

Our Triune God

God – Coming Face to Face with His Majesty

Who is God? In his book **The Future of an Illusion**, Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, said God is an invention of man (*New York: W.W. Norton, 1961*).

We desperately need security, he wrote, because we have deep-seated fears of living in a threatening world in which we have little control over our circumstances.

He also claimed that we invent God as a protective father, and he suggested three reasons for our doing so.

His first reason is that *we fear nature*—we fear its unpredictability, impersonality, and ruthlessness. Because we all see the frightful reality of disease, famine, and disasters against which we have only a nominal defense, Freud assumed that we postulate a supernatural being who can deliver us.

To illustrate that, picture in your mind a native who lives on a volcanic island. Suddenly he hears rumblings, and the ground begins to shake. He walks outside his hut and sees lava blowing out the top of the volcano. He realizes that shoring up his hut and comforting his wife and children won't help. Since there seems to be no way out, he resorts to looking for a supernatural being to save him from the terror of nature.

Another reason for inventing God, Freud claimed, is *our fear of relationships*. Because people often feel used by others, Freud assumed it was natural to conjure up a divine umpire—a cosmic God with a super whistle who ultimately stops play and penalizes people for what they have done. He made the commonsense observation that we all want someone who can right the wrongs of injustice.

Freud **also attributed this supposed invention of God** to *the fear of death*. He claimed that we want a Heavenly Father who will take us to a happy place, which we call heaven. It's hard to face the fact that we might cease to exist forever.

What about Freud's claims?

What are we to think of them? To begin with, his view of religion is rather simplistic. It's human nature to prefer that God does not exist. The first thing Adam and Eve did after they sinned was to hide from God (Gen. 3:8). To be free from the God who calls sinners into accountability has been a constant goal of humanity throughout history.

The Apostle Paul stated that everyone knows of God's existence "because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the Creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal

power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:19–20). This knowledge of God is planted within each person, and the fact of God’s existence is abundantly evident in creation.

However, even though every man and woman on earth knows of God’s existence, they do “*not see fit to acknowledge God any longer*” (v. 28). They reject **God’s self-revelation and refuse to acknowledge His glorious attributes**. Freud had it wrong: People do not wish to invent the true God; instead, they wish to deny His existence.

Furthermore, a careful examination of world religions shows that the gods spawned by them are rarely of the delivering kind, **but usually have an oppressive nature that needs continual appeasement**. Women in India who drown their babies in the Ganges River don’t think of their god as a savior, *but as a fearful ogre whom they must appease*. The gods of false religions are not protecting gods; *they are gods to be feared*. If people invent gods, they surely invent the wrong kinds! In fact, **Psalm 106** makes it clear that such “*gods*” are *actually demons* (vv. 36–37; cf. Ps. 96:5).

The Only True God

In contrast to Sigmund Freud are believers who accept the existence of God by faith. The beginning of faith is this: “He who comes to God must believe that He is” (Heb. 11:6). It involves more than just believing there is a God. It means believing in the only true God as revealed in Scripture.

In the Old Testament the Lord taught Job a lesson about faith by saying:

*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth!
Tell Me, if you have understanding,
Who set its measurements, since you know?

Or who stretched the line on it?
On what were its bases sunk?
Or who laid its cornerstone,
When the morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy? (Job 38:4–7)*

The Lord was saying, “*Job, you don’t know anything except what you know by faith. You weren’t around. You don’t have any answers except the answers I give you—and you either believe them or you don’t.*” Having faith is believing what God says to be true. The content of the Christian faith is God’s revealed Word.

Some people want to prove the existence of God through science. As valuable as science is, it has its limits. Paul Little pointed out:

*It can be said with equal emphasis that you can’t “prove”
Napoleon by the scientific method. The reason lies in the nature of*

history itself and in the limitations of the scientific method. In order for something to be “proved” by the scientific method, it must be repeatable. One cannot announce a new finding to the world on the basis of a single experiment.

But history in its very nature is non-repeatable. No man can “rerun” the beginning of the universe or bring Napoleon back or repeat the assassination of Lincoln or the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. But the fact that these events can’t be “proved” by repetition does not disprove their reality as events¹.

You can’t apply the scientific method to everything; it just doesn’t work. You can’t put love, justice, or anger in a test tube, but they’re obviously real nonetheless. Although you can’t prove the existence of God from science, there are abundant scientific and other rational evidences that make it reasonable to believe in God and His Word. (You can read about them in my booklet *You Can Trust the Bible* [Chicago: Moody, 1988].) Nevertheless, when you come right down to it, the Christian life boils down to faith. A person finally has to say, “I believe.”

As believers, we acknowledge that God exists. But do we know the God who exists? Do we know what He is like? If we are to learn of Him, we must turn to Scripture, for that is where He has revealed Himself to us.

¹ Know Why You Believe [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1968], p. 8