Having What She's Having

I'd prayed that Monday would never hit this hard, but clearly God doesn't handle hangovers. Waking at seven-thirty, having already missed my train to D.C., where I was expected for a noon meeting at St. Luke's Episcopal Church, I panicked. By nature a creature of habit, but now tossing off my sheets and throwing a few pieces of clothing in a bag, I did only one normal thing that morning: I left the house without putting anything at all in my stomach.

I slept in fits on both the subway and the southbound Amtrak from New York, my head pounding and my mind racing over what to tell the friend I'd arranged to travel with. I hoped "David, I'm sorry, you were right" would do. Around ten the night before, I'd excused myself from a date just as the wine was served before the meal to call him to make plans. Hanging up, David didn't seem convinced I'd be awake in time. By three-thirty, when I said goodnight to Alycia, she wasn't convinced either.

Looking back through this morning haze, it was clear that I hadn't convinced her of anything that night. As was becoming routine, mostly we'd talked about food. How we'd never have Indian together. How she'd traveled the world and always eaten exactly what was set in front of her. How discipline for discipline's sake left her cold. For my part I'd explained again and again that I was a creature of habit and ritual. I was choosey. "*Sure, sure*," she'd said. But without an environmentalist or animal rights angle, my veganism—no meat, no dairy, no fish, no eggs; in other words, a cheeseless pizza that night—made no sense. And she let me know it.

"What if you're traveling and a family invites you for dinner? You'll turn it down?" she'd asked. "Tell me again: You dated a pastry chef for almost a year—you slept with her, right?—and you wouldn't eat a pastry? What's wrong with you?"

Offering my weak apology over the phone to the secretary at St. Luke's, I knew that a lot was wrong. Above all, I couldn't think straight. I left a message for David, hoping he'd still choose a place for dinner that night. "Anything is fine," I said easily. After all, having spent four years avoiding most foods, I'd gotten good at finding something to eat on just about any menu.

About fifteen minutes from D.C., I called my best friend, Peter, to fill him in on the night I'd had, saying nothing at all about food. Even after all these years, having faced together the death of my stepfather and Peter's brother's suicide, having shared Shabbat dinners with his family, that one thing had always gone unsaid.

I would pass on the challah because I knew it contained eggs. I passed on Indian food because of the clarified butter. Yet, when Peter and I recited the Sabbath prayers in Hebrew, and toasted with kosher wine—or, because Peter doesn't drink, grape juice—as a Catholic, I'd had no trouble at all. If I could pray with him, why couldn't I eat with him? (And, on that note, Alycia was right, if I could sleep with a woman, why couldn't I eat with her?) And like everyone else I couldn't eat with, Peter had always seemed to buy my logic around food. Even I'd mostly bought it by now.

What was wrong with me?

I had some serious food issues.

Far beyond being just a practicing Catholic and a creature of habit, I'd become a highly religious eater. Certain ingredients were against my religion. I was as disciplined about eating as I was because—I had come to say—it made me disciplined in how I approached the world. My veganism was actually an ethical commitment in the Christian model of "love your neighbor as you love yourself,"[1] where asceticism was a kind of self-love that could teach me magically to love my neighbor.

I told Peter that my date had been successful, and in at least one way that was true. It got me thinking about eating again. I'd started doubting myself while dating the pastry chef the previous year but never let on. I had continued the self-doubt at wedding receptions that summer, where it was difficult to eat. But I ended my phone call with Peter without saying any of this. Why start now? I thought.

"Call me back later, will you, Peter?" I said. "I'm pulling into the station."

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Of the two of us, Peter has always had a more loving, less fearful relationship with food. While most of us have food issues, his seem mild. Nearly forty, he's more careful these days about fats and bad cholesterol. Increasingly, he eats in a "kosher style." Yet, the ritual meals he celebrates recall his mother's brisket and her delicate gestures over the Shabbat candles more than they invoke strict dietary laws distinguishing sacred from profane foods. And as a father he'd like to share with his son not just the practice of reciting prayers before dinner on Friday night but also the joy of eating as a Jew. Peter's eating habits are rooted, however, more in Jewish tradition than in mysticism. Eating itself, apart from providing basic sustenance, is more nostalgic than superstitious, and what passes his lips only rarely intersects with what food historian Felipe Fernández-Armesto calls the "foodways which belong to the sphere of the sacred."[2]

For me growing up, there was never any joy of eating as a Catholic. In my family there was religious eating, of course, and prayers specifically about food. Food was God's gift, given from his bounty. We received it. Or we selectively abstained from it. There were even days leading up to Easter when we fasted altogether. But the reasons for this—to feel hunger, to know a kind of suffering—were mostly lost on me. Religious practice was not important for what it might have taught me about the way others lived and struggled. As far as I was concerned, abstaining from certain foods—like abstaining from sex—kept the believer in God's good graces.

