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How the Story of Job May Help Us All Get Along

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> *Each of them set out from his home. . . . They met together to go and console and comfort him. When they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him, and they raised their voices and wept aloud; they tore their robes and threw dust in the air upon their heads. They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word to him, for they saw that his suffering was very great.*
>
> —Job 2:11–13

Acts of horror seemingly happen faster and faster today. When we hear of all these troubles, we struggle to respond in ways that would aid interfaith relations rather than exacerbate the strife. How can we counter hate and lessen violence arising from and directed at religious communities? Especially when we see that the suffering of one faith group is very great, what are we to do?

I worked as a youth minister in an Episcopal church for many years, but after seeing the suffering of September 11, 2001, I decided to go to graduate school to develop resources to help us avoid religious violence and oppose hate of religious others. I feared a cycle of violence that could plunge the world again into the horrors of the twentieth century that saw global war revolving in part around a "final solution" of purging the religious other from our midst. In the shadow of the Shoah and 9/11, I spent my master's and PhD studying comparative religions to try to help us all get along. Whether because of hate violence or catastrophe, when suffering befalls any one faith community, it affects all people of faith. From the Abrahamic traditions, the story of Job shows us a possible process for an interfaith response to such suffering. That is: to (1) know, (2) go, (3) gather, (4) recognize, (5) cry, (6) and share silence.

Know: "Now when Job's three friends heard of all these troubles . . ."

Somehow, the friends had come to know that Job suddenly had everything violently taken from him—his loved ones, his possessions, his health. From this, we see that we must first be friends. Without waiting for further calamity, we should already cultivate a climate of friendship among different religious traditions. As friends, we should have a system of communication capable of quickly informing all when some violence or hardship befalls one.

Some fear, however, that friendship with a religious other means watering down their own faith. The fearful think that those people over there who believe differently, worship differently, and act from different convictions cannot be our friends because they believe wrongly, worship wrongly, and act from the wrong convictions. To befriend them would mean to condone their wrongness and discount our rightness. If full agreement were a precondition of friendship, though, then we all would be friendless. How, then, can we forge friendships across religious differences?

People working on interfaith issues often use the key term *pluralism* to discuss religious differences, though that same word oftentimes has different meanings. When I teach the meaning(s) of pluralism in my classes, I begin with a distinction between descriptive and prescriptive. On the one hand, descriptive pluralism simply refers to the fact that there are in human cultures certain diverse systems that we deem religious, such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. We might debate the word "religion" as an overly Western, socially constructed concept with a colonialist history (as indeed we should and it is), but we also all should agree that, however we define what we now call "religions," there are more than one of them, or plural. Pluralism, then, simply describes an undeniable reality of religious diversity. On the other hand, prescriptive pluralism recommends an orientation in regard to that religious diversity. People who use the term in this sense, then, proclaim pluralism a virtue and offer it as a prescription for how we might all get along.

I further explain to my students, though, that there are at least two types of prescriptive pluralism, and that's where things get confusing, because in interfaith discussions it's not always clear which is which. Failing to clarify the differences of the term can cause confusion for many and create fear for some. For instance, I had a student in an upper-level comparative religions seminar who was deeply suspicious of pluralism. We read and discussed Eboo Patel's *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America,* and from the first she seemed skeptical.[1] Knowing that Patel was coming soon to our campus to speak, I thought that after hearing him herself her hesitancy would, if not disappear, then at least soften. When she heard of all these ideas, though, her resistance hardened further.

Patel defines pluralism according to the contributions of diverse peoples. He makes a helpful distinction between diversity and pluralism, the former being descriptive and a problem, with the latter being prescriptive and an opportunity. He tells a bold and convincing story of America's strength arising in great measure from our shared collective effort to embrace different opinions and peoples while persistently striving to form a more perfect union. Hearing diverse perspectives and having vibrant contributions from various communities helps us forge a brighter path ahead because the new ideas and additions might always be better. Any person or community willing to contribute to creating a better future, Patel argues, should be embraced not in spite of their differences but because of them. We do not have to agree on all matters to work together side by side volunteering at a food pantry, cleaning up a stream, or cooperating on ending sex trafficking.

