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“We Are Sorry”: The Canadian Government Apology for Residential Schooling

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The burden of this experience has been on your shoulders for far too long.

The burden is properly ours as a government, and as a country.

There is no place in Canada for the attitudes that inspired the Indian residential schools system to ever again prevail.

You have been working on recovering from this experience for a long time and in a very real sense, we are now joining you on this journey.

The government of Canada sincerely apologizes and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly.

Nous le regrettons.

We are sorry.¹

Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s apology on June 11, 2008, to the Aboriginal peoples of Canada for residential schools that had oppressed and tried to change them culturally was an extraordinary event. The setting was as unusual as it was striking: Harper apologized in the House of Commons, with the galleries packed with Aboriginal observers, and a group of representative Aboriginal leaders, some of them in colourful traditional dress, assembled directly in front of him on the floor of the chamber. The statement itself was also surprising, because Harper and his government for a long time had avoided committing themselves to an apology. And,

finally, it was remarkable because it attempted to respond to problems created by a “burden” that Aboriginal people had indeed borne for “far too long.”

A “burden ... for far too long”

The prime minister’s apology was intended to deal with the harm that residential schools had caused since the 1880s.² The modern residential school system began in the prairies in the early 1880s, and slowly spread through the West, including British Columbia from the

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1890s onward, and then to the North, northern Ontario, and eventually northern Québec, and one eastern school in Nova Scotia. From 1883 until 1923, Ottawa recognized both “industrial” schools and smaller boarding schools, but after 40 years the differences between the two systems had become insignificant. From 1923 onward, the federal government spoke simply of residential schools and day schools that it provided for Aboriginal, especially First Nations, students. In 1969, the Liberal government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau announced that the residential schools would be phased out. That process took another 25 years, and involved the stopgap arrangement of Native hostels in some locations, especially the North, at which children resided while attending government day schools.

Two factors largely account for the complex and noxious legacy the residential schools left behind. One is that the institutions were run not as secular schools by the federal government itself, but as denominational facilities operated by the missionary arms of four Christian denominations. The largest player in the residential school story was a variety of Roman Catholic agencies, the principal among them being the male missionary order known as the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, or, more simply, the Oblates. The Oblates, Jesuits, Sisters of Saint Ann, Grey Nuns, and several other female religious bodies operated approximately 60 per cent of the residential schools authorized by the federal government and run by church organizations. The Roman Catholic Church itself, as embodied in the hierarchy of bishops and archbishops, was not directly involved in school operations, although the bishops often served as lobbyists on behalf of Catholic schools. About one third of the schools had their day-to-day affairs supervised by the Church of England in Canada directly, or in one instance by the New England Company. The rest of the schools were under the control of the Methodists and Presbyterians. When the Methodists and most of the Presbyterians joined with the Congregationalists to form the United Church of Canada in 1925, all but two of the formerly Presbyterian institutions became United Church schools. The two were run by the continuing Presbyterian Church of Canada.

The shared authority of church and state led to systemic neglect of Aboriginal children. The dual leadership tended to diffuse oversight and responsibility; it provided a convenient excuse when things went wrong. The official approach was that the federal government’s Department of Indian Affairs authorized the creation of

a residential school, determined the maximum enrolment for which it would pay financial support, approved churches’ nominations of principals and other staff, and inspected the schools. According to this official view, the churches recruited and nominated staff, supplemented government funds (which were never sufficient) with their own contributions, and provided day-to-day operation of the schools. The reality was depressingly different. Churches lobbied to get new schools approved and deficient schools maintained on the approved list. In effect, they selected their own academic and childcare staffs because government rarely disallowed a church’s suggestions. The result was that the missionary bodies were permitted to staff the classrooms with individuals who often did not have adequate – or, sometimes, any – pedagogical training. The rationale for this practice was that “a missionary spirit” was more important than a teachers’ college certificate. The unstated additional reason was that those with “a missionary spirit” were prepared to work for lower wages than academically trained and approved teachers were. Finally, the Department of Indian Affairs’ oversight duty was not adequately discharged, with the result that performance in both classroom instruction and childcare was often substandard.

