

# critique

A Ransom Fellowship Publication

2015 Issue 5

## THINKING ABOUT GOD AND THE REALLY REAL



## CRITIQUE



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**ABOUT CRITIQUE:** Critique is part of the work of Ransom Fellowship founded by Denis and Margie Haack in 1982. Together, they have created a ministry that includes lecturing, mentoring, writing, teaching, hospitality, feeding, and encouraging those who want to know more about what it means to be a Christian in the everyday life of the twenty-first century.

Except where noted, all articles are by Denis Haack.

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Everyone on Ransom's mailing list also receives *Letters from The House Between* (formerly *Notes from Toad Hall*), a newsletter by Margie Haack in which she reflects on what it means to be faithful in the ordinary and routine of daily life and gives news about Ransom's ministry.

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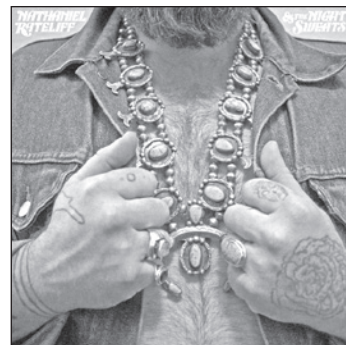
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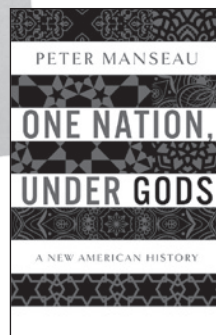
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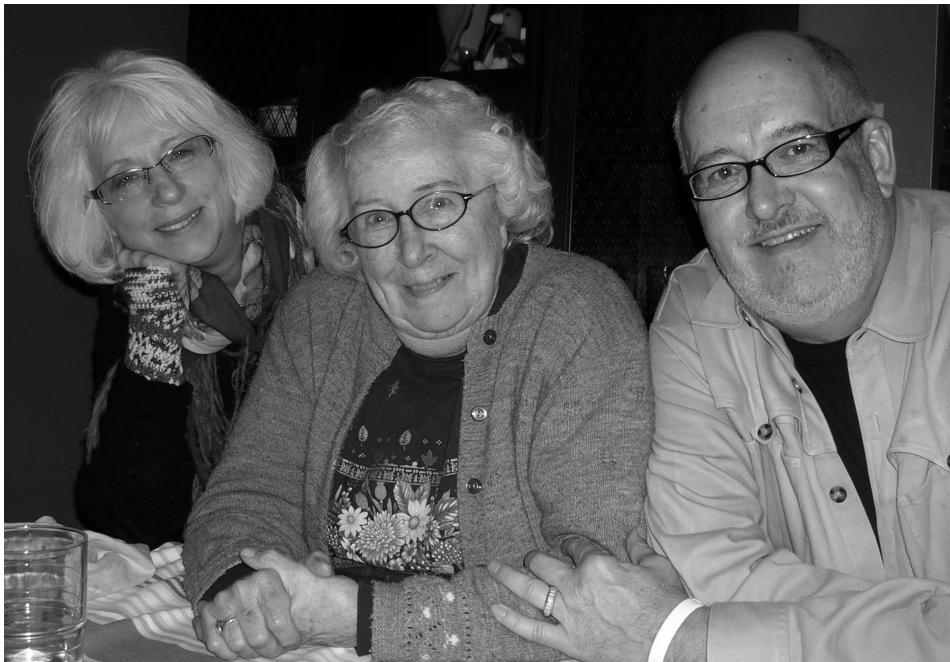
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# Welcoming Whispers of Hope



This last Sunday, early in the morning, my beloved Aunt Ruth passed from this life into the next. It was not unexpected, since she was 94 and suffering from Alzheimer's and diabetes, but I feel the loss keenly. Much of my childhood is shrouded in a fog of forgetfulness, but my memories of AR remain bright. When I was with her, I could be myself and talk about anything.

I think AR felt marginalized growing up. She was married briefly before losing Uncle Jay to cancer, worked for one company her entire adult life, and lived a quiet life in a small house in Massachusetts. She found contentment in the simple rhythm of work and weekends, reading books from the library, soaking in the sun at Horseneck Beach, going out for fish and chips, and sneaking bits of bacon to her much adored and spoiled

toy poodle, Lord Paddington (Paddy).

I loved being with AR as a child, though didn't know why until much later. She provided a safe place as I was growing up and so gave me something none of us can live without: hope. She never demeaned my feeling marginalized, and was always dismissive of the legalistic moralism that had so distorted the fundamentalism of our wider family. AR did not provide answers to my questions, but she allowed me to voice my questions and doubts without judgment or the usual pietistic responses that are so discouraging.

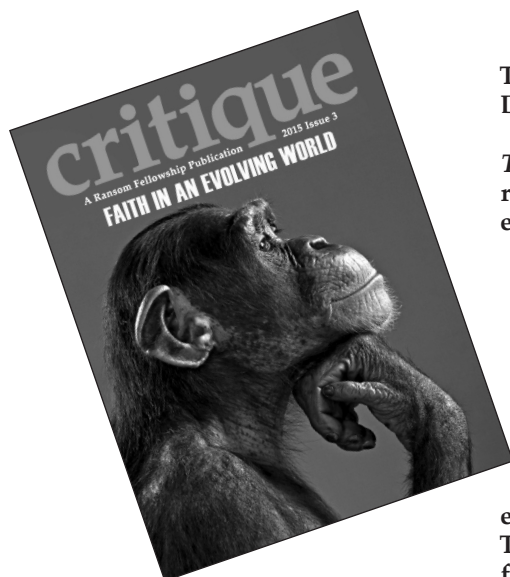
It wasn't that AR would not react, quite the opposite. "Oh, for goodness sake!" was common enough, signaling disagreement or discomfort, and when she was feeling grouchy it was wiser to read than talk. Still, I never feared her acceptance was based on my conformity

to what she thought, nor did she ever make me think the questions and yearnings I expressed were inappropriate or should be suppressed.

I realize now that AR did not have a theology thoughtful or biblical enough to provide answers, but that did not matter at the time. Her welcome brought a whisper of hope, and that is what counted then. Answers would come years later when I stumbled upon a man in knickers named Francis Schaeffer. He would help me see that Christianity has something substantial and intelligent to say to every aspect of life and reality. Sitting in AR's little house on a snowy day, her old furnace sending creaks, snaps, pops, and groans through the pipes that kept us warm, sipping tea and talking between chapters of some book, the whisper of hope was sufficient. I still associate noisy heating systems with feeling secure on a winter's day.

I was about to write that I doubt AR set out to have this ministry of hope, but that isn't entirely correct. She intended to provide a setting markedly different than the narrow, judgmental space of our wider family, and was quite willing to say so. I doubt, however, that she understood she was providing a ministry of hope to me, or thought through what that meant. She simply loved me, and it was sufficient and good.

If I can provide a similar place of safety, that is purpose enough in life. ■



To the editor:  
Denis,

I'm mid-way through the book, *The Goldfinch*, and I've enjoyed your review [*Critique* 2015:3] as much as I'm enjoying the book.

Thanks,  
R. Greg Grooms  
The Hill House  
Austin, TX

To the editor:  
Dear Denis,

Always a fan of *Critique*, but your 2015:3 issue was a great edition. Not only was I thrilled to see Terry Gilliam's, *The Zero Theorem* feature in your Darkened Room section, but your own "Is Everything Political?" (building off of Wendell Berry and David Koyzis, et al.) is a wonderful piece that I hope many will make a centerpiece of shared conversation at their meal table. I am so very appreciative for all your efforts at mentoring so many of us toward being Christian in the everyday life of the twenty-first century. Thank you for making it possible to still say to students unsure as to how to engage literature and poetry, film and philosophy, and other realms of discourse, "just read *Critique*."

