

## What Reality Are We Pointing to with the Word, “God”?

[Gene Marshall](#)

"Do you believe in God?" asks A. "What do you mean by God?" responds B.

A: Oh, you know, the Supreme Being.

B: What do you mean by *being*? And what kind of *being* would you imagine is supreme?

A: The Supreme Being is the creator of everything. Surely you don't believe we all got here by accident.

B: Oh, so you want to know if I hypothesize another world in which some invisible being causes everything that goes on in this world?

A: Well, I don't know if God causes everything. Some things are caused by Satan, and some by Nature. But yes. Do you believe there is a God in heaven, who causes many good things and got this universe started in the first place?

B: I don't believe there is another world with any kind of being in it — God, Satan, Angel, Goddess, or anything else. So, no; I'd have to say I don't believe in what you mean by "God."

Something similar to this conversation goes on throughout our culture. "A" is that person among us who tries to use the two-story worldview of Christian heritage in a literal manner. "B" is that person among us who is thoroughly committed to the one-story worldview, the way of viewing reality that now is common in contemporary scientific culture. For many of us, this conversation between "A" and "B" goes on inside our heads.

The philosopher Susan K. Langer was the one who clarified for me how amazingly obvious it is that the questions we ask give more direction to our thinking than the answers we give. So what question do we use to approach the subject of *God*? Schubert Ogden, in an essay called, "The Reality of God", asks and answers this question: "How can we picture the reality of God for people in this cultural setting?" (1) Ogden's question ignores a far more pressing question: "What reality are we pointing to with the word *God*?"

Hans Kung also ignores this question in his long, scholarly, and interesting book called, *Does God Exist?* (2) To focus on the question "Does God exist?" begs what I believe is the key question: "What reality is meant by the word *God*? Would we ever ask, "Does love exist?" or "Does water exist?" No, we feel something is strange about those questions. We just don't think that way. Rather, we describe this clear, running, bubbling, boiling, freezing, raining, thirst-quenching substance and then we say, "That is what I mean by the word *water*." When we talk of love, we describe specific interior human states and specific outward human behaviors and then say, "Those states and behaviors are what I mean by the word *love*? We might get into some strong arguments about what should be included or excluded from our use of the word *love*, but all the while we would know what we are talking about, and we would have no cause to ask, "Does love exist?"

Kung is one of the most progressive and well known Roman Catholic theologians alive. And Ogden, a Protestant, is likewise a known and accomplished scholar. I mention these two men to illustrate how deeply the whole Christian church is struggling with the word *God*. Both of these men are aware of many layers of the struggle and confusion surrounding the doctrine of God; yet both, I believe, are still trapped in confusing and obsolete ways of thinking about the subject.

What would it mean to approach the word *God* in the same way we approach the words *water* and *love*? **Rudolf Bultmann** did so in an influential essay called, "The Crisis of Faith." (3) Instead

of presupposing an idea of God, the existence of which can then be discussed, Bultmann says we must begin with our experience. He shows how every human being has experienced, or can experience, an obvious and unavoidable reality that Bultmann names *God*. He then asks, "Why name this reality *God* rather than something else?" And he also asks, "What does it mean for our whole lives to name this reality *God*?"

Bultmann raises another question: "Is this reality which I have named 'God' the same reality our biblical writings were pointing to with the word 'God'?" Yes, is his answer. In all his work, Bultmann has this basic aim: allowing us to hear what the Bible is saying rather than using the Bible to support ideas we already have.

So how does Bultmann use our everyday experience to help us see what he means and what the Bible means by the word *God*?

First, he points out that we are all taken up with the tasks of making our lives secure. We are unavoidably involved with the tasks of "provision, procuring, and preparation of the means of living." We hunt, grow, or buy our food. We prepare for the wherewithal to eat, sleep, work, and play the next month. Then he tells the story about the man who had filled his barns full — only to learn that he was going to die before he had time to use any of it. All of us have had the experience of something like this happening to us. Our efforts to be secure go amuck. Something unexpected happens. Perhaps we lose a job. Perhaps we experience a flood. This very week I dislocated a finger playing basketball and broke a tooth eating granola. I had to spend money I had not planned to spend at both doctor and dentist. All this reminded me how fragile my whole life actually is. Being a frail, fragile, finite creature dependent upon frail, fragile, finite things means I am always vulnerable to having my small and large achievements of security ripped away. If it were up to us, we would be secure. So our insecurity comes to us from some power outside ourselves that we do not control.

