

## “GO TELL PHARAOH” OR, WHY EMPIRES PREFER A NAMELESS GOD

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At a portentous moment in the story of the exodus, Pharaoh says to Moses, “Who is the LORD, that I should heed him and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and I will not let Israel go” (Exod. 5:2). From this point on, the drama of Exodus turns on God’s promise (or perhaps we should say threat) that “you shall know that I am the LORD” (7:17; 8:22; 9:30; etc.). Indeed, the fulfillment of this promise/threat quickly becomes the central subject of the rest of the Bible, which tells how one day not only Pharaoh and the sons and daughters of Israel, but all creation shall know “that the LORD is God” (Deut. 7:9; Josh. 4:24; I Sam. 17:46; I Kings 8:60; Ps. 100:3; Ezek. 13:9; etc.).

The remarkable character of Moses’ exchange with Pharaoh is blunted for us in some degree by the (honorable) conventions of biblical translators. For we must remember that what our English Bibles translate as LORD (usually with capital letters), is in Hebrew a proper name, God’s proper name. When Pharaoh scoffs, “I do not know the LORD,” his expostulation is identical in force to that of, say, a CEO who has just been informed that a stranger in the outer office, identified only by name, wants him to hand over the corporate assets. Pharaoh’s reaction is predictable; the story’s outcome is not. What came into being was a people who knew its existence to be tied up with this God’s name and the practice of taking it seriously (cf. Exod. 20:7).

Over time, the people of Israel came to treat God’s proper name with such respect that they ceased to pronounce it altogether, except on the holiest occasions. When the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek, the Holy Name was rendered by the common noun *kyrios*, meaning Lord, and this practice has been followed by most translators of the Bible down to the present day. Still today Jews do not pronounce God’s Holy Name, preferring to use some circumlocution such as, “The Holy One, Blessed be He,” or even more simply, Ha’Shem, which means simply, “The Name.” But Israel has never doubted that the One who delivered it from Egypt was not a nameless numinous “X”, but the particular One revealed by name to Moses.

Now, it is just at this point that the ancient claim of Jewish faith runs smack into a serious contemporary objection. It is all well and good, so the objection goes, for ancient Israel to have believed that God revealed God’s name to it and chose

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it uniquely to be God's people. But this belief, perhaps necessary in its day for the rise of "monotheism," has outlived its usefulness and legitimacy. Today it is necessary for Jewish faith, for Christian faith, indeed, for all faiths to embark upon a radical paradigm shift. "We need today more than ever a world faith which will provide an effective basis for human solidarity in a shrinking world. For unless we seek to harmonize the religions how shall we ever find that common 'ethos,' that universally accepted system of spiritual values and moral principles which we need in order to overcome our confusion, to end the war of ideologies and give international law and morality a sound foundation?"<sup>1</sup>

Recently this charge has been taken up with great seriousness in an anthology called *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralist Theology of Religions*.<sup>2</sup> While the authors are not of one mind about what a "pluralist theology of religions" would look like, they stress the ineffability of the transcendent referent of religion and hold that differing religions point more or less adequately toward a Reality that is itself absolutely indescribable. The "transcendent Center . . . remains always beyond and greater than apprehensions of it or even the sum total of such apprehensions." Behind and beyond Israel's LORD God, the Muslim's Allah, the Hindu's Brahman, there lies an ineffable reality that itself never appears except in these scheme-specific manifestations.<sup>3</sup> One author quotes with appreciation a verse from Hindu scripture, "Thou art formless. Thy only form is our knowledge of Thee." For this author, it follows that there can be no such thing as idolatry in the pejorative sense, since all concepts of God are "idols"—human constructs. What is to be condemned is the identification of the image with the Reality it represents. As one author states, "For Christians to think that Christianity is true, or final, or salvific, is a form of idolatry."<sup>4</sup>

Now, here indeed we are faced with a basic alternative. On the one hand, we have the faith of Israel, which attests to a God who has been revealed by name, who refuses to share glory with any other. On the other hand, we have the appeal to recognize that strictly speaking God has no name at all, that God is the ineffable mystery that transcends all the many names for God, and to whom all the different religions give access. This alternative is especially momentous for Christians, for it poses once again the ancient question of how Christian faith is or is not related to the jealous God, the LORD God of Israel.