Every blessing to you and Margie,  
Mark P. Ryan  
Director, Francis A. Schaeffer  
Institute  
Adjunct Professor of Religion and  
Culture, Covenant Theological  
Seminary

To the editor:  
Denis,

I am reading the current issue of *Critique*. As always, it is like receiving a message in a bottle on a desert island. I am praying Psalm 68 for you and all those whom God uses through the ministry of *Critique*.

With deep respect and passionate prayer,  
Rick Miller  
Sinclair Community College  
Dayton, Ohio

Denis Haack responds:

Greg, Mark and Rick:

Your kind words arrived at a time when encouragement was just what I needed. Sometimes the details of daily life seem to get dragged down as if by a dark whirlpool, overwhelming my attempt to stay on top. The illusion that I am in control, a lie I delight in telling myself, evaporates, and for awhile it's like being in a chute, running too fast to enjoy the trip. That's what I've been feeling, and your e-mails, though they didn't stop the chute, provided the encouragement to ride it to the end.

Thank you. ■

## TUNED IN: NATHANIEL RATELIFF & THE NIGHT SWEATS

# “Think of all the falling down”



Some new music—whether a band or an album—grows on me slowly, steadily, and I almost feel wooed, being won over by a beauty that cannot be refused. And sometimes it seems to burst into my consciousness, sweeping me up into sound that insists my heart pay attention to a beauty that will not be ignored. The debut album of the self-titled *Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats* falls into the second category. In fact, after my son sent me a link to a video for “S.O.B.,” I watched half of it, stopped, downloaded the entire album, and put it on repeat. This is music that grabs and will not let me go.

Rateliff’s lyrics are not easy and never sentimental, animated instead by a brutal honesty about falling short in life, and then falling short again.

*Well I needed you and not just someone  
I’ve been so long failing you dear  
I said I’d care for all of this darling  
Yet I buried all of it again...*

*I said don’t you weep and don’t you worry  
Don’t you weep and don’t you worry  
I’ve been failing you  
But I can’t stop trying  
[“I’ve Been Failing”]*

“S.O.B.” is the desperate cry of a man caught in the grip of alcohol, needing a drink or someone to hold him down as drying out becomes too much. “Son of a bitch / If I can’t get clean / I’m gonna drink my life away / My heart was aching hands are shaking bugs are crawling all over me.”

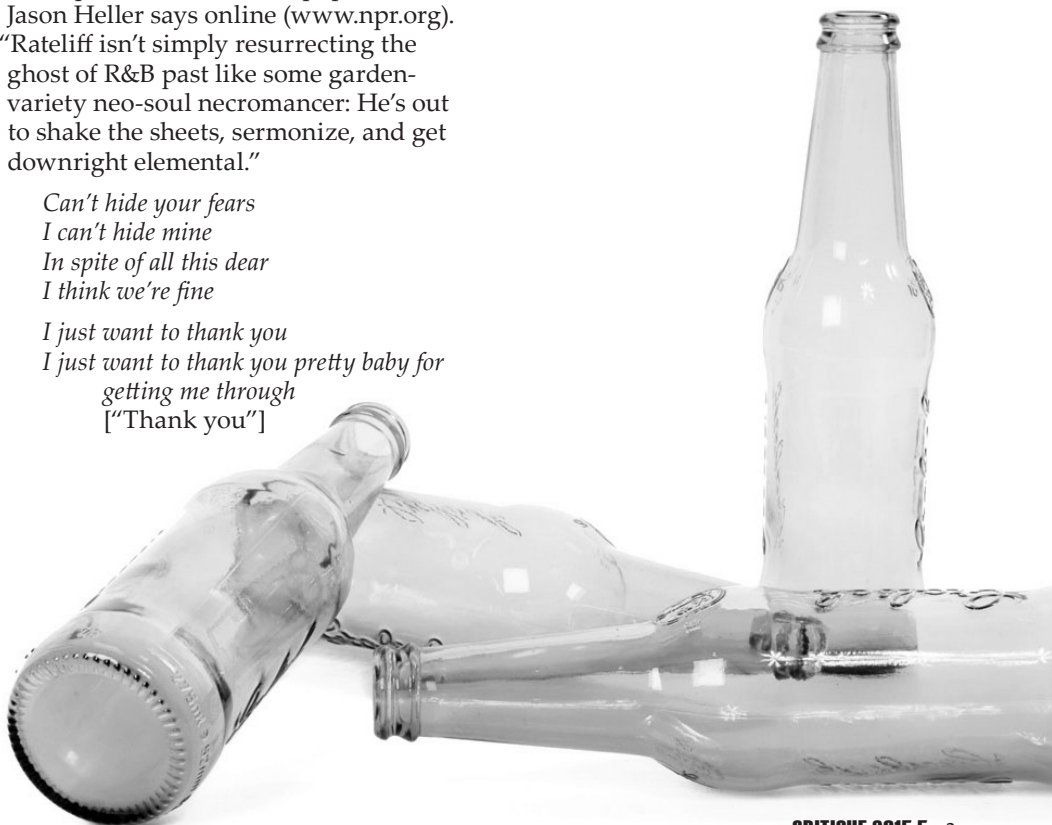
This is soul music, rhythm and blues with brass, guitars, organ, percussion and strong harmonies that modulate from a quiet hum into exploding crescendo, and make you dance and make you wonder. “*The Night Sweats* is an upbeat, old-time dance record—unpolished and unapologetic. Staying still during the stomping rawness of ‘Trying Hard Not To Know’ is like trying to keep a lid on a kettle of popcorn,” Jason Heller says online ([www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org)). “Rateliff isn’t simply resurrecting the ghost of R&B past like some garden-variety neo-soul necromancer: He’s out to shake the sheets, sermonize, and get downright elemental.”

*Can’t hide your fears  
I can’t hide mine  
In spite of all this dear  
I think we’re fine*

*I just want to thank you  
I just want to thank you pretty baby for  
getting me through  
[“Thank you”]*

One of the glories of art is that in a world so rocked by disappointment, fear, failure, and addiction, beauty can arise out of—and in—the ashes of brokenness. Occasionally we hear an artist who in the darkness realizes he cannot see. It is not nearly enough, but it is significant. ■

**Album recommended:** Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats (2015).





# Why I'm a Bad Listener

David K. Flowers, a Free Methodist Church minister and counselor, wrote an interesting post on his blog ([davidkflowers.com](http://davidkflowers.com)), titled, "Why You're Probably a Bad Listener (Don't Be Offended, It's Normal)." It's worth reading in its entirety, and I encourage you to do so. Flowers intended the piece to provoke reflection and discussion, and I certainly hope that occurs. In fact, I'm writing this piece as a further provocation in that direction.

Flowers insists, correctly I think, that most of us are bad listeners even though we may not intend to be, and that most of us assume we are better at listening than we really are. What is worse, we tend to be bad listeners even in those situations and relation-

ships that we feel are significant and that require careful listening. "Listening is hard work,"

Flowers points out. "Listening is the work of being fully present, fully attentive, to the person who is speaking." If you think that sounds easy, you've either misread it or are delusional. Notice that he repeats the term *fully* in that short sentence—"Listening is the work of being fully present, fully attentive, to the person who is speaking." And that is difficult even when we set out to do it. Flowers argues that there are at least four reasons why we are all

bad listeners:

*You're a bad listener because...*

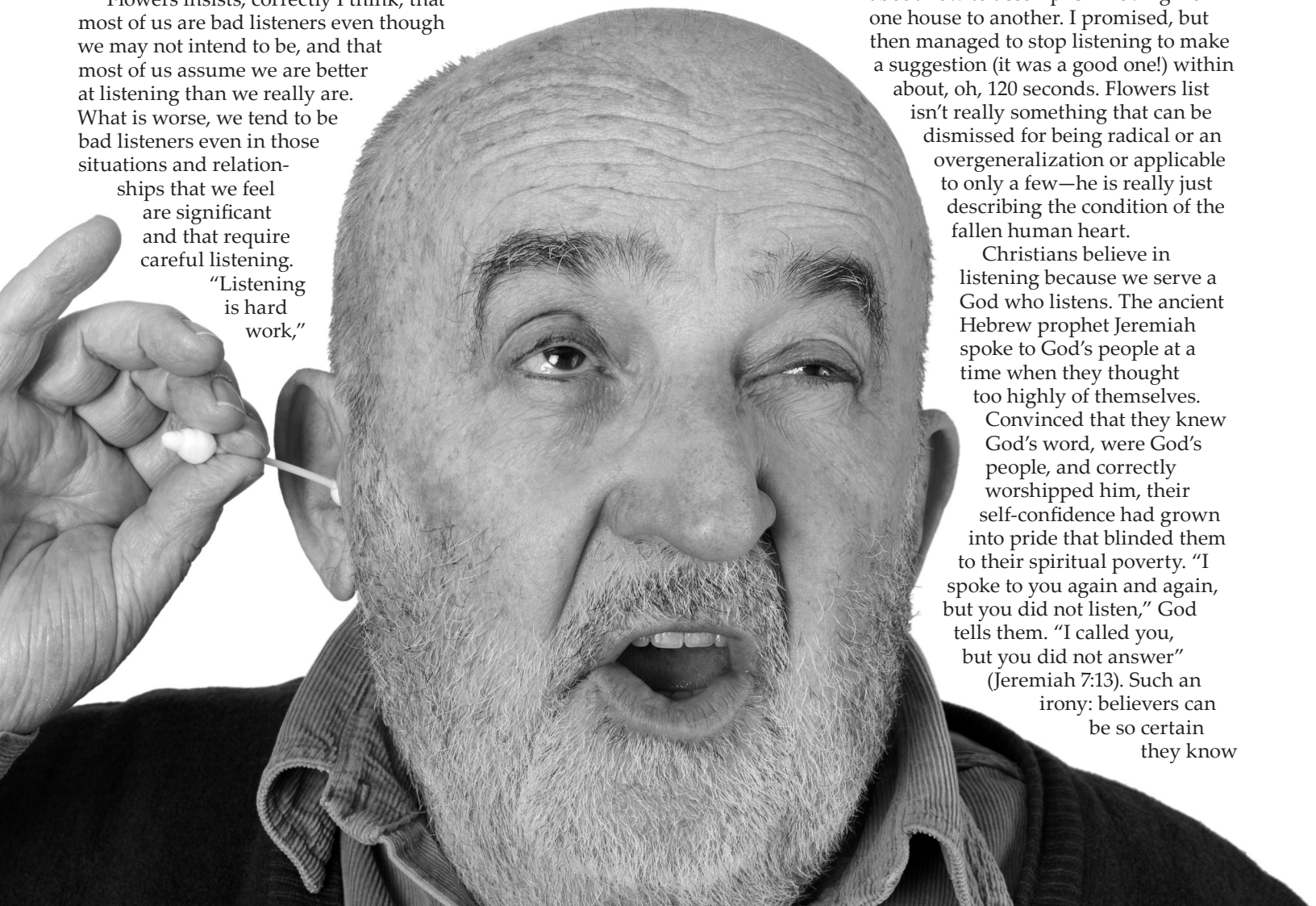
- *You're more interested in your own life*
- *You usually just want to give advice*
- *You're not comfortable with the darkness in your own life*
- *You're so reactive*

Rather convicting, especially the second point. Recently a friend said they were weary and didn't want any more ideas or suggestions from me about how to accomplish moving from one house to another. I promised, but then managed to stop listening to make a suggestion (it was a good one!) within about, oh, 120 seconds. Flowers list isn't really something that can be dismissed for being radical or an overgeneralization or applicable to only a few—he is really just describing the condition of the fallen human heart.

Christians believe in listening because we serve a God who listens. The ancient Hebrew prophet Jeremiah spoke to God's people at a time when they thought too highly of themselves.

Convinced that they knew God's word, were God's people, and correctly worshipped him, their self-confidence had grown into pride that blinded them to their spiritual poverty. "I spoke to you again and again, but you did not listen," God tells them. "I called you, but you did not answer"

(Jeremiah 7:13). Such an irony: believers can be so certain they know



God's word that they miss hearing God's word. And then out of the irony comes a warning. "So do not pray for this people nor offer any plea or petition for them," God tells Jeremiah, "do not plead with me, for I will not listen to you" (7:16). Remember this is not written about pagans who have refused to bow before God, but to believers who have studied and memorized the scriptures, taken care to praise God in worship, and sought to follow the commands of God. Is there any horror greater than not listening to God until he no longer listens to us?

Christianity is not primarily a moral code or a set of doctrines or a religious tradition, but a relationship. God calls us to himself, in Jesus, to be indwelt by the Spirit and loved by the Father. And relationships cannot occur or deepen without listening. Before he interacts with us, God as Trinity communicates with one another, from all eternity past, to infinity and beyond. As his people, we are called to reflect him in our own relationships, and that includes listening to people. Seen in this light, listening needs no justification.

Listening is essential to bearing God's image, which means our calling includes listening to those created in God's likeness. Only God can listen to all equally, of course, and we can be thankful he does. We are finite and so must steward our listening, but as David Flowers points out, we are also fallen, so our stewardship is always deeply flawed. Being a good listener is not automatic; it is a skill that must be learned, a discipline that should be mastered, a gift that can be given, and a calling to be stewarded.

All of which suggests this is a topic worthy of some thoughtful consideration. ■

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

1. Describe a time when someone truly listened to you. What was the significance of their listening to you? How rare has this been in your experience?
2. David Flowers lists four reasons why we are bad listeners. To what extent are they true of you?
3. What other reasons might you add to the four proposed by Flowers?
4. Since we are finite and so cannot be fully present, fully attentive, to every person that speaks to us, how should we steward our listening? What individuals do you believe you should truly listen to, and why? What are your greatest barriers in fulfilling your calling to them? With whom do you need to meet in order to ask their forgiveness?
5. It could be argued that some aspects of advanced modern culture militates against being fully present, fully attentive to people. Identify them, and discuss their impact, consciously or subconsciously, on our lives and consciousness.
6. One impediment to being fully present in order to listen is the fact that most people can choose to purchase technology that allows them to interrupt us any time they wish. Is it wise to permit them to do so? Some argue that they can't ignore their phone because someone might call in an emergency—discuss the validity of this claim.
7. After Moses had led God's people out of slavery in Egypt, he established judges to handle the disputes and conflicts that would arise in the community of Israel. "You shall not be partial in judgment," he told them. "You shall hear the small and the great alike" (Deuteronomy 1:17). This suggests that justice is at stake in listening. Even though we are not magistrates, how might a failure to listen be an injustice?
8. Some people tend not to be listened to because for whatever reason they are marginalized to some extent. Some tend to be invisible to the rest of us. They may be reserved, an introvert, isolated geographically, economically, or by a demanding vocation, or so needy as to overwhelm anyone who tries to listen to them. How can the Christian community find meaningful opportunities to listen to them?
9. What does the gift of listening give to a person? How precious is it in this disappointing, broken world?

# When Busy is Too Busy

In *Crazy Busy*, Kevin DeYoung isn't content to merely identify a problem we all struggle with, especially since busyness is hardly a novel insight. Instead, as a pastor, he is interested in helping us face life in a crazy busy world with enough clarity that we might learn by grace to walk into more of what it means to flourish as a person living before the face of God.

God created us as finite creatures in his image. This means not merely that we are limited, but that we fit in time. Time is not our enemy, nor is there too little of it. We were made to live in the time made for us. Thus, being finite in time is a gift we can embrace with gratitude.

It is freeing to know that our Lord does not expect us to be in two places at once, doing two things at once, in order to fulfill two sets of needs in two different groups of people, so that we even have to try. It is not only okay to say no to legitimate requests and opportunities at times—it is both necessary and pleasing to our Lord. And when someone says, "There simply isn't enough time," we can sympathize and know what they mean, but also know it isn't true. The Creator made us to live in 24-hour days, resting one day out of seven, and called it "Good." We are the ones who disagree with his assessment.