When my student first heard Patel advocate for pluralism, however, she heard him asking her to water down her faith in Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation. Now the mother of grown children, she had seen her way through many struggles in life with her strong faith sustaining her. Along the way, when she was first exposed to the idea of pluralism, she had encountered the type that prescribes believing in a more ascendant truth than any of the particular traditions claimed. Pluralism in this mode means embracing an unknowable universal sacred of which the individual traditions preach only partial approximations. Advocates of this type of pluralism hope we can all get along by accepting all religious worldviews as reflections of the more ascendant truth, albeit refracted through each one's particular limited perspectives. My student feared pluralism in that guise because it made Jesus not *the* way, as she heard in the Bible (John 14:6), but merely *a* way, which threatened the faith that had seen her through so much. Though Muslim, Patel clearly was not proclaiming such a message either in his writing or in his talk at Texas Wesleyan. Nevertheless, that's what she heard when she heard the word *pluralism*.

Thankfully, she was a good student who had committed to my class. Thus, we were able to spend an entire semester in dialogue on interfaith issues, reading great religious thinkers from many traditions and beyond, with Patel's book and his talk as parts of the continuing discussion. In other words, she had committed to work through a process of hearing diverse perspectives and listening for what they might contribute to her life, our community, and the world. In still other words, she had committed to Patel's vision of pluralism, but not under that term as she at first understood it.

For her final presentation, she revisited Patel's contributive pluralism (after a little urging from the professor), paying special attention to how his differed from the other ascendant pluralism. After undergoing a semester's worth of communal process of intentional interfaith engagement, she had developed the ears to hear the differences in the term *pluralism* and became committed to the type that values the contributions of diverse persons and communities. For her final project, she designed a blueprint for a mostly silent contemplative retreat that took the spiritual wisdom of Alcoholics Anonymous's 12-step process and adapted it to interfaith cooperation, with fear of the other as the addiction to overcome. Needless to say, it was amazing.

Before we can hear the troubles of our friends of other faiths, we must first cultivate those friendships, but we must also develop the ears to hear. Oftentimes developing the ears for interfaith work and dialogue means perhaps undergoing a long process of education and transformation.

Go: "Each of them set out from his home . . ."

Job's friends left the comfort of their homes to go and join Job. Praying in our own communities for the afflicted is good; going to their side is better. We cannot stay inside our places of worship—our churches, our mosques, our synagogues—and simply wish our neighbors well. We must leave our comfort zones to join in solidarity with those who suffer.

The metaphor of a journey frames my introductory courses on "world religions."[2] At the beginning of the semester, we take stock of where we are now and what we have to take with us on our trip exploring diverse dynamics deemed religious. We tell our own personal travel stories from our pasts that involve wild and wonderful sights as well as unexpected trials and travails. So too, I say, will and should our journey together thinking critically about religious dynamics involve not only amazing and uplifting insights but also challenging and difficult experiences. Journeys always involve risk, and going on a journey of exposure to different traditions might mean seeing our own formative traditions differently.

Having each been born at a particular place, at a particular time, to a particular set of parents, in a particular society, we all have stories from home that will affect how we hear and see whatever we encounter on our travels. In that sense, we all have been formed by the traditions of our upbringing, even if not by explicitly identified religious ones. Asking questions about these traditions will make us more aware of the lenses through which we see the world, and therefore better able to faithfully render the object of study. Responsibly accounting for our own subjectivity, then, makes us more objective, not less. Before embarking, we think critically about the terms we use and the methods of our study. Then, for the bulk of the semester, we journey far and wide across time and clime exploring peoples and processes deemed religious. I even offer extra credit for students to literally go to visit the sites, worship services, or gatherings of an unfamiliar tradition.

When students walk out of my classroom at the end of the semester, I hope to have equipped them with tools for thinking critically, reading against the grain, asking and responding to difficult questions, and responsibly dealing with difference, while at the same time seeking commonality. Ultimately, the goal of the class is for students to "return home" enriched and perhaps transformed by their exposure to different religious worldviews, even having risked the journey of viewing their own tradition, whatever it may be, from the outside. To know one is to know none, as the scholar Max Müller famously quipped. Setting out from our homes on a journey of exposure to diverse religious dynamics hopefully will give us not only an empathic understanding of others' traditions but also an enhanced understanding of our own.

Gather: "They met together to go and console and comfort him."