1. W. A. Visser 't Hooft, *No Other Name: The Choice Between Syncretism and Christian Universalism* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), 86.

2. John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness: Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1987).

3. J. A. DiNoia, O.P., "Pluralist Theology of Religions: Pluralistic or Non-Pluralistic," in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, edited by Gavin D'Costa (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 129.

4. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, "Idolatry: In Comparative Perspective," in *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1987), 56.

As one who has taught in a seminary for several years, I am well aware that the pluralist proposal is attractive to many people today, including many persons who are deeply concerned about Christian faith. And yet I am convinced that the promise of the pluralist option, namely, that it presents a truer understanding of God that will help humankind transcend its differences, is a dead end, a false promise.

To begin with, we should not imagine that the pluralist proposal is something dramatically new in the religious history of humankind. On the contrary, the idea that the divine is utterly transcendent, is strictly nameless and ineffable, is one of the oldest theological views on record. This view was, in fact, well known to Israel's neighbors, the ancient Egyptians. A hymn from an ancient Egyptian papyrus goes as follows, "The One and only, who hides himself from men and gods. No one knows his being. He is higher than the heaven and deeper than the netherworld. No God knows his true appearance . . . He is too mysterious, one cannot reveal his glory, he is too great that one can search him out, and too powerful to be known."<sup>5</sup> The nameless, ineffable God, then, is not a newcomer to the religious scene. He was, perhaps, precisely the God whom Pharaoh himself presupposed when he spoke derisively to Moses, "Who is the LORD, that I should heed him and let Israel go?" (Exod. 5:2).

The advocates of a pluralist theology of religions, of course, are well aware that the idea of Ultimate Reality as ineffable mystery is not new. In fact, they point to its ubiquity and antiquity as evidence of its deep roots in human experience and as grounds for its acceptance today. But here I think we come to a key question: the nameless, ineffable God has deep roots in human experience. But what experience is this? Or to put it another way, in whose behalf does the nameless, ineffable God reign? In fairness, we must say that the human spirit has been drawn to speak this way of God for many reasons, including awe and humility before the mystery of life. And yet we may at least ask whether the cult of the ineffable God owes at least some of its appeal to its political utility, especially for empires, which by their nature seek to unite many peoples, cultures, and religions under a single earthly authority. In the famous words of Edward Gibbon, in the age of the Caesars all modes of worship were "considered by the people equally true, by the philosophers equally false, and by the magistrates equally useful."<sup>6</sup>

We have already seen that ancient Egypt knew of the cult of the ineffable God. Yet it was Alexander the Great who, by conquering the whole eastern Mediterranean in a few short years, created the social and political conditions in which the cult of the nameless, ineffable God attained prominence in the Western world. According to the New Testament scholar James Dunn, the theology that underlay the policy of Alexander the Great and his Greek and Latin successors regarded the differ-

5. Peter Gerlitz, "Name/Namengebung I," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 23, eds. Gerhard Müller, Walter de Gruyter (Berlin: 1994), 746.

6. Edward Gibbon, *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (London: Jones and Co., 1826), 4 vols., vol. 1, 18.

ent religions as in the end only manifestations of the same deities.<sup>7</sup> This theology allowed the victors to incorporate defeated nations by absorbing the local religions into the larger syncretistic whole of the empire. So, for example, the Greek God Zeus and Roman God Jupiter were regarded as one and the same; at Bath in England, we find a statue to Minerva-Sulis, Minerva being the Roman goddess, and Sulis the local equivalent. In the great hymns to the Egyptian goddess Isis, she was addressed as “Thou of countless names,” because she was identified with so many different religions.

