whether you've just encountered the term or know exactly how silly such a person is, really think about what it is. I now begin dipping my toes in various religions, so tread heavily- the time for lightness was

before 2020. A gaurakshak is a person who staunchly defends the gaumata, simply put, a cow. Cows and buffaloes have long been excellent farm animals, and popular ones in India. Orthodox followers of Hinduism/Sanatana dharma broadly stick to a bunch of outdated practices that the "modern" Hindu had shed as regressive acts and scriptures of a forgotten age, and pays more attention to what aligns with his/her moral code- but our moral code, of course is warped by our experiences, influences, the storybooks and tales we read and are told, and our religions. But are they warped by these influences or created by them? After all, what moral code and compass would a person have with no experiences- no social knowledge, no interaction at all? It would be foolish to assume we can fathom an answer to that question. And the answer isn't simply, 'that person would have no moral compass'. Back to the gaurakshak. He defends cows, beats and intimidates the people who rear and butcher them for meat, since they are a holy animal that feed us so generously. Unfortunately, we aren't as generous back to it- In all these years after learning of evolution and genetic engineering, why don't we even have theoretical studies on how to evolve our fellow animals into beings of similar intellect? Or atleast of higher intellect. No, we have movies on the same- Rise of the planet of the Apes in which highly intelligent and verbose apes finally strike back at their oppressors. The gaurakshak even kills these ungodly men and women for this insult to his godly animal. And this is a practice related to Hindiusm- it isn't even a monotheistic religion, in case that wasn't clear. Many people throughout the world are convinced that vaccines are a bad development generally, and even if not, they should not have to take it, nor their kids. An injection into your body is not the same as paying your taxes, or roaming in a city wearing clothes, but we do it. The rule of law and civics at its most basic is a binding covenant to live by certain rules, regulations, and systems so we can continually advance and progress together in a civil manner into the inevitable future. Paying taxes and wearing clothes are necessary, or necessarily expected. Vaccines however, are not injected forcefully into every human's arm like a mind bending chemical that some will tell you a certain Willy Gates would like. They assist greatly in preventing many diseases, often communicable, and many eradicated or severely declawed by this miraculous invention. It has mild side effects for some, and none for most- and severe for the smallest group, which is why these reactions are recorded early in childhood, when monitoring is high to begin with, and defenses to many diseases are set up. Yet, there is a trend in vaccine resistance among the educated in certain places- note that I say vaccine resistance. Some people cannot tolerate vaccines and should not take them, and these people's medical records will reflect that- they and their family know it. A miniscule but inexcusable fraction of people have died, and in an even smaller portion, it is due to medically erroneous decisions, imperfect vaccine formulations, or lax monitoring- a harsh reality we live in, and this percentage should reach zero soon, not simply tend to. There are also quite a few vaccines- but then again, so many diseases! We might think not, but a quick dive into historical infection and mortality rates can set us straight. So many treatable and untreatable diseases- hell, so many different types of cancers, and lung cancers! And then different classifications and responses to drugs- it almost would take a professional with an advanced degree to present statistics that represent truth- or what we understand of it; Remember, always remember, biology, chemistry and physics do not argue and do not need to - we must strive to understand more of it, until we no longer can at which

point we may ourselves be what we consider, "Gods".