Seen from an eater's perspective, the Christian Gospels are all about food. Jesus' first miracle is to turn water into wine during the wedding feast at Cana.[3] His first disciples are fishermen he wins over with a miraculous catch, filling their "boats so full that they began to sink."[4] The most famous New Testament miracle is the hillside feeding of four thousand people with seven loaves of bread and a few small fish. The leftovers alone fill seven baskets.[5] And then there is the miracle of the upper room. On the first day of Passover, Jesus sends two disciples into the city, where they encounter a man carrying a jar of water—just as he said they would—who leads them to a house whose upstairs guest room is already "furnished and ready" for Passover, the Last Supper.[6]

Of all the Church's rites and traditions, the sacrament of the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, which is based on the words Jesus speaks in that upper room—*This is my body….This is my blood*—is central and the most vital to the faith. Food is at the center of Catholicism. But for me as a child, the belief that something magical happened both in the priest's preparation of the bread and wine (that they became Jesus' real flesh and blood) and in our receiving them (that we came into direct contact with the Savior) made the experience entirely about personal salvation. Like the cannibals we supposedly were—receiving flesh and blood—we believed that, as Fernández-Armesto writes, eating "affects the eater." The greatest hope for faithful Catholics—a hope shared with actual cannibals—was that Communion would "burnish their characters, extend their powers, prolong their lives."[7] Eternal life could be found in a wafer and a sip of wine.

But the food itself was never good. The drink was always as cheap as the church could find. Which is how it seemed it should be, after all. After fasting for forty days in the desert—another New Testament food miracle—Jesus was tempted by Satan: "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." To which Jesus replied, drawing on the book of Deuteronomy, "Man shall not live by bread alone."[8] Something so trivial as taste could not matter if what was really at issue in eating religiously was the spiritual effect of what we were given to eat. And ultimately, if it was more beneficial to the soul to resist every one of the devil's tempting offers, then the answer seemed obvious. Jesus was clear: Abstaining was good for you. Celibacy keeps you pure. *Not* eating affects the eater as much, or more, than eating does.

In Washington's Union Station options for food were everywhere. Something for everyone: the Corner Bakery Café, Center Café, East Street Café, Cookie Café, and Café Renée. Cajun Grill, Wingmaster's Grill, Station Grill, Thunder Grill, and Uno Chicago Grill. A New York Deli. McDonald's, of course. Sit-down places called America and Acropolis. A carry-out Soup in the City.

There was Nothing But Donuts.

But there wasn't time. The archivist was waiting for me at the church. I was late enough as it was. Sure, most of these places were fast, but I hated fast, and more, I couldn't stand to eat on the run.

So I just ran.

"Fifteenth Street and Church," I said, sliding into a cab.

I closed my eyes again. There was something in there for everyone—except me. Again, not eating was nothing new. And for a very long time, something to be proud of, I'd thought.

Growing up in rural Wisconsin, mine was a corn-fed, meat-and-potatoes household just like all my neighbors'. My family drove places more than we walked, ate a fair

LEE PRICE, *PICNIC*, OIL ON CANVAS, 65" X 60" © 2007

amount of fast food, and exercised irregularly, if at all. So, we carried some extra weight, some of us more than others. Though by no means obese—nor particularly unhealthy as an eater, I think—my dad was the heaviest.

I would be different. And so, when it came to deciding what I would and would not eat—as with most of my decision making as a young man—I responded to fear (in this case, of food), vanity (thinking skinny is more attractive), and a sense of chosenness (God had made me special). And from the start my decision had the taste of holiness. Although my parents had recently talked me out of a religious vocation, telling me it would be the loneliest life imaginable, I still heard a calling. Jesus had said, "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, even life itself, cannot be my disciple."[9] How better to hate all this—from family to life itself—than to start hating food?