The friends do not separately offer aid but rather gather together in collective consolation. We should gather our various faith communities to stand together against hate and violence. We must have well-laid plans to organize such gatherings quickly in response to unforeseen and unforeseeable acts and events.

Interfaith gatherings must be not only periodic events occurring after calamities but also regular events in the ordinary life of our campus and civic communities. To facilitate such meeting together, campuses must foster places for students to assemble and interact. From comfortable benches and hammocks in the shade of trees to outdoor amphitheaters capable of accommodating groups of various sizes, and from small dedicated interfaith rooms to large auditoriums, our colleges should provide places for people to congregate.

Many religious congregations, however, see fewer and fewer people gathering together each week. Rejecting organized religions, more and more people, especially young adults, embrace the affirmation of being “spiritual but not religious” or simply “none of the above.” Such “nones” may find little use in interfaith endeavors or may feel unwelcome at interfaith gatherings. While some seek sacred ground inside traditional places of worship, others see the sacred underneath their feet wherever they walk. Still others think religions are part of the problem and should go away, instead planting their feet firmly in faith in science and rationality. For these reasons, I prefer to define faith quite broadly and to seek common ground elsewhere than disputed sacred ground.

“Faith,” argues the philosopher William James in *The Will to Believe*, “means belief in something concerning which doubt is still theoretically possible; and as the test of belief is willingness to act, one may say that faith is the readiness to act in a cause the prosperous issue of which is not certified to us in advance.” Since it is always theoretically possible that even our most assured confidences can be revised by something other to come, then faith is the very air all of our actions, concepts, and experiences breathe. “The necessity of faith as an ingredient in our mental attitude,” James notes, “is strongly insisted on by the scientific philosophers of the present day; but by a singularly arbitrary caprice they say that it is only legitimate when used in the interests of one particular proposition—the proposition, namely, that the course of nature is uniform."[3] James proposes that we all walk by faith—whether rationalists or fideists. Reason and religion, then, are "over-beliefs" built upon the ground of faith, which is really the hope in future possibilities to come. New data, insights, and experiences may always arrive to challenge and transform any and all of our prior certainties. Thus, realizing that ignorance and error are as common to all humans as our fundamental dignity, I believe we can deal with complex questions from the common ground of admitting, "I don't know."

We all suffer human finitude. Even the most ardent atheists and fervent fideists should quiet down enough to agree that they do not know everything. From this shared place of silent humility, fruitful dialogue across beliefs and backgrounds may blossom. When we meet together in our shared human fallibility, we may better go forth with empathy for others. Like the friends in the Book of Job, our meeting together should be with the goal of going out in consolation and comfort for those who suffer.

Such gatherings to go compassionately forth for others might take the form of marching against hate, violence, and injustice. Protesting racial and economic injustice, Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel walked arm in arm with the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. in Selma. Sensing the holy in such prophetic protesting, Heschel famously said, "I felt my legs were praying."[4] When we gather together to go compassionately forth, all of our actions may become prayer.

Recognize: "When they saw him from a distance, they did not recognize him."

Job's afflictions left him unrecognizable to his friends. The sight of him did not align with the righteous and blessed person they were used to seeing because for them righteousness and blessings were aligned. Good people get good things, and bad people bad. Righteousness, so they thought, is something you can see in someone's health and wealth and happiness. The sight of poor Job challenged all of that.

The story of Job asks the age-old question: "Why do bad things happen to good people?"

Job himself did not recognize any of the traditional theological answers as satisfying. He rejected all attempts to explain his suffering, waiting instead for God to explain. When God finally showed up in the story, the answer God provided was a barrage of questions meant to humble Job in the face of Ultimate Mystery. Properly recognized, we can hear God's words to Job from out of the whirlwind as ultimately comforting, in essence proclaiming: "You're not God! You cannot know! Get over yourself and live!"