The other major complication with the schools’ administrative set-up was that the separation of principal funding and operating responsibilities invited systematic underfunding and negligence. Very soon after a formal system of custodial schools was established, the federal government grew disillusioned with the institutions. It quickly became clear that the schools were not producing the results desired, that they were far more costly than anticipated, and that neither the Aboriginal nor the non-Aboriginal community was well disposed towards them. From the government’s point of view, the fact that those who completed their studies at residential schools had great difficulty securing employment in the mainstream economy was particularly damning. The government responded in two ways, one of which had ominous implications for residential school students. In 1892, the Department of Indian Affairs initiated a long history of limiting government funding of the schools by shifting funding from an accountable costs basis to a per capita subsidy arrangement. A combination of per capita grants and government-controlled pupilage, the officially approved maximum enrolment, meant that Ottawa had powerful instruments to limit spending on schools. It manipulated those instruments to keep its share of

costs down, and in times of difficulty, such as world wars and the Great Depression of the 1930s, the government could easily cut financial obligations by reducing the per capita grant. In times of inflation, the government could similarly resist increasing the grant.

When per capita grants from the Department of Indian Affairs declined in real terms, the missionary organizations had only a few choices. One possibility was to raise more voluntary contributions from their own adherents, but over time, enthusiasm for the missions and schools within Canada declined. Another option, one that churches could and did implement, was to increase the “subsidy” that students provided by extracting more labour from them to keep the school running and to raise funds through the sale of school-produced goods, principally agricultural products. Taking this route, however, courted the danger of impairing the students’ opportunities to learn their academic subjects and of creating a regime that wore on them physically.

Another response that churches employed, particularly prior to the Great War, was to admit students whose health should have precluded them from attendance, in order to keep student numbers up to the pupilage, or maximum approved enrolment. With the connivance of co-operative doctors and the willful blindness of government inspectors, tubercular students were admitted to the schools, with resulting health dangers for all. Finally, another institutional response was to reduce the amount of paid labour in the schools, especially in periods, such as the era of the Korean War, when inflation and heavy demand for workers made it hard to recruit missionary workers anyway. This response reduced missionary bodies’ operating expenses, but exposed the students to grave dangers.

The combination of reductions in paid help and lax governmental oversight created an environment in which neglect and abuse flourished. It is these conditions that largely account for well-documented problems with student diet, health care, clothing, and recreational facilities. In such a setting it was all too easy for teachers and dormitory supervisors, often overworked themselves, to use severe corporal punishment on the students. When excessive discipline was combined, as it unfortunately all too often was, with evangelical messages that denigrated Aboriginal spirituality and identity, the result was young people whose identity, sense of self-worth, and confidence were devastated. Finally, and most distressing, the schools also became host to a number of sexual predators who exploited their authority and the gov-

ernment’s and churches’ lax oversight to indulge their appetites. While a considerable portion of the sexual abuse for which Canada’s residential schools are now infamous was inflicted on students by older students, the schools and their staffs bore responsibility for all abuse. If the missionary organizations and government were not culpable for failing to screen staff carefully, they were liable for not providing adequate supervision that would have reduced the amount of student-on-student abuse as well. It is, of course, the problems of physical and sexual abuse in residential schools that belatedly led to a governmental attempt at reconciliation.

“We are now joining you”

When Canadians began to deal with the malignant legacy of residential schooling, the Christian churches led the way. In 1986, the General Council of the United Church of Canada issued an apology for abusive aspects of missions to Aboriginal peoples through its Moderator: “We did not hear you when you shared your visions. In our zeal to tell you of the good news of Jesus Christ we were closed to the value of your spirituality.” The Moderator also acknowledged that United Church missionaries had “confused Western ways and culture with the depth and breadth and length and height of the gospel of Christ,” and had “imposed our civilization as a condition for accepting the gospel.” He concluded by “ask[ing] you to forgive us and to walk together with us in the Spirit of Christ so that our peoples may be blessed and God’s creation healed.”³