In the process of helping us face our problems with time, DeYoung lists some questions designed to make us think—and some answers to make us smile:

*In his book The Busy Christian's Guide to Busyness, Tim Chester suggests twelve diagnostic questions to determine how ill we've become with 'hurry sickness.' I can imagine how we'd answer each question in our church small groups. And then I can imagine*

*how we'd really respond:*

1. "Do you regularly work thirty minutes a day longer than your contracted hours?"

What does that have to do with anything? I have a lot to do, so I have to work a lot of hours.

2. "Do you check work e-mails and phone messages at home?"

Are you serious? Have you been around much this millennium?

3. "Has anyone ever said to you, 'I didn't want to trouble you because I know how busy you are'?"

Of course! And I'm glad they have the decency to respect my time!

4. "Do your family or friends complain about not getting time with you?"

Well, I wouldn't call it complaining per se. They're still learning that quality time is more important than quantity time.

5. "If tomorrow evening were unexpectedly freed up, would you use it to do work or a household chore?"

Uh, yeah. Were you going to do it for me?

5. "Do you often feel tired during the day or do you find your neck and shoulders aching?"

Mountain Dew, ibuprofen, not a problem.

7. "Do you often exceed the speed limit while driving?"

Depends on whether I'm trying to eat French fries at the same time.

8. "Do you make use of any flexible working arrangements offered by your employers?"

Definitely. I work at home. I work in the car. I work on vacation. I can work pretty much anywhere.

9. "Do you pray with your children regularly?"

I never turn them down when they ask.

10. "Do you have enough time to pray?" I'm more of a "pray continually" kind of person. I don't need to set aside specific times to pray because I'm always in communion with God.

11. "Do you have a hobby in which you are actively involved?"

Does Pinterest count?

12. "Do you eat together as a family or household at least once a day?"

More or less. When one person is eating, someone else is usually in the house at the same time.

I'm not certain of the process that is used to develop such lists of questions, especially when done by scholars researching busyness in people's lives. But as I read Chester's list a few of my own came to mind to diagnose whether I'm infected with "hurry sickness":

- Do you take the full time that your employer grants you for vacation? If not, why not?
- Do you schedule your vacation so you have an extended time away versus taking days off occasionally throughout the year? Why? If you don't, and since it usually takes busy people several days to slow down into rest mode, should you reconsider your policy?
- Are there people in your life who are restful and calming to be with, compared to others who though enjoyable tend to be emotionally draining? What might this suggest? What sort of person are you for your friends?
- Do you regularly schedule time—perhaps an evening—when you can sip a glass of wine or cup of tea and read



## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & DISCUSSION

1. Have you ever given thanks to God for being finite, for the gift of time? Why or why not? If not, when will you begin?
2. What questions might you add to the list?
3. On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 = under committed and 10 = over committed, how would you rate yourself? Ask friends who know you how they would rate you. If there is a difference, how do you explain it?
4. Do your friends tend to help you find a proper balance in terms of busyness? What does that suggest concerning their friendship? What is your impact on your friends?
5. Since it is probably possible to rationalize both the busiest and the laziest lifestyles, how can we be certain we are not simply rationalizing ours?
6. If you could give up one (optional) activity without difficulty, what would it be?
7. How does technology add to our busyness? What might be wise to do?
8. Who have you known or known about who demonstrated a relationship with busyness that you would like to emulate? Why?
9. Secularists can look forward to one morning each week—Sunday morning—when they can relax, read the newspaper, sip their coffee unhurriedly, and prepare and enjoy a leisurely breakfast. Christians, in contrast, are busy on Sunday mornings at an event where they are often encouraged to sign up for various activities, ministries, and service opportunities. Discuss.
10. What would you need to give up in order to escape the problem of busyness? How do you know there aren't other possibilities?
11. How does the biblical notion of seeing finiteness and time as a good gift change our perspective on busyness?

a good story? Do you have a small group of friends who might like to be included in such an evening when a story is read aloud?

- Are there activities or commitments to which you agreed because you felt guilty saying no, or because you have a problem declining worthy invitations? What should you do?

All of which suggests that discerning Christians may want to host an evening with some friends—both Christian and non-Christian—for some lively conversation on the topic. ■

**Source:** Crazy Days: A (Mercifully) Short Book about a (Really) Big Problem by Kevin DeYoung (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books; 2013) p. 21-23 quoting The Busy Christian's Guide to Busyness by Tim Chester (Nottingham, England: InterVarsity Press; 2005) p. 9-10.





# THINKING ABOUT GOD AND THE *REALLY* REAL

Have you ever thought something was real, only to find it isn't? It can be embarrassing. It can also be deadly, if someone simply blends in but is actually a suicide bomber.

We all mistake things as real that aren't—it's part of the human condition. We are finite, limited, and so our knowledge of reality is always partial, incomplete. We never have all the facts, know the whole story or see the entire picture. Add in the fact that we are also fallen and so tend to like our own impressions better than reality and it can become a real mess. Most of the time even careful, reasonable arguments can fail to dislodge our prejudices and mistaken beliefs.

We all, at times, mistake something as real that isn't.

## A LIGHTER SIDE

There is, of course, a playful side to this conundrum. Mistaking something as real that isn't is not always a tragedy.

Magicians play on our mistake, and delight us with their tricks. They even tell us to watch closely, and we do, but we know ahead of time that what looks real in their hands isn't. The stage magic of Penn and Teller and the close-up magic of Ricky Jay rightly amaze us by distracting us from what's really real so we see only what they want us to, and are glad we paid the price of admission. It's fun to be fooled.

Serious artists have played with this, as well. In 1928, for example, artist René Magritte produced one of his most famous paintings, *La trahison des images* (The Treachery of Images). The painting is deceptively simple: just a pipe, brown with a curved black stem, the sort of pipe commonly smoked after dinner at a sidewalk café in his native Belgium. Below the image of the pipe, Magritte painted the words, "*Ceci n'est pas une pipe*," French for "This is not a pipe." And of course, Magritte is correct. The pipe he painted, the pipe that seems so real in the painting, isn't really a pipe, and may have never existed since he may have painted from a picture of a pipe not an actual pipe—and so it goes. Some have dismissed this work as not real "art," but the power of the painting to capture the imagination cannot be denied.

It happens in films, too. In *A Most Wanted Man* (2014), for example, Philip Seymour Hoffman plays Günther Bachmann, a German agent assigned to ferret out terrorists in Hamburg, Germany. Based on a character from the novel by John le Carré, Bachmann is a brilliant, obsessed spy, carefully building a network of informants to close in on a major financier of international terror. The Americans are also interested in the case, but Bachmann has his own reasons not to trust either the agency or Martha Sullivan (played by Robin Wright), the agent the CIA sends to Hamburg. Sullivan reminds Bachmann they are on the same side, but he is not impressed, so she works to gain his trust. Finally she tells him a state secret, confirming his belief that before her time, the agency had been responsible for compromising a network Bachmann had laboriously built in the Middle East. Agents and informants had died, and the work of years had been

undone. She is apologetic, assuring him that she is there just to observe. Then, at the end, when Bachmann is betrayed and his case unraveled, his informants arrested instead of protected as he promised, he looks up to see Martha Sullivan watching impassively from a doorway across the street. In a world of lies, she had spoken the truth in order to make him fall for a bigger lie. What looked and sounded real wasn't.

What looks real in magician's acts, surrealist paintings, and movies is not real, but we know that going in, and we happily suspend belief to be swept up in the moment. It's why they work as entertainment and art and story. We are invited to mistake something as real that isn't, and we do, and the surprise we feel is both infectious and satisfying.

Only finite creatures can be surprised.