Once Bultmann has focused our eyes upon this real power — this unavoidable force in our daily lives, a force that is not in any way our own force — he says, "This mysterious power — the power that limits man and is master of him even when he thinks he is his own master — is God." (Bultmann, in the custom of his time, used the masculine gender for all persons. I will quote him verbatim and ask you, the reader, to include she, her, and woman in your awareness.)

Notice that Bultmann does not say that there is a supernatural power out there somewhere who invades our natural realm. He simply says that this mysterious power that all of us have experienced every day of our lives is what I, Bultmann, am pointing to with the word *God*.

Well, why call that "God"? Why not call it "fate" or "nature" or "life"? Why call it anything? These are questions that Bultmann deals with later in his essay. But first, he says more about what reality, in our own experience, he is pointing to with the word, "God."

Here is his second example: he describes how we long for true and beautiful moments, moments that we would like to last. And human life does have its lofty moments, moments we would like to embed in eternity. I can think of quite a few moments to which I might say, "But tarry, for thou art so fair." Stop the wheel of time! I wish to pause here a while longer. Bultmann then points out that "the moment just does not tarry." If it were up to me it would. But I am not able to stop time or to make some temporal thing eternal. The power that controls the temporal and the eternal is not me. Bultmann calls this power, "God."

Another example: our lives are driven by the desire for love. If we cannot be forever secure and content, let us at least be close to someone. And we do find solace with other people. In some periods of our lives, we may have many close relationships. If we increase our skills and put more effort into relating to others, we can have more closeness. However, Bultmann reminds us again of our limitations: "Some lives are poor in friendship and in love, and some rich, but even the rich life is aware of a final solitude into which it is forced." I must face my own big decisions and make them myself. Certainly, I must do my own dying. Just as certainly, I must do my own living. No matter how many people we have in our lives, we're also alone, finally and unavoidably alone. The more we open our selves to our real lives, the deeper the solitude reveals itself. We may want to avoid this and just be with others, but there is a power that is not our power that drives us into this final solitude. If we have our eyes focused on this power operating in our daily lives, we are looking at the reality that Bultmann calls, "God."

Bultmann takes up three more examples: our thirst for knowledge, our impulse to action, and our struggle for self-mastery. In each of these arenas he shows how we confront limitations.

We can never arrive at a final knowledge. After years of knowing more and more, we frequently find ourselves starting all over in our quest for knowledge. The honest study of reality is somewhat like this story: I went on a long trip, and while I was gone my closest colleagues began doing entirely different things. When I came home they were using a new set of words. I did not know what they were talking about. They were doing new things that I did not know how to do. All my hard-won wisdoms of the past were irrelevant to what was now going on. I was deeply resentful. Why wasn't I consulted? I felt like I had been secretly excommunicated from the group and that no one took me seriously anymore. This experience with my busy colleagues is like my experience with the wholeness of reality. Without consulting me, things get changed. Reality moves on ahead. I come off as someone who does not know what is going on anymore.

We also experience the frailty of our actions and accomplishments. Even the pyramids of Egypt are slowly wasting away. Most of our achievements are like sandcastles on the beach. And many of the things we work for never come to pass. "The power that sets a terminus to knowing and doing is God."

And self-mastery? If our knowing and doing are not solid, we think that we can at least feel good about ourselves: we can do our duty. Again, Bultmann points out our limitations. No matter how we conceive what it is we ought to do, our own conscience ends up pronouncing us "guilty of wasted time and lost opportunities, of impure thoughts and mean actions." Whatever kind of excellence we project for ourselves and work toward, we create in our own heads a conscience that shows us how "small, incomplete, and wretched we are."

All of the above ways of experiencing limitation are unavoidable. Whatever we do, we are confronted with whatever it is that makes us finite. I am not making myself finite; some mysterious "not me" is making me finite. This mysterious power, says Bultmann, is what I am pointing to with the word *God*.

