

## **Must we abandon our concepts of God ?**

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In pre-scientific times, it was easy to believe that our earth was positioned in the middle of the universe. In early Chinese concepts, not only was our planet the centre of all that existed, but more than that, China itself was known as “the middle land” by the people who lived there. It seemed at that time, reasonable to assume that God was a great creator who looked upon his creation with kindness and care, and knew every individual by name as they offered their prayers to their creator.

Today, our knowledge of science has expanded our concept of the universe to *unimaginable* proportions. We now know that our planet, comparatively speaking, is as a small speck of dust among millions of huge stars as the cosmos continues to expand beyond billions of light years and multi-billions of stars and countless planets. It is now believed in modern astronomy that there are vast numbers of planets, some with a good possibility of sustaining forms of life yet unknown to us. Modern scientists do not regard our planet, earth, as the centre of the universe.

In simple terms, either the early concepts of God were true, and such a caring and loving God exists, or such a creator does not exist. At least, God does not exist in accordance with earlier simplified concepts that place humans as the apex of creation.

Let's assume for now, that such a caring creator God exists. If so, all those who offer prayers for guidance will be provided with similar responses to their prayers. Ethical matters will not depend upon relativistic answers. All who worship God will know what ethical approaches to take, and life will be harmonious, consistent, and morally correct. It will not be important whether believers are Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, or any other of the multitude of religions. God will be the same universal God who looks after all people and all ethical directions. God will not offer relativistic guidance, but God's answers will be

consistent, true, and unchanging. Religious believers will be guided by God in all matters regarding ethics, and life among religious followers will be harmonious. Believers will not disagree over questions such as divorce, sexual orientation, marriage ceremonies, religious sacraments, methods of fasting, or women as clergy. Nor will God change his advice from time to time. Modern religious believers must look at this concept of a powerful and consistent God and decide whether or not belief in God actually brings believers together in such a harmonious way on ethical questions. Or do religions sometimes divide us on important ethical matters?

Another possibility is that while there may be a great creator God, we as humans do not understand God's commands. Believers bring to their thoughts and prayers, their own perception of what they think is fair and just and ethical. Believers genuinely come to believe that what they consider ethical, is what their God is telling them. In this scenario, from time to time, even among religions, there will be various answers given on ethics by religious experts from many religious persuasions. There will even be times when such religious differences lead to disagreements and to wars among religions.

A third possibility exists. That is, believers create God concepts rather than the other way around. Believers bring to their religious thinking their own cultural concepts and societal mores that seem to work fairly well within their own communities. But these ethical concepts really have little to do with a creator God of earlier times. Answers instead will be relevant to each particular culture and its customs.

A fourth concept exists. Maybe there is no God at all. It is easy for most of us today to dismiss the multitude of earlier historic gods such as Zeus, Odin, Poseidon, and Thor. Arguments over their advice were often conflicting and led to battles among believers. It may be, just as earlier believers have had to re-think their ideas of earlier multitudes of gods, we will have to mentally refashion our present concepts of God and even abandon some of them. This will be an important and momentous ongoing task for future religious thinkers and for human kind.