I began not eating just as soon as I could.

Vegetarianism was my method, beginning at seventeen, of separating myself and becoming slim. And it worked. I helped prepare meat dishes for my family but ate only the vegetable sides. There were also salads without dressings and breads without butter. No fast food. No desserts. No more breakfasts. Nothing I ate tasted particularly good, and so I didn't eat very much of it, and not very much at all. (I still eat only twice a day.)

I often stepped onto the bathroom scale, pleased with the low one-twenties—I was once more than twenty pounds heavier—and dropped into the high teens at my thinnest. I was cold most of the time. I did a thousand sit-ups every day

for years. I thanked people when they said it was clear I'd lost weight. (No one said I looked good, just thin.) I told my parents not to worry when they heard the same thing from the neighbors. Of course, they worried anyway.

Coinciding, though by no means coincidentally, with my serious consideration of becoming a priest, this discipline became a compulsion when that vocation burned out.

Now, what I called "vegetarianism" I've recently recognized in the anorexia among the Catholic nuns described in Karen Armstrong's memoir, *The Spiral Staircase*. Like Armstrong's convent sister Rebecca, and Armstrong herself, I nearly proved that man not just *shall* not but actually *cannot* live by bread alone.

Armstrong's book, subtitled *My Climb out of Darkness*, is an account of her escape from an English convent where she failed to find God and her dealings with panic attacks and the onset of epilepsy, both of which were eventually stabilized. For Armstrong religious devotion and asceticism were expressed through a strict control of money (her rationale for starving herself) as much as food: "I, however, was choosing of my own free will not to eat. I was often ravenously hungry, and would sometimes allow myself a piece of real toast and butter, which, if I had been truly anorexic, I told myself, would have been quite impossible….My purpose was, I believed, simple and pragmatic: I wanted to save money….If I built up a reserve fund….I would be set up for life and could eat and spend whatever I wanted." Her conclusion, of course, is the one I can only offer about myself now, with hindsight: "I made it sound rational, at least to myself, but this was a crazy scheme and a telling indication of the state I was in."[10] In time Armstrong got psychiatric help, and to deal with her seizures, she took appropriate medications.

I just got worse. Being thin was a horrible, embarrassing rationale, worse than money. I knew it as vanity, a weakness in me, nothing I could ever say out loud. So I called my fear of food "vegetarianism." And, for a while, that was enough. People assume a lot about you when you say you're a vegetarian: You love animals. You're an environmentalist. You want to be healthy (which is what I said, mostly, meaning in body *and* spirit). In fact, I was as much a health-foodie tree-hugger as Armstrong was a holy miser.

This went on for eight years, from age seventeen to twenty-five, and in time my weight—like Armstrong's panic attacks—stabilized. But my obsession grew worse. Knowing that the rationale of health was not enough, I had to change my reasons for not eating. Like Armstrong, a fellow Catholic, I had gone so far in controlling my diet because I wanted to be transformed. At a certain point my body had become sufficiently thin. Yet as Rebecca says in *The Spiral Staircase*, "I wanted to be another kind of person."[11]

I sought what could be called perfect eating. Or, again, *not* eating. Asceticism was an actual religious discipline; fasting was holy. And so without my really realizing it as it happened, the discipline of not eating actually became religious. I began believing in discipline for discipline's sake. I abstained from sex. I abstained from food. I was better for both, more like Christ. And for a time vegetarianism was good enough.

At least until I lost my virginity.

Jamie was a vegan. No meat, no dairy, no fish, no eggs. The timing works out, although I can't say that it presented itself this way to me at the time. But just as it seems no coincidence that I became a vegetarian around the time my priestly vocation faded away, it's no surprise that I took on a stricter food discipline just as I gave up my vow of celibacy. Less scared of sex, I became more scared of food. Already most of the way there—I already feared most food—I began eating like Jamie simply by giving up my daily cups of yogurt and reading the backs of packages, hoping not to find whey listed among the ingredients. My mantra became the cliché "We should eat to live, not live to eat."

At St. Luke's I was greeted by an old woman who playfully scolded me for being late with a school-matronly gesture of *Put up your dukes, son*. Just one solid punch would have done me in.

"I'm so sorry I'm so late," I said. "My travel was delayed."

