

Finally, this argument does not work at all if we cannot choose what we believe. Surely just going through the motions of religion shouldn't be enough to earn one a ticket to Heaven (since God would know you were not being sincere), so you can't just choose religion, you have to choose to *completely believe* that religion.

Can you do that? Can you honestly choose what you believe? Or do you have to be convinced that something is true before you will believe it? If you don't have to be convinced, perhaps you should ask yourself what else there is that you believe simply because you desire to instead of because there is adequate reason to believe. You may be living in a fantasy world and not even realize it. Certainly there is risk in doing that.

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## WHY RISK BEING AN ATHEIST?

A Question of Moral Atheism

*from blog.iamanatheist.com*



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least inclusive? For example, if Catholics believe you can go to Heaven by living a good life but Protestants believe that only Protestants go to Heaven, should you choose Protestantism because then you win if either Catholicism or Protestantism is true?

And should amount of reward enter into the equation? Should you choose a religion that offers your own planet or a huge harem in the afterlife over one that just offers eternal life?

The argument also seems to place high value on the benefits of belief. For example, would you buy a lottery ticket, put it in a safety deposit box, never check to see if it won, and then be comforted by the knowledge that after you die your children may find it and be millionaires?

Pascal's wager assumes that God doesn't care whether belief is sincere or not, so long as you believe. But what if God values someone who intelligently (but incorrectly) chooses atheism over someone who chooses theism purely, selfishly, because it offers the best possibility of reward?

IF GOD EXISTS and you believe in Him, you will be eternally rewarded, but if you do not believe, you will be eternally punished. If there is no God, you are neither punished nor rewarded, no matter what you believe. So if believing in God might reap eternal reward and risks nothing, why not believe in God?

This argument is a form of Pascal's Wager, and it is still used today, some four-hundred years after its creation. But does it justify belief in God? Let's take a look.

An important element of the argument is that you lose nothing if you choose to believe in God and it turns out that God does not exist. But is this the case? Certainly, to be a follower of God worthy of Heaven, there must at least be some requirements of prayer, behavior, and belief. Each of these has a potential cost in time, social standing, and intellectual integrity.

Also, this argument assumes that you have a choice between theism and atheism. But in reality there are a great many religions to choose from, and many of them are mutually exclusive. Following the arguments reasoning, shouldn't you choose the religion that is the

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### WHY RISK



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# QUESTIONS OF MORAL ATHEISM: INSTRUCTIONS

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We appreciate your interest in helping us spread information about moral atheism! To make copies of this pamphlet for your own use or to share with friends, follow these simple steps:

1. Print pages one and two of this document, one on each side of the same piece of paper (if you don't have access to a duplex printer, print page one, put the page back in the paper tray upside down, and print page two — depending on the type of printer, you may have to experiment a bit).
2. Cut the printout in two, using the thin rules across the middle of the page as a guide.
3. Fold the two pieces of paper in half, making a pair of small pamphlets.
4. Keep one of the pamphlets to read, and give the other away to an interested friend or stranger.

That's it! If you have any questions, suggestions, or comments, we invite you to share them by leaving a comment on [blog.iamanatheist.org](http://blog.iamanatheist.org). Thanks!

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