Yet, it does not provide a reasoning why perfectly normal humans should refuse to take vaccines and have access to government facilities where they may acquire, spread and rebirth diseases we're trying to wipe out and reduce over continents and generations as a whole, not to mention the middle-finger this refusal represents to the small immunocompromised community. This ridiculous exercise of 'choice' for 'choice's sake to protest an imagined oppression is gaining traction in certain areas of many developed nations; these individuals could take their boosts proudly to protect the immunocompromised, use their access to vaccines and medicines to take trips to developing countries sometimes to volunteer their time (being educated and skilled, it's often very valuable), but refusing an injection that the state mandates is something a lot more Hollywood-esque, I can only imagine. This resistance may occur due to a lack of oppression while most others have been oppressed. For some of us have known no oppression, have not read or related to someone else's oppression, and do not have a long and arduous history of being oppressed at some time. Or, if we relate to it, relate to it in a very heroic manner, exemplified by bursts of pride, daring anyone to tell us to knock our gazes down so we can raze them for criticising the pride we take in our history. I assume similar thinking plays out in 5G-corona connections, and the flat earth theory. The Earth has been largely conquered and explored, the sea cannot be (yet), and nearby space is still centuries away- The thirst of grand romantic adventure is real, and dangerous if we do not recognise it or allow it disfigure our thoughts. I digress often, but we're very close now. Islam as a religion is not favourable to women; Imagine picking a major (subject of study/career) between all the religions of the world and none, and picking Islam as a woman? It is of course in no way similar- you must have faith and believe in your God, trust and love unconditionally and stay faithful to your religion. We tend to try and choose our majors with some respect for our passions, and the probability of earning good money- two giant factors, among other mostly practical ones like aptitude. As an orthodox Muslim, one cannot drink or eat pork. As an orthodox Muslim woman- though the list of what men cannot do is long, the female list laughs at the men's. Laughs, spits, and guts it open, in fact. If all religions require sacrifice, as the older ones did, (think of the goat on Eid, the Pagan rituals, Greek and Roman offerings, charity in many religions etc) the humans most forced to sacrifice parts of possible existence should be the most revered and powerful of the sect- that doesn't really seem to be the case though. I confess knowing very little about Judaism, and most other religions, even the ones I write of here, but hopefully I know enough to spur the thoughts in your mind that form while reading this 'essay', or to at least think about them and grapple with them, almost converse and speak to them, with respect to your opinions and beliefs.

Everyone's heard of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson- Washington could have attempted to work in a position of power for many terms but limited everyone, and Jefferson was a Polymath, and said all men are created equal- you know where this always goes. Slaves were rampant across the Earth for a while, and most privileged enough to have them, did. But these great men should still be looked up to- they were truly great, no doubt- for their time. You'd be hard pressed to find someone perfect in history and the present, and most likely the future too.

We have been ignorant of genes, microprocessors and the Sun for most of our existence. Science, logic and making cold hard reason of things to absolute certainty have taken us to heights any man not alive could never dream of. I advance the idea that all religions may have served purposes at the time and may even have been revolutionary. Many religions frown upon the LGBTQ community, to put it lightly- If someone were forming a religion that long back, it would have been truly prescient to protect them, considering most people died young relative to today's standards, the most disease free and least violent time of all. Familial bonds were much stronger and children were cherished- a couple(really, a woman) producing young, healthy children would indeed be a power couple. When so many children died young(again, relatively HUGE) it would have been cruel to have a child and not deliver the new soul to the beautiful world. Women were for the propagation of humanity, taking care of the hearth, nurturing the young ones and taking care of the elderly and soothing most men- after all it's us men(I'm male) who had to hunt, grow crops, and fight for territory, land and everything (and often anything) else we could fight for - taking from each other simply was, by far, the easiest way to obtain "things". Could you imagine if Tesla opened up a factory in Jesus's age? A likeness of Elon Musk's kid would probably be etched on our skulls at birth. Man has always been stronger than woman(Sexual dimorphism), and man, he never let her forget it. But it made sense too of course- a tribe of men warriors and women everything else v/s women warriors and men everything else? We know who'd win! Amazons would beg to differ, or probably behead me with belligerence- but it's true. Men have typically oppressed anyone they could- animals, women, other men and nature. We use animals useful to use and keep, and separately animals we value like friends, the ones that are cute, or have some sense of personality. The rest we don't care about or dump in a zoo for our occasional fascination. Women have been repressed by nearly every generation of man, every religion, every country(at least till some point overtly, and then covertly or not at all), and have been versatile throughout history- companions, trophies, objects, pure fertility machines, and finally humans, they've done it all. Other men have also been oppressed by men. Silly isn't it? I think the more prehistoric(not in the real sense of the term, not before history) wars were wars of expansion, and tribes and empires less advanced were treated like lesser beings or savages- how could the more civilized know that the other human was the same species, had the same capabilities, and they could open a Nutella factory together? They couldn't. The Britons were stupid savages to the Roman gladiators, and the Indians a dirty and uncivilized people to the British. If aliens ever deign to visit us, be thankful if they only eliminate us- it would probably be merciful from all perspectives. Black men were slaves, islands were colonies, and countries throughout Asia and Africa were colonies. I pointedly mention black men being slaves because while most of Europe were colonising nations and largely the current descendants show some sense of generational guilt(intertwined with the buzzword privilege, check it), a lot of Americans don't. This does not mean it is an expectation of the privileged to apologise and sit down while the historically oppressed progress- it means that an acknowledgement of human history evokes compassion for the wronged, persecuted and unfortunate and a drive to help them help themselves while going about our lives- or at the absolute least, not getting in the way any more, whether by words, policies or actions. America was not discovered, the same way Vasco de Gama did not discover

