

Inventing God

By [Steve Woolley](#)

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I have a friend who washes windows for a living. I don't know what he used to do. According to him he raised horses, made a lot of money, owned everything he wanted and drank heavily. He more or less stumbled into Jesus through an introduction from another friend of mine, an Adventist pastor. Now he and Jesus are tight, he's been sober for five or six years, and he washes windows for a living. But I digress.

We got to talking the other day, and he wondered what we would do if we didn't have God. Together we decided that we would have to invent a god, which, of course, is precisely what people do all the time. I think the best inventors of god are atheists. They are very creative in inventing the god in whom they do not believe. Sometimes they stitch together a god out of bits and pieces of scriptural remnants with a trim of Greek, Egyptian or Nordic myth for decoration. Sometimes they invent a god out of the whole cloth of fertile imaginations. In either case credit is due for creativity.

By the way, accolades for creativity do not accrue to would be atheists whose only talent is caustic sarcasm. That takes very little creativity. Consider some of my own writing as a case in point. But again I digress.

Sadly, it's true that we Christians are also fond of creating a god or gods and giving them the name of Christ or God. J.B. Phillips' 1953 classic, *Your God is too Small*, or Philip Yancey's 1995, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, make that point well. We take limited Sunday school teaching carried into adulthood, combine it with sloppy lessons gained from half listened to sermons, and mix in popularized trash theology to create, for us Christians, a trinity of gods neatly packaged in little boxes

from which they are allowed to emerge for the limited purposes we have assigned to them.

Why

do you suppose that is? Are we afraid to let God be God? Is there something threatening about allowing our own limits of knowledge and ignorance be transcended by that which is not under our control?

I

wrote earlier about my friend the Rev. Gretchen Rehberg who, when asked if prayer works, says no. No, if by prayer you mean asking or telling God what to do and then sitting back to see if God does it. God desires conversation, communion, even arguing it out, but how scary is that? Maybe God will have something to say that I don't want to hear. Maybe God will want to hear something I don't want to say. Maybe I'll be forced to see something in me I don't want to see. Better to keep God in a box for occasional display.

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