I explained my work as an editor on a documentary edition of the papers—letters, diaries, newspaper writing—of a former North Carolina slave named Harriet Jacobs. My host sat with me at a card table and watched as I leafed through newspaper clippings and old sermons written by renowned black minister Alexander Crummell, the founder of St. Luke's. The archives were small for so historic a church, and I was grateful my business there would be brief. After I finished, my schoolmarm gave me a quick tour of the chapel and sent me on my way with another display of fisticuffs.

Now what?

It was two-thirty, still hours before I could check into my hotel. I'd never toured the capital before. I went looking for someplace to eat among the monuments, the memorials, the White House, and the museums. But nothing seemed right. Block after block, my mind continued to race. When I couldn't find anything, I realized it was because I just couldn't bring myself to eat. Maybe I'd been vegan long enough, I thought. Maybe too long.

Eating with Jamie had been so easy. Never so many choices. Never so hard as on my date the night before. Never so many questions. Never that kind of defensiveness.

Veganism seemed good for Jamie and me because it brought us together as often as twice a day to share a meal—often from the same plate. With her, eating took on a social character I hadn't known since I started picking around foods at my family's dinner table. Over time eating had become an almost entirely private ritual—as embarrassing and holy, I guess, as weighing myself every day. Before her I'd mostly eaten alone, arranging my meal times to avoid family suppers, eating something before I went to a dinner party so I wouldn't have to face what was put before me. Food kept me apart.

But with Jamie, who seemed equally scared of food, we had favorite restaurants and favorite supermarkets. She became my partner around the stove and the table as much as in bed. Strangely, food itself almost became good again.

But I soon realized, with both of us so fearful, dinner for two can be just as lonely as dinner for one. Only now, with company in my loneliness, I began to see in someone else my own embarrassing and irrational fears. And when the relationship ended—several times over several years, and ultimately not until she met someone else she planned to marry—my old habits returned. Meals became rote.

For a time huge bowls of granola, filled to the same line each day, supported me from morning until evening, even as I biked often twenty miles a day—another habit I had picked up from Jamie. Or in another daily fit of undiagnosed obsessive compulsion, I would buy the same cup of soup for lunch every day and measure between two fingers the thickness of my stack of napkins before I could even start eating—even the accouterments of food had their place in my new rituals. Yet I stopped ritual fasting on Catholic holy days after blacking out on an uptown train the morning after Ash Wednesday one year. My roommate dragged me to a subway police station at Columbus Circle, where I sat for twenty minutes with my head between my legs. A nurse at the clinic thought it was low blood sugar. After that I also gave up the tradition of giving things up during Lent. My life had become one big discipline already.

It's no wonder I so often refused to eat with people and actually a little surprising that people weren't refusing more often to eat with me. Holiday meals with my family were more work than they should have been, and I could always hear the disappointment in someone's voice after I'd recommended we have dinner at another vegan place. And although there is the sense when you eat with a vegan that he is always silently judging you, I was now beginning to feel that censure in reverse.

If the discipline was supposed to make me better around people, why had not eating suddenly felt so unconvincing last night? And why had I felt so comfortable and confident making people so uncomfortable? How much good can a discipline do if it keeps you from eating what your lover prepares for you?

That didn't matter. We should eat to live, not live to eat, I repeated.

Yet, as much as ever, this discipline meant I was still more or less scared to live.

I WAS ON PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, a quarter mile from the Capitol, when David finally called. I'd been wandering around for a few hours, I said. "No, I haven't found a lunch place….Dinner later? Great. I'm starving."

He'd meet me at nine, with some friends, at a restaurant called Café Saint-Ex, named for Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, the French author of *The Little Prince*.

"See you then. Fourteenth and T Streets."

I ARRIVED EARLY at the restaurant and sat at the bar with the menu and a scotch and soda. Without anything in my stomach, the drink hit quickly. I read the menu. Organic greens. I could eat around a goat cheese croquette, I decided. Soup of the day was made with local organic vegetables. The wild mushroom risotto was made with red wine and fresh herbs. Or I could make a dinner of sides….$4.00:

Smoky Lentils
Wood Grilled Greens with Lemon and Garlic
Brussels Sprouts with Balsamic and Pine Nuts
Organic Sweet Potato Puree

"Are all of these vegan?" I asked.

