Travail personnel 2025/2026

“I who know no God”

By Elif Sophia Bağatur

“There has been an estimated 18’000 Gods to have ever existed. The difference between a religious person and I is that the religious person believes in 1 God but not the other 17’999, and I believe in one God less than the religious person.”

- **Çayan Bağatur**

Subject explanation:

This year for my Travail Personnel I have decided to take a different route as apposed to the subjects I have surrounded myself with the past years. I felt that due to me wanting to later work in the field of Marketing and Public Relations, this subject may seem irrelevant, that writing about the impact of Market shares or the entire process of Value-Chain would have been more beneficial, these subjects however interesting, didn't call out to me this semester.

My goal with this essay is to evoke a certain conversation. Which even today in the 21st century seems too taboo to discuss for many. To not only spark debate but to give the reader a new perspective on what they believed to be true.

My goal is not however to offend anyone of whom is religious but only to confront them with questions that they themselves may refuse to conform with.

Introduction:

My name is Elif Sophia Bagatur. I am an atheist.

My father is from Türkiye and my mother from Russia, born during the Soviet Union. My father grew up often surrounded by Muslim customs, intern making him believe he is a Muslim. My mother, having been raised an Orthodox Christian, being baptised and celebrating Jesus Christ, believed she was a Christian.

They both lived very separate lives, facing very different struggles daily. Yet, even with these differences they came to an understanding not to raise their children with religion as opposed to them both agreeing that religion should be discovered by one self, not a decision made by birth.

My parents, neither of which are strongly religious, have shaped as well changed their opinions and views on life, God and religion. Over the years religion has helped guide me through a better understanding on life, suffering as well humanity. I wish to say for the better, but unfortunalty that isn't the case.

As soon as I had an understanding of God, I grew up believing that a human being is bound to a specific religion which is why I believed I was a Muslim by birth because my father said to me that he is a Muslim. I, a Muslim who also celebrated Christmas not knowing the origin of the fest was tied to Christianity but at the same time received pocket money at the end of Ramadan. Again, not understanding the differences. Even at a young age, I never could comprehend what it truly meant to be religious. In the school I attended there were either Christians or Muslims. And as I recall, that is the way we were all split. On days where a Christian child would bring sweets to school and hand them out to all his friends only to tell

me as I asked for one: “You’re a Muslim, you can’t have gelatin, it’s against your belief.” Which had me thinking at the ripe age of 8 years old: “Why does he have the right to tell me what I can and cannot do.” Incidents like these happened just as well as me making a Christmas cards for my classmates only for a Muslim student to decline my gift and say to me: “We are not allowed to celebrate this, it is haram. Aren’t you ashamed?”

At a certain period in my childhood, I can recall contemplating religion being all that I wanted to do. With the little knowledge that I had of God, I could never desipher wether it would be best to consider myself a Muslim or a Christian.

After years of debate and contemplation, I gladly and confidently state, *I know no God*.

Chapters:

1. The fear of Questioning
2. “Why Man created God”
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The fear of Questioning

Why do we fear to question? Do we fear that the unanswerable will consume us and swallow us whole? That a life of constant questioning leads to the deepening of wisdom, though often at the cost of comfort. Yes, it is known that we fear to question.

The impulse to question is one of the most fundamental characteristics of human cognition. Without said impulse, the human race wouldn't have been able to evolve to this degree. From childhood, the first stirrings of curiosity propel us to ask: *Why is the sky blue? Where does the sun go at night? Why do birds fly but we can't?* Questioning is human and our vast ability to ask so many questions on so many matters is what set us apart from the rest of the animal kingdom. Yet as we grow, something shifts. The questions remain, but their expression is often subdued, concealed beneath layers of hesitation, conformity, and fear. To ask a question is not merely to seek knowledge—it is to risk unsettling established orders of thought, community, and even one's own sense of identity. We believe to know it all. We believe to have the answers to everything, which is why to further question anything is nothing short of unnecessary. But how much do we really know of anything? Thus, the fear of questioning reveals itself not as a simple timidity, but as a profound reflection of the psychological, social, and existential structures within which we humans live. Now, why is that?

At the psychological level, the fear of questioning often arises from the discomfort that uncertainty provokes. To ask a question is to acknowledge a gap in understanding, a rupture in the reassuring narrative that one has constructed about the world. Certainty functions as a form of psychological shelter, protecting the mind from the disquieting abyss of the unknown. For example, imagine being placed in a room with no knowledge of anything beyond it. The room is comfortable, familiar, and provides everything you need. It is safe, predictable, and easy to understand. Within this room, there is also a door. You do not know where it leads, and you have never seen what lies on the other side. Yet, despite this, you often find yourself wondering about it—what could possibly exist beyond that door?

The unknown is unsettling. It could lead to something dangerous, something that disrupts your comfort and challenges everything you believe to be true. But it could also lead to something extraordinary—something greater than the limited world you currently know. Still, the question remains: why risk stepping through that door when everything you need already exists within the room?

Over time, you may begin to convince yourself that what lies beyond the door is irrelevant. You tell yourself that safety is enough, that certainty is preferable to curiosity. In doing so, you choose to remain where you are—not because you lack the ability to leave, but because you have been conditioned to value comfort over discovery.

This is how conformity works. It teaches us, often subtly, to avoid questions that may disturb our sense of stability. We learn to silence curiosity in favor of reassurance, to

accept what is known rather than confront what is uncertain. However, it is precisely the act of questioning—of stepping through that door—that allows for growth, understanding, and intellectual independence. Without it, we remain confined not by physical barriers, but by the limits we have brought upon ourselves. But what if this isn't entierly self imprisonment? What if we've been conditioned to think this way? What really is *the true consequence of questioning*?

From a social perspective it intensifies this hesitation to question. As we humans are not solitary creatures, we exist within communities governed by shared norms, beliefs, hierarchies and authority. To questions any of the above might even come across as an act of rebellion rather then an act of intellectual engagement. In fact we are taught from a very young age not to question certain people in what they say even if they are wrong. In school and/or learning institutions we often times reward rote learning over critical thinking. Hence why we are taught from a very early age on to listen to our teachers, counselors and trainers in what they say, and believe it to be true. I myself only gained consciousness of this when my third year high school teacher held a lesson on the topic of biases and asked us: *"Why do you believe anything I teach you to be true?"* For this had a lot of wisdom; it is all because they hold a position of authority. This behaviour of blindless obedience only teaches us that as well as later in life we achieve through compliance. When in workplaces prize efficiency over creativity is highly rewardable and even promotable, media outlets reinforce rather than disrupt dominant narratives, and that religious leaders are not to be questioned in what they preach because it is the ultimate truth. In such environments, questioning becomes an act of resistance, and resistance always breaks the illusion of certainty.

The fear, then, is not simply of the question itself, but of the social penalties it may incur: ridicule, alienation, or even persecution. History offers abundant testimony to this fear. Socrates, condemned for corrupting the youth of Athens through his incessant questioning, stands as the archetype of the fate that can befall those who dare to interrogate too boldly.

So why does the idea of God rationalise our fears and prevent us from spiraling into unanswerable madness?

Another dimension of this fear lies in the existential stakes of questioning. Some questions touch not merely on knowledge, but on meaning. To ask *Why am I here?* or *What is the purpose of suffering?* is to confront the fragile scaffolding upon which human existence rests. Such inquiries can awaken the unsettling possibility that life's certainties are illusory, that existence itself may be devoid of inherent meaning. In this sense, questioning threatens to expose the abyss of nihilism, a prospect that many instinctively recoil from. It is not ignorance that frightens, but the possibility that the answer might strip away the comforting illusions by which life is navigated. It is important to know that we as humans subconsciously seek patterns in everything as a way to navigate the world better it so happens to be faces with issues of inquiry. God in this sense doesn't help rationalise our fears because he gives us the answers to them. God even supports not making use of your own reasoning in many religious texts, even in the Bible:

Proverbs 3:5

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."

God not only in this setting gives you the answer, but ends curiosity. Take actions found in nature which assumingly are the will of God. So, if you were to drop a stone on the ground, and believe it to be gods doing, your curiosity ends there. Who are we? Well, we are who God says we are. Why we exist, what the purpose of life is. There is no comfort, only affirmed indoctrination.

"Questioning doesn't necessarily bring you discomfort, you just don't want to be faced with the truth."

The fear of questioning reveals itself as a paradoxical human condition. To question is to risk unsettling the very foundations upon which identity, community, and meaning rest. Yet without questioning, growth stagnates, and ignorance solidifies into dogma. Perhaps it is precisely this tension that defines the human experience: the simultaneous longing for certainty and the restless impulse to transcend it. To embrace questioning, despite the fear it arouses, is to accept the vulnerability inherent in being human. For it is only by confronting what we fear to ask that we move closer to understanding who we truly are.

"Fear conquers the right to question."

To make my point on the matter so far, research has shown that fear conquers the right to question. But many people would now wish to argue, "but we do not fear God, we love him" however fear does play a crucial role when it comes to religion. You see, without fear comes no will to be faithful. If I did not fear to be placed it the pits of hell to burn for all eternity, then there would be no reason for I to live under the laws of God. And for many people of whom have been faithful to God for all their life, questioning his existence may lead to a sensitive unwanted burden within them because religion is believing the uncertain. Just as if you were to look up to a superstar throughout your entire youth only to later find out that they have been arrested for suspected murder. You would do anything in your power to try and keep their good name and defend them when everyone else starts turning their backs on them but somewhere within, you don't actually know if the allegations against them are to be true or not, and if this person you've looked up to for most of your life is in fact a murderer and not at all who you thought they were, you would be left thinking if supporting this person your whole life was really ever worth it. This in a way is how I can best describe how difficult it can be to question your own faith when even plain facts prove it otherwise.

Religion can bring comfort as it brings answers, which can be relieving. But it comes at the cost of self exploration. For example, a Christian identity comes with moral

frameworks that will inevitably already frame one's ideas and things like virtue, gender, sin, forgiveness, family roles, etcetera. You aren't just a person searching for God. You're already a sinner or a redeemed person. Ultimately someone who exists within the eyes of God. This can be grounding, knowing you're governed over and you have an identity. But it also means certain questions are answered before you even get the chance to ask them.

Summary of: “The fear of Questioning”

The fear of questioning is a deeply human paradox. While curiosity is one of the defining traits of human intelligence—driving discovery, growth, and understanding—it is often suppressed as individuals grow older. As children, we naturally question everything, but over time, this impulse is shaped by psychological, social, and existential pressures. Questioning does not simply seek knowledge; it challenges stability, identity, and the systems we rely on to make sense of the world.

Psychologically, questioning creates discomfort because it exposes uncertainty. Humans seek certainty as a form of mental security, and questioning disrupts that sense of safety. Like standing in a familiar room with a door leading to the unknown, we may feel curious, yet choose not to open it because what lies beyond could challenge everything we believe. As a result, people often choose comfort over discovery, convincing themselves that the unknown is unnecessary.

Socially, the fear of questioning is reinforced by authority and conformity. From a young age, individuals are taught to trust teachers, leaders, and institutions without challenge. Questioning authority can be perceived as disobedience rather than intellectual engagement, leading to potential consequences such as rejection or criticism. Environments such as schools, workplaces, and religious institutions often reward compliance over critical thinking, making questioning feel risky.

On an existential level, questioning can threaten meaning itself. Questions about purpose, existence, or morality may lead to uncertainty or even nihilism. Religion, in this context, provides clear answers and reduces this fear by offering structure and certainty. However, these answers can also limit curiosity, as belief systems may discourage further questioning by presenting themselves as ultimate truth.

Ultimately, the fear of questioning stems from a tension between the desire for certainty and the pursuit of truth. While questioning can be unsettling, it is essential for intellectual independence and personal growth. Without it, individuals risk remaining confined not by external limits, but by the boundaries they are taught not to cross.

“Why Man created God”

How arrogant do you have to be to arrive 13.8 billion years late to the universe’s existence, then proceed to claim that the universe was created for you.

“If you are distressed by anything external, the pain is not due to the thing itself, but to your estimate of it.”

– Marcus Aurelius

Across the world, humans believe in thousands of different religions. Not a few, but thousands. Each one claiming to have the ultimate truth. Each one with different gods, different creation stories, different rules, rituals and afterlife beliefs. Some say there is one God, others say many. Some say no idols other say statues are in order. Some say eternal heaven and hell, others say reincarnation. It’s almost like humans where experimenting with ideas – trying to make different stories and systems to make sense of the world around them. And that’s exactly what happened.

If we look at religion closely, not through the lens of belief but through history, phycology and simple reasoning, a clear picture forms. Religion isn’t something that was given to us from the sky above, it's something that grew up from the ground under, from us. From our fears, our hopes, our ignorance, our need for order and meaning. Let’s look back. Way back. Before the bible, before the Quran, before the temples of India, before the monasteries of Tibet, before the many prophets.

In early human societies before cities, before agriculture, our ancestors lived in small groups. Life was dangerous, unpredictable and short. They didn’t understand disease. They didn’t understand what caused earthquakes and thunderstorms. They didn’t know what happened after death. So, what did they do, they created explanations. They told stories. That’s what humans do. They imagine. And what did early humans imagine? Spirits in the wind. Gods in the sky. Invisible forces behind every natural event. A tree wasn’t just a tree; it had a spirit. A mountain wasn’t just a rock. It was the home of a God. This was by no means stupidity, it was creativity. It was a way to make sense of a confusing world. It brought comfort, it brought a sense of control. “If the gods are angry, maybe we need to offer them something”, “if the rain doesn’t come, maybe we need a ritual.” “God” in this sense is a lot more tied down to nature; seen as a spirit, for it is all they knew at the time. This is where religion begins, not with a truth but with a guess.

Over time, as we evolved “God” evolved with us. Those guesses became systems, they became traditions, they were passed down generation after generation and became more

detailed. Gods were given names, personalities, families even. Myths were written; rituals were created. Slowly but surely religion over time became a part of identity, of politics, of law and power.

But here is what's important, as different groups of humans evolved separately, they came up with different religious stories. a tribe in Africa invented one story. A tribe in the Middle East created another. A tribe in South America something else entirely. If religion truly came from a single divine source, wouldn't it be the same story told everywhere? All that religion reflects is local culture, geography and environments. In hot desert climates, Gods are fierce and jealous. In lush, forested areas, Gods are connected to nature. Even the moral systems differ – not because truth changes but because humans do. Look at the idea of God's form. In western religions God is usually imagined as a powerful all-knowing man, white beard, throne, powerful voice. In Hinduism Gods have blue skin, multiple arms, elaborate jewellery. In certain African religions, Gods are more abstract, forces of nature rather than individuals. This is not evidence of divine reality; it's evidence of human imagination and of how far humans are willing to imagine only to keep their sanity. We shape Gods in our image, not the other way around.

