

Pascal's Bet: Does God exist or not?



What are the chances? Blaise Pascal provides assistance

Dear Andrew, *

There is a bet that surpasses every other:
Pascal's bet.

Who was Blaise Pascal?

Blaise Pascal was an outstanding French mathematician, physicist and inventor; a great mind in human history. He was a child prodigy. Already at the age of 11 he devised basic geometric theorems, which are still valid today.

Later, his brilliant intelligence enabled him to develop and found the principles of the theory of probability. He devised principles for logical thinking, which are still valid today.

When his father, who was a tax collector, was delayed by time-consuming calculations, Pascal developed the first calculating machine. This was an important foundation for the development of the modern calculating machines.

Pascal made many inventions and developed important theorems. At 31 years of age he developed personal faith in Jesus Christ. Later, he wrote a defense statement for the Christian faith, but wasn't able to complete it since he died at the age of 39.

The modern and still popular computer language is named after him – Pascal.

This great mind estimated the probability of God's existence at a fair 50:50. His thoughts, known as "Pascal's Bet" went down into history.

* This name was selected to remind us of the biblical Andrew, who led his brother Peter to Jesus. (John 1:40-42)

Is there a God? Is there no God?

He once asked his friends the following question: You say: There is no God. I say: God does exist. If you are right and there is no God, what would happen to me? Nothing actually. I would die and that would be it. Maybe I might not have enjoyed everything that is seen as indispensable. But is that such a great loss?

But if there is a God, then everything, literally everything, would be lost for you. You would die and would have to give account to God. Or do you think that God would put up with someone ignoring Him? Admittedly, you would have had everything here, nevertheless you would lose everything.

Pascal's pointed thought makes it clear what Jesus Christ said much earlier:

"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"

The Bible says: *"He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."* (Matthew 16:26; 1 John 5:12 NKJV)

A Surgeon is against Faith

Dr. Viggo Olsen, a well-known surgeon, encountered Blaise Pascal's statements. He and his wife fought tooth and nail against the Christian faith. Together, they searched for all the arguments they could find and step by step they drifted into an unparalleled adventure. Dr. Olsen tells the story in his book: "The agnostic who dared to search".

What brought about a turning point?

They found a living faith in Jesus Christ by reading the Bible. **Blaise Pascal's theory of probability and its application to the claim to truth of the biblical-Christian faith was also a crucial help. The so-called "Pascal's bet".**

(Note: It has to do with the foundation of the Christian faith according to the Bible and not with church traditions.)

Pascal: The better choice

The surgeon relates: "Blaise Pascal dealt in-depth with the same choice that we have to make today."

He came to the conclusion that every sensible, thinking person had to make a decision for Jesus Christ, even when the chances of the Christian teachings being accurate were only 50:50. Here is his explanation:

Everyone has to bet

In the game of life everyone has to place a bet. There is a stake for every bet. Each person has to either bet his life on the claim that the Christian teaching is true or on the claim that it isn't true. When a person doesn't place a bet, then he has automatically placed a bet on the possibility that it isn't true.

First Possibility

Let's assume that a person chooses the biblical-Christian faith: If his assumption is correct, then he has gained everything. If his assumption is incorrect, then he has nothing to lose.

Second Possibility

Let's assume that a person decides AGAINST the Christian faith: If his assumption is correct, then he has gained nothing. If his assumption is incorrect, then he has lost everything.

Further Considerations

Dr. Olsen said about himself: "Since I used to be a passionate gambler, I was able to follow Pascal's arguments. I said to my wife that his argument is based on a simple 50:50 chance that the Christian faith is right. However, Pascal doesn't even take into consideration the countless evidence for the truth of the Christian teaching. Later, we discovered that Pascal did mention the search for proof after all."

Later, I will make a brief reference to evidence. Proof on one side or the other can be a great

help to us in making the right and best decision.

The principle of probability shows that it is important to make the effort to find the truth. Because this effort will be richly rewarded.

