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“Moses, his chosen one, withstood him in the breach” (Psalm 106;21).

Exod 32:7-14; John 5:31-47

It has been said that when God made us in the divine image and likeness, we returned the favor by making God in our image and likeness. Human conceptions of God are projections of our own characteristics and limitations. This seems evident in the Bible itself when God is portrayed with human emotions such as anger and impatience. In today's reading from Exodus, Moses has to calm God's wrath when the people worship a molten calf. He steps into the breach to persuade God not to destroy the Hebrews in the desert.

This anthropomorphic quality to many Bible stories has created many memorable scenes in the evolving human understanding of the divine mystery. Abraham negotiates with God over the fate of Sodom and Gomorrah, Jacob wrestles to a draw with a divine messenger, and Job contends with God over the injustice of his suffering until he is overwhelmed by divine majesty and power. The Bible seems to invite humans to argue with God as an aspect of the astonishing intimacy of the divine revelation. A popular 1970's Broadway musical captured this bold intimacy in its title, “Your Arms Too Short to Box with God.”

Jesus' many debates with his opponents add dramatic tension to the Gospels, and we may at times feel frustrated at the slowness to believe even by the disciples. Why doesn't Jesus just overwhelm everyone with glory to advance his mission? Why does he engage with the proud Pharisees and plotting priests when he could have used his power to open their minds and hearts to the truth? Instead, Jesus lets the slow human process of awareness play out so people will come freely to the truth.

In our own conversion stories, we know the importance of being invited instead of forced to open our hearts to God's direction. Could any love story survive if we felt pressured into a relationship? Or can an important personal decision be made without resolving doubt or delaying consent until our hearts have explored every alternative.? If our images of God have evolved, so God's approach to us in the human Jesus has also moved in human ways.

Part of this patient process of knowing and loving God is believing we can box with God with our short arms, argue with God about fairness, hold out until our doubts and questions have been satisfied. Love drives out fear, intimacy instills confidence over time. After all, this is the God we will spend eternity with. This is the love story

that will ultimately tell us who we are and why we exist.

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