## THE SERIOUS SIDE

Things become more serious when the stakes get higher. Reputations can be ruined, relationships ended, innocent people convicted, cherished dreams shattered, jobs lost, wars begun, people maimed or killed all because what someone is certain is real isn't. Still, as awful as this list is, things can become more serious yet. We can be mistaken about God.

For the believer, this issue has two (often closely related) aspects or sides: Christians can be mistaken about God, and Christians can live in a society that is mistaken about God. I want to begin with the first—how Christians can be mistaken about God. (We'll consider the second aspect in the second part of this article.)

The Hebrew poet, Asaph, spoke of a divine encounter with God's people:

*The Mighty One, God the Lord,  
speaks and summons the earth  
from the rising of the sun to  
its setting.*

*Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,  
God shines forth.*

*Our God comes, he does not keep silence,  
before him is a devouring fire,  
round about him a mighty tempest.*

*He calls to the heavens above  
and to the earth, that he may judge  
his people:*

*"Gather to me my faithful ones,  
who made a covenant with me  
by sacrifice!"*

*The heavens declare his righteousness,  
for God himself is judge! Selah*

*"Hear, O my people, and I will speak,  
O Israel, I will testify against you.  
I am God, your God.  
I do not reprove you for  
your sacrifices...  
...you thought that I was one  
like yourself.  
But now I rebuke you, and lay the  
charge before you."  
(Psalm 50:1–8, 21)*

How can this be? I am made in his image (so his word teaches), I am a believer (I remember when I made the decision), my life is pleasing to him (mostly, and I confess my sins regularly), my sense of justice is his (I have proof-texts), he is my God through Christ (more proof texts), and I could extend the list. What if all this time I assumed I was becoming more like him when what I've actually done is increasingly imagine him to be like me?

Every one of us has some notion of what God is like and, if at this level of things what we think is real isn't, then everything else we think will be to some extent off kilter. It's like getting the foundation of a house crooked and then expecting the rest of the structure to be automatically straight—it won't happen.

In his classic book of devotional theology, *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer says that knowing God makes an unmistakable difference in the knower. "Those who know God," he insists, "have great contentment in God" (p. 31). Packer doesn't mention Jeremiah Burroughs (1599–1646) in this regard, but his passion for the Puritans makes it safe to assume he knows of Burroughs' definition. "Christian contentment," he wrote in *The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment*, "is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God's wise and fatherly disposal in every condition."

Is it cynical or unkind of me to note that though there seems no end of people who claim to really know God, I am hard pressed to name many who demonstrate great contentment? Even small contentment seems in short supply. Am I missing something? But in case I am being cynical and unkind, let me say that by this measure I find myself wondering how well I know the real God, or whether what I think is real about him isn't.

## Our Great Big American God

Matthew Paul Turner is, according to his website ([www.MatthewPaulTurner.com](http://www.MatthewPaulTurner.com)).



com), “a freelance writer/journalist, author, blogger, and speaker” living in Nashville, Tenn. He writes in a breezy, accessible style, skeptical and witty yet always serious, often oversimplifying complex issues or events to make a larger point he thinks important, and is serious enough about his faith to be unwilling to let the cultural captivity of the church pass unchallenged. Turner is, he notes, “revered by some as the ‘Christian David Sedaris,’” as he “communicates what lots of people are thinking and unwilling to say aloud.”

If that description of the author suggests *Our Great Big American God* might be an interesting read, it is. Turner has an important story to tell, and he tells it well.

*For four hundred years, Americans have narrated God’s story and, during that time, God has grown and evolved, become bigger and more unbelievable. Our stories have added theologies and folklore, miracles and fear, pro-this narratives and anti-that themes, ghost stories and strobe lights, Sarah Palin and more than a little humanistic sensibilities. In our efforts to make God known, we quite possibly turned God into something that resembles us, a big fat American with an ever-growing appetite for more. What follows is the story of God as told, shaped, and effected by America. Because God is not the same as he was yesterday, not here, not among God’s faithful. [p. 10]*

Turner is being coy—he is certain we have turned God into something that resembles us, and he thinks we need to know about it.

This is a book of cultural theology told with a brisk dose of the cynical humor that draws so many fans to Comedy Central. It is the story of how Christians in America since the Pilgrims have understood and spoken of God in changing times where changing issues have shaped not just society, but the values, assumptions, and yes, even the beliefs of Christians about God.

To cite one example, Turner notes that the American Christian idea of God changed when the evangelist D.L. Moody preached a message favored by the wealthy business leaders who sponsored his campaigns:

*According to evangelical researcher Thomas Askew, “the list of Moody’s*

*sponsors reads like a roster of tycoons”—from J.P. Morgan and Cornelius Vanderbilt to John Wanamaker and Cyrus McCormick, just to name a few. Why were so many of Moody’s rich friends willing to give so “sacrificially” to a revivalist? They believed in Moody’s message, of course. Or, as Richard Kyle writes in Evangelicalism, “The social and labor unrest due to crowded urban areas and terrible working conditions made the business community nervous. They hoped that Moody’s simple message would improve the morals of the ‘unchurched masses’ in the cities.”*

*Transforming his Gospel into motivational talks that helped the businessmen funding his mission was simple. When Moody railed passionately against drunkenness, he was, as Garry Wills writes, promoting good job performance. During the riots, Moody often preached against joining unions or participating in strikes. He even helped promote the ten-hour workday, the American average during the Gilded Age. How did Moody accomplish this? By using “holy*

## NOTHING IS MORE DASTARDLY THAN TO ACT WITH BRAVADO BEFORE GOD.

— *Pascal’s Pensées, #194*

*living” as the jumping-off point into a sermonizing plea such as this one: “Get something to do. If it is for fifteen hours a day, all the better; for while you are at work Satan does not have so much chance to tempt you. If you cannot earn more than a dollar a week, earn that. That is better than nothing, and you can pray to God for more.”*

*Not only did Moody take money from the very men whose businesses were creating impoverished urban environments, but he shaped God’s message into “gilded” rhetoric that worked to silence the rich men’s critics and the men they employed. Who better to make a poor man shut up and work harder than God? [p. 130]*

It was the perfect God for American consumerism, though Moody’s belief that temptation occurs in time off but not on the job makes one realize how easily biblical truth can be perverted by cultural ideals.

Though this is not the primary point of *Our Great Big American God*, Turner’s

story clarifies something that apparently puzzles a lot of older Christians—why so many unbelievers have no interest in the gospel and why so many younger believers have no interest in the church. This is the story of cultural captivity, a hypocrisy that the younger generation spots easily and finds implausible and unattractive.

It is true that orthodox Christian belief is always relevant, speaking with intelligence and power to the questions, issues, culture, and yearnings of the present moment, even as these shift over time. But to remain orthodox, Christian belief must also be true to its ancient roots, never moving away from the deep wisdom of the historic biblical tradition of truth and practice that is founded on the apostles and prophets. We can become too confident in our own understanding, so certain we are correct that we fail to notice we have unwittingly remade God in the image of the latest ideologies and assumptions of our world. Turner argues in *Our Great Big American God* that this monumental error has been going on for centuries in America.

*Our Great Big American God* is irreverent enough to read like a comedy, but it is a tragic tale. There are numerous points where I disagree with the details of Turner’s depiction of things,

but the picture he paints of American evangelical faith is how a watching world tends to see us.

What we think about God matters because this is the God we commend to non-Christians, both by how we live and how we explain things. If the God we commend has been shaped by consumerism or conservatism or progressivism or nationalism or any other ideology, we fall short of God’s glory and should not be surprised if our new friend refuses to take the gospel seriously.

Which leads me to say this: If you are not a Christian and the God depicted in *Our Great Big American God* strikes you as frivolous and implausible, please know this: I am a Christian and I think so too. What is more, I am convinced that the prophets and apostles whose voices we hear in the scriptures are speaking of a very different God. It wouldn’t be the first time believers believed something about God to be real that isn’t.

