

Is God bald?

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I heard from a relative today a story about a younger child in our family who asked her parent if God has hair. The parent had at least enough theological sophistication to recognize that it is inappropriate to say “yes” in response to such a question, and so answered “No.”

The child looked puzzled, and said “So God is bald, then?”

It occurred to me that this story illustrates the simplistic character of many discussions about God. If God is not literally like certain childish or anthropomorphic depictions, then that simply leads to the conclusion that God is literally like the *opposite* of those depictions, or simply literally does not exist at all, disappearing completely along with his receding hairline.

But sometimes the discussions and depictions themselves are problematic at a more basic level, and attributes are off target both when affirmed and when denied. Theologians have acknowledged this for millennia, and yet popular discussion of deities very often seems to continue as though such cautions had never been voiced.

Yet I was struck as well by the fact that, at least up until a certain age, it probably would not be possible to discuss an abstract concept with a child. And so we have no choice but to use pictures and metaphors and images to illustrate ideas and values.

I wonder whether those reading this post think that growing out of childish thinking happens naturally, or requires a concerted effort. There clearly are people and groups that think it is appropriate to remain with childish ways of thinking. But I wonder whether it is their advocacy of that stance that leads people to fail to mature in their thinking, or whether it is conversely immature thinking that leads to

the adoption of such a religious perspective. Or maybe it is both, at least some of the time.

What do you think? Is God bald?

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