"It is God who makes us finite, who makes a comedy of our care, who allows our longing to miscarry, who casts us into solitude, who sets a terminus to our knowing and doing, who calls us to duty, and who gives the guilty over to torment." Such is Bultmann's summary of his essay up to this point. He then turns to the other side of the same story. We are not only limited but we are also being given our lives — the very lives that are then limited. We are being given all the cares

and drives that make our lives what they are. This mysterious power, experienced as giving us our lives, Bultmann also calls "God." In one sentence, parallel to the sentence above, Bultmann summarizes this side of the picture: "And yet, at the same time, it is God who forces us into life and drives us into care; who puts longing and desire for love in our hearts; who gives us thoughts and strength for our work, and who places us in the eternal struggle between self-assertion and duty."(4)

Now Bultmann has painted his master picture: we see an enigmatic power operative in our daily lives — giving us our lives, limiting our lives in every possible way, and finally taking our lives away. There can be no argument whether or not this power exists. If you don't want to call it a power, call it a force, an up-against-ness, or the un-synonymous-with-me-ness. We are not talking about some metaphysical idea. We are talking about an unavoidable actuality. Words may fail us, but we know we experience this reality.

Having established clarity on what he is talking about, Bultmann goes on to ask his next question:

Why do we call this mysterious power *God*? Why give the enigma, the mystery that drives us this way or that and hedges us in, any name other than simply the *enigma*, or *fate*? Or, if there must be a name, why not simply *the devil*? Does not this power play a cruel game with us, destroying and annihilating? Is not unfulfillment the distinguishing mark of every life? Is not death and nothingness the end? (5)

These questions reveal that the issue of a name for the mysterious power is the issue of how we are going to relate to that power and thus relate to our own finitude, to all aspects of our lives. If we call this enigmatic power "the devil," we are thereby proclaiming reality to be fundamentally evil. We are thus taking a relationship to reality and to our whole lives that results in a state of life Tillich called "despair." If reality is viewed as evil, then we are estranged from reality. And because we are also bound to reality, we are in despair. Sometimes it seems to us that there is no other possibility. Life has dealt us some severe blow. We are in grief. We are not willing to be in grief. We are not willing to be the person to whom this thing has happened. We despair.

But despair is not the only option. Bultmann describes the alternative:

It is the courage to assert that in the knowledge of this power every being acquires its meaning, that in knowing this power I also realize I belong to it, and that the limits constraining me are inwardly removed. This will, of course, happen when I give up my claim to make my own way — when I submit to this power as that which brought me into existence, and when I can say "Yes" to it. (6)

This response Bultmann calls "faith" or "faith in God," for the response of faith means trust, a trust that makes meaningful our giving the enigmatic power the name *God*.

For me to look into the awe-filling fullness of enigmatic reality and pronounce the name "God," means a commitment of my life to realistic living. Reality, the wholeness of reality, is my God — the object of my trust and loyalty. Just as Joyce is my sweetheart, so reality is my God. The name *God* is not being used as a proper name for some super being whose existence we can question. The name *God* means "my God" — my personal trust in the enigmatic and overwhelming reality with which I am always confronted.

Obviously such faith is not an escape from the finite conditions of life, but gives us the tranquility to live abundantly within the real human situation. Our longings continue to be frustrated, but we no longer experience the torture of longing for a life that never comes. We have found a deeper sort of contentment through surrendering our lives to the uncontrollable flow of moments — some lofty, some low. We no longer require permanence for our knowledge and action, so we can be grateful for each new opportunity to know and to act. Living in this faith, we even trust the voice of conscience that kills our egotistical arrogance and brings us back to our honest selves. And when we enter the place of our final solitude, instead of panicking, we find courage to embrace the dignity and joy of having community with the depth and wholeness of reality.

### **When Bad Theology Happens to Pained People**

Such an understanding of God and faith is not the popular view. For example, it is almost the opposite of what bestselling author Harold Kushner is saying in his book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Here is a revealing quotation:

God does not want you to be sick or crippled. He didn't make you have this problem, and He doesn't want you to go on having it, but He can't make it go away. That is something which is too hard for God. ... Fate, not God, sends us the problem. When we try to deal with it, we find out that we are not strong. We are weak; we get tired, we get angry, overwhelmed. We begin to wonder how we will even make it through all the years. But when we reach the limits of our own strength and courage, something unexpected happens. We find reinforcement coming from a source outside of ourselves. And in the knowledge that we are not alone, that God is on our side, we manage to go on. (7)

Kushner is projecting into some second-story world a God who has our values (that is, suffering is bad). Then he assumes that this "super being" can assist us to cope with our real fate. He does not deal with the fundamental question raised by Bultmann: what relationship shall we take to our enigmatic fate? He just assumes this perspective: our fate contains "raw deals" with which we must somehow cope.

And what are the consequences of Kushner's assumptions about good and bad? As Bultmann has pointed out, approximately half of what goes on in our lives is having to face limits and other disappointments beyond our control. So if these things are all bad, then "bads" make up half our lives. If we view half of our lives as bad, we are in despair over our lives! Kushner's entire theology is an expression of his despair over his fate!