I recommend *Our Great Big American God* for three reasons. First, because even if you think, as I do, that Turner's analysis is mistaken or incomplete at points, the story he tells is exactly what most people see when they look at the evangelical movement. It's what they think we represent. And knowing what my neighbors think when they discover I am a Christian matters. Second, the book gives us an opportunity to think again about who God is, how we speak of him, and to what extent our thinking, feeling, and doing in the ordinary things of life demonstrates what is truly real. This is a task each of us should eagerly welcome as Christians. My third reason for recommending *Our Great Big American God* is this, but don't tell anyone: Turner says some things that I think but am unwilling to say aloud.

### *The Experience of God*

Now I want to consider the second aspect of the issue of being mistaken about God, namely, when Christians live in a society that is mistaken about God. In case you haven't noticed, this is the situation if you are a believer living in America in the early decades of the twenty-first century.

David Bentley Hart is an Eastern Orthodox scholar of religion and philosophy who wants to enter this conversation. More specifically, he has written *The Experience of God* to bring some needed clarity to an otherwise muddled cultural conversation:

*My intention is simply to offer a definition of the word "God," or of its equivalents in other tongues, and to do so in fairly slavish obedience to the classical definitions of the divine found in the theological and philosophical schools of most of the major religious traditions. My reason for wanting to do this is that I have come to the conclusion that, while there has been a great deal of public debate about belief in God in recent years (much of it a little petulant, much of it positively ferocious), the concept of God around which the arguments have run their seemingly interminable courses has remained strangely obscure the whole time. The more scrutiny one accords*

*these debates, moreover, the more evident it becomes that often the contending parties are not even talking about the same thing; and I would go as far as to say that on most occasions none of them is talking about God in any coherent sense at all....*

*This book, then, will be primarily a kind of lexicographical exercise, not a work of apologetics, though that is a distinction that cannot be perfectly maintained throughout.*

*Honestly, though, my chief purpose is not to advise atheists on what I think they should believe; I want merely to make sure that they have a clear concept of what it is they claim not to believe. In that sense,*

*I should hope the more amiable sort of atheist might take this book as a well-intended gift. I am not even centrally concerned with traditional "proofs" of the reality of God, except insofar as they help to explain how the word "God" functions in the intellectual traditions of the developed religions (by which I mean faiths that include sophisticated and self-critical philosophical and contemplative schools). [p. 1-2]*

As a Christian, I would hope there are amiable atheists who will read *The Experience of God*, and perhaps there are. My experience is, however, that most people, believers and unbelievers alike, tend to read those publications with which they agree. Which leads, of course, to shriveled minds, but that is another topic.

The reviews of *The Experience of God* by non-Christians I've read think Hart has written a proof for God's existence and don't find it compelling. This isn't surprising because, in the first place, there is no rational argument for God that will bring unbelievers to faith, and in the second, because Hart's purpose is not to overturn unbelief but rather to clarify, at a time when all sorts of people mean different things by the word, what "God" actually means. (For a superb study of what unbelief or "suppressing the truth" consists, see "Anatomy of Unbelief," chapter 5 in Os Guinness' *Fool's Talk*.) In any case, they miss the point and don't wrestle honestly with the careful explanations Hart develops.

The reviews of the book by Christians I've read tend to be

concerned that Hart sets out to define "God" as "can be found in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Vedantic and Bhaktic Hinduism, Sikhism, various late antique paganisms, and so forth (it even applies in many respects to various Mahayana formulations of, say, the Buddha Consciousness" [p. 4]). This seems to suggest that all gods are the same, and that the Christian God is merely one variation of the many gods, so that any uniqueness to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus is hereby lost. They miss the point, too, because Hart is not attempting to introduce the God of scripture, but to define the term "God" as it is understood in the metaphysics put forward over the centuries by serious religious thinkers.

This is a serious work of philosophy and is not an easy read, though Hart is careful to explain things in a way that we can follow if we read with care. He writes in a confident tone, one that suggests he knows his stuff and is sure of his position. And he does—his knowledge of the history of ideas and patristic literature is admirable. As I read, I remembered an amusing moment at a conference years ago where Francis Schaeffer gave a lecture. It was standard Schaeffer, designed to make us think, and to think hard. When he finished, the people behind us gave a great sigh. "I didn't understand a word," one said, "but I sure am glad he's on our side." Readers may feel the same way about Hart, but an attentive person can benefit from a thoughtful reading—and the book is very worth the effort. Still, I'd recommend that readers be intentional about wanting to work through a work of serious philosophy if they take up *The Experience of God*.

But an example of his prose might help. Here, to cite merely one single paragraph from the book, is Hart's reflection on how modern people have been taught to believe that what science proves is more sure than their own experience, because it is subjective and personal, and so less trustworthy:

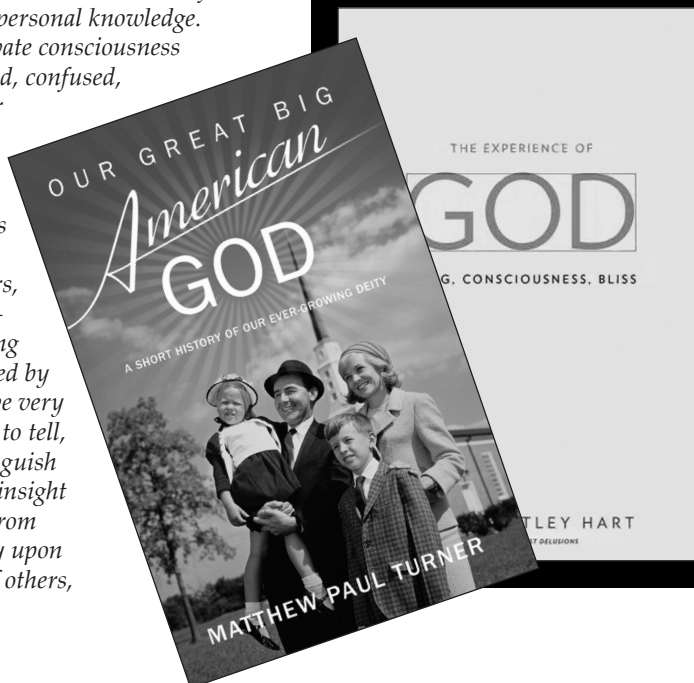
*Many of us today, of course, tend to be suspicious or disdainful of appeals to personal experience. This too is part of the intellectual patrimony of modernity. Nor is it an entirely unfortunate condition: a certain degree of canny skepticism in regard to claims made on the basis of private feelings or ineffable intuitions or episodic insights is a healthy thing. But our ideological tradition takes us*

## OUR IDEA OF GOD TELLS US MORE ABOUT OURSELVES THAN ABOUT HIM.

— Thomas Merton



far beyond mere sane discretion in such matters, and makes us prone to a rather extreme form of the "verificationist" fallacy, the exquisitely self-contradictory conviction that no belief can be trusted until it has been proved true by scientific methods. Today, there are seemingly rational persons who claim that our belief in the reality of our own intentional consciousness must be validated by methods appropriate to mechanical processes, mindless objects, and "third person" descriptions. The absurdity of this becomes altogether poignant when one considers that our trust in the power of scientific method is itself grounded in our subjective sense of the continuity of conscious experience and in our subjective judgment of the validity of our reasoning. Even the decision to seek objective confirmation of our beliefs is a subjective choice arising from a private apprehension. At some very basic level, our "third person" knowledge always depends upon a "first person" insight. In a larger sense, moreover, most of the things we actually know to be true are susceptible of no empirical proof whatsoever, but can only be borne witness to, in a stubbornly first person voice. We know events and personalities and sentiments better and more abundantly than we know physical principles or laws; our understanding of the world consists in memories, direct encounters, accumulated experiences, the phenomenal qualities of things, shifting moods, interpretations formed and reformed continually throughout the course of a life, our own tastes and aversions, the sense of identity each of us separately possesses, and innumerable other forms of essentially personal knowledge. Certainly private consciousness can be deceived, confused, diminished, or deranged; if we are wise, we submit our judgments to the judgments of others, offer our testimony expecting to be challenged by those who have very different tales to tell, learn to distinguish opinion from insight and impulse from reflection, rely upon the wisdom of others,



cultivate an aptitude for doubt, and so on. Nevertheless, there remains in each of us an unshakable ground of resolute subjective certainty which forms the necessary basis of all rational belief. The world that appears in consciousness is the only world of which we have anything like immediate assurance. This being so, it would be positively insane to relinquish our confidence in, say, our sense of our own free will, or in the privacy of our qualitative experiences, or in the unity of consciousness, or even in the transcendental reality of goodness or beauty, and so on, simply because this materialist orthodoxy or that pseudoscientific theory urges us to do so. We are not condemned to absolute subjectivity, but our direct experience of reality has to possess an altogether primary authority for us, which may need to be qualified by further experience but which can never be wholly superseded. [p. 315–316]

