

IS IT SAFEST TO BELIEVE IN GOD?

Some think you have nothing to lose by believing in God and everything to lose if you do not.

But belief is about evidence and even real faith needs evidence.

Ultimatums never work. They bully.

And they are arguing for blind faith which is not faith at all. What if all you have is reason? What if all you think you have is reason? What if God wants you to find him in reason? Some believers say that God is not to be found in reason but that denies that God will or might use reason as a sacrament through which we find him? And if there is a God he will honour us by honouring our reason.

And a loving God will still bless you if you do not believe. You do not need to believe in a medicine for it to work.

All reasonable people believe we need faith and sometimes a vague faith that things will be okay is enough. It will be enough for people who have walked the troubling treadmills of life and who know how things can get better. The atheist who knows pain and suffering and who witnesses that of others can think of many examples where the people learned from it and were more equipped to deal with any misfortune that could appear in the future. None of that is religious or needs belief in God or involves God. Faith grows through experience and you must help others - that is how you help your faith to grow. Unless you become part of the healing process for others you will not be able to feel that there is a light at the end of the tunnel if you end up going through similar torment. Faith should not make suffering and the dark side of human nature worse. If it cannot deal with them at least it must not make them any worse. At times the ability of faith to keep things as they are without worsening them is all that is possible and that must be accepted. Fighting it only makes you feel worse. Believing that God is going to help is not accepting. Faith is an argument against God not for God.

Blaise Pascal said that it does no harm to believe in God and we will go to Hell and lose his blessing in this life if we don't. So when we have nothing to lose and everything to gain we should believe in God. Pascal said we would not want to be unbelievers and find out when we die that we are wrong and have to face the God we denied. This is called Pascal's Wager. Some say Pascal's Wager is a misinterpretation for Pascal never encouraged a wager. He was not saying you should believe in God or else but explaining what will happen if you do not believe. Let us assume that it was a wager.

It does not claim to be an argument for God but an argument for believing in God. It claims that we are better off believing in a life after death for it is foolish not to for we might be wrong!

It is a crafty attempt to force people on the fence to make a decision for the Catholic God and the Catholic Church. Pascal certainly did not intend his argument to be applied by any other religion to itself. The threatening nature of the wager is disgusting and can only lead to bad religion.

If God is slandered by the doctrine of Hell then it follows that it is safer to believe in a God who corrects people but who never punishes anybody forever. If you think you have free will and can use it to stay away from God forever it does not follow that this estrangement need be hellish. And surely if God is so much better than that he can win your heart through your own free will? If hell is your own choice then it is not what you believe about God is the problem but you. The wager misses the point.

Thanks to Pascal, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that if you believe in God and obey him and join his Catholic Church, even if you are wrong and there is no God you will at least have lived a righteous life. They say that if you don't believe you will be damned forever. So they conclude that you are better off to believe. It is the best bet.

But if Pascal had said, "Ok follow God's laws whether you believe or not. If there is no God at least you will have lived a good life" he might have made some sense. Bringing God into the argument is just disingenuous.

But back to Pascal and what he said about religious faith being the best bet. Why is it the best bet? It is Jesus Christ saying we will go to Hell and be cursed if we do not believe. Why should we think he is right?

If those who use Pascal's argument were honest they would say, "We believe Jesus Christ warned that we will not be blessed in this life and damned forever in the next unless we believe in God therefore its safer to believe."

We can't say Jesus Christ warned. We have to say we believe Jesus Christ warned. That is because it wasn't Jesus who

wrote the gospels - people who could have erred wrote about him.

Their wager shows they mean, "Don't even consider another faith but this one." It's inherently intolerant and divisive and imperialist.

If I believe in one religion because it says I am at risk of Hell without it, then it follows that I should believe in the religion with the worst version of Hell. I am demeaning myself by giving in to threats if I go along with that! The wager is based on hypocrisy for nobody says you should convert to Islam which teaches a worse Hell than the Christians!

You cannot let a religion force you like that! What joy will you find in faith when faith is a veiled or even a shameless threat?

Pascal thinks belief in God is good. Who says belief in God is harmless to us and others? The teaching of Jesus that we must help others not for their sake at all but entirely for God's "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, self and mind" marks that religion as psychopathic. It puts a huge burden on human nature. The teaching is bad simply because it is counter-intuitive. Intuition is not always right but there are cases in which it is and to try to violate it is to do harm and violence to yourself and to those who are influenced by you. It oppresses us by saying we must love God with the whole heart ie emotions. It is telling us how to feel - that is a form of bullying. Trying to keep the commandment will make us worse at doing good for others not better.

The teaching only leads to Christians pretending they love God ultimately when they actually love, say their children, ultimately.

A variation of Pascal's nonsense goes, I should believe in God in case I am doing him an injustice by not honouring him and it's better for me if I believe in case I am wrong. This if it were emphasised would empty the Churches. People like God for the good feelings that come from the notion of God. They do not want to put him first never mind love him alone.

Believing in God in order to be blessed and escape Hell is actually pretending to honour him. You may think you do his will but you do not because you don't really care about what he wants and you just want the payoff. The argument is pro-hypocrisy.

We can't believe in God just because Christ wants us to curse us and wants us to go to Hell for unceasing torments for disbelieving for we can't accept every religion or god just because it or its god makes threats. Anybody who reveres the vice of blind faith who tells you that something terrible will happen to you if you don't believe what they believe is just admitting that they would like to see the misfortune visiting you. They wouldn't be making a dogma out of a guess otherwise. And how could it be harmless to believe in and reverence a God who has no understanding for people who don't believe in him? Where is his mercy for them? Anybody could manipulate you if you have to believe in whoever says God will do X, Y, Z if you don't do this or that. You can't believe in every religion that makes threats and it is sectarian and unfair to pick one religion out of many when you believe that you should believe in a threatening religion just in case.