And religion of course follows language, the Quran is in Arabic, the Vedas are in Sanskrit, the bibles original text was in Hebrew and Greek. These texts didn't fall from the sky in a universal language. They were written by people, in the languages they spoke, using ideas they knew. And that's exactly how human-made stories behave. Furthermore, we can state that *religion is truly man made.* Every known prophet on earth was a living, breathing man. The texts were written by men who presumed to have the answers of God, but it was never God himself who wrote any of it himself.

The question of why humanity created God has occupied philosophers, theologians, and anthropologists for centuries. In the minds of Atheists, *God, in this framing, is not taken as an eternal being independent of human culture, but rather as a profound human invention—a projection of needs, fears, and aspirations.* The idea that man created God, rather than the reverse, may be unsettling, yet it reveals much about human race and the perennial search for meaning. Yet many atheists beg to differ on what the underlying ideologies were to the creating of a higher power.

One of the earliest systematic formulations of this claim comes from the German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach. In *The Essence of Christianity* (1841), Feuerbach argued that "theology is anthropology." By this he meant that the attributes we ascribe to God—love, justice, wisdom, omnipotence—are in fact idealized versions of human qualities. For Feuerbach, God is the mirror in which humanity contemplates its own essence, magnified and perfected. The divine becomes, in effect, an exalted projection of our deepest values. In this sense, man created God to articulate ideals that exceed the limitations of any one human being but which remain comprehensible only through human categories.

Later thinkers expanded Feuerbach's insight. Friedrich Nietzsche, in his provocative *The Gay Science*, declared that *"God is dead."* This statement was not a literal claim but a recognition that modern man had outgrown the explanatory and moral

framework once provided by the divine. Nietzsche insisted that God was a construct invented to provide stability, meaning, and order in a chaotic world. With the rise of science and secular culture, this construct was no longer sustainable. Yet, Nietzsche also warned that without God, humanity risks plunging into *nihilism*, a recognition that the "death" of our own creation might leave us unmoored.

Another strand of thought emphasizes the social function of God. Karl Marx famously wrote, *"Religion is the opium of the people."* For Marx, man created God as a response to suffering, injustice, and alienation. Belief in a higher power provided comfort and the illusion of ultimate justice, soothing the oppressed while simultaneously preventing them from seeking liberation in this world. God, in Marx's interpretation, is not merely an abstraction of ideals but an ideological tool shaped by material conditions.

Sigmund Freud added yet another layer in *The Future of an Illusion* (1927). He argued that God is a psychological projection of the father figure: protective, authoritative, yet also punishing. According to Freud, religious belief originates in childhood helplessness, where the human mind longs for a cosmic parent to provide security against the unpredictability of life and death. The creation of God here is less about abstract ideals or social manipulation and more about the deep psychic needs of individuals facing mortality and uncertainty.

Despite their differences, these thinkers converge on a central point: God emerges from human need. Especially the fundamental need for safety and security. Whether as an idealized essence (Feuerbach), a cultural construct (Nietzsche), an ideological mask (Marx), or a paternal projection (Freud), the divine is consistently explained as a product of human invention. In each case, man creates God not frivolously but out of existential necessity.

There are further implications worth noting. First, the creation of God can be seen as an act of imaginative genius. Even if God is a fiction, it is one of the most enduring and powerful fictions in history, shaping civilizations, inspiring art, and giving structure to moral life. Second, the persistence of belief across millennia suggests that the human condition may be inextricably tied to such projections. As the philosopher Blaise Pascal once wrote, *"There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be filled by any created thing."* Even if Pascal meant this as an argument for faith, secular thinkers might interpret it as evidence of humanity's persistent longing for transcendence, a longing that invents its own object.

This persistent need for authority and structure does not remain confined to belief alone—it extends into the way humans organize society itself. If God is conceived as a higher authority who defines order, then this mirrors the structures humans already understand and depend on. Just as Sigmund Freud depicted when he mention that humans created God out of longing for an authority figure. In other words, the concept of God both reflects and reinforces an existing tendency within human nature: the inclination to place power above oneself. What begins as a psychological or existential need gradually takes form as a social reality.

Which can all leads us back to why we live in hierachrical systems as we as a species have never known it any other way. That being the case, the idea of a higher being never

occurred coincidentally. Humans have a strong tendency to organize themselves into hierarchical systems, where some individuals lead and others follow.

This behavior can be explained through evolutionary biology, and social science. Hierarchies did not appear by accident, they developed because they helped human groups survive and function more efficiently.

From an evolutionary perspective, early human societies faced constant threats such as predators, scarce resources, and conflicts with other groups. In these conditions, groups with clear leadership were often more successful. A leader could make quick decisions, organize hunting or defense, and reduce internal conflict. Groups without structure risked chaos, which lowered their chances of survival. Over time, natural selection favored social systems that included leadership and rank. And even in early stages of our lives we cling to our care givers/ providers e.g our parents, which is just a natural reaction and instinct of survival.

Psychology also helps explain hierarchical behavior. Humans naturally seek order and predictability. Hierarchies reduce uncertainty by defining roles and responsibilities. When individuals know who is responsible for decisions, cooperation becomes easier. Research in social psychology shows that people often look for authority figures during times of stress or danger because leadership provides a sense of safety and direction. Hence the theory of why God may not in fact be an actual higher power but merely a coping mechanism for a loss of authority and feeling of security and survival. Although there isn't a singular study which proves the statistical incline of people who revert back to their religion after let's say the loss of a loved one, there are statistics which come to show significant faith shifts, especially if faith was a prior importance to the family.

This creating of a sort of coping mechanism isn't anything new to humans, it's generally just a survival instinct more so for the subconscious.

Moreover on the theory of Sigmund Freud who believed God was created by humans who lacked leadership over themselves; hierarchies are linked to differences in skills, experience, and knowledge. Not all individuals contribute in the same way. Some are better at planning, others at physical tasks, and others at communication. Hierarchical systems allow groups to place individuals where they are most effective, increasing overall efficiency. Leadership often emerges naturally when certain individuals demonstrate competence, confidence, or the ability to coordinate others.

Neuroscience also suggests that humans are biologically sensitive to social rank. Brain systems related to reward and motivation respond to status and recognition, reinforcing hierarchical behavior. This does not mean hierarchies are always rigid or unfair, but rather that the human brain is adapted to recognize social structure.

Humans build hierarchical systems because they promote survival, efficiency, and social stability. Leadership helps groups make decisions, coordinate actions, and reduce uncertainty. While modern societies are far more complex than early human groups, the underlying psychological and biological mechanisms that support hierarchy remain deeply rooted in human nature. Which in turn is why you will not be able to discover a country, state, town, or functioning tribe that does not apply any form of hierarchy.

Now this wasn't surely the only underlying idea behind the creation of the great divine however also for a need of answers.

The Science gap

The Science Gap is a general term used when discussing the yet, unexplainable, meaning, as soon as an unexplainable gap appears in science, it is often filled by a man-made excuse to explain it. When it comes down to it, as the most intellectually developed species, the human race has always seeked answers to the most profound of questions, naturally.

Also think about what happens when we gain more knowledge. The gaps that religion used to fill, like where lighting comes from or why diseases spread have been filled by science. And when science answers a question, religion steps back. It even shows in how religious texts contradict science-based facts. Religion retreats as knowledge advances. If it were true, it wouldn't have to retreat. But human-made ideas do, when better ones replace them.

"I am against religion because it teaches us to be satisfied with not understanding the world."

Now look at how children adopt religion. A child born in Saudi Arabia is likely to be Muslim. A child born in Italy, Catholic. In India, Hindu. In Thailand, Buddhist. Not because those religions are truer in those places – but because belief is taught, not discovered. Infants don't independently find God. They inherit belief, just as they do language. That's the base line of how culture works. You're not born Christian or Muslim or Jewish, you are born human. The labels that we plaster onto individuals come later. Depending on where you were born, your labels shift. If religion came from a universal God, it wouldn't depend on birthplace. But it does. And that tells us something important.

Then there is the fact that religions borrow from each other. Christianity borrowed ideas from Judaism and pagan traditions. Islam was built on both Judaism and Christianity. Buddhism was influenced by early Indian beliefs. Even ancient mythology shares common themes - floods, virgin births, saviour figures. These aren't original revelations. They're recycled stories. Religion evolves as any form of culture – like language, like art, like music – by remixing what came before. That's how we evolved as a society. We borrow, we adapt, we tell, we learn.

Even prayer reveals this.

Billions of prayers go unanswered every day. People pray for health, safety, peace. But wars rage on, new diseases get discovered, accidents happens and if you were to argue it is due to humans having free will then explain why we get told that all we can do in times of need is to pray. But when God cannot change an incident which was inflicted by another man's free will then God in this sense if useless. As well as prayer in this sense is useless. The world operates by natural law – not by divine intervention.

If religion were true, it would be obvious. It would be universal. Everyone would know it, not just believe it. If a one all-powerful God intended for us to worship him, he would've made it clear that, that is our purpose for living. Not to create us, predict who will follow him and who won't and then to banish his own creations to eternal hellfire simply for not believing something for which he did not provide enough evidence for.

We live in a world of thousands of competing religions all claiming to be the sole truth. However, that's not what truth looks like. This is nothing more than proof of human storytelling. The simplest explanation, the one that fits all the facts, all the contradictions, all the inconsistencies – is this: religion was created by people. Not evil people, not stupid people, just people, trying to understand the world they live in, to comfort themselves, to create meaning in a chaotic existence. Religion is human, through and through.

Summary of: “Why Man created God”

How arrogant do you have to be to arrive 13.8 billion years late to the universe’s existence and still claim it was all created for you?

Across the world, humans believe in thousands of religions—each claiming ultimate truth, each contradicting the other. Different gods, different rules, different afterlives. This alone suggests something important: religion is not a singular truth handed down to humanity, but a collection of human attempts to make sense of the world. When viewed through history and psychology rather than belief, religion appears not as something given from above, but something built from below—from fear, uncertainty, and the need for meaning.

Early humans lived in a world they could not explain. Faced with death, disease, and natural disasters, they created stories. Spirits in the wind, gods in the sky—these were not signs of ignorance, but of imagination. Over time, these ideas evolved into structured religions, shaped by culture, geography, and language. A god in the desert differs from a god in the jungle, not because truth changes, but because humans do. We shape gods in our image, not the other way around.

Philosophers reinforce this idea. Ludwig Feuerbach argued that God is a projection of human ideals. Friedrich Nietzscheclaimed God was a construct for meaning in a chaotic world. Karl Marx saw religion as a tool to comfort and control, while Sigmund Freud described God as a psychological father figure. Despite their differences, they agree: God reflects human need, not divine reality.

This need extends beyond belief into how we structure society. Humans naturally form hierarchies—leaders and followers—because they increase survival, order, and efficiency. The idea of a higher power mirrors this instinct. Just as we seek authority in society, we project it onto the universe itself.

Religion also fills the gaps in our understanding. Before science, it explained lightning, illness, and existence. But as knowledge advances, those gaps shrink—and religion retreats. Belief, much like language, is inherited. A child’s religion depends on where they are born, not on discovering universal truth. Religions even borrow from one another, evolving like any human creation.

Even prayer reflects this reality. Billions pray daily, yet the world continues under natural laws, not divine intervention. If one universal truth existed, it would not be divided into thousands of conflicting beliefs.

The simplest explanation is often the correct one: religion was not created by gods—it was created by humans. Not out of stupidity or malice, but out of a deep, shared need to understand, to belong, and to feel safe in an uncertain world.

The political God

Introduction:

One could argue that religion is purely political, and to that I agree. In my two earlier chapters, I explored some of the more, or less, debatable and controversial questions surrounding religion. Now, however, the focus shifts to a more uncomfortable but undeniable reality: the way in which religion is deeply embedded in politics and, in many cases, nearly impossible to separate from it.

Throughout the process of writing this essay, I have found that nearly every argument, example, and pattern eventually traces back to this intersection. For that reason, this chapter is not meant to stand entirely on its own, but rather to act as a foundation for what follows. It serves as a lens through which the rest of the essay can be better understood.

So, take this chapter with a grain of salt. At times, it may feel broad or even unfinished in its conclusions, but that is intentional. The following chapters will build upon the ideas introduced here, revealing how religion consistently finds its way into systems of power, governance, and influence. In this sense, this chapter functions less as a definitive argument and more as a roadmap—one that outlines the underlying structure connecting religion and politics, and prepares the ground for a deeper exploration of how belief can be used, shaped, and, at times, manipulated within political contexts.

From the earliest civilizations to the complexities of the modern nation-state, the relationship between God and politics has not only been inescapable but deeply transformative. What we understand as politics forms the very foundation of both historical and modern societies, yet it has rarely existed independently of religion. Time and time again, political systems have relied on the divine—whether to legitimize power, enforce moral authority, or rally resistance—revealing how closely belief and control are intertwined.

Kings once ruled by “divine right,” presenting their authority not as something to be questioned, but as something sacred and unquestionable. At the same time, revolutions—often praised as movements of liberation—have repeatedly emerged under the banner of religious freedom or reform, using faith as both justification and motivation. In both cases, religion does not stand outside of politics; it actively fuels and shapes it.

Even in modern democratic societies, where power is supposed to rest in the hands of the people, political discourse remains saturated with appeals to a higher moral authority. These appeals are far from neutral. They shape laws, particularly those concerning human rights, according to specific moral frameworks that claim universality while failing to apply equally to all. As a result, standards defined by a select few are imposed upon the many, not as subjective beliefs, but as unquestionable truths—creating tension, exclusion, and conflict under the guise of moral certainty.

As well as transcendent justice—concepts rooted in theological traditions are effected. The idea of God has not only shaped the structure of laws and governments but also influenced debates about human rights, and the limits of authority.

At the same time, political struggles have consistently shaped the way God is imagined, and worshipped, demonstrating the mutual dependency between the sacred and the civic and in a way is manipulated to fit a certain narrative that fits the authoritarians standard to make it work for them. But in a world of constant stream of inovation and change, these outdated laws cannot be manipulated that much further.

If we think about it, laws are nothing more but moral structures to help us desipher from right and wrong. Many of these morals are already taught to us from an early age on – not to steal; not to harm; not to cheat. But how do we desipher right from wrong and who decides what is set in stone?

Morality

Many claim that religion gives us morality – a sense of right and wrong. But morality existed before religion and different religions have different moral codes. Some allow polygamy others forbid it. Some demand animal sacrifice, others say it is cruel. Some religions condone slavery others fight against it. Morality isn't fixed in religion, it evolves. Societies change and their ethics too. The fact that many people now reject ancient religious morality – like stoning adulterers or executing apostates – shows that human morality has outgrown many religious rules. And that teaches us something, religion didn't create morality, morality evolved with human society.

One of the most striking signs that religion is man made is that it often reflects the biases and values of its time. Ancient scriptures contain ideas that today we find shocking. Slavery is accepted. Women are treated as property. People are killed for minor offences. Why would such a perfect and timeless God give the people such cruel and outdated rules? The simple answer is, he didn't. We did. The people wrote those rules reflecting the world they lived in.