*The Experience of God* opens with Hart dispensing with the latest popular expression of atheism in the so-called new atheists. He says their “texts are manifestoes, buoyantly coarse and intentionally simplistic, meant to fortify unbelievers in their unbelief; their appeal is broad but certainly not deep; they are supposed to set a mood, not encourage deep reflection.... The movement’s only real interest is that it is symptomatic of a larger cultural forgetfulness on the part of believers and unbelievers alike” [p. 5–6]. He then goes on to explain, in clear forceful terms how “God” has been badly misunderstood in the debates about evolution and creation, in the process exploring the proper limits of science and the scientific method. The heart of *The Experience of God* is in the next part, three chapters on our experience of God as believers in terms of being, consciousness, and bliss. Hart ends with a concluding chapter on illusion and reality—in other words about what’s real, and what isn’t. Once we properly understand what “God”

means, he argues, we will see that the claim of naturalism to explain all of life and reality is not merely incorrect, but impossible, and that seeing reality in terms of the existence of the God who is there provides meaning, truth, and beauty that surpasses all our imagining.

I stated earlier that I’m not certain many atheists will read *The Experience of God*, though I pray I am mistaken in this doubt. I certainly hope and pray that many Christians will read it, reflect deeply on Hart’s reflections and, as a result, be better able to provide honest answers to the honest questions of

their materialist neighbors. Don’t approach it as an argument to reproduce to defeat mistaken ideas about God, but as an opportunity to sharpen our own thinking about what is real, and what isn’t. We aren’t called to debates but to relationships.

I should add that every reader is likely to find something with which to disagree in *The*

*Experience of God*. Evangelicals may not like Hart’s treatment of the creation account in Genesis, conservatives may dislike his dismissal of the intelligent design movement, and materialists may dislike his insistence that naturalism is not merely inadequate but self-refuting and impossible.

Christians who read *The Experience of God* should take care to note Hart’s argument that believers living in a world where a naturalistic worldview is the default perspective are under a subtle, and perhaps subconscious pressure to think wrongly about God. The larger point is that living in an era of unbelief changes how believers believe. We may be unaware of it, but that only suggests we need to become aware of it. Hart argues that the recent debates of creation and evolution, belief and unbelief, Christianity and Naturalism have had an unfortunate side effect, namely that believers have unintentionally absorbed our opponent’s definition of “God.” And in so doing we have lost the debate before it began.

**THE INSTRUMENT THROUGH WHICH YOU SEE GOD IS YOUR WHOLE SELF. AND IF A MAN’S SELF IS NOT KEPT CLEAN AND BRIGHT, HIS GLIMPSE OF GOD WILL BE BLURRED—LIKE THE MOON SEEN THROUGH A DIRTY TELESCOPE.**

— C.S. Lewis

## THINKING ABOUT THE REAL

How we think about God—about what is really real—matters not just because we don’t want to be mistaken about the divine, but because how we think of God makes a difference in how we see everything else. God is not merely a being out there who made everything at some point in the past, he is Being itself, out of whom all being comes, and is thus not only creator and sustainer but the fountain and final purpose of all reality. If this is true, then experiencing reality in daily life is actually an experience of God, though fallen human beings seldom are cognizant of the fact. This is why the ancient wisdom literature of scripture provides such a drastic and counter-cultural prescription for those who wish to see and feel and know with clarity. “Be still,” Psalm 46:10 says, “and know that I am God.” And in Psalm 37:7, “Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him.”

But isn’t that just poetic hyperbole?

*The endless cycle of idea and action,  
Endless invention, endless experiment,  
Brings knowledge of motion, but not  
of stillness;*

*Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;  
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of  
the Word.*

*All our knowledge brings us nearer  
to death,*

*But nearness to death no nearer to God.  
Where is the Life we have lost in living?  
Where is the wisdom we have lost  
in knowledge?*

*Where is the knowledge we have lost  
in information?*

*The cycles of Heaven in twenty centuries  
Brings us farther from God and nearer to  
the Dust.*

[T. S. Eliot,  
“Choruses from ‘The Rock’”] ■

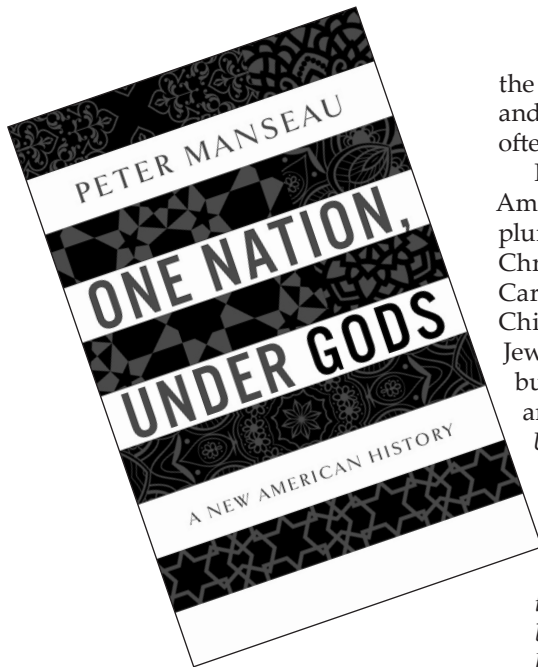
### Books reviewed:

Our Great Big American God: A Short History of Our Ever-Growing Deity by Matthew Paul Turner (New York, NY: Jericho Books; 2014) 222 pages + notes

The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss by David Bentley Hart (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press; 2013) 332 pages + notes + bibliography + index



# One Nation, Under Gods



The subtitle of this book, *A New American History*, doesn't quite capture the sense of the story Peter Manseau tells. It is a work of history, beginning in 1492 and ending with reflections on the Obama administration. Each chapter tells the story of some representative individual set within the cultural and religious history of his or her era. We meet Bhagat Singh Thind, a Sikh veteran of the U.S. army who was denied citizenship by the U.S. Supreme Court; Jacob Lumbrozo, a doctor, lawyer, and trader who settled in Maryland in 1656, discovered that he was not required to deny his Jewishness but was required to keep it out of sight; William Livingstone, the first governor of New Jersey, a signatory of the U.S. Constitution, and an outspoken atheist; and many more. Still, as I read, my understanding of history was not replaced so much as that for the first time I heard the voices of a myriad ordinary people who were outside

the American religious mainstream and so were always marginalized and often persecuted.

Manseau is correct to insist that America has always been religiously pluralistic. The Taino people who met Christopher Columbus' flotilla in the Caribbean, Native Americans, the Chinese who labored on the railroads, Jewish immigrants—all were religious but non-Christian—and the list can, and should be extended, as *One Nation, Under Gods* clearly demonstrates.