What if Buddha was right that honouring God would be dangerous? And a truly good God will care only about what you do, not what you believe as long as it encourages you to do good. And you can honour God without believing in him. To honour a God who is evil is to show you don't really know what evil is as far as faith is concerned. What does that say about you as a person?

Belief in God is not necessary. The opinion that there is a God is better for it is less arrogant and sure of itself. If Catholics only had the opinion that Catholicism was true and Muslims only had the opinion that Islam was true there would have been less bloodshed between them. Yet the Bible puts belief or faith up at the top. It says if you don't believe in God or Jesus you will be lost in Hell forever and have to endure everlasting torment. Its God says faith or belief is a gift he gives. If religious belief is bad then so is Christianity.

The wager argument is an essential catalyst for and component of fundamentalism. Fundamentalists over-simplify things to exploit people. The argument assumes that belief in God is good, that any God is not enough and you need the hellfire making Christian God, that human nature is able to really believe out of fear, that being mercenary in spirituality is good and so on. All the assumptions are nasty and absurd. In fact, each one of us is the creator of our own belief therefore each one of us is the creator of our God. And we all have one even atheists for we all have something we value most of all. I am serving myself not a God. Religion then is based on lies and is an accessory so any harm done over it is inexcusable and its good is not proper good. The wager seems to expect us to consider submitting to religious authority for only such authority tells us that there is a God. It is said that we cannot decide everything for ourselves and must accept things on authority. For example, if you didn't have time to consider the god question, you could simply take your religion's word for it that he exists and that it has evidence to back up its word.

Fundamentalists react against progress and what they see as moral decline. They become cloistered and insular and

obscurantist. They think, "It is better to believe in our gospel for we don't we will go to ruin with the rest of the world." They are using the same logic as the wager.

The wager is irrational and manipulates people to think they believe provided they don't look deeply enough at it. It is riddled with violent wishes and fears. If it has never inspired and impelled those who have committed murder in the name of God, then that would be remarkable beyond belief.

The wager says one must make a choice for or against God. But what about being neutral? That is a choice too! (If you believe in free will - that is!). And the argument is biased because why God and not something else? Why not Jupiter? Why should God be given the honour?

It has been said that the argument is merely saying that it is best to believe in God and is not an argument that God exists.

The doctrine of God is that a completely and infinitely good being exists. This being must love us - that is work for our wellbeing. Thus it follows that the wisest risk is to believe in him. It follows that belief is best for us. So it is claimed. In fact God loving us does not mean that belief in God matters. If God is bigger than our errors then erroneously thinking there is no God does not matter. The belief is only allowed if it is best for God. If you believe in God simply because you think it is best to believe, that is not honouring God but yourself. You are supposed to love your children for their sake not because you think it is somehow best to do so.

Also, evil is a yes to chaos and the unexpected. If God has to tolerate evil he might have to tolerate you suffering for others for all eternity. It is not his will but we are told that evil is not his will.

You would need to know what is good and what is not good for belief in God to really be the best for you. But your perception of what is good is limited and we live in a nasty world where doing what is said to be right can actually make things worse. It is better to feel that this can happen than to imagine a God is guiding you into the right decision. If God does not exist and you feel guided that will not help matters. It is better to believe it is up to you not God to decide what to do. Once you start feeling guided towards a particular action it means the other points of view will not get the same consideration.

Should you think that it is good to be tortured forever? No for if you think that you deserve it then when you intentionally sin you intend to create this torture and deserve it. That would be very foolish. Clearly we should not take the risk of believing in a hellfire faith.

Bernard Williams was once asked if religious faith and worship could be thought of as colluding with a God who harms people and lets harm befall people. His reply was that religion is in a nasty world and is a nasty business itself. What religion does for people is that it helps them see how nasty the world is and how nasty God seems so that they can rise above that and get some spiritual good out of it. He seems to have meant that anger at God can be an impetus for good. He implies that we must have a sense of hatred for God and defiance of him. This would require arguing that we are better to believe in God as long as we have no respect for him and our hatred spurs us on to help the people who he allows to be hurt. If babies were dying and Christians were not doing enough surely you would be happy if people came along to help who worked themselves up to help by hating God and were helping the babies to spite him?

Being vindictive towards a sin means being vindictive to the sinner. A sinner shows what he is as a person by his sin so the sin cannot be treated as if it were not him. The sin is different from him but not separate from him. The Church contradicts the truth with love the sinner and hate the sin. It gets away with the lie because people think that hating the harm is the same as loving the person but it is forgotten that sin is a judgemental term. It is about what the person deserves and not the harm done to the person as such. The Church says God judges the sin not the sinner and loves sinners. Only a miracle could make that possible. Only a miracle that can make the impossible possible can enable us to love the sinner and hate the sin. The doctrine is so outrageous that it implies it is safer NOT to believe in God.

Pascal's view is based on the notion that if you do not believe in God and turn to him then you will reject him forever if you die. This suggests that you make your own Hell and God has nothing to do with it. It is a terrible thing to accuse people of being able to create an eternity of malice and evil. It is an insult to the human race that society does not take Christianity's accusation seriously.

Christianity uses Pascal's argument to manipulate people to serve it even at the price of making them fearful hypocrites. A person who pretends to honour God alone and who believes he should is in his heart the biggest hypocrite ever for he is breaking the biggest imaginable law.

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