Given life amidst a constitutive opacity, humans are marked by both capacity and incapacity. As finite and fallible human beings who nevertheless exercise substantial creative and destructive power, we find ourselves possessed of or by agency as well as dispossessed by the unavoidable passivity of affectivity. The interplay of agency and passivity perhaps unavoidably generates indeterminate realms that we construct as more or less human—a more of whatever or whoever exceeds our grasp and control, like death or God, and a less of that which falls under our ability to manipulate, like nonhuman animals and the environment. This "more" we call sovereign, supernatural, or mystical, and the "less" we call beastly, natural, or material. We wage wars about the more of gods and sovereign states, and we turn the natural into technology and visit unspeakable violence on nonhuman animals, ecosystems, and on other humans we deem as less-than-human. All too often we fail to recognize those who differ from us along whatever categories—religion, race, class, gender, or species—as deserving of the dignity accorded to humanity. In such misrecognition, we demean not only others but ourselves.

Whatever or whoever we recognize as ourselves and our others, perhaps we should ever remain vigilant in striving to recognize the unrecognizable who may come (back). "The unrecognizable," wrote the French Jewish philosopher Jacques Derrida, "is the beginning of ethics."[5] What he might mean by that can be explained partly with the story of the old monastery that had fallen into disrepair.[6] Not only were the walls and buildings crumbling, but also the worship and brothers were faltering. When they sang the hymns, their hearts weren't in it. When they did their chores, they did them grudgingly. When they passed each other in the halls, they grumbled and groaned. At his wit's end, the abbot who oversaw the miserable monastery journeyed into the forest to seek out the wisdom of the secluded rabbi. While sharing a small pot of soup, the rabbi listened to the abbot's woes. When the abbot finally fell into an exasperated silence, the rabbi slowly leaned forward, squinted an eye, and said that he had a secret to share. Then he whispered, "*The Messiah is among you*" and spoke no more.

As the abbot walked back to the monastery, he pondered this new insight. Was it Brother Timothy, who was terrible at carpentry but sang so beautifully? Or Brother John, who was so clumsy but always tried so hard? Or perhaps Brother Peter, who grumbled loudly in groups but always whistled quietly while sweeping the floors alone? The others received the news in shocked silence. From then on, however, the monastery was transformed. Now when they passed each other in the halls, they wondered whether the other brother might be the Messiah, and smiled affably. When they did their chores, they worked joyously wondering whether the Messiah would walk on the floor they scrubbed. The walls were rebuilt, the buildings restored, and once again from the old monastery the hymns rang out happily with resounding love.

Perhaps we must dare to unknow ourselves and our others through participation in unrecognizable mystery beyond recognized divisions—natural and supernatural, secular and sacred, self and other.

Cry: "They raised their voices and wept aloud."

Just as wailing loudly, tearing their clothes, and covering themselves in dirt are unmistakable signs of the friends' deep identification with Job's affliction, so too should our cries of common cause in response to an attack against a faith community be unambiguous and apparent to all. Publicly and in concert we must unequivocally express our shared grief, sorrow, and outrage.

Society tends to devalue displays of emotion, especially by men. In fact, all things associated with emotion and vulnerability largely have been disparaged historically and cross-culturally, though, of course, notable exceptions can always be found. All too often, however, women, embodiment, and the earth are deemed lower in the hierarchy of values. To engage students in thinking critically about such denigrated dynamics, I like to use a video clip of a comedian explaining why he doesn't let his daughters use cell phones. The comedian explains that technology removes us from interconnection and empathy, which are facts and skills we need to cultivate just as part of what it means to be human.

The comedian also tells a story of texting in traffic to avoid the realization that life involves deep suffering just by being in it (I also use the clip to explain some of the basics of Buddhism, like the Four Noble Truths. The comedian does a great job, unintentionally I think, of explaining basic Buddhist *dharma*, or teaching). One time, when a particularly nostalgic song comes on the radio, though, he puts aside the phone and decides to just sit there and let the feelings wash over him. He pulls over and cries. And at that moment, when he's trying to explain the intensity of the feeling and the tears, he blurts out the term for a female dog. Why?

Perhaps because those societal associations with femininity and animality arise whenever we (especially, maybe, white men) experience the unavoidable exposure to vulnerability that comes with deep feeling. The comedian tells the story to teach us that we need to set aside distractions and practice the ability to just sit there while watching good and bad feelings ebb and flow. That's what it means to be human, he says, and that's why he won't let his daughters have smartphones. If we could better cultivate such skills, especially embracing the unavoidable associations with vulnerability, we could better build empathy for one another across our differences. Moreover, I would argue, if we transform our relations with emotion and the body, we may transform society as well.