Gradually, among the learned, the religious attitude took hold that the different religions were in fact only manifestations of the one deity, or, in the words of a treatise falsely attributed to Aristotle, “God being one yet has many names.”<sup>8</sup> This view, philosophically buttressed by the successive waves of platonic revival that emphasized, in addition to God’s unity, his utter transcendence and ineffability, became in fact the reigning civic religion of the ancient imperial world, so that we should not be too surprised to learn that the Emperor Alexander Severus had in his private chapel not only the statues of the deified emperors, but also those of the miracle-worker Apollonius of Tyana, of Christ, of Abraham and of Orpheus.<sup>9</sup>

Of course, the success of the imperial theology depended in part on the willingness of the subjugated to identify their own deities with other gods. In general, this was not much of an obstacle, for many ancient people were eager to keep their religious portfolios in balance. For if eternal reality is ultimately unknowable, it is best to take advantage of emerging opportunities to participate as fully as possible in the life of the gods.<sup>10</sup> In the case of the Jews, however, the policy did not work. When Antiochus Epiphanes, one of Alexander’s regional successors, tried to set up a cult of Zeus in the Temple of Jerusalem, he was simply following the logic of imperial theology, for in his view the LORD God was simply the local manifestation of Zeus (2 Macc. 6:1-2). The Jews didn’t see it that way, and the incident set off the Maccabean revolt and the eventual repurification of the temple which is celebrated today in the festival of Chahukkah. Even such thoroughly Hellenized men as the Jew Philo and the Christian Origen (both residents, we may note, of the imperial city Alexandria in Egypt) refused to identify the God who spoke to Moses with any other god or deity known to the ancient world. When the emperor Caligula decreed that his image should be venerated in the Temple in Jerusalem, Philo risked his life by joining a delegation sent to the Emperor in protest, and Origen declared that Christians would rather die than call God Zeus, and was himself imprisoned and tortured for his refusal to burn incense to Caesar.

7. James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways: Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), 20.

8. Robert M. Grant, *Gods and the One God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1986), 77.

9. W. A. Visser ‘t Hooft, *No Other Name*, 15.

10. *Ibid.*, 16.

In light of incidents such as these, we can understand, I think, the threat that the God of Exodus posed to the ancient God of imperial religion. Moreover, we can understand the widespread belief among cultured Hellenists in the Graeco-Roman world that Jews (and later Christians) were atheists—not because they were monotheists, but because they were exclusive monotheists.<sup>11</sup> For if different religions are simply different local manifestations of the same deities, and if furthermore all these are simply manifestations of the one supreme being who is nameless and ineffable, then to speak of a God who has revealed himself by name in the Exodus is in fact to abandon the proper worship of God altogether.

Today, the authors of *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness* have renewed the call to worship the nameless, ineffable One who is manifest through the variety of religions. And while they do not charge Christians and Jews with being atheists, they do imply, as we saw earlier, that “for Christians to think that Christianity is true, or final, or salvific, is a form of idolatry.”<sup>12</sup> Yet here again, I think, we do well to ask whether there may not be a hidden, imperial spirit that animates this proposal, much against the good intentions of the authors themselves. A telling clue in this respect is found in the book’s “Preface,” where the editors write, “We wanted to gather theologians who were exploring the possibilities of a pluralist position—a move away from insistence on the superiority of finality of Christ and Christianity toward a recognition of the independent validity of other ways. Such a move came to be described by participants in our project as the crossing of a theological Rubicon.”<sup>13</sup> The image is ironic, of course, for Julius Caesar’s crossing of that same river in 49 BCE was “a forceful attempt to encompass the ‘other’ within his own framework.”<sup>14</sup>

But is there in fact a modern “empire” today, similar in its sheer power and territorial ambitions to the ancient empires of Egypt, of Alexander, of the Roman Caesars? The answer, I think, is yes. Today the counterpart to the ancient empires is the power of the marketplace and the penetration of market rationality into ever new domains of life. Further, in its attempt to subordinate the Holy One of Israel to the nameless ineffable One, to the nameless God with many names, the pluralist theology of religion unwittingly provides a spiritual rationale for the unlimited dominance of the marketplace, for the commodification of all things, including religion, and indeed, human life itself.

11. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 20.

12. Lesslie Newbigin, “Religion for the Marketplace,” in *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions*, ed. Gavin D’Costa (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 137-38.