As expected, Peter called just before nine, so I stepped outside and perched atop a newspaper box to hear the story of his sister-in-law's wedding. His wife, Amy, had danced with their son, Sam. The food was wonderful. A bartender, though, had accidentally served him a cranberry drink with a little vodka, which, after a healthy sip, threatened his seventeen-year sobriety. It wasn't exactly a technicality.

As we talked, I was reminded of something Amy had once told me soon after Sam was born. Sobriety, a practice of faithful discipline, is what makes Peter's marriage possible. It allows him to be a loving father. It binds him to Amy and Sam and now to this growing family. His own

faithfulness is reflected in every dance between his wife and his son. It's reflected in his friendship with me.

Veganism, as much a discipline as sobriety, had never been so faithful. It had made nothing possible. It bound me to no one.

David arrived with his friends a little after nine, and I waved them on ahead of me. I'd join them in a minute.

Of course, it wasn't catholicism or religious belief itself that had misserved me for all these years where food was concerned. No priest had ever recommended I drop below a hundred and twenty pounds. No bit of scripture prescribes with any precision how thick a stack of napkins should be before a diner can take his first spoonful of soup. And as far as I know, of all the early Christian writings, only the apocryphal Gospel of the Ebionites proscribes meat. With this small, ridiculed vegetarian sect, even Jesus had issues. (Learning this while in seminary was a small source of identification and pride.) "I came to destroy the [food] sacrifices," Jesus says, "and if ye cease not from sacrificing, the wrath of God will not cease from you." Their Gospel turns John the Baptist, famous for his diet of locusts, into a vegetarian by swapping out the Greek word *akris*, or locust, for the similar *enkris*, or cake. For this the Ebionites were scorned by the early Church Father Epiphanius: "That, forsooth, they may pervert the word of truth into a lie and for locusts put a cake dipped in honey."[12]

I deserved scorn far more than the poor Ebionites. Because, as with anything in need of interpretation, it was my approach to the faith that had kept me aloof and disordered my eating. It may be true that all of what I had found in religious eating is there to be discovered in the Scriptures and Catholic rituals and tradition. This is particularly true where Catholics, like certain, mainly fundamentalist, Christians everywhere, stress piety and personal salvation over concern and engagement with the community. Yet in an essay titled "Onward, Christian Liberals," Marilynne Robinson remarks that this focus on "personal holiness" is not supported even by the most prolific, and arguably the most influential, of the early Christians. "[Personal holiness] suggests a regime of pious behaviors whose object is the advantage of one's own soul. It suggests also a sense of security concerning final things, which is understood as a virtue, though it is in fact a confidence not claimed even by the Apostle Paul."[13]

Veganism was just such a pious regime. Yet just as Robinson reminds us that Paul's biblical writings are concerned mainly with building communities of humble and loving Christians, the Gospels seem equally unconcerned with individual piety or holiness. Where food is involved, nowhere in the Gospels do we find Jesus eating alone. The food miracles at Cana, on the Sea of Galilee with the fishermen, on the hillside with the four thousand hungry believers, and in the upper room with the twelve disciples, are all about serving other people, dining together, sharing food, and breaking bread. Where eating serves the individual soul, to borrow another phrase from Robinson, it involves an "openness to the perception of the holy in existence itself and, above all, in one another." True holiness is evident in the Gospels when Jesus makes it possible for all people to eat the same fish, bread, and wine. And because miracles are mythical evidence of the presence of the sacred in the world (or, more simply, the sacredness *of* the world), the quality (or quantity) of what the miracles produce is important. The wine Jesus produces in Cana is the best that had been served all evening. And as for the bread and fishes, there is not just enough but, with God, always an abundance: more leftovers than they started with, enough fish to sink a boat.

Nowadays, where Communion is concerned, I've certainly become more Protestant in my belief than Catholic. Food magic has done me no good. For Protestants, Holy Communion is a metaphor, not literally the body and blood of Christ. Nothing magical happens on the altar. Fernández-Armesto is right: eating may affect the eater. But just as I no longer believe in the facts of the miracles from the Scriptures, I also no longer believe that "there are substances you consume to make yourself holy or intimate with the gods or ghosts."[14] Not as a Catholic. And not as a vegan.

