

# How Do People View God --Today?

## Part I

Written by: D. Eddie Bhawanie

Today there is a fatal flaw in the teaching of the modern Church; the teaching is about the existence of the Truth, and how one arrives at Truth, and about the revelation of the Living God – through Jesus Christ. It appears that the fatal flaw is rooted in the Church’s low view of God, or a lack of understanding of Who GOD really is!

The modern Church is communicating this flaw—as an absolute, and sadly, it is accepted as reality. On the surface, it appears that the modern Church is living without the Biblical *content* of God, and the absence of the presence of God, at the center of their faith. Therefore, the consequence of living with the loss of the presence of God is being demonstrated in how Christians are living, and behaving both; in the Church, and in the world today. This can be observed in three areas:

- (i) The Christian mind is conformed to the culture, and thinks with a cultural mind-set.
- (ii) The Christian mind is conformed to the world and the culture, because it does not have as its reference point, The Living God, the complete work of the Incarnate Christ, and His resurrection as *the object* of its witness.
- (iii) There is a visible demonstration of religion and Church going, but they are void of the presence of the personality of God, and Christ, His holiness, and any objective, spiritual health. Christians are making a fair show in the flesh without having a corresponding inner-spiritual life!

In the Church today, the word “**God**” has become a religious cliché—a stereotype expression. In the study of God and in the life of the believer should not the Christian Faith, and worldview center on the Being, and Nature of God? It appears that, behind every manifestation of unrest in the lives of Christians looms this question of the Being of God.

One of the cancers in modern Church-thought, is that Church men/women have sentenced themselves to stumble, and blunder through the Christian life while wearing a blindfold. This is true, because there is a blatant disregard for the Study of the True God.

A belief in God, or gods of some kind is central to the great majority of the world’s religions, and religious people. The question that comes to mind is a logical one: “Is it reasonable to believe in God, and if so, what kind of God should we believe in?”

There are a great *number of views* about God, which vary in details; there are, of course, many interesting variations in each view. The views of God can fall into a number of types:

An **abstract** God – an abstract God is neither real, nor personal. An abstract God is eventually an idol. An abstraction is what remains when Man draws away all that is real and concrete concerning God, and all that remains are the *Idols* of: relationships, wealth, fame, materialism, and status, etc.,. An abstract God is cold, unloving, and impersonal. This concept of God leads to a silent atheism, and this idolatry exists in the lives of many people in the Church, and out of the Church, today.

A **mystical** God – someone, who is **impersonal**, and unloving, and is also accepted as **a force**. In the movie *Star Wars* the phrase “*may the force be with you*” is mentioned several times. A force has **no** personality. A force has no love, joy, peace, mercy, patience, compassion, etc., but the infinite-personal, living God does have these attributes! A force does little to forgive us our sins!

Take for example, nature’s powerful forces such as; Volcanoes, Earthquakes, Hurricanes, Typhoons, Floods, Tsunamis, Tidal waves, Tornadoes, Forest Fires, etc., --all these are forces of nature, but they have no personality—no life. They leave utter destruction behind them!

A **transactional (to transact, or conduct business activities) kind of God**, or a **Cosmic Santa Clause**. The idea namely, is, relating to God for toys, and things, and more things. It concerns having a God to meet all my **expectation; so, I can find meaning** in things and toys, etc. This way of thought relates to God for comfort, prosperity, etc., — where the individual goes after the accumulation of things and toys, in order, to obtain happiness –this also is idolatry!

The **essence of idolatry** is replacing God with tangible and observable things, and self. (Engaging in sin, the gratification of the senses such as pornography, fornication, adultery, alcohol, the use of tobacco, and the use of drugs –these things give one pleasure and gratification to the **physical** senses, but offer no meaning to life!)

Next, a God who **can be known only**, through **feelings and through the senses** hence; through subjectivism, or through human experiences. There are three great dangers here:

(i) All questions, and answers about God are raised in the context of feelings and experiences, and not through divine revelation. For those who practice this form of faith, God is accepted and seen through **feelings and subjectivism**.

**Subjectivism** is the doctrine that all knowledge is limited to human experiences, and that the good and right can be distinguished and judged only by individual feelings.