13. Hick and Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, viii.

14. Gavin D’Costa, *Christian Uniqueness Reconsidered: The Myth of a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), ix.

From time immemorial, humans have engaged in market exchange. The market operates by creating a place where persons can freely produce and exchange commodities, according to the laws of supply and demand, without interference from outside forces. What distinguishes the modern world is not the existence of markets, but the increasingly large place that markets and market logic have taken in Western society. In exchange for this larger space, the market has delivered an unprecedented growth in wealth and material standards of living for many tens of millions of people. But the growth of the market has not been without costs. Throughout the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries, the growth of the market was accompanied by the gradual dissolution of other modes of organizing society based on tradition, kinship, religion and government. From the point of view of the market, these older forms of relation were inefficient, that is, they created obstacles to the free exchange of goods and the accumulation of wealth. The growth of the market therefore demanded that these relationships be gradually dissolved and reshaped in more rational ways, i.e., ways serve that serve and respond to the demands of the marketplace.

Over time, the growth of the liberal market society has helped to shape a new kind of person, a new “I.” Since the economic world is one of constant innovation and flux, the new individuated person is supposed to be free of all constraints, unrestricted in its inward life by any bounds to external authority. Charles Taylor remarks that the new self is constructed as a rational individual who is “not to identify with any of the tendencies he finds in himself, which can only be the deposits of tradition and authority, but [must] be ready to break and remake these habitual responses according to his own goals.” The result is the construction of the “I” as a pure unencumbered self, existing independent of relationships and ready to act for the sake of greater material reward.<sup>15</sup>

In light of this, we should not be too surprised, I think, by the re-emergence of the proposal for religious pluralism, which, if I am right, has long been the native theology of empire. I do not think that the advocates of a pluralist theology of religions want to underwrite the imperial logic of the marketplace. Indeed, I think their desire is to do exactly the opposite. Nevertheless, if their proposal proves widely popular, I think it will be because it serves so well to provide an account of religion that mirrors the logic of the marketplace and thus also gives the market a theological justification.

Consider three ways in which the pluralist theology of religion reflects and thereby underwrites the logic of the marketplace. In the first place, the pluralist theology

cultural  
encounters

15. Charles Taylor, “Inwardness and the Culture of Modernity,” in *Zwischenbetrachtungen Im Prozess der Aufklärung*, A. Hönneth, et. al. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1989), 613.

of religion transforms the different religions, each with their own unique theologies, social formations, and claims to truth, into essentially interchangeable paths or vehicles to the same end. In effect, the pluralist theology turns the religions into a kind of spiritual commodity, which may differ from one another for the purposes of attracting adherents (i.e., advertising), but which are in substance all offering exactly the same product. Second, the pluralist theology teaches that the end or goal of all the various religions is not identical with any of the religions, but remains an ineffable, unknown X which transcends them all, a locus of pure numinous power and salvation. Here the analogy to the imperial market is especially eerie, for the market too spins around a center that is itself utterly without form, namely, pure wealth as power. What drives the market is not any particular form of wealth, but wealth as such, which may temporarily reside in dollars or yen, or stock, or real estate, but which in itself transcends them all. Finally, the pluralist theology of religions suggests that since no religion is superior to any other, all persons are free to choose the image of God that he or she finds most congenial. As Lesslie Newbigin has pointed out, this final implication serupticiously elevates the self into a position of command, and corresponds "to the ethos of the consumer society where the choice of the customer is free and sovereign."<sup>16</sup>

Of course, I do not know whether the pluralist proposal will take hold in the coming decades, and whether it will in fact come to provide something like the plausibility structure of the new global marketplace. But I am certain of a couple of things. Like all empires, the imperial market will continue to exact frightening costs from the human community. The market, of course, promises to make the consumer king, and encourages us to think that we are in charge. But the market charges a high price in return, namely, the increasing commodification of human life itself. To take just one example, as genetic knowledge becomes more complete and available to consumers through law, prospective parents will be subject to pressure to screen their pregnancies in order to screen out inefficiencies such as mental retardation, genetic disorder, etc. The other thing I am certain of is this: the ineffable God of the pluralists will be powerless to deliver humankind from its plight. Increasingly, I believe, people will refuse to be satisfied with the promises of gods who are ineffable, who cannot or will not reveal their name: in the midst of their groaning, people will demand to know from those who presume to speak for God, "Who is it that sent you? What is his name?"

