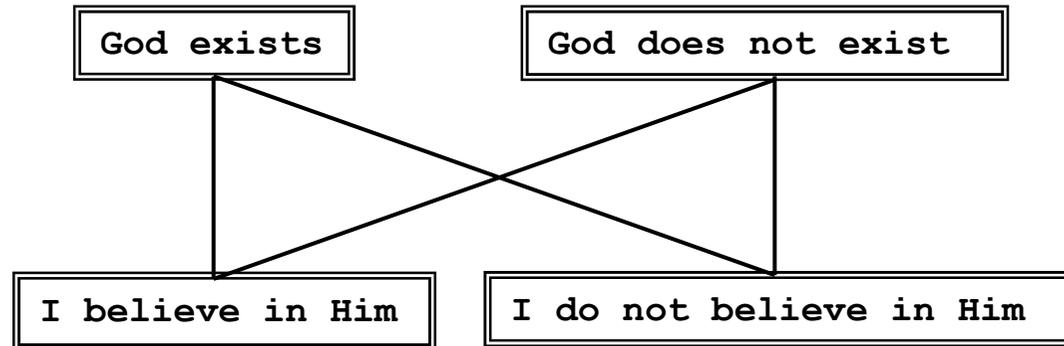


## It is Logical to Search for God - Pascal's Wager

Not sure if God exists? Then it makes most sense to assume that He does exist – and then to search for Him!  
Consider the simple diagram below:



Assume:

- ◆ **God does not exist** and I do not believe in Him. *Correct decision.* We don't waste our life trying to find Him.
- ◆ **God does not exist** but I believe in Him. *Incorrect decision.* We waste our life trying to find a non-existent entity.
- ◆ **God exists and I believe in Him.** *Correct decision.* We spend our life in communion with our Creator and have no fear of judgement after death.
- ◆ **God exists and I do not believe in Him.** *Incorrect decision.* We miss the opportunity to find real life with our Creator, and we will be judged for this after death. We lose everything!

**We stand to lose most if we assume God does not exist – and we are wrong!**

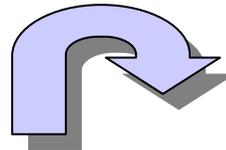
*“The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Psalm 14.1)*

## Socratic Principle of Inquiry

Pascal's wager suggests that the most logical stance is to assume God exists and then to search for Him. It is illogical to deny His existence since we cannot be sure we are correct and the consequences of an incorrect decision here can be serious. So how does one search for wisdom, truth, and ultimately, for God? Socrates' view of searching was to ideally find and listen to one who knows. Failing this, the only alternative in our search is to pursue reasoned discourse, argument and critical reflection. The well-known Socratic principle of inquiry states:

**"We must follow the argument wherever it leads"**

The injunction is to follow the path of our reflections no matter where they lead – even if argument leads us to truths that are unexpected and unattractive (in the sense that they could force us to cede mastery of oneself to an external source of governance). In short, it could enforce a U-turn in our worldview.



In recent years, Professor Anthony Flew was gracious enough to admit to such a U-turn. As one of the world's leading philosophers and one of its most renowned atheists, Flew admitted to following the Socratic principle all his life. This eventually led him to abandon Darwin's naturalism and to become a *deist*. Flew changed his atheistic stance to that of Einstein, who believed in "an intelligence that produced the complexity of creation". What changed his mind? One factor was the arguments advanced by Intelligent Design theorists e.g. the argument that the fine-tuning of the universe makes it impossible to explain the origin of life without a supreme intelligence. Flew also has a high regard for Jesus, but still finds much of the fundamentalist Christian doctrine difficult to swallow! But at least he is searching and open to argument.

## God Hears Genuine Seekers

Consider an apparent paradox. Hundreds of millions of people are genuinely religious (or devout) and seek God as they perceive Him. This includes Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, New-ager's and so on. They may have heard of the Christian message but do not adhere to it. The paradox arises when we read Jesus' statement:

*"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me." (John 14.6)*

Jesus is saying that no one can come to God (the Father) except via Himself. Does this mean that a genuinely religious person who is seeking God (but not through Jesus) is not heard by God? No, not necessarily. Consider the historical case of Cornelius, a Roman centurion who was "a devout man, one who feared God, and one who gave alms and prayed to God continuously" (Acts 10.2). Although Cornelius probably knew about Christ (Acts 10.36,37), he clearly was not a follower of Christ and so was not coming to God through Christ in the John 14.6 sense. **Yet God heard him and accepted his religious acts of alms giving (Acts 10.31)!** God saw his genuine heart and sent Peter to explain the new way to God through Christ's death and resurrection. Peter was to tell Cornelius and his household how to be truly and unambiguously 'saved' (Acts 11.14), namely:

*"that through His (Christ's) name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins" (Acts 10.43)*

Here, 'believing' means turning from our previous ways, including our previous approaches to God, and adhering to Christ's teachings. In turn God gives His Holy Spirit to help us (Acts 10.44-46). Cornelius and his household were then baptised as an outward sign of their turning to Christ (Acts 10.47.48).

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