(ii) **There is also the** danger of rejecting Scriptural revelation; that is rejecting the living God Who speaks, and acts for Himself in the flow of history, through creation, through Biblical revelation, and through the light that is in the “conscience of man.”<sup>1</sup>

(iii) **The** danger that exists in the modern Church involves using the phrase: “*Just Believe,*” a similar approach to believe that has been well publicized in hit movies like *The Wizard of Oz.*

Perhaps we should ask ourselves a question, **what** is one called to believe about God? Are Christians called to believe in a Person, or in a God who is impersonal? The Bible calls people to believe, and place their faith in The Living, Personal God, Who exists:

*“And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that He exists, and that He rewards those who seek Him.”<sup>2</sup>*

In his book, *Your God Is Too Small*, the English author and theologian, J. B. Phillips describes some of the common gods that people manufacture. Here is a short summary of his comments:

*“One is the grand-old-man [god], the grand-fatherly, white-haired, indulgent god who smiles down on men and winks at their adultery, stealing, cheating, and lying. Then there are the resident-policeman god, whose primary job is to make life difficult and unenjoyable, and the god-in-a-box,-god, the private, exclusive, sectarian god. The managing director god is the god of the deists, the god who designed and created the universe, started it spinning, and now stands by far away watching it run down.”<sup>3</sup>*

Man-made [gods] are idols, they are [gods] of fear, of dread, of graven images, and of appeasement who demand much, promise little, and provide nothing! Man makes and serves his gods to assuage, and pacify his guilt, to cover his true guilt—which he seeks to stifle!

Men who deny the existence of the real God usually support one of two opposing hypotheses with respect to the existence of God: the **first** is: ***Wishing God into Existence***, and the **second** is: ***Wishing God out of Existence***.

(Remember, a hypothesis is a position, or set of positions, set forth as an explanation for the occurrence of some specified group of phenomena, either asserted

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<sup>1</sup>Romans 2:14-15.

<sup>2</sup>Hebrews 11:6.

<sup>3</sup> J. B. Phillips, *Your God Is Too Small*, Published by, MacMillan Publishing Company, [New York; New York], 1961, pp. 15-59,

merely as a provisional conjecture to guide investigation, or accepted as highly probable in the light of established facts).

The *first* hypothesis was suggested by the Vienna psychiatrist, Sigmund Freud, (1856-1939), in his book, *The Future of an Illusion*. He argues that religion is merely the *projection of a wish*. Actually, he says, there is nothing “out there,” meaning that there is no God.

Freud believed that man, because of his fears, developed the idea of a protective father. He believed that man created God, rather than that God created man. He went on to develop three chief causes which led man to project the idea of a protective heavenly father. But his ideas are just ideas, and is not actual evidence or proof. **We would ask**, “Does the fact that man needs God and wishes for God actually disprove that God exists?”

Consider *an opposite* hypothesis: Man wishes God *not to exist*. I believe that I can make a strong case for the idea that modern man really wishes that there were no God. Dr. Baxter, said it would go something like this:

*“Modern man possesses great pride in himself and in his accomplishments. He looks about himself and rejoices in his ability to cross the oceans and the continents. He is master of even the highest mountains and the deepest seas. He can brave the cold of the Antarctic, and the heat of the Sahara. In fractions of a second he can speak around the world and send pictures to the far corners of the earth. He can reach out into space and land on the moon, a sophisticated accomplishment almost beyond the comprehension of most men. Man can transport himself under the earth, on the sea, on land, through the air and even through space with great efficiency, and with great speed. He can build great skyscrapers, huge bridges, (cell phones), intricate computers, and countless other machines to do his work for him. . . .Through the use of advanced medical science he can cure many diseases, substitute organs in the human body for those that are worn out, and in general extend his life span. He can think, invent, and construct. There is almost no limit to what he can do. Therefore, there is a tendency . . . for man to feel that he is self-sufficient, independent, and without any need for God.”<sup>4</sup>*

Modern man can care for himself and almost for his every physical need. So man’s pride leads him to substituting God, for his own man-made god, and that leads to self-worship; for that tends to make him his own [god]!

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<sup>4</sup> Batsell B. Baxter, *I believe Because*, Published by Baker Book House, (Grand Rapids; Michigan) 1971, p. 34-35.

Modern Man, in both his pride and his accomplishments is then left with an image of God, and his image is of a God who is dead. So he has surrendered to a:

*“New atheism, which maintains that man has now reached a position of such power and independence that he needs no God in whom to trust.”<sup>5</sup>*

The true knowledge of God, as revealed in the Bible, leads to the content of His true existence. His created universe points to the inescapable conclusion that He exists; and He is never pleased, nor will He ever be pleased, with any of the idols man makes as a substitute for Him.

The famed, and brilliant Princeton physicist, Albert Einstein (1879-1955) said, *“Certainly there is a God. Any man who doesn’t believe in a cosmic force is a fool, but we could never know Him.”* Einstein, though very brilliant, was wrong. We can know God! In fact, in order, to please Him, we must believe that He is personal, knowable, loving, caring, moral, and one who responds very graciously to those who come to Him.<sup>6</sup> (see Rom. 1:18-19; Heb. 11:6).

Continued in Part II

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<sup>5</sup> David H. C. Reed, *Whose God Is Dead, The Challenge Of The New Atheism*, Published by, Forward Movement Publications, [Cincinnati; Ohio], 1966, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup>Romans 1:18-19; Hebrews 11:6.