If someone wrote a holy book today, here in the Western world, it would likely talk about human rights, consent, democracy, equity, climate change. In, other parts of the world, the holy script would be tailored to the world they live in. But ancient books don't mention these things. Not because God didn't care, but because ancient people didn't care about them and/or at the time they were written it was irrelevant to them.

Even the promises of religion match human hopes. Eternal life. Reunions with loved ones. A paradise where suffering ends. These are not facts, these are wishes. Who wouldn't want to live a peaceful fulfilling life forever? Who wouldn't want to see lost loved ones again? It's deeply human to long for those things. And religion offers them - not because they're true but because they're comforting. This isn't a divine plan, but emotional marketing. It's what humans do when they are faced with death; we make up stories to ease the pain.

"If you argue that you need God to be moral, then you were never moral to begin with."

Now consider how often religion aligns with power. Throughout history, religion and authority have gone hand in hand. Kings claimed to rule by divine right. Popes hold more power than emperors. Religious leaders could bless or curse a kingdom. Why? Because religion gave power the strongest tool of all – obedience. If people believe a rule comes from God, they are more likely to obey it, even when its unfair. Don't believe me? Here's an example.

In parts of India, where the majority of the population identifies with Hinduism, society has historically been shaped by a hierarchical system known as the caste system. This system divides people into different social groups, traditionally including Brahmins (priests and scholars), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (traders), and Shudras (laborers), with those outside the system, often referred to as Dalits, placed at the very bottom. These divisions were often justified through religious texts and beliefs, presenting them not as social constructs, but as a natural and divinely ordained order.

Within this framework, a person's position in society is determined by birth and is largely unchangeable. Those at the top are granted privilege, authority, and respect, while those at the bottom are expected to accept lives of limitation, exclusion, and hardship. Because this structure is tied to religious belief, questioning it can be seen not only as social defiance but as spiritual wrongdoing. In this way, inequality is not only maintained but protected.

That's not evidence of truth. That's evidence of manipulation.

Let's not ignore how religion changes when society changes. Take Christianity. In early days, it was about humility and poverty. Overtime, churches became wealthy, powerful institutions. Islam went from a small persecuted, movement to the foundations of empires. Hinduism adapted to centuries of change by absorbing new ideas. This adaptability shows that religion isn't fixed truth – it's a cultural system that evolves. Real truth doesn't evolve. Just as two plus two has always been four. Gravity has always pulled things down. But religion? It shifts with time, power and politics.

How is religion manipulatable for political gain in a democratic society?

Religion has long been a powerful resource in politics because it supplies moral language, communal identity, institutional networks, and ritual legitimacy. All of which politicians/ political parties can harness to persuade, mobilize, and consolidate power. Using religion for political gain is not merely opportunistic rhetoric; it exploits deep psychological mechanisms that shape how people think and decide. Understanding both the tactics and the psychology clarifies why religious appeals remain potent and why they can be politically consequential.

It's no secret that religion is deeply rooted into our society and laws, religion is used as the very base line for most of our moral reasoning. Such as, not to steal, cheat or harm one another. All of which are fairly obvious and common curtosies that we have been taught to apply since we were children. Is that to say that just because a higher power forbid us from committing such unlawful sins, that we as a society without the guidance of God would in fact commit them?

Let's digress:

Politicians use religion instrumentally in several ways. They invoke sacred narratives and symbols to frame policy as a moral imperative (e.g., casting welfare as an act of charity or opposition as a threat to the "family"); they seek endorsements from religious leaders to borrow moral authority; they pass laws or policies that codify religious values (education curricular, marriage laws); and they stage public rituals—prayers at inaugurations, flag-and-cross imagery—to signal alignment with a faith community. Political parties may also build organizational ties with houses of worship, using congregations as channels for voter outreach and volunteer recruitment.

Note to self Psychologically, religious appeals work because they tap into multiple robust cognitive and social processes.

Further arguments:

First, religion strongly anchors identity: people who see faith as central to who they are are likely to adopt political positions that align with their religious in-group, often because of an underlying feeling of guilt or fear.

Just as I have previously mentioned in my chapter, "the fear of questioning," even when individuals may personally want to vote more liberally—where decision-making is less directly tied to religion (as opposed to more conservative approaches)—they may hesitate, believing that doing so would conflict with their duty as a "good" man or woman of God.

Here's an example to simplify it: if you believe that a woman has the right to an abortion, but your religion strongly opposes it, you might be reluctant to support a candidate who protects that right. Instead, you may convince yourself that, as a good believer, your vote is a reflection of your faith—that by opposing abortion, you are carrying out God's will and preventing what you have been taught to see as the taking of a life.

This appears to be the case for many religious individuals, but why is that? One possible explanation lies in the difference between religious identity and religious practice.

According to studies conducted by the Pew Research Center, attendance at weekly religious services has declined significantly over recent decades, particularly in Western countries. However, the number of people who still identify as religious has remained relatively stable, with no equally drastic decline.

When these two observations are considered together, an interesting pattern emerges: fewer people actively practice religion through regular rituals, even though many religions emphasize the importance of consistent worship and devotion. This creates a gap between belief and action.

Within this gap, guilt may begin to play a role. If individuals feel that they are not fully living up to the expectations of their religion in their daily lives, they may seek alternative ways to reaffirm their faith. Voting, in this context, can become one such outlet. Supporting policies or political figures that align with religious teachings may serve as a form of moral compensation—a way to reassure oneself of being a "good" believer despite not fully adhering to religious practices in other areas of life.

Second, religion supplies moral foundations and simplifying heuristics. Moralized framing (sacred vs. profane) transforms policy debates into existential choices rather than technical tradeoffs, invoking intense emotions like guilt, righteous anger, or reverence. The authority heuristic—people defer to perceived legitimate sources—makes endorsements from clergy or religious institutions unusually persuasive.

Third, cognitive biases amplify religious rhetoric. Motivated reasoning leads believers to accept arguments congruent with preexisting faith; confirmation bias filters supportive evidence; and loss-aversion and fear-based messaging (threats to religious freedom/ way of life) produce rapid behavioral responses. Rituals and repeated messaging create familiarity and the mere-exposure effect, increasing acceptance over time.

Finally, religion provides durable networks and institutions—churches, mosques, seminaries—that function as communication infrastructures, volunteer pools, and local legitimacy brokers. Politicians who cultivate these networks gain access to organized mobilization and a moral cover that secular appeals lack. Social identity theory explains how in-group signals (rituals, shared texts) increase cohesion and cooperation while disfavoring outsiders—useful for mobilizing blocs of voters.

Furthermore, there are ethical and practical risks: politicized religion can deepen polarization, erode pluralism, and legitimize exclusionary policies; it can also corrode secular institutions and enable authoritarianism when religious legitimacy substitutes for accountability. Responsible politics requires guarding against instrumentalization of faith by fostering transparent deliberation and protecting institutional boundaries that preserve both religious freedom and civic equality.

Summary of: “The Political God”

One could argue that religion is purely political, and to that I agree.. Across history, religion and politics have been deeply intertwined, rarely existing independently of one another. From ancient civilizations to modern democracies, belief has consistently been used to legitimize authority, enforce moral systems, and mobilize populations. Kings once ruled by divine right, presenting their power as sacred and unquestionable, while revolutions often emerged under the banner of religious reform. In both cases, religion does not stand apart from politics—it fuels it.

Even today, political discourse is saturated with appeals to higher moral authority. These appeals are not neutral; they shape laws, especially those concerning human rights, according to specific moral frameworks that claim universality while often excluding others. This raises a fundamental question: who decides what is right and wrong? Many argue that religion provides morality, yet moral systems differ widely across religions and evolve over time. Practices once justified by religion—such as slavery or extreme punishments—are now widely rejected, suggesting that morality develops with society, not from a fixed divine source.

Religious texts themselves reflect the values of the time in which they were written. Ideas about gender roles, power, and justice mirror historical contexts rather than timeless truths. If such texts were written today, they would likely reflect modern concerns like human rights and equality. This suggests that religion is not divine instruction, but a human product shaped by culture and circumstance. Even its promises—eternal life, reunion with loved ones, a world without suffering—mirror human desires rather than objective realities.

Religion’s true power lies in its ability to enforce obedience. When authority is framed as divine, it becomes far harder to challenge. Systems like the caste system in India illustrate how religious belief can justify and maintain inequality by presenting social hierarchies as natural or sacred. This is not evidence of truth, but of how belief can be used to sustain power structures.

In modern democratic societies, religion remains a powerful political tool. Politicians use it to frame policies as moral imperatives, gain support from religious leaders, and mobilize communities. These strategies are effective because they tap into deep psychological mechanisms—identity, guilt, fear, and cognitive bias. People are more likely to align their political views with their religious identity, even when it conflicts with personal beliefs. For instance, individuals may vote against their own views to remain consistent with what they believe their faith demands.

Studies, such as those by the Pew Research Center, show that while religious practice has declined, religious identity remains stable. This gap often leads individuals to express their faith through political choices rather than daily practice, using voting as a form of moral reassurance.

Ultimately, religion persists in politics because it offers something uniquely powerful: moral certainty, collective identity, and emotional influence. But this also makes it

vulnerable to manipulation. When belief is used as a political tool, it risks deepening division, limiting critical thought, and justifying systems of inequality—raising serious questions about the role religion should play in modern governance.

How Religion justifies Immoral Conflicts

Religion has always struck me as an odd defending argument for much of anything. Using religion as a shield to defend yourself when it comes to your own wrongdoing seems more like giving the blame to someone else rather than taking accountability. But as far as arguments go, in the civil context, what happens when God is used as a shield in the world of politics?

Now we need to define how many religious conflicts actually do create wars.

Religion is quote: "The most prolific force of violence in our history." So writes Sam Harris in his 2004 novel "*The End of Faith*" but so says a great sum of our society. But here are the facts.

In 2005, Charles Phillips and Alan Axelrod published a three-volume work called the Encyclopaedia of Wars. In it they meticulously counted and categorised every documented AND known violent conflict in history. Coming up with a list of 1763 such events. Of these, they list 121 as "religious wars." That's about 7%. This is not to say that only 121 conflicts had religious components to them, but only 121, by their estimation had religion as its primary motivation. If we digress and add, let's say, colonial conquest, acts of violence that weren't directly motivated by religion but had a strong religious component to them, that brings the number up to 282, or just under 16%. By their admission, none of this data is indisputable and different and obviously different scholars will have different ways of categorising conflicts but if you were to even double or even triple that percentage, the number would still not be over 50%.

Meaning the common notion that religion causes most wars is simply not factual. Obviously, quantity isn't all that matters but quality should be taken into consideration as well. It is highly possible that a large number of "insignificant" conflicts inflate the non-religious category. If we were to look at it solely from the most catastrophic of wars it might tell a different story.

This is the question that Matthew White sought to answer in 2012. In his book: "The great big book of Horrible Things," White focuses only on the 100 worst atrocities of Human History including, World War II, the Mongol Conquest, An Lushan Rebellion, Fall of the Ming Dynasty, etcetera. He digresses by going into which events caused the most destruction and what effect religion had on them. According to his estimation, of the 100, 11 were related to religion, only one of which was near the top of the list. This should not shock us. When we look to the major wars of history, we see that religion was never the cause. Between 70 and 85 million people died because of World War II. World War I claimed 40 million lives. More than 25 million died as a result of the Manchu conquest of China. Even in ancient and medieval times when religion played a far bigger role in society, the most deadly conflicts had nothing to do with religion.

In many of these events, the motivating cause was not religion, but land, wealth, resources and ultimately power. If you were to add up all the wars with a religious component to them such as the Crusades, the medieval wars over religion, the ongoing conflict between Isreal and Palestine, even the Taiping rebellion which claimed the lives of between 20 to 30 million people - this number would still be greatly overshadowed by the wars that had nothing to do with religion.

So how is it that we still blame religion for insinuating these conflicts when the data clearly shows otherwise?

Although religion isn't the main component for why most wars begin, it is what ultimately what is remembered to be the leading cause. Why is that? Power and alliance.

More often, wars are driven by power, territory, resources, and political control. However, religion plays a crucial role in how these conflicts are framed, justified, and remembered. Why is that? Because of its ability to create unity, and moral legitimacy.Religion has historically been a powerful tool for building and maintaining authority. It gives individuals a strong sense of belonging to a larger community, one that transcends social, cultural, and economic differences. Empires and kingdoms have long relied on religious identity to unify populations and strengthen internal cohesion. When people share a common belief system, it becomes easier to mobilize them, align their values, and direct their actions toward a collective goal even at the expense of contrasting opinions. This is why rulers and political leaders have frequently aligned themselves with religion—not necessarily out of personal belief, but because it provides a stable foundation for influence and control.

Shared belief systems create strong in-group identities, making it easier to distinguish between "us" and "them." This division can intensify conflict, as opposing sides are no longer just political rivals, but are seen as fundamentally different or even morally opposed. This deepens loyalty within groups while justifying hostility toward others.

This dynamic is particularly visible in historical conflicts such as the Opium Wars, fought between China and Western powers in the mid-19th century, were fundamentally about trade imbalances and the desire of European nations, particularly Britain, to force open Chinese markets. The core issue was the British addiction to Chinese tea and the resulting trade deficit, which they attempted to rectify by smuggling opium into China. While there were missionaries present and some religious undertones in the broader colonial context, the wars themselves were not about conflicts between faiths. They were about economic dominance and sovereignty. In both cases, religion was not the only cause, but it became the defining narrative that justified and sustained the violence. Along side other obvious wars: the Crusades, where political and territorial ambitions were framed as religious missions, or in the Thirty Years' War, which, although rooted in power struggles within Europe, was largely remembered as a conflict between religious groups and so on.

Religion also introduces a moral dimension that can make extreme actions feel justified. When individuals believe they are acting in accordance with divine will, their actions are no longer seen as purely personal choices, but as part of a higher purpose. This can reduce feelings of guilt and increase willingness to participate in or support violence.

If one believes that God supports their cause—or will ultimately forgive them—then the moral weight of their actions may feel diminished.

This logic can even be applied to people in our daily lives.

"Bad people turn to religion because they need forgiveness from a being that's higher than the people they've hurt."

Notice how I said "bad" people? Narcissistic people take advantage of religion and use the forgiveness of an all-powerful, all-loving God as an excuse their behaviour. And most of the time, they remain bad people. If an all-powerful, all-loving God forgives you then you don't need to take accountability for your actions, and why would you? You've already been forgiven by the highest power.

Some individuals turn to religion not necessarily out of reflection, but out of a desire for absolution. The idea of forgiveness from a higher power can be deeply appealing, especially when accountability to other people feels uncomfortable or threatening. If an all-powerful, all-loving God forgives you, it can create the impression that reconciliation with those you have harmed is no longer necessary—or at least less urgent. In this sense, forgiveness becomes internal rather than relational, removing the need to fully confront the consequences of one's actions.

This dynamic can be particularly visible in individuals with narcissistic tendencies, who may use religion as a way to protect their self-image. Rather than engaging in genuine self-reflection, they may adopt religious language—speaking of being "forgiven," or "saved," —as a way to justify or move past their behaviour without truly changing it. In these cases, religion is not used as a tool for growth, but as a shield against criticism.