I noted at the beginning of this essay that central to biblical faith is God's promise to Israel that Israel, the nations and all the earth will come to confess that the "LORD is God!" What shall we make of this?

Let us begin with this simple observation. For biblical faith, it goes to the very heart of the matter to recognize that although God cannot be circumscribed, God can be identified.

16. Newbigin, "Religion for the Marketplace," 146.

To say that God cannot be circumscribed is to say that human beings can never bring God under their control. God is inexhaustible. Here is the element of truth in the position of the pluralist theologians. God cannot be caught by our definitions, nor domesticated by human thought or feeling. Moreover, the pluralists are correct in saying that any name that we give to God falls short of God's own reality. Although humans are name-giving animals, they cannot give a name to name God.

But the Bible makes clear that while God cannot be circumscribed, God can be identified. But note: God is identifiable not because God's namelessness sets us free to give God names according to our own predilections. Rather, God is identifiable because God reveals God's name to us, and in doing so casts aside all of our self-serving talk of God. And this is precisely what God does in his encounter with Moses.

And here it is of inestimable significance that God reveals God's name to Moses in context of the Exodus. For biblical faith, the name of God is inseparable from the stories and narratives that delineate God's actions. God's name comes with a specific history, and that history, as we see in the Exodus, is the creation of freedom.

Today of course, we think of freedom on the model of consumer choice: to be free is to have lots of options, regardless of what particular option we pick. But that is not the biblical understanding of freedom. The story of the Exodus makes clear that God's name promises and creates freedom with a definite content. In the first place, God creates freedom for those who are threatened by the empires of their day, for those who, in the words of Gustavo Gutierrez, are non-persons, whose lives and deaths are of no account. But in the second place, the freedom that God creates is for life lived in community with others. Long before the Exodus, God promised Abraham that in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed, and the prophets continually look forward to the time when this promise will be fulfilled, and when all the nations shall dwell together in peace with God, with one another, and the natural world.

Both biblical faith and the pluralist theologians affirm the mystery of God. But the two positions have very different understandings of God's mystery. For the pluralists, God's mystery means that in the final analysis God remains hidden and ineffable. This is what I have sometimes called the Monty Hall understanding of mystery. God is a mystery in a similar way that contestants on *Let's Make a Deal* do not know what is behind door number three. In the words of the ancient Egyptian prayer, "No God knows his true appearance . . . He is too mysterious, one cannot reveal his glory, he is too great that one can search him out, and too powerful to be known."<sup>17</sup> But this understanding of mystery is actually a prison beyond which

17. Gerlitz, "Name/Namengebung I," 746.

God cannot move. For the pluralists, the one thing God can never do is reveal his name, for to do so would be to expose the mystery.

Biblical faith understands God's mystery in an entirely different way. God is not restricted by the prison of ineffability. God's mystery is not something that God must protect by remaining inaccessible and ineffable. For biblical faith, the mystery of God is that God wants to be known. The mystery of God is that God steps out of the "ineffability" beloved by Greeks and makes God Self addressable, nameable, and vulnerable. The mystery of God is not what we do not know about God, but precisely what God shows to us, namely, that God is, in the words of Mary, one who "puts down the mighty from their throne and exalts those of low degree, who fills the hungry with good things, and who sends the rich away empty" (Luke 1:52-53). The mystery of this God is that He does not choose to remain inaccessible, but that He freely shares his life with his creatures, and that no matter how much they may draw upon Him, He remains ever inexhaustible and generous.