Suppose we assume that we are not dealing with an impersonal fate constantly giving us raw deals, but trust instead that this very enigmatic fate is our God. What would this mean in terms of our approach to suffering? It would mean a radical change in our values. From the perspective of such faith, there are no bad things happening to good people. All things in life are the fullness of life and we all must contend with them.

It is not only necessary but wholesome that I live the reality I am given — neither despairing over it nor fleeing from it. Reality is not too hard for me; I am made for reality! Furthermore, there are no good people: there are just people like Kushner and me, despairing people who can be healed, who can trust reality (i.e., have faith in God).

I do not mean to imply that such a faith is easy. When we have an intense loss or tragedy in our lives, we do not affirm the living of that reality without an interior struggle. Also "affirming reality" does not mean an unfeeling, stoic, numb, getting-on with things. Affirming our real past, or our real present, or our real future does not mean ignoring our feelings of grief, sadness, fear, horror, gloom, excitement, or whatever. These feelings are part of our experience of reality and they also are good. Only when we experience such feelings fully is our affirmation of reality complete. Affirming reality does not mean being a passive person: our freedom, our creativity to change things, is an essential aspect of our real lives.

Perhaps some people have been assisted by Kushner's book to see that our suffering does not come to us as a punishment because we have done something wrong. Certainly it is true that ours is not a moral universe that treats everyone fairly according to their 'just desserts'. Kushner was impressed with the book of Job, for he saw that the book of Job was an attack on that "bad theology" which says that we get the suffering we deserve. Kushner, the author of *Job*, Bultmann, and I all agree on that. However, where Kushner comments on the very end of the book of Job, he admits that he is not clear about the message the author is trying to express. Kushner does not see that Job stops talking about God as an idea that explains something. Job starts experiencing the enigmatic mystery that was relating to him through his very suffering. He saw, with his awe-filled consciousness, the stark power and glory of what he was finally up against. In the first nine-tenths of the book, Job is arguing with God or with his companions about God's righteousness or God's proper relation to Job's righteousness. Now Job sees that all such arguments are just plain silly. God is not a theory about the way things work. God is a reality we experience directly.

In Job 42:5-6, we find Job saying:

I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear,  
but now my eye sees thee;  
therefore I despise myself,  
and repent in dust and ashes.

And what is Job repenting of? He is giving up his insistence that he should understand the mystery of reality. He is content to allow the enigma to be enigmatic and himself to be ignorant. He has made peace with the real situation. He has let the enigmatic power be God — his God.

### **The Two-Story Mind-Block**

Schubert Ogden has claimed that Bultmann only talked about "God for us" (that is, about how we experience God), but did not go on to talk about "God in Himself." Bultmann, in his reply to Ogden, made the point that such an objective picturing of God is nonsense. (8) Is this so? If so, what has happened to our familiar ways of talking about God?

Whether individual persons realize it or not, something has happened in our whole culture relative to a meaningful use of the word *God*. This shift in the course of religion is somewhat like what happened in 20<sup>th</sup> century physics. As Einstein overturned the familiar Newtonian concepts of absolute time and space, so Bultmann and many others have pointed out how the whole trend of contemporary culture has undermined a long-established mode of religious reasoning.

Our religious confusions arose when we moved into the age of modern science. Many religious scholars attempted to understand the inherited worldview of the Bible and Christian tradition in terms of the literalism of modern scientific investigation. But this leads to problems, because the religious message of the Bible and Christian tradition were both formulated in patterns of expression that I will call *the two-story metaphysics*.

What do I mean by two-story metaphysics? I mean the assumption that there are two realms: the *natural* and the *supernatural*. This appears in biblical language as: "in heaven" and "on earth." Even the most primitive tribes of people made a distinction between the spirit world and the ordinary world. The two-story worldview is very ancient. It pre-dates Christianity by thousands of years. And it was not seriously challenged until the 19th century.

What is wrong with the two-story worldview? In the first place, it is not being used today as a serious religious metaphor: it is being taken literally. Literalism is a high virtue in the scientific method of truth. Modern science has taught us to ask: Did this really happen? Does this actually weigh five pounds? Is so-and-so really there? Was Jonah really swallowed by a big fish or was that in fact a short story understood even by its author to be fiction? What is literally true?