We can see this pattern in everyday situations. For example, an abusive partner may suddenly turn to religion after a relationship ends, hoping for forgiveness as a guilty conscious lies heavy on them. While genuine transformation is always possible, in some cases this shift serves more as a rebranding than a real change in behaviour.

A similar pattern can be observed in public figures who, after being exposed for unethical or harmful actions, publicly "find religion" and frame their past behaviour as something that has already been forgiven. This can redirect attention away from accountability and toward redemption, often without meaningful consequences. Likewise, in some communities, individuals may repeatedly engage in harmful behaviour—such as dishonesty or exploitation—only to rely on confession, repentance, or prayer, rather than a genuine commitment to change.

What ties these examples together is not religion itself, but how it can be used. While many people turn to faith as a way to genuinely grow, reflect, and improve, others may use it to bypass responsibility. In these cases, forgiveness becomes less about

transformation and more about relief from guilt. This raises an important question: *if forgiveness is granted without accountability, does it truly lead to change, or does it simply allow harmful patterns to continue under a different name?*

"Wars are not religiously motivated but religiously manipulated."

Summary of: “How Religion Justifies Immoral Conflicts”

Religion often serves as an odd defense for wrongdoing—a shield used to deflect accountability rather than take it. While many assume religion is the primary driver of global conflict, the data tells a different story. In the Encyclopedia of Wars, researchers found that of 1,763 historical conflicts, only about 7% were primarily religious. Even when expanding the criteria to include colonial conquests with religious components, the figure only reaches 16%.

A similar pattern emerges when looking at the "quality" of violence. In The Great Big Book of Horrible Things, Matthew White analyzed the 100 deadliest atrocities in history. Only 11 were related to religion. The most catastrophic events, such as the World Wars and the Manchu conquest, claimed tens of millions of lives based on land, resources, and power—not faith.

So, why does the "religious war" narrative persist? The answer lies in manipulation. While wars are driven by political and economic interests, religion is the ultimate tool for framing and justifying them. It creates a powerful "us vs. them" identity, providing moral legitimacy and unity that transcends social differences. Leaders invoke divine will to mobilize populations, turning territorial disputes into "holy missions." This allows extreme violence to be rebranded as a higher purpose, diminishing the personal guilt of those involved.

This same avoidance of accountability mirrors the behavior of "bad" or narcissistic people in everyday life. For some, religion isn't a path to growth, but a shortcut to absolution. By seeking forgiveness from a higher power, individuals can bypass the uncomfortable work of making amends to the people they’ve actually hurt. If an all-loving God has already forgiven you, reconciliation with your victims feels less urgent.

We see this in abusive partners who "find God" to rebrand their image after a breakup, or public figures who use "redemption" to dodge the consequences of their scandals. In these cases, faith is used as a shield against criticism rather than a tool for transformation. Ultimately, religion itself isn't the culprit; the issue is how it is exploited. As the saying goes, "Wars are not religiously motivated, but religiously manipulated." Whether on a global stage or in a personal relationship, the result is the same: the pursuit of relief from guilt without the burden of true accountability.

“God has Favourites”

Claim 1: “God is exceptionally cruel to those who need him most.” / God turns his own followers against each other.

“25000 people starve to death today. Tomorrow another 25000. If that’s God’s plan, then God is the problem.”

At its core, favouritism in religion refers to the idea that certain groups, individuals, or believers are considered more worthy, more chosen, or more morally correct than others. In all three major holy scripts (the Bible, the Quran, the Torah) it is mentioned that humans are made equal before the eyes of God yet we are treated so very differently.

Many Christians believe that God has a “chosen people,” a concept often supported by passages such as Deuteronomy7:6:

“For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you… out of all the peoples on the face of the earth,”

and Deuteronomy 14:2:

“The Lord has chosen you… to be his treasured possession out of all the peoples on the face of the earth.”

In this sense, the Bible presents the people of Israel as specially chosen, and later extends this idea to the Church or to Christians as those who represent God.

Now, consider a simple analogy. If you were to ask any parent with multiple children, “Which is your favourite child?”, most would likely respond by saying that the question itself is unfair, and that they do not have a favourite. In most cases, parents believe they love their children equally, and recognise that favouritism would be both harmful and unhealthy within a family.

If we extend this idea to humanity as a whole, the comparison becomes more thought-provoking. In many religious traditions, there is one God and one shared human “family” consisting of over eight billion people. Within this framework, the claim that

God selects certain individuals or groups as "chosen" suggests a form of preference within this universal system. One might argue that God still loves everyone equally, but this raises an important question: if equal love in a human family obligates parents not to favour one child over another, why would divine love not carry the same expectation?

Should this mean that the bible is just wrong? Well. The bible was written by people who believed themselves to be the chosen, special, favoured ones of God and it reflects that belief and if you side with and promote that belief then you're ascribing to God a fairly unhealthy relational dynamic. Therefore, when this idea of divine favouritism is accepted and promoted, it may also involve attributing to God a relational dynamic that, in human terms, would be considered unequal and potentially unhealthy.

Many religions contain the notion of being "chosen" or following the "true path." For believers, this can provide a sense of purpose and belonging. However, when taken to an extreme, it can foster an "us versus them" mentality. If one group believes they hold ultimate truth, it becomes easier to dismiss or devalue others. This can manifest in subtle ways, such as social exclusion or prejudice, but also in more serious forms like discrimination or justified hostility. History has repeatedly shown that when people are convinced of their moral superiority, they are more likely to excuse actions that would otherwise be seen as wrong.

Favouritism also affects how individuals within the same religion are treated. Those who strictly follow rules or conform closely to expectations are often viewed as more devout or worthy, while others may be judged or marginalized. This creates internal pressure to conform, discouraging personal interpretation or questioning. In such environments, belief becomes less about personal conviction and more about meeting external standards. As a result, individuals may hide doubts or differences in order to maintain acceptance within their community.

On a psychological level, favouritism in religion can reinforce bias. Humans naturally seek belonging, and religion often provides a strong sense of identity. However, this identity can come at the cost of openness. When people are taught that their group is inherently better or closer to truth, it can limit their willingness to engage with different perspectives. This not only affects relationships between different religious groups but can also shape how individuals view the world more broadly, making empathy and understanding more difficult.

It is important to acknowledge that religion itself is not inherently problematic. Many religious teachings promote compassion, humility, and equality. The issue arises when interpretations of religion are used to elevate some while diminishing others. Favouritism, in this sense, is less about the belief system itself and more about how it is applied by individuals and communities.

*Claim 2: "*God is selfish and self-centred for creating humans."

There is no non selfish reason to bring a child into this world.

If you ask most people, why they wish to have children, the majority might as well start by saying: “Because I want-” Because they wish to get something out of it. “I want a mini-me,” “I want someone to take over my company once I retire,” “I want someone to take care of me once I can’t take care of myself anymore,” “I want my legacy to continue.” - I want. Now from our perspective we could say, that’s fair, I mean no child deserves to come into this world without emotionally, financially, loving parents.

So, why doesn’t this apply God?

It’s a strange irony that all 8 billion of us are allegedly unified by one thing: we are all products of the same Creator. Yet, if we look at the mechanics of this arrangement, it feels less like a gift and more like a trap. We are souls stuffed into "meat cages," dropped into a world of chaos, and then expected to blindly navigate a labyrinth of divine rules. The penalty for a wrong turn? Eternal suffering.

When we examine the three pillars of God’s identity—Omnipotence, Omniscience, and Omnibenevolence—the logic doesn't just stretch; it snaps.

1. The All-Powerful (Omnipotence)
We are told God is the ultimate architect, a spirit with the power to manipulate the very fabric of reality. If He is all-powerful, He has the capacity to end suffering, clarify His message, or design a system where "growth" doesn't require agony. Yet, He allegedly "chooses" not to. By claiming God is all-powerful, we essentially grant Him a pass for His silence. We treat His inaction as a "mystery" rather than what it would be in any human context: negligence.

2. The All-Knowing (Omniscience)
This is where the timeline gets messy. If God is all-knowing, He isn't just watching your life unfold; He watched the "movie" of your existence before He even hit "play." The Scripted Trap: Before I was even conceived, God knew I wouldn’t be faithful. He knew every doubt I’d have and every mistake I’d make. Yet, He chose to grant me the "gift" of life anyway, knowing full well He was just minting a fresh soul for the furnace. To create someone specifically to watch them fail—and then punish them for that failure—isn't "divine plan." It’s a setup.

3. All-Loving (The Free Will Illusion)
The "All-Loving" title is the most effective shield of all because it introduces the concept of Free Will. We are told God loves us so much that He refuses to force us to love Him back. But when you look at the conditions, that "love" starts to look a lot like a threat.

Free will in a nutshell:

The Stuffed Bear Analogy:
To see how absurd the "Free Will" argument is, let’s strip it down to its core. Imagine I sit you down and give you a choice:

- The Pink Bear: Your favorite color. You naturally like it.

• The Blue Bear: A color you’re indifferent to.

Me: "Choose whichever you want! I give you total free will. But, just so you know, if you pick the Pink Bear, I’m going to lock you in a basement and torture you for the rest of your life. If you pick the Blue Bear, we’ll go get ice cream and live in peace. Now... what do you want?"

You: "Uh... okay, obviously I'll take the Blue Bear."

Me: "Wait! You can't just pick it because you're scared of the basement. You have to genuinely love the Blue Bear from the bottom of your heart. If you don't love it for its own sake, the basement still awaits. And remember—be grateful I love you enough to give you this choice!"

This isn’t a choice; it’s an ultimatum. In any other context, we’d call this psychological abuse. We’re told the Devil is the one punishing us, but the Devil didn't build the basement, and he didn't set the rules for the bears. God did.

Why Doesn't This Apply to God?

This brings us back to the central theme: Manipulation. We’ve established that narcissistic individuals turn to religion because it offers a "Higher Power" that grants absolution without accountability. They use God as a shield to bypass the people they’ve hurt. But why does this tactic work so well?

Because the system itself is designed that way. The reason "bad people" can use God to justify their lack of accountability is that God’s own relationship with humanity—as described by most religious dogmas—lacks accountability. If God is allowed to create a "meat cage" trap, set impossible standards, and punish people for outcomes He knew would happen, then He is the ultimate blueprint for the narcissist.

Just as a ruler manipulates religion to justify a war for land, a person manipulates religion to justify their war on those around them. If the Creator isn't held to a standard of fairness or true consent, why should the follower be?

“Wars are not religiously motivated, but religiously manipulated.” And just like those wars, the "choice" to follow God isn't motivated by love—it’s manipulated by fear. Whether it’s a global conflict or a personal relationship, the tactic is the same: use the Divine to turn a "must" into a "want" and a "threat" into a "blessing."

“The devil isn’t the one punishing you in hell, God is.”

Summary of: “God has Favourites”

The concept of divine favoritisim is the ultimate religious paradox. While the Bible, Quran, and Torah maintain that all humans are equal before God, the narratives they push tell a radically different story. Whether it’s the "chosen people" of Israel or the exclusive "true path" of the Church, the message is clear: God plays favorites.

The Divine "Favorite Child" Syndrome:

If you ask any decent parent who their favorite child is, they’ll tell you the question is toxic. We recognize that favoritism in a family is a recipe for resentment and dysfunction. Yet, when it comes to the "human family" of eight billion souls, we are expected to worship a Creator who singles out specific groups as his "treasured possessions."

The reality is simpler and far more human: the Bible was written by people who believed they were the favorites, and the text reflects that ego. By promoting this "us versus them" mentality, religion doesn't just foster a sense of belonging; it creates a license for moral superiority. History proves that once a group convinces itself it holds the ultimate truth, it becomes terrifyingly easy to devalue, exclude, or even destroy anyone on the outside.

The "Meat Cage" Trap

The second claim is even more unsettling: the idea that creating humanity was a fundamentally selfish act. We often scrutinize the motives of human parents who have children for "legacy" or "security," yet we give God a free pass.

When you look at the mechanics of our existence, life feels less like a gift and more like a setup. We are souls shoved into "meat cages," dropped into a chaotic world, and told to navigate a labyrinth of divine rules where one wrong turn leads to eternal agony. This "plan" falls apart under the weight of God’s own supposed attributes:

- Omnipotence: If God is all-powerful, his silence in the face of 25,000 people starving daily isn't a "mystery"—it’s negligence.
- Omniscience: If God is all-knowing, he watched the "movie" of your life before hitting play. Creating a soul he knows will fail, only to punish them for that failure, isn't a test; it's a scripted trap.
- The Free Will Illusion: The "choice" to love God is actually an ultimatum.

The Stuffed Bear Analogy:

Imagine being offered a choice between a Pink Bear and a Blue Bear. You’re told you have "free will," but if you pick the Pink one, you’ll be tortured in a basement forever. To make it worse, you can't just pick the Blue one out of fear—you have to genuinely love it, or you still get the basement.

In any other context, we would call this psychological abuse. We are told the Devil is the villain, but he didn't build the basement or set the rules. God did.

The Blueprint for Narcissism:

Ultimately, the religious system is the ultimate blueprint for the narcissist. It offers a "Higher Power" that grants absolution without accountability. If the Creator isn't held to a standard of fairness or consent, why should the follower be? Just as wars are religiously manipulated rather than motivated, the choice to follow God is often driven by fear, disguised as a blessing. We've been handed a threat and told to call it love.

Faith as a Last Refuge

Growing up I was surrounded by many people of many backgrounds, ethnicities, beliefs, social rank and financial class. From people who bought 700 USD plane tickets to New York City in first class, to people who had to share a room with multiple family members. Among these many differences what I found to be most interesting in what makes the shift from poverty to wealth is the mindset. Specifically belief. Now don't get me wrong, many wealthy people are highly religious, but should that mean that they truly understand of what it even means to be a man/woman of God?

The first time I really noticed this was when in primary school I spoke to one of my classmates discussing our plans for summer break. I grew up flying first class, and there is no denying that I was fairly spoiled. To me airplane flights with a screen attached to the seat infront of me, leg room and the window seat with complimatary food, drinks was normal. Yet for him, he lived in what seemed to me as a parallel world. So when I asked him where he was headed on holiday and he told me: "Me and my family are taking a trip to the lake to go camping for a weekend." I was fairly confused at first. And so, I asked why that is? I asked him, why can't you take any further trips? To that he explained to me: "Both my parents have to work during the break and we reserve what we have so that we can visit our family over Christmas during the winter." I was curious to know what he thought of this so I asked one final question; do you think you're missing out? To that he simply replied: "Sometimes I feel that way but I know that having my family and God by me is all I need. He ensures for me to be able to have a roof over my head so I don't need the rest as long as God is on my side."

Now this boy came from a highly religious family with highly religious values and he would often express his faith and spread his belief even by saying things such as: "Money and greed is the route to hell." This mindset also played a lot on his exceptance and tolerance of other people as he was very openly against homosexuals and yet he didn't have an issue with excepting other religions he only once mentioned that he prayed for others to eventually "find their way to Christ." I wish to say he was the only one in this case, but unfortunately, he definitely wasn't.