India(that's but one example), but discovered is often the word used since the native Americans weren't using much of the land now, were they, living so sustainably with nature- they were largely wiped out, while most other colonies had indigenous populations that are by far the majority there, again, like India- hence called ex-colonies. The colonists came to America, wiped out the locals largely and imported slaves there, and generations of slaves were born there with little concept of other countries. In a continent like Europe or Asia, there wasn't at least that sort of geographical block from having any inkling of other regions. America did have to win its independence from Britain and they did- I'm having a tough time thinking of other ex-colonies that managed that, though. Perhaps it wasn't as much of a British colony as the others, perhaps it was more of a new opportunity colony that had to pay homage largely in taxes for a while, then decided it didn't really need to do that either- it wasn't fair. I'm not trivialising America's fight for independence and I apologise, for that sounds like my intention. I'm attempting to throw perspective on America's struggle when contrasted with the real horror stories, the real colonies, and the real victims of the history of America. In other places too there exist constructs of hierarchy, like the caste system, clerics, religious elders, religious figures of power(think Popes, priests, temple elders {not sadhus or spiritual humans}, imams and successors of such). Black people, Jews, Dalits, among others were and often are considered lesser humans- even in 2020. Even as I type and as you read this, even as we know most of "how people are" is purely due to where they are born and what influences they're exposed to. Even as we must realise that at this burgeoning rate of technological and scientific progress (which is still hindered greatly by a greedy society that still largely draws value from each other by paying those it can lesser wages, making profits at the expense of environmental degradation, glorifying an image and material obsessed culture accelerated by social media apps, which prey on our increasingly shorter attention span and need for gratification to sell us items we don't need or 'need' in a materialistic and posey sense) in maybe a century(who knows, maybe shorter or longer) we will have a society vastly different with unimaginable new problems, and excellent solutions to older ones.(Ever thought eradicating smallpox was an option before vaccines? Nope. Ever had a problem that involved having to charge in a regeneron pod to extend life by 5 years at the age of 20 instead of 30 because your genes are more susceptible to breast cancer and produce oxidants at a 20% faster rate? Again, I think and honestly hope not. If yes, please reach out to me.) Such a society could have the new, final and true religion which could be a new one, or an old one, or most of them, with a monotheistic god simply testing our "faith" by appearing in different forms at different times with different teachings. But I think not. God has not deigned to appear before humanity, and, on the balance of probability, will not- we have no reason to believe he ever will. And the question of new religion? No new religion can be born- anything that even steps close to resembling it is labelled a cult. That should be a profound statement, speaking volumes- if it wasn't to you, I encourage you to mention it to someone around you and ask whether there is anything distinctly "profound" about it. For the times they were born in, religion served many purposes, and again, that may be what spurred its spread through charity, wars and everything in between. Loving thy neighbour, not stealing, not charging interest and not consuming alcohol all sound like generally good natured advice, but are commandments from different religions, albeit simplified. In a civilization

inconceivably different from ours- and I repeat this, to make sure that the difference in perspective is clear- these religions could be beacons of hope, blueprints of how to live a innocuous and harmonious life. And speaking of difference in perspective, think about explaining today's complex economies or technology underlying cell phones, cryptocurrency, and chicken farming to your grandparents. Let's say you manage it- your grandparents have kept up- they were rad, trendy and now cool. How about your great grandparents? Or their parents? Or maybe Todd from 1312 AD?

Genghis Khan is said to have murdered an enemy tribe and then devoured the leader's heart for kidnapping one of his wives. So-called "witches" were found and burnt, and many other unthinkable weird practices prevailed to certain degrees in our history. Is it not inconceivable to imagine a time when humanity had such savagery in it, that Christianity rescued it- attempted to instill in it the good values it could achieve, and eschew what the Devil ordained? I find it perfectly plausible. In those times, a human with such compassion, wisdom and public appeal, that champions these ideals could very well be special. Religion can also be thought of a belief in a higher being, or a unified supreme being we all belong to, that humanity turns to in times of darkness, in times of stagnancy, in times of unshakable doubts in the significance of its own existence. Religion has appeared to humans time and again, each one impacting our civilization in not quite the same way, but attaching itself inseparably to our history, making it unimaginable to visualize a world free from it. However, after a point, no more major religions were born, and we may very well never witness another one. I've asked a lot of questions in this little piece, often rhetorically, but here's one to chew on- If you were told you were the last prophet or somehow felt enlightened enough that you had the one true religion- what would it look like? If you don't have a religion, empty canvas, and if you're staunchly convinced of a faith, how would you refine or add to it, of course keeping in line with what your faith already preaches?

