

that their belief is pure faith, and try to cover their lack of sound reasoning with noisy rhetoric.

Wishing it was true. Wishing does not make it so, and convincing yourself that something you need to be true is indeed true just highlights how little basis your beliefs have. Sorry.

You don't like the consequences if it's not true. Arguing (for example) that if there is no God there is no guarantee of justice isn't proof that God exists. At best, it's proof that guaranteed justice doesn't exist. The same is true for arguments that without God there is no ultimate meaning, no absolute morality, no purpose to life, etc. — these things may simply not exist, or they may exist whether or not God exists.

For the reward. If you believe in God you might go to Heaven so you believe in God. But an offer of a reward that you will not live to see is not proof of anything. You're just fooling yourself.

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ARE THERE BAD REASONS TO BELIEVE IN GOD?

A Question of Moral Atheism

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Fear of being shunned by community. Do you believe in God because of how non-believers are treated? Is this any different than paying "protection" to gangsters so they won't trash your store? And do you think that God wants you believing out of fear of other people (instead of fear of Him, for example)?

To please someone else. Let's say you're a Catholic and convert to Judaism so that you can marry a nice girl you met in college. This implies that you can change your view of how the universe works (deciding that Jesus wasn't the savior after all, etc.) at will and for convenience. If your metaphysics is this malleable, then your convictions are likely quite shallow.

Because of bad reasoning. Some people claim to base their belief in God on arguments or evidence that is just plain false on the face of it. If you point out their errors, they either insult you, berate you, or move on to a new piece of bad evidence without defending their previous position. Such people either have such a terrible grasp of how to follow an argument that they are in constant danger of being taken advantage of, or they are committed to believing in God, refuse to say

THOUGH ATHEISTS THINK that atheists are incorrect in their conclusions about God, atheists don't necessarily consider theists to be irrational. In fact, some theists try to make sure their beliefs are logically consistent and well founded, just as moral atheists do.

But even though it's possible to be both a theist and reasonable, there are some reasons for belief in God that are significantly better than others. Here are a few of the worst.

Family tradition. Believing in God because you were brought up to believe in God isn't much of a reason. Why were you brought up religious? Because your parents were. Why were they? Because *their* parents were. Following this chain back — do you ever get to someone who had a reason other than tradition? If so, why not find out that ancestor's reason for belief instead of blindly carrying it on? And, just to be consistent, do you keep to all of your family's ancient traditional beliefs?

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QUESTIONS OF MORAL ATHEISM: INSTRUCTIONS

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. Thanks!