*To be sure, the American talent for the absorption of faiths and cultures has rarely resulted in the kind of peaceful pluralism most hope for today. The story of how a global array of beliefs came to occupy the same ocean-locked piece of land is more often one of violence than of toleration. There can be no clearer illustration of this than what occurred during the three centuries of slavery, which gave the nation its most enduring spiritual wounds. Twenty percent of the U.S. population was enslaved at the Republic's inception, and few were Christians when they arrived. Most were born of religious histories as rich and complex as Christendom—followers of Islam, Yoruba, and a dozen other lesser-known faiths. During this era, there was a forced transplantation of African beliefs and practices into the growing body of American religion. Yet the loss of such ancient traditions is often overlooked in the discussion of what was wrought by that painful period in our history...*

*The story of so many minority religious traditions living in the shadow of a single dominant creed may seem an epic only of repression and subjugation. However, it is in that tension—between the marginal and the mainstream—that*

*the nation so many faiths have come to call home has forged its commitment, clear on paper if not always in practice, to become a place where, paradoxically, belief matters both very much and not at all, because we have the right to believe as we please. [p. 6]*

This is part of my story, because I am an American. So, there is an important sense in which *One Nation, Under Gods* is *A New American History*. It is an essential part of the history of which I am a part, and the ending of the story has not yet been written. As Os Guinness demonstrates in *A Free People's Suicide* (2012), the freedom we boast in as Americans must be sustained, or will be lost. Our future is rooted in our past, including the story of religious minorities who for the most part did not experience religious freedom. This is the story told in *One Nation, Under Gods*. ■

**Book recommended:** *One Nation, Under Gods: A New American History* by Peter Manseau (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Company; 2015). 413 pages + notes + index.

## RESOURCE

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# The Biblical Word, Bolded



I've only met Edward Knippers one time, in his studio in northern Virginia. It was delightfully disheveled, with splashes of paint spread about, brushes, bottles and cans on tables and floor, the sharp smell of oil and turpentine in the air, and huge wooden panels leaning against the wall on which he painted. In some studios the artwork seems to fade into the background in the presence of the artist, but in Knippers' studio the opposite was true. His artwork overwhelmed everything and everyone, demanding my attention as if it were a booming echo of a king's command. Everything about the paintings was bold—their huge size (6 x 8 and 8 x 12 feet), each consisting of three door-size wooden panels, the confident strokes of paint, the nudity of the figures, the fearless color palette, and a demanding, expressionistic style that is unwilling to let us remain neutral before what is depicted. Art historian Monsignor Timothy Verdon feels the same before Knippers' artwork as I did:

*The staggering size, furious execution, and searing color of Edward Knippers' painted panels overwhelm, and their physicality shocks. Indeed, given his chosen field, Biblical illustration, the raw*

*violence of Knippers' art deeply disturbs. For viewers whose knowledge of the Old Testament may stop at the "fresh, green pastures" and "restful waters" of the Twenty-Third Psalm, moreover—or who conventionally visualize Jesus as blond and sweet—these hot, muscled forms constitute premeditated assault. [p. 209]*

This is art that refuses to disappear into background decoration. And every biblical narrative Knippers paints changes how I understand the text for good.

Knippers himself is soft-spoken, thoughtful, gentle, and quietly passionate about his calling as an artist. He told me that day that he considered himself the servant of the word—meaning the word of God in the text of the scriptures. Art historian E. John Walford captures well Knippers' passion and goal:

*Edward Knippers has devoted his artistic career striving to effectively represent visually what most people within the modern and contemporary art world deem beyond the fitting reach of such practice. His sustained effort and primary goal has been directed toward the revival of a practice depicting biblical narratives on a scale large enough to command attention and strong enough to provoke substantive thought in viewers. He stands undeterred by a consensus within the art world that such an enterprise belongs to the past and has no place in a modern, secular society. For his part, as an artist who is a Christian, he is driven by the conviction that such an artist is called to engage the most substantive and significant themes that are within the reach of his or her artistic capability. To this end, Edward Knippers has spent his career mastering the most effective means at his disposal for embodying aspects of the biblical*

*narrative in a potent and dramatic form, centered on the human figure, which for reasons grounded in his convictions about the nature and universal relevance of that narrative, he has rendered nude.*

Ever since the time of Christ, Christians have struggled to articulate the mystery of this man Jesus Christ, the Son of God, being, as he himself asserted and his followers believe, both fully man and fully God. Church leaders, teachers, theologians, and artists have wrestled to come to terms with and effectively articulate this essential conundrum for which there is no precedent and no complete reiteration. However, if as is asserted in Scripture, man is created in the image of God, then all human beings also carry within themselves the image of this dual, and from a mortal point of view, contradictory reality for each of us contains within ourselves the seeds of both mortality and immortality. But historically, for an artist as for any other to articulate this complex reality without falling off the bench at one end or the other, has proven extremely hard to accomplish. The challenges facing a contemporary artist with Knippers' aims are thus, theologically, the paradoxical reality of the humanity and divinity of Christ, and artistically, the absence of any effective living tradition of biblical art from which to build.

Most viewers familiar with Edward Knippers' work would recognize that he has spent most of his artistic career asserting the Incarnation of Christ, the Son of God, as possessing absolute and complete humanity, embodied in a gendered body, just like ours. For this reason he places the physical palpability of the human body, including Christ's body, at the center of his work. In so doing, he seeks to strongly resist all forms of Gnosticism that would



*spiritualize or sentimentalize the potent message of the biblical narrative, at the core of which he sees God made flesh in the person of Jesus Christ to redeem our mortal flesh—soul, mind, and body. However, in 2005 Knippers lost his wife Diane to cancer, and since that time he has complemented his signature themes and approach with themes that address the Resurrection and Transfiguration of Christ, and by extension, of his believers.* [p. 58–59]

Convinced that both the liberal and the evangelical views of the Bible are mistaken—the one mythologizes Christ, the other ignores his humanity—Knippers paints so as to catch their attention and say, “Take another look!” The more I stood before his work in his studio that day, the more I thought of Flannery O’Connor’s fiction—two superb artists boldly speaking the truth to a society unwilling to hear.

Such callings, as you might guess, are not pursued without controversy. Once while lecturing at a Christian college on the biblical worldview, I was asked to speak to an art class and so included a number of Knippers’ works in my presentation. The professor in whose class I was the guest was not impressed. He made it clear the paintings I showed were unworthy of a Christian artist, and argued against my interpretation of them. Knippers’ use of the nude was, I was told, offensive. One fellow elder said, with obvious distaste, “He paints nudes!” and considered the matter closed. They are both wrong, but nothing I said was persuasive.

*Violent Grace: A Retrospective* is a large format book that showcases Edward Knippers’ art and includes seven thoughtful, accessible essays exploring various aspects of the artist and his

work. I realize such books are on the more expensive side of the publishing spectrum, but art books enrich a home and allow reflection and discussion. *Violent Grace* is one I recommend to you warmly.

Edward Knippers is an artist whose work will make you see grace in a more primal way, as the raw, compassionate, furious determination of God to redeem his fallen world. ■

*See samples of Knippers’ work on the back cover of this issue of Critique.*

**Art book, large format, recommended:** *Violent Grace: A Retrospective by Edward Knippers, with essays by Gregory Wolfe, Howard Fox, Theodore Prescott, John Walford, William Dryness, Roberta Green Ahmanson, and Timothy Verdon* (Albuquerque, NM: SF Design/Fresco Books; 2015) 208 pages + curriculum vitae; distributed by University of New Mexico Press

**Ordering Information:** In addition to the regular edition at \$75, there are also two special editions. *The Collector’s Edition* comes with an original oil painting and is housed with the book in a clamshell box at a price of \$1,800. *The Deluxe Edition* comes in a slipcase with an original colored woodcut printed by the artist at a price of \$400. Both of these are in an edition of 50. Any of these can be purchased through Edward Knippers at 2408 Washington Boulevard, Arlington, VA 22201; or e-mail at [ecknippers@aol.com](mailto:ecknippers@aol.com).







Images from the art book *Violent Grace: A Retrospective* by Edward Knippers (clockwise from the top):  
*Angel at the Crucifixion*, page 144  
*The Resurrection*, page 150  
*Moses and the Burning Bush*, page 176

From the table of contents: *Resurrection*, page 148