Now, consider what religion seemingly resembles, in another perspective. It has endured centuries, and now one might say it has similarities to a collective club, purpose, organization based on ideals. If you'd like to give offence to theists, it is also similar to gangs, political (and sometimes socio-economic) ideologies and as aforementioned, cults. It is very possible that in contemporary times, people of faith do not question their religion. As an agnostic or atheist might furiously argue, the mind of such believers is closed, and they cannot and will not question any or some tenets of their religion (I am alluding here to the fact the Christianity and Islam, like most other religions, have many different factions, and there are clearly reasons for that; Protestants and Catholics are truly not the same). But the situation isn't exactly as simple as that. There can be no proof that a God exists, and nor can that be disproved. As members of a species that, while compared to any other animal on Earth, is pure genius- we haven't even visited another planet, we aren't yet living in a sustainable manner, and have all manner of worldly problems like hunger, poverty, and wretched diseases. Of course we don't have the power to prove or disprove the existence of an omnipotent creator. Then how does one end up following one faith or the other? There isn't a simple answer or even a few complex ones. While it is true that not every person has their own unique reason for being religious, many have widely different reasons. Most, I should think, have no reason at all- it's their environment that

molds them into religious people. Ask yourself this- (I seem to be asking you to ask yourself a lot of questions, but on a subject like this, introspection is more powerful than the words leaving anyone else's lips) As a man or a woman in a devoutly Islamic country, what is the likelihood that an individual will turn out to be a Buddhist, or Judaist? Seems very, very low, and you may apply the same logic to an area and parents born devoutly Christian, and following the practices and social norms associated with it. While religion is often stylized as an individual journey of finding God, or coming to terms and accepting God into your life, it never is typically as much of a solo venture as it might sound. Nearly every religion has festivals, rituals, birth and death day celebrations, and these are certainly not events one enjoys alone in the confines of their mind. As a Christian, one might relate to another Christian with ease; understand, for example, how to talk to someone suffering from a gambling addiction, or to help a fellow Muslim avoid the traps of greed and remind them of their teachings or set them on a better path. These are entire books people have read, stories and legends passed down through generations, songs and beautiful hymns sung with loving devotion, acts of charity engaged in, regular routines (often daily or weekly) followed, and so much more. As civilization has become more complex, religion has not faded away, on the contrary, it has attempted to involve itself in any aspect of life it possibly can, and not necessarily in a harmful manner. Most democratic countries recognise the separation of religion and state, or follow secularism- I haven't looked up the definition, but I would imagine a secular country is one where anyone is free to practice whichever religion they wish to. Ah, but not just that. A secular country must be one where religion plays no part in law, plays no part in civic sense, plays no part in regulations, indeed, a secular country must be one where religion must be treated as a rational human being, unburdened by millenia of human blunders of understanding itself and its psychology would, and, that is, religion must be treated as nothing. This is nothing new to advocates of atheism, but stop for a second to ponder its implications. No religion would even be considered as anything at all. Churches get no tax breaks, temples can not store vast amounts of money, and mosques are not allowed to cause the noise pollution they inevitably do. Why? Simply, for in such a country, a fan club of Harry Potter would have no legal framework to collect any money, no Doctor Who fans would be able to solicit and collect over many years, giant heaps of money, and no Star wars fans would be able to blast the infamous introduction score on loudspeakers at any point in the day or night. Or perhaps they could all try, but would incur the unapologetic wrath of monetary regulatory agencies, fraud detection services and the police. Now, back to religions resembling their own clubs, of sorts. I would go ahead and rattle on about its similarities to clubs and indoctrination, but let's spare us all of that tirade; most likely, even if devoutly religious, you would agree it has elements of the mentioned social groups.

I'd like to focus more now on the different importance religions hold in people's lives.

We all have heard terms like morality, conscience, and concepts of being brought into this world for a certain purpose, or have interests in the motivations of people, societal evolution, and the evolution of human morality, whether or not religion is significant to it or otherwise. But in our lives, largely, we do not exercise these thoughts, decisions and considerations- except in particular features of the modern world, and unsettlingly putting a much smaller amount of

thought into these “features” as we might expect of each other. Voting, buying things. Macro vs micro considerations.