In *The Year of Magical Thinking*, Joan Didion's meditation on the death of her husband, the novelist and screenwriter John Gregory Dunne, she recounts a point of religious contention between the couple that had lasted forty years. Like me, Dunne was a Catholic who, at a point, stopped believing in the resurrection of the dead, and he did not find great literal meaning in Holy Communion. Yet his approach to the Eucharist was Catholic in the same way mine has become. Didion recalls, "'Only Episcopalians "take" communion,' he had corrected me one last time as we left St. Sulpice….Episcopalians 'took,' Catholics 'received.' It was, he explained each time, a difference in attitude."[15]

If, as I now believe, there are not any gods or ghosts to become intimate with, religious eating actually becomes less pious and, actually, more biblical, more about serving others. Without any connection to actual spirits, what becomes important to religious eaters are, in a phrase borrowed from Karen Armstrong's book A *Short History*

of Myth, the *spiritual attitudes* we form about food as an essential part of living and a building block of a holy existence.[16] It's no longer a matter only of what we eat, or what we believe we're eating, but how we eat, and why.

Given the right spiritual attitude, every meal eaten with others can be a religious meal. Blessings and prayers of thanksgiving said before meals remind us both of our dependence on others and on the natural world—God's creation in both cases—for the food we eat and the joy possible in finding more moments for communion with friends, family, and even strangers. Given the right spiritual attitude—say, that the eater has truly *received* the meal he sets before himself—even eating alone can be a religious experience.

The absence of such experiences, as a scared vegetarian and later as an apparently terrified vegan, has taught me the value of food. And yes, given the right approach to food, even fasting can prove valuable again, for precisely the reasons I'd missed as a young Catholic. People starve. And with this new approach to food, Jesus loses his power as the otherworldly ascetic starving himself for his own sake. As we read in Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians, he stands as the model of compassion: "For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich."[17] Whether the generous act is understood as God's becoming human or Jesus' living among the poorest of the poor—and demanding that his fishermen friends do the same—the message is no different. And forever I was wrong. There is no perfect eating. There is no perfect not eating. There is only eating or not. When you have an opportunity to eat with or feed other people, take that opportunity. When you have the chance to fast in a way that will remind you of the poverty of others—or of your own poorness of spirit—fast.

Go for Indian. And when you love a pastry chef, eat what she sets before you. Even if, on occasion, there is nothing but doughnuts.

I FOUND DAVID, his girlfriend, and their friend already seated on the patio. David had ordered olives for the table. Introductions were made. We had drinks all around. I spent a little time with the menu again. The goat cheese croquette made me nervous.

When the waiter arrived at the table, he looked to me, and I froze: "Come back to me last," I said, pointing to David. I ran my finger down the list again: smoky lentils, wood-grilled greens with lemon and garlic, brussels sprouts with balsamic and pine nuts, organic sweet potato puree. Four dollars each, I thought.

David ordered the burger. I ate an olive. His girlfriend chose the risotto. The waiter was coming around too fast. The woman next to me ordered the organic greens, seven dollars, and house-smoked salmon sandwich with goat cheese, tomato, and mixed greens. Nine dollars.

No one knew what was coming. And no one cared. The waiter looked to me.

"I'll have what she's having."

And it was good.

NOTES

1. Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27; originates in Leviticus 19:18.

2. Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Near a Thousand Tables* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 29.

3. John 2:1–11.

4. Luke 5:7

5. Matthew 14:13–21; *cf.* Mark 6:30–44, Luke 9:10–17.

6. Matthew 26:17–19, Mark 14:12–16, Luke 22:7–13.

7. Fernández-Armesto, *Near a Thousand Tables*, 29.

8. Matthew 4:1–11, Luke 4:1–13; cf. Mark 1:12–13. See also Deuteronomy 8:3.

9. Matthew 10:37, Luke 14:26.

10. Karen Armstrong, *The Spiral Staircase* (New York: Knopf, 2004), 99–100.

11. Ibid., 106.

12. Bart D. Ehrman, ed., *The New Testament and Other Early Christian Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 135–136.

13. Marilynne Robinson, "Onward Christian Liberals," *American Scholar*, March 2006, 42–51.

14. Fernández-Armesto, *Near a Thousand Tables*, 29.

15. Joan Didion, *The Year of Magical Thinking* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 81.

16. Karen Armstrong, *A Short History of Myth* (New York: Canongate, 2005), 137.

17. 2 Corinthians 8:9.