Dr. Olsen continued: "During this time, I had a clear insight with regards to faith. I saw that millions of people call themselves Christians. But in reality, they aren't true Christians, because their faith has become dull and diseased." 'Let's assume', I said to my wife, 'that two patients are suffering from the same fatal disease. Both of them think I am a skillful doctor. They both believe my diagnosis is correct. They also believe that the shots I prescribed will save them from dying. One of them gets the shot and survives. The other, despite his trust in me and my treatment, has an illogical fear of shots and thus refuses it. He dies.'"

What is the difference?

Both patients believed, both believed on the healing power of the medicine.

But belief that doesn't take possession, that isn't expressed in actions, isn't enough.

Consider what we can win:

- › Forgiveness of our guilt by grace without merit
- › A loving relationship with God
- › A changed life with different wishes and goals
- › A new inner strength for life
- › Joyful eternal life in a completely different dimension.
- › We won't be annihilated for eternity. (According to the Bible there is no eternal torment in hell.)

Are there decision-making aids?

Getting to know the evidence:

Prophecies: The Bible is the only book that contains exact predictions for long periods of time. There are hundreds of fulfilled prophecies, which we can verify. They show clearly that the Bible is of divine origin, since humans have no such foreknowledge.

The Bible itself is a miracle: This book about God's way of salvation was written over a period of 1,600 years by 40 men and contains 66 books. The miracle is that the contents all agree.

Archeological findings: The archeological finds have revealed an abundance of facts. Archeology confirms the Bible.

Changed lives: Every individual can experience the power of God in his own life. He can have the assurance that his sins are forgiven. He can be certain of his own resurrection and eternal life. Every person can lead a life full of significance and meaning through Christ.

I think it is good, if we don't make any emotional decisions, but rather weigh the evidence.

Getting to Know the Bible:

Reading the Bible: It is important that we get to know the Bible ourselves. I recommend reading the New Testament first, since it is historically closer to our times and gives us insights into Jesus' life here on earth. Afterwards, it is good to read the Old Testament. We should always pray before reading the Bible and should ask God to help us understand what we read.

Bible Correspondence Course: There are good free Bible lesson courses for beginners and advanced people, which can help us to get to know the Bible. These courses can be done alone or together with someone else.

Bible Discussion Group: This is a good opportunity to discuss the Bible in a small familial setting. Today, it is also possible to take part in Bible discussions online, i.e. Skype.

Bible Lectures: This is also a good possibility to gain basic understanding of God's word.

Doubters: People, who have honest questions, can get help so that they can make a good decision. One possibility is to pray in the following sense:

"Great God, is You really exist, then please help me to perceive You."

Prayer

The exact wording doesn't matter, but rather that we are sincere. Jesus said that anyone who is willing to do God's will, will be bestowed with understanding. (John 7:17) However, a person who deliberately doubts can't be helped by anyone – neither by God nor by people.

Rational human beings occupy themselves increasingly with the Bible. But they make a minor difference. A moderator said it like this: "I don't have anything against God, but I do have a lot against His 'ground crew'."

Many reckon that there must be something about God. They ask: Could I thereby find the meaning of life?

You have everything to win or everything to lose. It is your decision. The bet counts...

With warm greetings,

Helmut

Hilfreich war „Kann man Gott entfliehen“ von Dr. Viggo Olsen, Schulte-Verlag 1973 mit Genehmigung Gerth-Verlag.

Recommendation

Further Letters to Andrew, which feature evidence in favor of God's existence and the Bible:

Letter to Andrew 6: What does the future hold?

- › The shortest world history was written 2,600 years ago.
It shows us “what will be in the latter days”.
- › Of the six predictions, five have already been fulfilled.
- › Will Europe achieve political unity? What is still to come?

Letter to Andrew 7: Prevention or healing?

- › From whom does the science of preventive medicine stem?
- › Who helped to save millions of people's lives?

Letter to Andrew 8: Prophecies about Jesus Christ

- › Probability of fulfillment 1:10¹⁷ according to human criteria
- › But the prophecies were precisely fulfilled and strengthen our faith.

Letter to Andrew 9: Prophecies about four cities

- › Which were literally fulfilled although the mathematical probability is 1:200 trillion.
 - The Golden Gate of Jerusalem
 - The strange rock city of Petra
 - The legendary Babylon
 - The rise and fall of Tyre