

# Thinking Theologically



*"Tell me about this God you don't believe in;  
chances are I don't believe in that God either."*

– Harry Emerson Fosdick

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## 1<sup>st</sup> break:

Describe the stage Borg calls “pre-critical naïveté.”

## 2<sup>nd</sup> break:

What are some of the alternatives to using the word “God” to describe the Divine?

How would you describe the stage Borg calls “critical thinking”?

## 3<sup>rd</sup> break:

Cobb discusses Omnipotence as an unbiblical concept that misrepresents the nature of the Divine. What do you see as some of the advantages of seeing God as a persuasive, relational power (instead of the unbiblical notion of omnipotent, coercive power)?

Describe the stage Borg calls “post-critical naïveté.”

### General Reflection:

What do you find most helpful or interesting from the material so far?

What are the implications for your personal spiritual journey? For Christianity as a whole?

## Spirit Practice

Ufford-Chase suggests, “We’ve got plenty of *thinking* going on out there and far too little acting.” Describe an action that you might take that has potential for changing your theological thinking.

## Words of Wisdom

Expand your God vocabulary. Practice using names for God that, while Biblical, are seldom heard in Christian circles. Consider how using different imagery alters your understanding or experience of what Marcus Borg calls “the More.”

The Name [HaShem]: (Leviticus 24:16)

Mother: (Deuteronomy 32:18)

Holy One: (Habakkuk 1:12)

The Spirit Of Wisdom And

Understanding: (Isaiah 11:2)

Woman in Labor: (Isaiah 42:14)

Comforting Mother: (Isaiah 66:13)

Light and Salvation: (Psalm 27:1)

Our Dwelling Place: (Psalm 90:1)

Fortress: (Psalm 91:2)

Refuge and Strength: (Psalm 46:1)

Hiding Place: (Psalm 32:7)

Shield: (Psalm 18:30)

Rock: (Habakkuk 1:12)

Cornerstone: (Psalm 118:22)

My Cup: (Psalm 16:5)

Star: (Numbers 24:17)

Potter: (Isaiah 64:8)

Creator: (Ecclesiastes 12:1)

Shepherd: (Genesis 49:24)

Redeemer: (Psalm 19:14)

Deliverer: (Psalm 144:2)

Power: (Mark 14:62)

A Consuming Fire: (Hebrews 12:29)

Promised Holy Spirit: (Ephesians 1:13)

The Spirit of the Living God: (2

Corinthians 3:3)

The Spirit Of Truth: (John 15:26)

Helper or Comforter: (John 14:26)

## Try it

Share the following poem with those who plan and implement Christian Education in your faith community. Discuss ways you can counter what seems to be the “cultural norm” described by the poet.

### Beyond the Sixth Grade

Graduated from theology  
In the sixth grade  
No need for Sunday School again  
Too much struggle for mom and dad  
To plead that young soul into a classroom  
One more Sabbath.  
Others finished with biblical studies  
Just after clergy words and hands  
Confirmed the journey.

For few remaining  
Or handful brought later by a party  
Simple answers served.  
Just when spicy foods and rich meals  
Could be appreciated,  
Peanut butter and jelly fare, crust off,  
Served cut in half  
As to a preschooler.  
As school encouraged wrestling with Plato  
and heavy weights  
Church promoted “simply believe.”

No one would conceive of youth departing  
Chemistry, government, orchestra and  
basketball  
Because knowledge and skills sufficient.  
No memo to sit this one out  
Concerning race relations and global affairs.  
No teacher would convey the theory  
That the universe would crack,  
All knowledge shatter  
If questioned, tugged, and manipulated  
This way and that.

Monday-through-Friday learner she became  
So did he.  
Absorbing the mysteries of the galaxies,  
Reveling in literature,  
Practicing cello and backstroke,  
Pondering ancient philosophies of the wise  
ones.  
Delighted by discoveries within and beyond  
self,  
Thrilled in the land of accomplishments  
And meaningful living.

All the while religious education -  
Perfect attendance awards  
With Bible school art  
Tucked in a scrapbook on a top shelf.  
Journey with the Creator deemed complete  
In an “all I need to know I learned by sixth  
grade” approach.

Is it any wonder that it is both stunning and  
refreshing  
To consider divine study -  
The kind where head and heart muscle grow  
As we grapple with God?  
Areas atrophied and places newly discovered  
Surprised that Holy Mystery can withstand  
Questions, fears, disillusionment, prods, and  
amazement -  
As can our faith.

-- Cynthia Langston Kirk