I left the conversation at that. I was still fairly young at the time and I wished to understand him. So as I did, I questioned everything. *Would he still have this point of view if he was raised an atheist? Would he still think similarly if he was financially better of?*

This displays indoctrination at its finest. If you are being told that all you need or will ever need is already in your possession and that reaching for anything more will condemn you to be greedy and sinful, will inevitably keep you from challenging the system that benefits from your unquestioning obedience.

In general, religion tends to be more prominent and deeply rooted in poorer countries, while wealthier nations tend to be more secular. The relationship between poverty and faith reveals how economic conditions, education levels, and psychological needs influence religious belief. For many people facing hardship and uncertainty, religion provides meaning, stability, and hope—making it one of the most powerful comforts available.

Global data clearly demonstrates the connection between economic wealth and religious devotion. Surveys conducted in over 100 countries show that people living in poorer nations are significantly more likely to say religion is an important part of their daily lives. According to Gallup research, about **95%** of people in countries with average incomes below $2,000 per capita say religion is important in their lives**,** compared with only **47%** in countries where incomes exceed $25,000 per capita.

Many of the most religious countries in the world are located in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and parts of the Middle East. For example, surveys show that **99%** of people in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka say religion is important**,** while similarly high numbers are found in countries like Niger, Yemen, and Malawi. In African nations such as Ethiopia **(98%)**, Senegal **(97%)**, and Nigeria **(88%)**, religion plays a central role in everyday life. These societies often have lower GDP per capita and face economic instability, which appears closely linked to stronger religious commitment.

Now this can be traced back to the colonial period from the 15th to 20th century when European settlers sought to colonise Africa.

The colonisation of Africa, particularly from the late 19th century during the *Scramble for Africa,* was not only about land and resources but also about cultural and religious control. European powers such as United Kingdom, France, and Belgium often worked alongside Christian missionaries to spread Christianity across the continent.

Missionaries presented Christianity as part of a "civilizing mission," but in many cases, it was imposed rather than freely adopted. Indigenous beliefs and spiritual systems were frequently dismissed as primitive or wrong. In mission schools, African children were taught Christian doctrine, often alongside European languages and values, while being discouraged—or even punished—for practicing their own traditions. Conversion was sometimes tied to access to education, healthcare, or social mobility, making it less of a genuine choice and more of a necessity for survival or advancement.

This process had long-lasting effects. Christianity became deeply rooted in many African societies, and today, a large portion of the continent identifies as Christian. However, this legacy also led to the erosion of indigenous cultures, languages, and belief systems. In some cases, it created internal divisions between those who adopted Christianity and those who held onto traditional practices.

Now you would think that after generations of slavery and forced indoctrination that resistance and resilience would build, but surprisingly, religion is what stuck.

One explanation for this pattern is that religion often fulfills psychological and social needs that become especially strong during times of hardship. People living in poverty

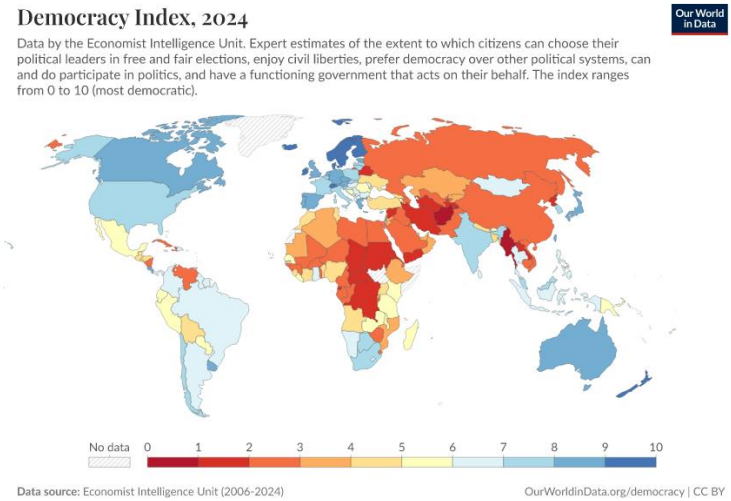
frequently face uncertainty regarding employment, health care, food security, and political stability. Religion provides a framework for coping with these struggles. It offers explanations for suffering, promises hope for a better future, and creates a sense of community and solidarity among believers. Researchers note that in poorer countries religion often plays a "functional role," helping individuals cope with the daily struggle to support themselves and their families.

Another reason for why that is was already mentioned previously, they managed to indoctrinate African children early on, which is a topic I will cover more on later.

Religious communities also provide practical support networks. Churches, mosques, temples, and other institutions frequently organize charity, education, and social assistance programs that help people survive difficult circumstances. In regions where government welfare systems are weak or nonexistent, religious organizations can become an important safety net. As a result, faith becomes closely tied to both survival and social belonging.

Education is another major factor influencing religiosity. Studies repeatedly show that higher levels of education correlate with lower levels of religious belief. Education exposes individuals to scientific explanations of the natural world, encourages critical thinking, and introduces diverse worldviews. As societies become more educated, traditional religious explanations often lose their central authority. Research by the Pew Research Center indicates that both across countries and within them, wealthier and better-educated individuals tend to be less religious than poorer and less educated populations.

We could now link these ideas back to capitalism and the ongoing exploitation of Africa. As of 2024 the World Democracy Index shows Africa and closing in on the Middle East that these countries are obviously at a political disadvantage. It also happens to be the exact regions which were once dominated by European settlers and yet, maybe still are.



Despite the formal end of colonialism, the economic relationship between Africa and the Western world continues to reflect many of the same patterns of extraction and imbalance. Africa is one of the richest continents in natural resources, holding

approximately **30%** of the world's known mineral reserves. Yet, it captures only a small fraction of the wealth generated from these resources.

This is largely because raw materials are extracted within African countries but processed, manufactured, and sold elsewhere—primarily by foreign corporations that retain the majority of the profits.

One of the most significant examples of this can be found in Central Africa, particularly in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The country produces around **70–75%** of the world's cobalt, a mineral essential for modern technology such as smartphones, electric vehicles, and rechargeable batteries. Despite this global dependence, much of the profit generated from cobalt mining does not remain within the country. Instead, large multinational corporations such as Glencore control major mining operations and export the raw materials abroad. These companies generate billions in revenue, while local workers often face low wages and hazardous working conditions.

A similar pattern can be observed in Southern Africa, including countries like South Africa, where valuable resources such as gold, platinum, and diamonds are extracted. These materials are essential for industries ranging from jewelry to advanced electronics and automotive manufacturing. In West Africa, countries like Guinea play a crucial role in supplying bauxite, the primary material used to produce aluminum, which is widely used in construction, transportation, and packaging. Once again, the raw materials are exported, refined elsewhere, and sold at significantly higher value on global markets.

This system creates a structural imbalance often referred to as the *"raw export problem."* African nations largely export unprocessed materials at relatively low prices, while wealthier countries and corporations transform them into high-value goods. For example, cobalt extracted in Congo may eventually become part of a smartphone or electric car battery sold for hundreds or thousands of euros, yet only a small portion of that value returns to the communities where the resource originated.

This ongoing dynamic has led many scholars to argue that, although political colonialism has ended, a form of economic dependency remains. African economies often rely heavily on the extraction and export of raw materials, with limited development of local industries that could add value domestically. This dependency makes it difficult for these countries to fully benefit from their own natural wealth.

Which leads me to wonder, how is the population of those said countries still accepting these tiresome living conditions? The answer: Capitalism.

Capitalism is an economic system characterised by private ownership of the means of production such as factories, tools, and land. Its essential goal it to get the working class to do as much work for as little pay as possible. In other words by any means to make the capitalist more profit.

Unfortunately these countries are the victims of this system. Working tirelessly without being able to second guess the system, and why should they? They don't have the means, the education nor the time to be able to contemplate wether there could be more to this or not. As well as the fact that religion often preaches that greed is a sin and route

to all evil so why would they want to become the people they most despise (their oppressors). And when religion promises an eternal peace and ended suffering after this life, it brings comfort and hope. And I mean, why would anyone need to improve their quality of life here on this earth when truthfully an endless afterlife of happiness is promised to those who are faithful.

This is how religion traps the working class. Some regions are more extreme cases than others but ultimately tragic in any sense nonetheless.

Despite these exceptions, the global trend remains clear: as countries become wealthier, more stable, and better educated, religiosity tends to decline. Sociologists sometimes refer to this as the "secularization effect," where modernization reduces the social role of religion. When people have reliable healthcare, stable incomes, strong governments, and advanced education systems, they may feel less need to rely on religious explanations or spiritual comfort.

Ultimately, the relationship between poverty and religiosity reflects how human beings respond to uncertainty and struggle. When life is difficult and unpredictable, faith can become one of the few constants people can rely on. In wealthier societies, where economic security and education offer alternative sources of meaning and stability, religion often becomes less central. Yet for millions living in poverty across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, faith remains not only a belief system but ultimately as a last refuge.

Summary of: “Faith as a Last Refuge”

Growing up surrounded by people from vastly different economic backgrounds, one difference stood out more than wealth itself: mindset—particularly belief. While religion exists across all social classes, it often takes on a different role depending on one’s circumstances. I first noticed this as a child when speaking to a classmate whose family could not afford the kind of travel I considered normal. When I asked if he felt he was missing out, he simply replied that having his family and God was enough. For him, faith replaced what was materially lacking. It wasn’t just belief—it was acceptance.

This mindset reflects something deeper. When individuals are taught that everything they need is already in their possession, and that striving for more is greed, it discourages questioning both their situation and the systems that maintain it. Religion, in this sense, can act as a form of quiet control—shaping not only belief, but ambition.

On a global scale, this pattern becomes even clearer. Data shows that religion is significantly more prominent in poorer countries than in wealthier ones. According to Gallup, around 95% of people in low-income countries say religion is important in their lives, compared to less than half in high-income nations. Regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, where economic instability is common, show the highest levels of religiosity. In contrast, wealthier and more educated societies tend to be more secular.

This can be traced back in part to history. During the colonization of Africa, European powers imposed Christianity alongside political and economic control. Religion was not always adopted freely, but often tied to survival, education, and opportunity. Its influence remains deeply rooted today.

Religion also fulfills practical and psychological needs. In unstable environments, it provides community, support networks, and a sense of hope. When governments fail to provide security, religious institutions often step in. At the same time, limited access to education reduces exposure to alternative explanations, reinforcing belief.

Ultimately, faith becomes more than belief—it becomes a coping mechanism. In conditions of hardship, it offers certainty, purpose, and comfort. But in doing so, it can also discourage questioning and maintain the very systems that keep people in place. For many, religion is not just a choice—it is a last refuge.

“Written by men for men”

“Nations that fail women, fail.”

- Zanny Minton Beddoes,
Editor-in-Chief of *the Economist*

Women’s position in religion is the epidamy of proof that religion is man made. I know that sounds definitive, especially in a debate when nothing is ever fully provable, but honestly, just think about it for a second. If religion truly came from a single source, from an all knowing, all powerful being, women’s position in it would look very different. If you had the power to create the rules of reality itself, not just laws but moral order, hierachry, who speaks, who leads, who obeys, would you seriously place yourself under another group? Would you design a world where you are consistently quieter, more restricted, more controlled and more blamed? Because I wouldn’t and neither would you.

Religious people sometimes respond to this with: “How would you know a woman wouldn’t write that?” And I mean how would I know. The same way I know someone would rather be a millionaire than homeless. The same way I know people who don’t voluntarily choose disadvantage, when they’re holding the pen. Phycologically humans are wired towards self preservation and self advantage. Our brains are evolved to secure safety, control, statues, and resources, not to surrender them. However, when people are given power they overmehlmingly shape systems hat protect their own position. This isn’t controversial, its observable everywhere. In politics, in economics, in families, in ordinary work places. So when every major religion places men above wome, spiritually; morally; socially that tells us something very important about who authored the rules.

Across religions women are expected to obey, submit, remain modest, serve and reproduce. But in the end all of this never benefits the woman. Meanwhile men are perseived as leaders, decision maker, spiritual intermediates and moral authorities. Even when women are respected, that respect is conditional and is only reserved for the true “women of God” and those conditions are tied to purity, motherhood, obedient and/or sacrifice. Many people only respect the women that do follow these conditions, as if a woman is only truly worth something when she proves it. Now, could a woman technically write that. There’s no doubt in that whatsoever. Humans can internalise anything. But would a woman, given full authorship and autorothy, consistently design a system where her sex is framed as, weaker, more sinful, more tempting and less trustworthy? Now that wouldn’t hold up, now would it.

Neurologically humans also tend to justify systems that benefit them. Cognitive biases like self serving bias and system justification explain how people unconsciously shape beliefs to align with their own advantage, just as someone born into a comfortable lifestyle might believe, *"Anyone can succeed if they really want to."* This reflects system justification, as it defends an unequal system that already works in their favor and then convince themselves it's fair, natural or necessary.

Religion is especially effective at this because it doesn't justify hierarchy, it sanctifies it. Once a rule is framed as "God's will" questioning isn't just disagreement it's rebellion, its immorality, it's sin. That's an incredibly efficient way to lock in power across generations. Through fear. I am not claiming to prove no God exists, no one can. Religion itself isn't a concrete debate it's belief against belief. Faith against scepticism. There's no laboratory result waiting at the end of this conversation. But when it comes to structure, we can analyse patterns. Religious hierachries mirror male dominated societies almost perfectly. The values, restrictions, punishments, and power dynamics allligned seamlessly with what benefits men historically and materially. That doesn't seem like divine neutrality. It looks like human authorship. Specifially male authorship.

If you were to ask me to only name one example for why every recognised worldly religion is deeply rooted in misogyny it would be this. Look at how they deal with menstruation. If you are Hindu and are on your period, you cannot enter temples, perform Poojas or even touch sacred object. In Shintoism in Japan if you are on your period, you cannot enter sacred shrines or perform rituals. In Islam you cannot pray or even enter mosques while on your period. There even still exists religious sites that will not allow women of menstruating age. The Subaremila temple in India finally reversed that recently through a court case in 2018. Certain Orthodox traditions say that you can't handle the Eucharist if you are on your period. In certain Buddhist texts because women are impure because they have menstruation, they have to reincarnate as a man to achieve enlightenment. There exist records of theological debate in medieval Christianity where they're trying to decide wether or not menstruating women can handle the Bible or even participate in theological discussions while they are on their period. Judaism of course has many rules around menstruation including rituals where the woman has to purify herself after menstruation in which they are not even allowed to touch their husbands. Across Buddhism and Hinduism, we have ideas that the female body is more impure and so it will inevitably make their spiritual progress harder.

'Menstruation is the only blood that is not born from violence, yet it's the one that disgusts you the most,'

- Maia Schwartz

All these cases, all these rules, amount to what? A woman is not seen as equal in her natural state. She is seen as something that must be restricted and managed.