For biblical faith, the mystery of God is also this: that in coming to know God, in coming to bless God's name, we also come to know ourselves and one another. Notice that if God is ineffable, then ultimately each religion stands on its own as an independent avenue toward God, and indeed, each tradition and each person comes to stand on its own. For if God is ineffable, then the search for God ultimately becomes an individual quest, in which each person sets out in pursuit of the image that is most congenial. But the mystery of the biblical God is not something that can be discovered by each person on his or her own. On the contrary, the mystery of the biblical God is that we can only come to know and praise this God in the company of others whom God provides as our companions. To know God, we must be open to one another. Israel's life with God cannot happen apart from the nations, and the nations cannot live with God apart from Israel.

From this it follows, too, that our names, our identities are important. This is not at all clear from the pluralist perspective. The pluralists argue that since God is the ineffable X, one cannot even say that the X is personal and relates to us in a personal way. Hence one cannot say whether our own personal identity is of ultimate significance to God. Thus to the Hindu, for example, salvation consists in the dissolution of the self; and for pluralists, this is at least as accurate as the biblical teaching that humankind is created in the image and likeness of God.

But from the biblical perspective, who we are matters, and therefore the Bible takes names so seriously. Have you noticed that the Bible is chock-full of proper names? A proper name is the very opposite of a commodity. Each name and its history is unique, non-interchangeable. And hence the biblical God alone, I think, has the power to resist the forces of the contemporary empire, the market, which pushes towards the commodification of all things, including human life itself. The Pharaoh of Moses regarded Israel as a nameless mass for producing bricks—as units of productive power. But in calling them, in hearing their groans, God made

them a people, bestowed on them a name, and delivered them from an imperial power that treated them as expendable and interchangeable.

I firmly believe that there is a power that can deliver humankind from its groaning, and that power is in the name of the LORD. Apart from this power, humankind is helpless before the nameless, faceless, impersonal powers of this world. But in this name, there is salvation, righteousness, wholeness, and peace. And this brings me to a final name, the name of Jesus Christ.

It is extremely important, I think, that at several points when the Apostolic Witness wants to get across the incomparable significance of Jesus Christ, it finds it necessary to speak of him in relationship to God's name. So for instance, all four gospels record the fact that when Jesus entered into the Holy City riding on an ass, the crowds went before him singing the messianic psalm, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the LORD" (Matt. 21:9; Mark 11:9; Luke 13:35; John 12:13). Similarly, the Gospel of John records that when Jesus prayed on behalf of the disciples in the High Priestly prayer, he said, "Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one" (John 17:12). And perhaps most famously, the great hymn in Philippians declares that, "He humbled himself, and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:8-11). In this hymn, the name that the Father gives to Jesus, the name that is above every name, is none other than the holy name signified by the title Lord.

What are we to make of these declarations? Shall we say that these and similar passages intend to suggest that the name of Jesus Christ supersedes and replaces the holy name that God revealed to Moses? Shall we say that the holy name worshipped by the Jewish people has for Christians become a thing of memory only, a reality of the past? I do not think so.

Rather, I think these and similar passages are nudging us toward the recognition that the whole life of Jesus Christ is God's own exegesis, in the medium of humanity, of the content of the divine name.<sup>18</sup> When John declares that "the Word was with God, and the Word was God," and, "the Word become flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:1, 14), can he be pointing to anything other than that unique Word which is God's name?

18. Christian Link, "Die Spur Des Namens. Zur Function und Bedeutung Des Biblischen Gottesnamens," *Evangelische Theologie* 55, no. 5 (1995): 416-438.

"GO TELL PHARAOH"

- Soulen

If God is the nameless, ineffable X that stands equidistant behind and above all of the world's spiritual questing and confusion, then the empires of this world are safe. They may struggle for supremacy with one another, but they need not fear a fundamental challenge from beyond. For a nameless God is infinitely malleable, readily adaptable to the needs of the ruler and hence ultimately unreliable from the perspective of those who are enslaved and perishing. But if God is not nameless, if God is the One whose name was disclosed to Moses at the burning bush, then the empires of this world are threatened at their very foundations. For the One who declares, "You shall know that I am the LORD!" (Exod. 7:17) is a God who refuses to be turned into a commodity of the powerful, and who refuses to countenance the commodification of God's creatures. Blessed be the name of the Lord.