Religious thinkers who have thought "literally true" and "religiously true" to be the same thing have defended the literal truth of the Bible and Christian tradition. They have fought scientifically minded thinkers whose pursuit of literal truth resulted in contradictions with religious statements when those statements were taken literally. The irony of this long warfare, still being fought by many people, is that both sides agree that literal (factual) truth is the only truth that matters. Religious (practical) truth is being ignored both by the scientifically minded skeptics and the literalistic defenders of religion.

While only the most conservative Christians insist that Jonah's story is literal historical fact, quite liberal Christians show up claiming that there is a literal Supernatural Being in a literal supernatural realm. The persistence of literalism is understandable when we realize that literalism is the scientific worldview. But the two-story worldview came into being long before literal truth became the sort of ideal it is now. Jesus, Paul, Amos, or Isaiah never asked if the second-story world was literally there. That is a modern question! If any of them were alive today, they would laugh at us for thinking that they were in the least interested in a question like that. In their time, they did not dwell on distinctions between literal, factual truth and poetic, practical truth. They just spoke about the reality that they experienced — and did so in the familiar metaphysical poetry of their time.

So what is really going on when we want these biblical figures to support our belief in a literal God residing in a literal heaven? We are trying to escape the risk of faith. We don't want to be in the actual human situation of having to bet our lives on the trustworthiness of mysterious reality. We want proof that there actually is a literal loving God. An honest use of a phrase like "Our Father who art in heaven" means that we are choosing to bet our lives that this mysterious reality, which pushes us this way and that, is trustworthy — that is, like a Father. (We could just as well say, "like a Mother.")

If thousands of years of religious statements are not literal truth, what kind of truth are they? They are a form of poetry, emotionally nourishing metaphysical poetry (i.e., practical truth), expressing the nature of a trust-filled relationship with the whole of reality.

The writings of the Bible and Christian heritage struggle over and over with this basic question: Does that mysterious power, the inescapable power that pushes us this way and that, love us? Only faith, not intelligence, can answer that question. Faith is trust, a risk, a bet of my whole life on the trustworthy nature of that power that "no one has ever seen" (John 1:18). After the risk of faith has been taken, *then* the faithful create their metaphysical pictures of the nature of this unseen mysteriousness from which we cannot escape.

Consider the following as powerful pictures of someone's faith that reality in all its unknown wonder is trustworthy: "a Creator who stooped to the dust of the earth and breathed life into me," or "a Benevolent Father who sent his loyal son for my salvation," or "a Mother Goddess out of whose womb I have come and at whose breast I suckle." As pictures of some literal being in some literal place, all these images become nonsensical and irrelevant. But these pictures were not invented to be used so superficially!

As pictures of trust in the basic goodness of an enigmatic reality, these metaphors had revolutionary power. Today we need new poetry grounded in the intellectual climate of our time. The two-story worldview has become an obsolete religious metaphor. It is dying. God, in Bultmann's sense, is not, however, dying. What is passing away is a fragile human invention: the two-story worldview.

This transition is indeed an ominous thing: we are altering the basic religious metaphor used by the human race for at least 30,000 years. That time span is one expression of how profound the current revolution in religion actually is. We should perhaps pause a few seconds and soak up some of the awe that is present in such a death. This *awe of oblivion* regarding the death of the two-story metaphor is another concrete experience of the terminus to all human knowing.

The demise of our two-story God-talk is an experience of the enigmatic and mysterious power that Bultmann called "God." This tectonic shift from a two-story to a one-story worldview is global; it is affecting every religion on the planet. Every aspect of thought is affected. We can no longer talk about reality and ultimate reality as if there were a distinction. That is two-story poetry. We can no longer talk about reality and the meaning of reality as if the meaning of reality were some second realm of mystical space or cosmic order. There is no meaningful rational order out there somewhere. That, too, is two-story poetry.

If, in the future, Christian faith is to be effectively expressed, we who understand ourselves as the bearers of that faith will need fresh ways to express our trust in mysterious reality's trustworthiness. I believe that a new religious metaphor, one that will replace the two-story metaphor, is already emerging. We are already being given a new way to talk about what the biblical heritage meant by the heavenly realm. "Heaven" in the two-story metaphor was pictured as another realm at the *edge* of ordinary reality. In the new metaphor, "heaven" is envisioned as a qualitative intensification happening in the *center* of the ordinary flow of reality.