Crucifixtion is the most feminie thing religion has ever done. Bleed out for his children. And just how depressing it is that the world found it so remarkable that Jesus would do that for you. To then proceed to forget about the women who have been doing it since they were 13. But when Jesus bleeds and Jesus gets blood everywhere, it is sacred and it is life giving, and it is life affirming, and because of that we created rituals to showcase just how life affirming this blood is. And yet there is something so hypocritical about the fact that when a woman bleeds which is a biological process—one that is essential for the continuation of human life—is reframed as something shameful, something contaminating. Jesus' blood did nothing and yet is praised as everything but when the average woman bleeds and that actually is tied to her ability to create life it's impure.

This is not simply about ritual purity; it reflects a deeper pattern of control. By attaching spiritual consequences to a natural function of the female body, these systems reinforce the idea that women are inherently less pure, less worthy, and in need of regulation.

What makes this particularly powerful is that it is not enforced solely through external rules, but through internalised belief. When women themselves come to accept these ideas, to step away from sacred spaces without question, the system sustains itself. It no longer needs to justify its logic, because it has already been absorbed.

"What is a <u>woman</u>?"

"A human being."

- *Elena Bağatur*

The Bible of lies:

Most Christian's claim to follow the bible and the example of Jesus. But if you look into the original text the primary source describes how Jesus actually treated women that Jesus never said a word about presiding or male headship. In fact, the record shows Jesus being radically inclusive of women and treating them as his equals. And the early christian churches were full of female leaders. So, the question remains how did Christianity submit to such a hierarchical system?

The historical figure we know as Jesus was born in Judaea in the year 0. Judaea had been settled by the hebrews for around 1200 years which means a "functional" state had already existed including norms or to be more exact, gender norms. Many patriarchal customs were pre existed at the time. And many of those customs had been build on religious foundations. Men segregated women away from them keeping them covered and mostly indoors. The Mishnah directed men "talk not much with women kind" and a rabbi at the time cautioned men not to

talk to young women and women alike on the streets because this was seen as the gateway to breaking the law of Chastity.

Menstruating women were considered unclean and if a man even accidentally touched a menstruating woman would consider him being unclean for the day. Adding to that, the influence of the Greco Roman world in 63 BCE Rome conquered the kingdom of Judaea bringing it into what would soon be known as the Roman Empire.

So, what were Romes' gender norms? Well Rome had been copying the Greeks for centuries so if you think about the Greeks views on women, think “mutilated” male. It makes sense that in Rome, men also prohibited women from taking part in politics or in the publics sphere in general. Roman law considered women to be the weaker sex and mentally frivolous. This concept of female inferiority justified laws that had roman fathers in charge of daughters and roman husbands in charge of their wives. In both cases a woman, regardless of her age was effectively a minor and needed a man to represent her under any circumstances especially legal transactions.

Men achieved honour by proving their excellence in the public sphere and women proved their honour by being meek quiet and submissive. In both the Hebrew tradition and the Greco roman tradition, men partitioned women off to a separate inferior category where they were only allowed to have any authority in the home. It was in this context that Jesus started his movement although he could’ve gone along with the social norms, it would’ve in fact even made it a lot easier for him to avoid criticism from Hebrew and Greco roman authorities but instead the stories in the bible show Jesus constantly and fragrantly breaking social norms when it came down to the equity of women. Here’s an example you may have heard of, there is a story in which Jesus spoke to a woman who was drawing water from a well which if you well remember was prohibited. And in another incident Jesus allowed a prostitute to wash his feet with her hair which at the time was absolutely scandalous. But to whoever who was writing these stories down was obviously making a point. Jesus went out of his way to show that women who were seen as impure in society were in fact equals of the opposing sex and that women were not beneath him.

Now this surprises me. As I was reading this passage I couldn’t help but think that Jesus was obviously a great man, excepting of women and caring for them as if they were his own family. Such solidarity is rare and reminded me of a certain solidarity that I found to exist in every society that I have studied and put myself up with. Women. Women stick together especially when a greater threat is opposed upon them. They show love and compassion towards each other. Though it is also expected for a woman to care in such a way. To tend to any child in need or struggling person. This art of compassion is what women have been doing for centuries. However, why is it that when a man condones to such an act of greatness, he is automatically seen as a greater power beyond man kind. As if the average male at the time never could’ve competed with such greatness, even many men today.

It even shows in the way that when women experience the supernatural, they are condemned to witchcraft, but when men experience the supernatural, it is seen as holy and documentary worthy. Jeanne d’Arc being the perfect example for this as she led an army believing she was

chosen by God to do so. Eventually executed by burning at the stake on May 30th, 1431, in Rouen, France at the age of 19 allegedly because of witchcraft. Only later to be proven innocent. Convenient, isn't it?

Jesus was the average woman.

The forgotten *Mary Magdalen*

Perhaps the most dramatic story within the bible when it comes to women was the fact that the first witness of Jesus' resurrection was in fact a woman. A woman by the name of Mary Magdalen. In this role Mary Magdalen becomes the apostle to the apostles. The book we now know as the new restatement is primarily based on writings that were written from about forty to a hundred years after the death of Jesus Christ. Scholars now estimate that we only have about 15% of the literature that was written about Jesus in those first few centuries.

So now the question remains, what happened to the other 85%?

Well in 1896 some fragments of ancient Papyrus books were found in Egypt and scholars determined that they were written at around the same time as some of the rest of the books of the bible were written and they were in fact about Mary Magdalen.

So, in short, it is believed that Mary Magdalen came to the apostles and tried to tell them about some of the teachings that Jesus had entrusted her. To which some of the apostles agree with her whereas Peter extremely uncomfortable with being taught or led by a woman.

So, if you think about it, we have a record of debate of what role women were going to play in the early Christian church. Would they follow the norms of the culture at the given time where men prohibited woman from equal participation, or would they follow the more egalitarian path that Jesus seemed to have established. Well evidence shows that the early Christian church was egalitarian meaning women did act as priest and submitted to authoritarian roles within the church.

The New Testament itself is filled with female leaders. Such as Mary, Prisca and Junia even Pol Called Junia the foremost among the apostles so how was this even possible? Remember that I mentioned roman women having authority in the home, this actually wasn't trivial. Women were often in charge of large households that sometimes-included farms that even sold their produce if you remember about the Greek word Oikos meaning household, is the root word for our modern word economy. As household managers, women had a lot of power and authority and at the time, men were used to it. This was rather critical because during the first and second centuries there were no Christian churches, the religion itself was outlawed, so the Christian's met in peoples houses where the female authority was well established.

In her book when women were priests, scholar Karen Jo Torjensen points out that early Christian's saw each other as nothing less than family meaning the early Christian's church existed in the private atmosphere of one's home. So much so that one second century detractor

of Christianity attacked and dismissed the religion as a women's movement. At the same time if you look back to the tension between the apostles Peter and Mary Magdalen shows that there was still lots of tension between the women friendly home church situation and the broader culture of the male leadership and one of those male apostles was Paul.

Paul was an early convent from Judaism to Christianity. He never knew Jesus, but most scholars consider his letters to be real authentic historical texts that were written between the year 50s and 60s. In which here are a few things Paul had to say about women:

"Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, for the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church." "The head of the women, is man." "Women should not speak in church."

To which showing a clear display for anachronism, where one person establishes an idea and subsequent generations build structures around said ideas. Paul was raised with the idea that Eve had sinned and thus all women were incapable of leadership or even of being considered of equal footing with men. He was brought up being told that Adam because you hearkened to your wife that brought about the fall of man so then Paul builds on that foundation and says wives should submit to their husbands in every sense. He does however soften it by saying husbands should take care of their wives just as Christ takes care of the church but even with that benevolent spin it still degrades the woman to nothing more than being children for the entirety of their lives.

So, who's version has become the standardised excepted version of Christianity? The egalitarian model that Christ himself established and Mary Magdalen taught or, the patriarchal version that of Peter and Paul had foreseen. While it is not clear and as you know we only have about 15% of the original scriptures, but then in the early 300s something happened that would change the course of history forever.

A roman emperor converted to Christianity. Constantine the Great took Christianity from being a tiny, disorganised, persecuted minority to being the official religion of the Roman Empire. He wanted a very tidy organised body of doctrine. So, in the year 325 he convened the council of Nicaea, this council was a meeting of all male bishops who's job it was to standardise the until then, the very "unstandard" new faith. There were few more councils convened in which these men determined which of the many existing accounts were going to make it into the official church canon. They chose the books that we see today, and 13 of the 27 that made it in were letters written by the apostle Paul.

What about a realm in which men and women had convened in equal numbers in Nicaea to determine which books going to make it into the canon. Yes, we can only hope to wonder, what if? What if we were equal? But as it happens, we got saying such as, "wives submit to their husbands" and "women should not speak in churches" combine that with Greco roman norms and you get early Christian church fathers who said such as:

"Woman you shall turn to your husband, and he shall rule over you. And do you not know that you are Eve? God's sentence hangs still over all your sex, and His punishment weighs

down upon you. You are the devil's gateway. Because of the death you merited even the son of God had to die. Women, you are the gate to hell."

- Tertullian, "the father of Latin Christianity" (c. 160-225)

"Woman is a misbegotten man and has a faulty and defective nature in comparison to him. To put it briefly, one must be on one's guard with every woman, as if she were a poisonous snake and the horned devil."

- Saint Albert Magnus, Dominican Theologian, 13th century

"It is improper for a woman to speak in an assembly, no matter what she says, even if she says admirable things or even saintly things; that is of little consequence since they come from the mouth of a woman."

- Origen of Alexandria (c. 200 CE)

Now obviously this very extreme misogyny, however those misogynistic foundations are still turing points on us today. But even for Christian families where the women are not seen as incapable beings, most Christian families do still believe in the concept of male headship.

Now the impact of modern Christian patriarchy not only effects the faithful, but it affects the non-believing as well so to any religious people reading this, I would like you to consider two things. First, you might often hear this, "men are the leaders and women are the helpers" and think that its some outdated ideology and not very many people could actually believe such a thing, well so many people do believe it. And not just uneducated fully Christian folks either, lawyers, CEOs even the people in your neighbourhood strongly believe in these ideas. There even exist women who publicly announce how much they enjoy submitting to their husbands and how they take great pleasure in obeying their husbands and will continue to submit to them even in the afterlife. If you now look at American and global politics, you can no longer afford to not acknowledge Christian patriarchy and think it was present in some other time in some other place. It is happening right now. As to my second point, when discussing with people of faith, if you attack their beliefs or make them feel like you think they're stupid, you will guarantee that they will only dig in their heels harder. So, when discussing religion don't be the one to deny their faith be the one to question it, question them.

Religious parents raise daughters for a world that no longer exists.

To raise your daughter to be submissive, conservative, obedient is raising a woman who will inevitably be incompetent in this world.

Everything about the daughter is how the family is perceived. But then again expecting for their daughters to thrive in the real world in order to survive financially. They want her to be controllable in the home but competent outside of it. They want her to get good grades, they want her to find a good job; to support her siblings, they want her to navigate society while also raising her in a way as if she still lived in a village. They don't necessarily want their daughters to follow the rules; they want daughters who look good while following the rules.

Which is why many religious parents always preach to obey, to stay modest, to stay in the home, to not date. But they don't actually want you to be passive and helpless even though this upbringing only brings up passive and helpless women. All this is done so that the family can look intelligent and cultured. In other words, they don't actually want you to be obedient but only your reputation to be obedient. They want people know about you to be obedient. All the demands are contradictory. They want you to be modest and charismatic, they want you to be sheltered and worldly. They want you to be scared of men but also be ready to be married. They want you to be docile but also capable and competent. And inevitably all that this creates is girls who split inside of themselves. They raise you in a belief system that existed in a different time period. But we live in a globalised society that demands financial independence and emotional intelligence, and it asks us to have communication skills and to adapt. It wants us to be resilient it wants us to advocate ourselves.

Yet all these cultured raise daughters are being trained for a world that doesn't exist and they still expect to excel in the world that does. Daughters that obey them and protect their reputation and uphold their cultural expectations but also succeed in western institutions. They expect you to navigate adulthood, they also want you to support them when they're old. They want to control you, but they also want you to be strong but only strong when it benefits them. Which is why they always expect that competency will just arise. Like: "oh she'll learn when she's married" or "she'll learn when she's at university," "she will learn once she gets a job." But competency doesn't magically appear it is something that you build and grow throughout your childhood and adolescent years. It comes from childhood freedom, yet they have always denied.

Modesty is sexualization.

If we can understand that rape does not have anything to do with the clothes that the victim was wearing, why are we still acting like modest clothing or modesty in general, does anything to "turn men away from their desires." Modesty does not exist. Being of the opinion that women should cover themselves from head to toe to cull men's desires is the same as the opinion that women should go out fully naked to excite men. In both, the woman's body is made solely the object of desire and yet it is made her responsibility to either facilitate this desire or impede it.

The whole concept of being modest or wearing revealing clothing puts the onus on women to decide how men are going to see and react to their bodies. It puts responsibility on women to prevent men from desiring them when that is something only the man himself can change. It positions the woman as nothing more than a sex object one that needs to factor in her sexuality before she leaves the house. The woman is given no freedom to decide how she wants to dress, only that dressing one way will cause men to react this way, and dressing another will cause men to react another.

Modesty is seen as a virtue because you're doing something "holy," something "pure." But really all you are doing is submitting to another form of control and violence. The whole concept of modesty requires a level of subordination from women, because it dictates that men are the arbiters of what women wear. In that way modesty is nothing but another form of control and dominance over women, one that dictates how they're allowed to appear and present themselves in public. It's a false safety net that promises women they'll be safe from men's prying eyes as long as there is nothing visible for them to look at.

Modesty, just like rape, and overt sexualization, is about power.

The amount of fabric on your body does not change the fact that what men are seeking is power and dominance. In a patriarchal society, men's desires are seen as something that women need to submit to, and this is just another form of submission.

Language speaks truths.

Take it how you will on the past passages of this chapter however another thought that struck me on the subject is the taking away a female's birthright gifts. If you think about it, "God" as I've said has always been referred to as "*he*," the "*father*," our creator. A man. Never a woman. Many will argue that "God is not a man nor a woman," but a divine spirit beyond gender yet he is always referred to as a male. And that tells us something. Language shapes the way we think. And if God is referred to as he we subconsciously internalise that to be true.

In other words you could suggest that men felt the need to reshape God as a form of control. A man's best friend you could say. In the sense that women for example have the ability to create life. A natural gift so sacred, so ethereal. Mother Earth. That in a way, men plainly felt jelousy. Needing to believe it was a higher power, a male power that gave women on earth that ability, essentially taking away a woman's natural gift. We see this in other forms as well, a given example would be bathbetism. The act of having to rebirth an infant to free it from sin essentially giving it a "rebirth". Which was historically seen, mostly preformed by men. What to me seems like an attempt to take away from a woman's shine.

So not only were we all created by God but a ritual must be taken place after our birth to "rebirth" ourselves and free us from sin. In both cases performed and excecuted by a "he." Funny how that takes away the time to appreciate the mother who actually birthed a living being.