Better learning to cry without shame may help upend some of the oppressive hierarchies that limit our efforts to cultivate the skills of interconnection, like interfaith work. Whether we see, understand, or acknowledge it, we are all connected by our shared exposure to suffering and vulnerability. When I was six years old, I went to ride bikes with my big brother. Just like everyone else back then, we wore no helmets. Riding hard to keep up with him, I jumped off a root wrong and hit my head on a rock. The blow caused my brain to swell in such a way that I could not see, or remember who I was. Someone told me afterwards that I spent the entire time asking for my mother. For hours and hours, I kicked and cried and tried to get away and get home to mom. What I know now is that my mother was the one holding me the whole time. She was there when it happened. She rushed me immediately to the hospital. And she hugged me while I was kicking and crying for her. In the dark and not knowing where or who I was, I called out for the very love that was embracing me all the while.

Share Silence: "They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke a word."

The best solace one can give another during a time of crisis may simply be one's comforting presence. Platitudes and explanations can hurt more than help. And Job's friends give him seven days and seven nights of nothing but their presence. So too should we lend more of simply our comforting presence than our words of interpretation to an affected faith community. Indeed, the friends err when later they open their mouths and start to tell Job what's what, presuming to speak for God. Thinking we know best will surely be the death of interfaith endeavors. Silence that is not silencing may actually offer our greatest hope for nurturing the mutual understanding among religious people that will form friendships in the first place.

For monologue to yield to dialogue, one must be silent and listen to the other. Beginning, ending, and punctuating gatherings with long periods of silence could cool heated arguments and help us all learn to listen more. Cultivating a discipline of sitting in silence with people who believe differently may grow to become a core practice of creative nonviolent action. When violence takes the form of hate speech, our active nonviolent resistance might take the form not of counter-rhetoric but of silence. How might the hurlers of hate speech be affected by the faithful of all religions sitting together in silent prayer?

When the time came, the friends would have better served Job by adding action rather than words to their silence. They did not need to discuss theology in order to care for his wounds, rebuild his house, and work to restore his livelihood. Practices of silence paired with practical action can counter violence and foster peace.

Embracing Mystery: Christian Interfaith Resources

The moral of the story of Job is that we need to faithfully accept the limitations of human finitude in the face of Ultimate Mystery. Toward that end, I would like to offer by way of conclusion a few underappreciated, specifically Christian resources for interfaith work. Contrary to much Christian (self-)righteousness today, the historical depth of the tradition offers resources for humbly embracing mystery, and doing so not simply from a lack in human capacity but moreover from the fullness of God's inherent incomprehensibility. For many, Christ reveals God as unrevealable. Thus, I would also like to suggest that Christians might not have so much to fear from even the ascendant version of pluralism as it at first may seem.

If ascendant pluralism affirms meeting amidst an unknowable mystery above and beyond all traditional approximations, then what have we to fear? After all, at the heart of our faith, is not mystery inscribed? The Trinity: three persons, one substance; Jesus: both God and human—to claim final resolution of these paradoxes is the height of heresy. Mystery remains as participation in the life of faith involves us in a paradox of wills: it takes a supreme act of will to submit one's will to God. I must will the giving of my will to God. How can such an impossible kenosis be possible? Perhaps only by grace, but by this do we not mean that God's will must (not) overwhelm human will?

Mystery and unknowing may also be found at the heart of our ethical teachings. Is not hospitality to the unknown and unrecognizable other inscribed in Christian scriptures in Matthew 25:37-39?

> Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?

In other words, the righteous did not know. Such unknowing would entail not idolatrously living in confidence of one's own interpretive powers in regard to people, texts, or events. Instead, it would involve always wondering when, where, and how we are attending or failing to attend to the least. That future wonder should spur us to present questioning, always asking of any context, "Who is least?"