In the midst of my ordinary flow of life, an extraordinary intensity burns through. That is the way I experience being in awe: this bit of ordinary reality is on fire. I do not presuppose a miraculous supernatural invasion of the natural order. I am just encountering reality with an intensity of awareness that vastly exceeds the awareness I usually bring to the flow of my life. In such an awe-moment, I am seeing reality in a deeper way. Reality has not itself become deeper; rather, a greater depth of reality has been "revealed" to me. Ordinary reality becomes extraordinary.



Indeed, I see at such a moment that ordinary reality never was ordinary. I, in my insensitivity, had overlooked its awe-filling dimensions.

In truth, there is just one reality — in part familiar and predictable but in greater part mysterious and unpredictable. These two parts are not two realms: natural and supernatural. Rather, they are dynamics of one realm, one "holomovement" of reality. In the midst of the all-too-familiar aspects of life, I become aware of the awe-filling, the extraordinary, the sublime.

This new metaphor is not simply the old two-story metaphor with the top story knocked off. That is one way to talk about scientific materialism, the sort of philosophy that makes everything natural while paying no mind to awe an inspiration. Such one-story spiritless secularism is not the new religious metaphor I am describing. The new metaphor (which pictures the awe-filled experience of reality opening up in the center of ordinary reality) enables us to open ourselves to reality in both its familiar naturalness and in its awe-producing strangeness. Reality is both known and unknown, ordinary and profoundly mysterious. Only when we accept and honor this mysteriousness in the midst of ordinary life, will we stop trying to wrap life up in neat intellectual boxes.

With the new metaphor in mind, we will continue to expand beyond the limits of our current understanding, but we will expect to meet more and more mysteriousness, rather than closer and closer approximations to some absolute truth that can be grasped by human intelligence. This way of sensing our relationship with reality is consistent with good science. Reality is mysterious, bigger than all our scientific understandings of it. And this awe-producing mysteriousness is not something to be solved with one more year in a good science class. It is a permanent quality of the nature of the universe. The mysteriousness of reality is utterly inescapable, no matter how powerful our knowledge and technological skill may become. A sensitive student of modern science knows this.

Faith in God means trusting this mysterious reality, known to the scientist, known to each of us. *Reality is not too hard for us; we are made for it!* Trusting in reality means interpreting generously the unpleasant and challenging aspects of our lives as well as the pleasant and glorious. It means living into the question: *What's possible now?* Doing so brings an end to incapacitating worry about ourselves, our fellow human beings, our social destiny, our fragile planet. It means accepting realistic living as wholesome living — however many large-scale or small-scale problems we have to contend with.

*Realistic living is the good life.* The evil life is fleeing from real life into sentimental beliefs about a literal God who will see to it that our planet will be spared. The evil life is fleeing from real life into pessimistic beliefs about a literal God who is already determined to destroy the earth. In contrast, the good life is a wholesome belief in reality's trustworthiness. The good life is courageous faith that allows us to live creatively the crises we encounter. Realistic living is the practical consequence of an honest embodiment of trust-sayings like, "God our Father" or "God our Mother." Such faith banishes despair and inspires us to live fully, to love broadly, and to leave a sweet legacy. As the very heart of religion, it calls us into an ever-deepening, ever-widening communion with our true self — with Nature, with Reality, with God.

### Exercise:

Select three passages from the Bible that contain the word, "God," and read those passages with Bultmann's clarification in mind. Prevent your mind from viewing off into visualizing a Super Being in a so-called supernatural realm. See if these passages illuminate your life, when "God" means the enigmatic power you confront every day of your life.

---

Originally published in [Gene Marshall's](#) 1985 book, [Primer on Radical Christianity](#).

A 36-minute audio recording of this essay, narrated by eco-theologian [Michael Dowd](#), can be found [here](#). Text here: <http://thegreatstory.org/Bultmann-Reality-Is-God.pdf>

Gene and Joyce Marshall's website is: [RealiticLiving.org](http://RealiticLiving.org)

Subscribe to their e-newsletter here: [Citizens' Call](#)

---

### END NOTES

- (1) Shubert M. Ogden, *The Reality of God* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1964) Chapter 1
- (2) Hans Kung, *Does God Exist?* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1981)
- (3) Rudolf Bultmann, "The Crisis of Faith", from *Essays: Philosophical and Theological* (London: SCM Press, 1955)
- (4) *ibid*
- (5) *ibid*
- (6) *ibid*
- (7) Harold Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), p. 129
- (8) Charles W. Kegley, ed., *The Theology of Rudolf Bultmann* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966) Bultmann's Reply to Interpretation and Criticism, p. 273