And yet the closest thing with a creatory power which is almost always pictured as a woman, is nature. So why is nature almost always imagined as a woman? “Mother Earth”; “Fertile Land” yet, it treated with such violence. Nature didn’t become feminized by accident. It happened first through language.

Call it Mother Nature; Nurturing; Abundant; Endlessly giving. And as soon as something is framed that way, it quietly becomes expected to provide without limit. I recently informed myself on ecofeminist Vandana Shiva. Vandana Shiva’s argument touches on this subject. She argues that this very framing isn’t symbolic. It’s fully political. She further explains that; during colonialism, nature stopped being understood as alive and rational. And was redefined as “raw-material” hence the settlers claiming any land they came across to be theirs. The land itself is something to be owned; to be extracted and controlled. Seems familiar. Once the earth was feminized, exploitation is a sense could be framed as progress. This absurd logic didn’t just shape how we treat the planet. It shaped how care itself became gendered.

This offers explanations as to why women on average are more likely to be vegetarian and/or lean towards a more mindful lifestyle. But maybe, just maybe, it isn’t that it is more expected of women to except this way of living but frowned upon men when they choose to live this way, as it isn’t “manly.”

And it isn’t because women are inherently more ethical, but because care, restraint, and responsibility has become culturally assigned to them based off of their gender. In the same way you could argue that girls are expected to take on responsibility from much younger age on than boys do.

Meanwhile practices that cost the most environmental damage; Industrial meat consumption, oil extraction, bombing, wars, and destruction at all costs are often culturally coded as “masculine” and “powerful.” Now, this isn’t about blaming individual men or men as a whole. It’s putting the blame on a system that rewards domination over care as well as devalues the very practices that sustain life. Vandana Shiva reminds us that what’s dismissed as “feminine knowledge”; local farming; healing; interdependence is often the most sustainable.

To put it simply, when care is seen as weakness, destruction becomes normalized. And if the earth is framed as our mother, the environmental collapse isn’t just ecological it’s gendered. A society that learns to dominate instead of care will eventually consume the very thing it depends on the most.

“Made by men for men” to justify a whole bunch of stuff that they really wanted to do. Like for example, impose their own will on each other, on women and on nature. Biologically women those amongst us who are born with fully functioning reproductive organs. We can give life so god is in a sense, sort of, within us. They say and I believe this to be true, it is likely that humans were originally a matriarchy or a matrilineal society. Afterall the other five animal species that have the menopause are. But all this wisdom, all this power, all this natural sanctity could have made men feel less important or maybe they just needed an ally. An imaginary friend. *“God told me to do it”*. So god shifted from something within us to something without. From something tangible made of blood and tissue and fluids that needed to be nurtured. To something intangible that demanded worship, obedience, sacrifices. Above all, and I should

think, it’s no coincidence many gods seem to fear women just like men do. So religions, the will of the gods, discriminate against us.

Again I am not the one to argue that men sat around one day and said “let’s be evil” human behaviour doesn’t work that way. Power doesn’t need malice to act in self interest, it just needs opportunity and justification. Religion provided both. So when I say, women’s position in religion is proof that religion is man made, I am not insulting belief I am pointing incentive psychology and pattern recognition. Hierarchy reveals its author. And when the rules of the universe consistently favour one group, and restrict another, then proceed to declare those rules “untouchable.” Well now, just think about it, if you had the power to write reality, where would you place yourself?

Summary of: "Written by Men, for Men."

If religion were truly the product of a single, all-knowing and all-powerful source, the position of women within it would look very different. That is the central tension of this chapter. Across cultures, texts, and traditions, women are consistently placed beneath men—spiritually, socially, and morally. And while belief itself cannot be proven or disproven, structures can be analyzed. Patterns can be observed. And the pattern here is difficult to ignore: religious hierarchies mirror male-dominated societies almost perfectly.

From a psychological standpoint, this alignment is not surprising. Humans are wired for self-preservation and self-advantage. When given power, people tend to shape systems that benefit themselves. This is visible everywhere—in politics, economics, and everyday social structures. Religion, however, takes this one step further. It doesn't just justify hierarchy; it sanctifies it. Once something is framed as "God's will," questioning it is no longer disagreement—it becomes sin. That is what makes religious hierarchy so durable. It locks power into place not just externally, but internally, through belief.

Across religions, women are expected to obey, to remain modest, to serve, and to reproduce. Even when respected, that respect is conditional—granted only when women conform to ideals of purity, obedience, and sacrifice. Meanwhile, men occupy positions of leadership, authority, and interpretation. This imbalance raises a simple but powerful question: if women had equal authorship over these systems, would they consistently design a world where they are framed as weaker, more sinful, and less trustworthy? The answer, when viewed through basic human behavior, becomes increasingly unlikely.

One of the clearest examples of this imbalance lies in how religions treat menstruation. Across Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Shinto traditions, menstruation is often associated with impurity or restriction. Women are barred from temples, rituals, or sacred objects during a natural biological process. This is not just about ritual—it reflects a deeper framing of the female body as something that must be controlled, managed, or purified. The contrast is striking: blood shed in religious narratives, such as sacrifice, is often seen as sacred, while menstrual blood—essential to the creation of life—is treated as contaminating. The message is subtle but consistent: women, in their natural state, are not equal.

This pattern extends beyond ritual into historical development. Early Christianity, for example, did not begin as strictly patriarchal as it later became. Historical accounts suggest that women played significant roles in early Christian communities. Figures like Mary Magdalene were central, even described as key witnesses and leaders. Early churches, often held in private homes, operated in spaces where women already had authority. There is evidence that the early movement had egalitarian tendencies.

However, as Christianity became institutionalized—particularly under the influence of figures like Paul and later the Roman Empire—these structures shifted. Teachings emphasizing female submission and male authority became dominant. By the time of the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE, decisions about doctrine were made exclusively by men, and many alternative texts and interpretations were excluded. What remained was a version of Christianity that aligned far more closely with existing patriarchal norms than with the more inclusive practices attributed to Jesus.

This shift illustrates a broader point: religion does not exist in a vacuum. It evolves alongside culture, politics, and power. The patriarchal structures of ancient Hebrew and Greco-Roman societies were not replaced by religion—they were absorbed and reinforced by it. Over time, these ideas became canon, presented not as human decisions, but as divine truth.

The consequences of this are not limited to the past. Religious patriarchy continues to shape modern life, influencing family structures, gender roles, and even political systems. Many women today are still raised within frameworks that emphasize obedience, modesty, and submission, while simultaneously being expected to succeed in a modern world that demands independence, confidence, and self-advocacy. This creates a contradiction. Girls are taught to be both passive and capable, sheltered and worldly, obedient and ambitious. The result is often internal conflict—a division between who they are expected to be and who they need to become.

The concept of modesty further reinforces this tension. Presented as virtue, modesty places responsibility on women to regulate male behavior. Whether through covering or revealing, the underlying assumption remains the same: a woman's body exists in relation to male desire. This shifts accountability away from men and places it onto women, framing control as protection. In this sense, modesty becomes less about morality and more about power—another mechanism through which female autonomy is limited.

Language also plays a role in maintaining these dynamics. God is overwhelmingly referred to as "He," as "Father," as male. Even when believers claim that God transcends gender, the consistent use of male imagery shapes perception. Over time, this reinforces the association between authority and masculinity. It subtly suggests that power, creation, and control are inherently male traits.

This extends into symbolic structures as well. Women, despite being the biological source of life, are often overshadowed by male-centered narratives of creation and rebirth. Rituals such as baptism symbolically "rebirth" individuals, shifting focus away from the physical act of birth carried out by women. Even nature—often referred to as "Mother Earth"—is feminized, yet treated as something to be controlled, exploited, and dominated. As ecofeminist perspectives argue, once something is framed as endlessly giving and nurturing, it becomes easier to justify its exploitation. The same logic applied to nature has historically been applied to women.

Ultimately, this chapter argues that religion reflects human systems more than it defines them. It is not necessarily the product of intentional malice, but of opportunity and justification. Power does not need to be consciously cruel to act in its own interest—it simply needs a framework that allows it to do so without resistance. Religion has often provided that framework.

So when the claim is made that religion is "written by men for men," it is not an attack on belief itself, but an observation of patterns. When systems consistently elevate one group while restricting another—and then declare those systems divine and unchangeable—it raises an unavoidable question: if you had the power to write reality, where would you place yourself?

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Children and Religion

"We are all born atheist until someone tells us otherwise"

- *Ricky Gervais*

The nature of a child is nothing short of simple. Just about comparable to a sponge. Children soak up everything from their surroundings. It even shapes who they become, from communication, to mannerism, to thoughts and opinions and so much more. Yes, your surroundings shape who you are. But this isn't entirely just a fact or a given gift but a deeply biological factor that ensured our survival.

From an evolutionary perspective, this imitative behavior was essential for survival. Early humans relied on the ability of their offspring to quickly learn from older members of the group. A child who copied their parents' actions—such as identifying food, avoiding danger, or following social rules—was far more likely to survive. This aligns with principles found in Evolutionary Psychology, which suggest that humans are biologically predisposed to adopt the behaviors and opinions of those around them, especially authority figures.

Furthermore, this tendency is not merely observational, it is deeply rooted in biology and supported by research in Developmental Psychology and Neuroscience. From the earliest stages of life, children are neurologically wired to learn through imitation. One of the most significant discoveries supporting this is the concept of Mirror Neurons, first identified in the 1990s. These neurons activate not only when an individual performs an action, but also when they observe someone else performing that same action. In children, this system plays a crucial role in learning, allowing them to internalize behaviors, language, and social cues simply by watching others—particularly their parents.

In addition, children undergo rapid brain development in their early years, making them especially receptive to external influence. Studies show that by the age of five, a child's brain has already developed to around 90% of its adult size.

During this period, neural pathways are formed and strengthened based on repeated experiences. This process, often referred to as Neuroplasticity.

Now, neuroplasticity is not a skill you "develop" at a certain age, but rather a fundamental, inherent property of the brain that you have from birth until death that insures the ability of the brain to form new connections, prune unused ones, and recognize its structure and function in response to experience, learning, or injury. However, the degree and type of plasticity change

dramatically throughout your lifespan, being most intense during childhood and more regulated in adulthood. The brain is born immature and "under construction," with rapid growth and synaptic overproduction. Children have a high capacity to rewire, allowing them to learn quickly.

It takes us five years to develop our brains by 90%, five years. Indoctrination of religion is already deeply rooted into necessary religious practices as parents often feel as their children's faith lies as their responsibility. Across many of the world's major religions, children are introduced to faith from a very early age, often through rituals, stories, and community practices. In Christianity, children are baptized as infants and later attend Sunday school to learn religious teachings. In Islam, as soon as the child is born the Adhan is whispered into their right ear and even children arent legally acceptable for religious duties in Islam until they reach puberty, children are taught to recite prayers and passages from the Qur'an from a young age and are gradually introduced to daily prayer. In Judaism, children begin learning from the Torah early on and participate in rites like the Bar or Bat Mitzvah during adolescence. In Hinduism, children are exposed to rituals such as pujas and festivals within the home and temple environment. In Buddhism, they learn moral teachings, meditation practices, and stories about the Buddha. In Sikhism, children are taught prayers and values from the Guru Granth Sahib and often participate in community service. In Shintoism, children are introduced to shrine visits and purification rituals as part of cultural life.

Taking all this into consideration, children don't even get the opportunity to question any of it. As children can't even fully process what they're being indoctrinated with. Children process and react through instinct not reason. Their instinct tells them that going against the herd will turn them away from the herd and lead to exclusion. Children also learn this through punishment. Touching their food before prayer was said, not being able to recite a certain passage they were told to practice. The punishment doesn't have to be severe it only needs to show disagreement by for a child to understand that it is wrong to reject. Especially when the thing that they're rejecting is so sacred and significant to the family.

"If belief disappears when it isn't taught, perhaps it suggests that faith is something learned rather than something we are born with."

Moreover, this brings me to the topic of why more young people appear to be turning back to religion. Adeline Johanna, a young Catholic content creator, touched on this in her video *"The Unexpected Rise in Gen Z Catholics"* on YouTube in 2025.

Beyond the statistics she presents and her explanations of why faith in God remains important, she makes an observation that is particularly revealing. At both the beginning and the end of her video, she reflects on her personal experience with the Church. As a child, she remembers it as lively, full of energy, and, most importantly, filled with other young people. It felt like a

genuine community—something social, engaging, and alive. However, she contrasts this with her present experience, where the same church now appears far more empty and disconnected. This shift becomes the starting point of her curiosity: why are fewer people attending, and yet, paradoxically, why does it seem as though more young people are identifying with religion again?

Toward the end of the video, she poses a crucial question: why are young people returning specifically to Catholicism rather than to more modern, adaptable forms of religion? Her conclusion is that it is precisely Catholicism's traditional nature that draws them in. Tradition offers something stable, something rooted, something that feels certain in a world that often feels chaotic. In other words, people tend to return to what is familiar—what feels safe and structured.

However, this tendency goes even deeper than comfort or nostalgia. What many people do not realise is that religion builds upon intuitions that humans are born with. This is why belief in God or the supernatural often feels so natural and immediate. From a young age, humans instinctively assume that events are caused by external agents. We are predisposed to see intention behind occurrence. For example, if you ask a child why mountains exist, they might respond, "So that goats have something to climb on." This reflects a natural tendency to assume purpose in everything around us.

Humans are also born with what psychologists describe as *intuitive dualism*—the sense that the mind and the body are separate. We experience ourselves as both physical beings and something beyond the physical, which makes concepts like the soul or an afterlife feel inherently plausible. In addition to this, our brains are wired to seek patterns and create meaning, even where none objectively exists. From an evolutionary standpoint, this pattern-seeking behavior was advantageous; recognising patterns could mean the difference between survival and danger. However, it also means that we are inclined to perceive order, intention, and design in the world around us.

Religion, then, does not create these tendencies—it builds upon them. When a child is raised within a religious framework, these natural intuitions are shaped and directed toward specific beliefs. This is why religion feels so convincing to many: it aligns with how the human mind already processes the world. It does not feel imposed, but rather confirmed. This, often accompanied by fear is the exact formula when it comes to binding an instinctual factor with indoctrinated fantasies. And this only gets carried through generations. How can we ever know how many children had their psychological and physical lives irreplacably maimed by the compulsory incluation of faith?

As a result, stepping away from religion is not simply a matter of rejecting a set of beliefs. For an atheist, it often involves questioning the very framework through which reality is understood. It can feel like dismantling the lens through which meaning, purpose, and existence itself have been interpreted.

A useful way to understand this is through an analogy. Most people would agree that the sky is blue. This is taken as an obvious, almost unquestionable truth. But as we learn more about light, wavelengths, and perception, we begin to understand that "blue" is not an inherent property of the sky itself, but rather a result of how our eyes and brains interpret certain wavelengths of light. Other animals may perceive the sky entirely differently. This does not

mean that the experience of “blue” is false, but it does suggest that it is not an independent, objective reality—it is dependent on perception.