Ultimately, however, the least may be the one we do not even yet recognize as deserving of our attention, respect, or care. At some mysterious level, then, the other whom we miss or marginalize becomes indistinguishable from our God. Ethics and faith conflate in the effort to see the invisible. Gregory of Nyssa (335–395), one of the people most responsible for solidifying Nicene orthodoxy, taught that though the trinitarian God may be represented through various images, all images are inadequate finally to reflect the incomprehensible God. Arguing that any one image must be destabilized by others, he offered an array of analogies: three men (from "On Not Three Gods"), gold and coins ("On Not Three Gods"), breath (*The Great Catechism*), grape and wine (*Against Eunomius*), and archer-arrow-ointment (*Commentary on the Song of Songs*). Preeminently, Gregory prescribed a complex process of spiritual purgation that involves alternation between seeker and sought, active and passive, masculine and feminine in a perpetual ascent into intimacy with the divine.[7] In his allegorical interpretation of the Old Testament, *The Life of Moses*, Gregory says, "This truly is the vision of God: never to be satisfied in the desire to see him. But one must always, by looking at what he can see, rekindle his desire to see more."[8]

"We, however, following the suggestions of Holy Scripture, have learned that His nature cannot be named and is ineffable," Gregory of Nyssa wrote in "On Not Three Gods" of Christian orthodox belief.[9] Thus, the Nicene formulation of the Trinity affirming God as Three-in-One and the Christology (study of the two natures of Christ) of Chalcedon that affirms Jesus himself as both human and divine seem composed in part to direct Christians toward ever-deepening mystery. The Christian creedal response to the human condition, then, deems three mysteries—beyond, without, and within—to all be one and the same mystery. Indeed, the sacraments or "mysteries" of the faith may have been in part designed to deepen participation in such paradoxes.

"What is the significance of the unnameable name of which the Father speaks when he says 'Baptize them in my name,' without adding the signification uttered by this name?" Gregory of Nyssa asks of the baptismal blessing in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Eunomius, a later follower of Arius, asserted that the word *agennetos,* "unbegotten," literally signified the nature of the divine. Against such an assertion of literal understanding of the divine communicable through any formulation of words, however fundamental, Christian orthodoxy according to Gregory affirmed:

> Only the uncreated nature, which we believe to be the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, surpasses all signification that a name can convey. This is why the Word, in saying this name, did not add to the tradition of faith what it is (how could he have found a name which indicates the supereminent nature and which is equally fitting to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. . . . And this, it seems to me, is what the Word decreed by this formula—in order to convince us that the name of the divine essence is unsayable and incomprehensible. (*Against Eunomius Book II.3*)[10]

Humans created in the image of such an incomprehensible God must also be at heart incomprehensible. Christian praxis may well be designed, then, to empower the believer to relinquish unhealthy attachment to grasping knowledge of God and self, in favor of participation in ever-deepening and ascending mystery, fueled by ever-increasing love.

"Let us change," argues Gregory of Nyssa in his treatise, "On Perfection,"

> in such a way that we may constantly evolve towards what is better, being *transformed from glory to glory*, and thus always improving and ever becoming more perfect by daily growth, and never arriving at any limit of perfection. For that perfection consists in our never stopping in our growth in good, never circumscribing our perfection by any limitation.[11]

For the Christian, then, perfection means perpetually striving to be more perfect. Thus, we should welcome as neighbors and friends any who also walk along with us on the path of persistently working to form a more perfect union.

Notes

1 Eboo Patel, *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America* (Boston: Beacon, 2012).

2 For more on this metaphor in introductory classes, see the textbook *Comparing Religions: Coming to Terms*, by Jeffrey J. Kripal (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014).

3 William James, *Writings, 1878–1899* (New York: Library Classics of the United States, 1992), 524.

4 As quoted by his daughter, Susannah Heschel, in her introduction to his *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity: Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1996), vii.

5 Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 1:108. For a similar analysis of the more or less human, see Judith Butler's *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), esp. p. 8.

6 Though anonymous and old, this story first came to my attention through a version found in the Jesuit priest Anthony De Mello's *Taking Flight: A Book of Story Meditations* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 51–52.

7 For more, see Sarah Coakley's *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), esp. chap. 9, "The Eschatological Body: Gender, Transformation and God."

8 Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978), 116.

9 Gregory of Nyssa, "On Not Three Gods," in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. Edward R. Hardy (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), 259.

10 Gregory of Nyssa, as quoted by Jean-Luc Marion in *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena* (New York: Fordham, 2002), 156.

11 Gregory of Nyssa, as quoted by Jean Daniélou in *From Glory to Glory: Texts from Gregory of Nyssa's Mystical Writings* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 51–52.

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