

power, but some believe he actively creates signs or will perform healings and other miraculous acts if they are asked for in His name.

Others use the label “God” to describe a being with quite a different set of characteristics. For example, a Deist believes in a deity that created the universe and then, essentially, stepped out of the picture and let the universe go on its way without divine interference.

There are those who say that “everyone believes in the same God.” But, given the variety of beliefs about God’s nature and behavior, if everyone believes in the same being, then most of them are probably wrong about what He is like.

So before you get into a conversation about whether or not God exists or what He might be like, be sure that you and the person you’re talking to agree what the word “God” refers to. You might be surprised how different your views are.

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## WHAT IS GOD?

A Question of Moral Atheism

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doing so would be against his nature (in the same sense that a fish can't live happily on the moon because that would be against its nature — if it could live on the moon, it would be something other than a fish). Beyond these items, there is quite a bit of variation in how different religions see God. For example, most Christians believe that God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are part of a trinity of beings that though individuals, are of one nature and therefore all part of the same person. This allows Christians to consider themselves monotheistic even though they consider there to be, in one sense, three divine beings. (If you don't think this makes much sense that's okay — most non-theologians have a hard time wrapping their head around such an esoteric concept.) Some see God as an active force for justice in this world, dealing out punishment to the wicked (in the form of disease and disasters). Others believe God acts only to save and heal, and that the world's evils are the result of human corruption. Some believe that God no longer performs miracles on earth to demonstrate his

to be able to answer this question before you get into an argument about whether or not He exists. To most Jews, Christians, and Muslims, God is an incorporeal, personal, supernatural, monotheistic deity who created and actively watches over the universe. Characteristics often ascribed to God by believers include: omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, eternal, unchanging, good, loving, just, vengeful, simple, and necessarily existing. In addition to being the creator of the universe, God is the source of all things good and of morality itself. God's omnipotence means that He can do anything that can be done with an exercise of power. This does *not* mean that God can do anything at all — there are limits. Most importantly, God cannot do things which are logically impossible, such as make a square with no corners. Because God is perfectly good, God is incapable of doing evil. This means that, in a sense, God does not have free will. He cannot choose to do evil because



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# QUESTIONS OF MORAL ATHEISM: INSTRUCTIONS

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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](http://blog.iamanatheist.org). Thanks!

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