In the same way, belief in religion can feel undeniably real and self-evident to those who hold it. But when that belief is questioned, it can create a sense of disorientation and isolation. It is not just a disagreement with others—it is a shift in how reality itself is perceived. This helps explain why disbelief can feel so isolating, and why many people, even after questioning, may feel drawn back to religion. Which is why for many of us who weren’t raised religious and are missing this “intuition,” it can even result in feeling as though there is something more that we ought to understand, which we simply do not.

Summary of: “Children and Religion”

Children, by nature, are not independent thinkers—they are absorbers. Like sponges, they take in everything around them: language, behavior, beliefs. This isn’t just a social observation; it’s biological. From an evolutionary standpoint, imitation ensured survival. A child who copied their parents—what to eat, what to fear, how to behave—was far more likely to make it. That instinct still exists today, and it plays a central role in how belief systems, including religion, are passed down.

Neuroscience reinforces this. The discovery of mirror neurons shows that children don’t just observe behavior—they internalize it. Combined with rapid brain development (reaching about 90% by age five) and high neuroplasticity, early childhood becomes the most influential period of life. During this time, repeated experiences literally shape the brain’s structure. So when religion is introduced early—through rituals, prayers, and community—it doesn’t just inform belief, it embeds it.

Across religions, this pattern is consistent. From baptism in Christianity to early Qur'an recitation in Islam, from Torah teachings in Judaism to rituals in Hinduism and Buddhism, children are immersed in faith long before they are capable of critically evaluating it. At that stage, belief isn’t chosen—it’s inherited. Questioning it isn’t just difficult; it goes against a child’s instinct to belong. Even mild disapproval or correction teaches them that rejecting belief is wrong.

Religion also works because it aligns with how the human mind already functions. Children naturally assume purpose behind everything, seeing intention where none may exist. They also intuitively separate mind and body, making ideas like the soul feel plausible. Religion doesn’t create these tendencies—it builds on them, giving structure to instincts that already exist.

This helps explain both belief and its persistence. Walking away from religion isn’t just rejecting ideas; it’s dismantling a framework that shaped one’s understanding of reality. Like realizing the sky isn’t inherently “blue,” but perceived that way, it can feel disorienting. And that’s why, even after questioning, many are drawn back—not necessarily because it’s true, but because it feels natural.

The Inescapable God

Do we turn to religion to escape ourselves or to find ourselves?

Philosopher Kierkegaard believed that consciousness is a burden. Being one's free self is anxiety inducing, so many turn to religion to remedy that anxiety. But religion itself is not the issue. It is the ways in which one engages with it. Kierkegaard distinguishes between a comfortable faith, one that people resort to, to hide from themselves, and real faith that, to Kierkegaard, forces you to confront yourself.

I am sufficiently honest to admit it. I would be quite content to attend another's bar mitzvahs, to marvel at their grand festivities in ancient churches, to respect their daily disciplined manner of living and devotion to an Arabic scripture dictated by an illiterate merchant or to interest myself in Wicca and Hindu and Jain consolations. As it happens, I will continue to do this without insisting on the polite reciprocal condition – which is *that they in turn leave me alone.* But this concept of religion I write about tirelessly is ultimately incapable of doing so. As I write these words, and as you read them, people of faith from all walks of life, are in their different ways consuming material such as this with pure rage. Disagreeing with every word, every syllable, and every topic that I have touched upon. Arguing, deprived of reason is *pointless*.

When even the men who made it cannot agree on what their prophets or redeemers or gurus actually said or did. And yet the believers still claim to know. But just to know but to know *everything*. Not just to know that God exists, and that he created and supervised the entire enterprise, but also to know what "he" demands of us – from our diet to our observances to our sexual morality. With its many "marvelous" claims and sublime assurances. It must seek to interfere with the lives of nonbelievers, or heretics, or adherents of other faiths. It may speak about the bliss of the next world, but it wants power in this one. Which is why, if humanity allows itself to know more and more about less and less it is what will inevitably cease the evolvement of our species.

In the words of Christopher Hitchens,

Religion poisons everything.

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Preservation of religion

The church was the one who taught you to read and write and so many people never turned to science or discovery. Darwin himself was religious and had proof of evolution yet how many centuries in other cultures before him might've discovered what he already claimed to be his own discovery. But of that we will never know.

Political:

Thus, to study politics without considering God is to miss an essential dimension of human governance, just as to study religion without acknowledging politics is to ignore the worldly structures through which divine ideals have been pursued, contested, and transformed.

Uguslavya was divided by the west (divide and conquer) by turning the Muslims against the Christians.

Geopolitical factors:

US: "a God given country" yet it is land which they have stolen from the indigenous

If you were born in Brunei instead of California then you would be worshipping and defending the Quran the same way you worship and defend the bible.

Religion can evolve: Christianity has been evolved to a humanitarian social behaviour as to be seen in the Scandinavian nations/ religion is being replaced by humanitarians/ you can't politicise religion in Scandinavian countries but they have ethical morals.

- You cannot use Hinduism or Buddhism in politics. (Prove it/ argument it)
- School for Inuits in North America run by nuns.

"The answer that explains everything in the universe. Wouldn't it be nice to know. Although many people globally have found to already know the answer."

- “I believe in God because it helps me hold on to something during ruff times.” In times where we struggle we seek guidance and help in a way a child would always look up to their mother after an inconvenience however seeking an answer to every question may seem relieving however doesn’t always deems to be necessary

Seneca (Stoic philosopher) – “We suffer more often in imagination than in reality.”
Fear creates suffering in our minds, often worse than reality.

The digression of God, a theological concept: The Demiurge

What if I told you that the God you worship, who made this universe wasn’t perfect but broken. What if everything wrong with this world isn’t a test but a design flaw.

Every religion on earth tells the same story. A perfect God made a perfect world and somehow we managed to screw it up as his perfect creations. However there is an ancient group of believers who flipped that script completely. They observed all the suffering, disease, chaos and cruelty baked into reality itself and asked a question nobody wanted to hear. What if God isn’t testing us; what if God messed up.

This is one of the most controversial religious ideas ever conceived; the Demiurge.

A cosmic architect so flawed so deeply broken, that he trapped souls in meat prisons and called it creation. This however isn’t some fringe conspiracy theory, this was a major religious movement that terrified early Christianity so much they tried to erase it from existence. And once you understand what these gnostics discovered about the nature of our reality, you will never view suffering the same again. Let’s start with the world as it actually is. Right now as you are reading this, 25000 people will die from starvation. Most of them children. Tomorrow another 25000. The day after, another 25000. Every single day. This isn’t a flaw in the system, this is how the system was shaped. Babies are born with bone cancer, parasites eats children eyes from inside out, earthquakes flatten entire cities of innocent people. Dementia slowly erases an elderly woman’s memory until she cannot even recognise her loved ones faces anymore. This isn’t humanity’s fault. We didn’t design mosquitoes to spread malaria, we didn’t program childhood leukemia into our DNA. We didn’t place tectonic plates in positions where they’d crush thousand of people without warning. These are features of the universe itself. Which is why theologians have been in and over their heads trying to find a reasonable explanation of why an all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving God would create a reality soaked in so much random, senseless suffering.

Every excuse you can think of was thought out; it’s a test, it builds carachter, free will requires evil,suffering brings us closer to the divine and an obvious favourite, we cannot understand God’s plan. But here’s the thing, none of these explanations actually work. If God is truly all-powerful he could’ve created a universe where we have free will without childhood bone cancer. If he’s all-knowing then he knew we’d already failed his tests before he made us. If he’s all loving, why does a two year old need to suffer to learn a moral lesson they can’t even

understand? The problem of evil has haunted every major religion since the beginning and most believers just accept the contradiciton. They hold two opposite ideas in their head at the same time. God is perfect and loving, but also the world is full of horrific suffering. They call it a mystery, they call it faith. But around the 2nd century, a group of mystics looked at that same contradiciton and came to a radically different conclusion.

What if the God who made this world isn't the real God at all? What if he's an imposter? This is where the Gnosticism enters the picture.

The word "Gnostic" comes from the Greek word "gnosis" which means knowledge. Not book knowledge; direct, experiential knowledge of spiritual truth. The Gnostics weren't just reading scriptures and following rules. They were having mystical experiences that revealed the true nature of reality and what the discovered was absolutely terrifying.

According to Gnostic cosmology, there is a true God, the real ultimate divine source. Pure consciousness, pure light, infinite love beyond human comprehension. This true God never created our physical universe because this God is so far beyond material reality that the idea of trapping conscious beings in bodies made of meat and suffering would be absolutely foreign to its nature.

So where did our universe come from? Now this is very it gets complicated.

The gnostics thought there was a divine emanation, a lesser spiritual being called Demiurge. The name literally means, craftsman, or artisan in Greek. This entity wasn't the ultimate God. He was more like a confused arrogant middle manager who thought he was the CEO. The most detailed account of the Demiurge comes from Gnostic texts like the Apocryphon of John and the Hypostasis of the Archons. These weren't included in the bible, obviously. The early Christian church made sure of that. But they survived hidden in jars buried in the Egyptian desert until 1945 when farmers accidentally discovered them. Here's what these texts reveal: the Demiurge is born of Sophia which means wisdom. Sophia is now of the divine emanations from the true God, but she makes a catastrophic mistake. She tries to create without her divine parnter, acting alone. And what comes out is a deformed ignorant creature. The Demiurge. Some texts describe him having the face of a lion in the body of a serpent. Others describe him as simply blind and foolish. But all agree on one thing. He is deeply profoundly flawed. And here's the kicker. The Demiurge looks around the void believing he is the only God. He has no idea that the true divine realm exist above him. It's pure arrogance born from pure ignorance. He genuinely believes he is the ultimate creator. And in his blind pride he decides to create a universe but because he is fundamentally flawed, his creations are fundamentally flawed. He creates the physical universe earth animals and human bodies. INCOMPLETE.

"We host God. God is nature."

A brief examination on questioning in the dictatorship aspect:

Moreover, cultural traditions often play a role in shaping attitudes toward inquiry. Some societies valorize questioning as a path to innovation and progress, while others revere deference and continuity. In certain countries where the population is ruled under strict dictatorship, to question may be perceived as an attack upon the regime such as in Eritrea, an eastern African country also more commonly known as “the North Korean of Africa”. The country has been under the ruling of President Isaias Afwerki since the independence from Ethiopia in 1993. What began with promises of democracy quickly turned into one of the world’s most repressive dictatorships. The country has no free press, no independent judiciary and no functioning parliament. Political opponents, journalists and even ordinary critics vanish into secret prisons where torture and even death are common just for displaying their opinion. Questioning Eritrea’s authorities is not only dangerous but whishing on a silent death sentence. Now from a European point of view we could say “well we don’t fear to speak our minds because we have the right to free of speech” however this is also not so entirerly true. As I have mentioned before, we are under subtle pressure to hold our tongues when it comes to speaking our truths. In tight communities, we share the same morals as well as opinions through shared people that pass us by daily. This promises harmony and sufficient cooperations amongst groups.

…

Chaos shifts.

Yet it must also be acknowledged that fear of questioning is not entirely maladaptive. Social cohesion depends, in part, on the preservation of shared assumptions. A society in which every individual relentlessly interrogates every custom would descend into chaos. On a personal level, too, the suspension of doubt can provide a sense of stability and belonging. The fear of questioning, then, reflects the tension between two imperatives: the need for order and continuity, and the drive toward truth and transformation.

> Proof claims on how religion would rather have you put trust in your faith than into man-kind (yourself):
>
> Psalms 118:8–9
>
> *“It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in humans.*
> *It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes.”*
>
> Qur'an 3:160
>
> *“If Allah helps you, none can overcome you… so in Allah let the believers put their trust.”*
>
> Psalms 146:3 (often included in Jewish scripture tradition)
>
> *“Do not put your trust in princes, in human beings, who cannot save.”*

Religion when it best suits you:

But then again if you take the bible seriously when it says that homosexuality is a sin and will condemn you to all eternity in hell than you must also take the bible seriously when it says that men should cut of their hand if looking/ touching a woman the wrong way.

"But how can it be that we cannot move passed an outdated thought that is religion? Fear."

But how can it be that we struggle to move beyond what many would consider an outdated system of thought such as religion? The answer, in many cases, lies in fear. The fear of being wrong, and perhaps most powerfully: the fear of consequence. Religion often provides clear answers, structure, and a sense of certainty in an otherwise unpredictable world. To question it, or to step away from it, is not simply an intellectual decision—it can feel like a personal risk. For many, it means risking community, identity, and even moral security. In some belief systems, it also involves the fear of punishment, whether social or spiritual, which can be deeply ingrained from a young age. This fear creates a powerful barrier to questioning, encouraging individuals to remain within familiar boundaries rather than confront uncertainty. As a result, even when doubt arises, it is often suppressed, not because people are incapable of thinking differently, but because the cost of doing so feels too great

"When gluttony and greed are two of the seven deadly sins but streets paved of gold and a never ending buffet is the afterlife they're expecting."

Belief in the Absence of Wealth:

- It has always struck me how some could have so much while others have so little, and what really is the turning point to success?

- Does it really take 6 generations to escape poverty?

"Neurons that fire together, wire together": This principle (Hebbian learning) means that repeating thoughts and behaviors strengthens neural pathways, making them more efficient.

Further (non mentioned) statistics:

In contrast, wealthier countries—particularly in Western Europe and East Asia—show far lower levels of religiosity. Nations such as Sweden, Denmark, Japan, France, and the United Kingdom rank among the least religious in global surveys. In Sweden, for example, only 17% of people say religion is important in their daily lives, while the figure is around 27% in the United Kingdom and about 24% in Japan. These countries are also among the most economically developed and socially secure in the world.

This relationship between education and belief can be seen clearly in highly developed societies. Countries such as Sweden, Finland, Japan, and the Netherlands have very high literacy rates, advanced education systems, and strong scientific institutions. At the same time, they also have some of the lowest levels of religious practice in the world. In contrast, regions where educational opportunities are limited—such as parts of Sub-Saharan Africa or rural South Asia—often show extremely high levels of religious commitment.

However, the relationship between wealth and religiosity is not absolute. Some countries break the general pattern. The United States, for example, is both wealthy and relatively religious compared with other developed nations. About 65% of Americans say religion is important in their daily lives, a much higher percentage than in most European countries. Cultural history, immigration patterns, and strong religious institutions help explain why the United States remains more religious than other wealthy nations. This might also be linked to the American education system as at least 12 states including Iowa, Montana, Ohio, Texas, Florida, Hawaii, Kentucky, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Vermont and Wisconsin include bible studies into their curriculum.

Telling your child that they will burn in hell if they don't believe is a phycological form of abuse.

What if the one and only true God's religion existed but went extinct some time ago, are we all believing in the wrong thing?

"If we must answer to God and all his greatness to be rewarded in this lifetime and the next then what happens if there is no one left believing, what power does God have over us then."