The United Church’s lead was followed by the other churches. In 1991, both the Roman Catholic Church as a national entity and the Oblates apologized. That same year, a “National Meeting on Indian Residential Schools,” attended by sixteen bishops, officials from religious organizations, and First Nations Roman Catholics, issued a statement referring specifically to the ills of residential schools. Also in 1991, the Oblates apologized for “the part we played in the cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious imperialism” that Europeans manifested at contact and later. The Church of England in 1993 apologized for efforts “to remake you in our image, taking from you your language and the signs of your identity,” while an accompanying statement from the Anglican Primate referred specifically to residential schools as a site of offence. The following year, the Presbyterian Church in Canada issued a lengthy “Confession” that apologized for co-operating with “the stated policy of the Government of Canada [that] was

to assimilate Aboriginal peoples to the dominant culture,” while also making direct reference to residential schools. And, finally, the United Church issued another, more specific apology in 1998 that referred to “the pain and suffering that our church’s involvement in the Indian Residential School system has caused.”⁴

Through the 1990s, the federal government also came under increasing pressure to account for its role in residential schooling. In 1990, Phil Fontaine, then chief of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, disclosed publicly his own abuse at a residential school, and called for a public inquiry.⁵ The government ignored Chief Fontaine, though it did appoint a Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) whose 1996 *Final Report* included a damning account of residential schools and also called for a public inquiry.⁶ When the federal government eventually responded to the RCAP *Final Report* in January 1998 with *Gathering Strength: Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan*, it included a Statement of Reconciliation. Indian Affairs minister Jane Stewart spoke directly to victims of residential school abuse: “We wish to emphasize that what you experienced was not your fault and should never have happened. To those of you who suffered this tragedy at residential schools, we are deeply sorry.” She also announced the creation of a \$350 million Aboriginal Healing Foundation. There was, however, no mention at all of a public inquiry into residential schools. Chief Phil Fontaine expressed approval of the minister’s statement, but several other Aboriginal leaders declared it inadequate.⁷ The government’s failure to acknowledge its direct responsibility for abuse was considered a serious defect.

Ottawa soon faced a mounting number of legal actions that former students took against the government for the damage they had suffered as a result of being abused in residential schools. The government reacted to litigation by trying to deflect responsibility onto the churches, but such a ploy was not an effective long-term policy. The Canadian government was forced in 2001 to institute a system of alternate dispute resolution to deal with the allegations, but their efforts in this regard also proved unsuccessful. During the decade of litigation and legal manoeuvring that followed the report of the Royal Commission in 1996, the churches found themselves increasingly hard pressed financially and emotionally by what was happening. Some responded by creating healing initiatives of their own for residential school survivors, and all pressed the government to accept its responsibility.

Finally, a comprehensive settlement of residential school issues was negotiated among survivors, churches, and government in 2006. The package included universal payments for all who could demonstrate they had attended a residential school, a remodelled arbitration system for allegations of severe abuse, the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, \$20 million for commemoration projects, and \$125 million more for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.⁸ Notable by its absence was any reference to an apology for residential schools. Initially, the minority Harper government said that it did not intend to apologize. After the Commons voted 257–0 to apologize to former residential school students, the Indian Affairs minister backtracked somewhat, saying that the government was not committing itself to make an apology until the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had completed its work. Pressure continued, however, and the Harper government yielded. The autumn 2007 Speech from the Throne announced that the government would make an apology to residential school survivors.⁹

“We are sorry”

The apology of June 11, 2008, proved much more successful than the statement issued in 1998. For one thing, it was delivered by the prime minister in the House of Commons, not by a minister in a press conference. It was also surrounded by elaborate ceremony. In fact, after the formal apology, the prime minister spoke privately in a room with many Aboriginal survivors, and autographed illuminated copies of the apology that had been given to them.¹⁰ The government had also arranged with Aboriginal organizations to provide facilities in centres across the country at which many indigenous people could watch the apology ceremony on television. Most important was the fact that the official apology specified many of the abuses in question, accepted the government’s direct responsibility for them, expressed regret to survivors, and suggested that such things would not be allowed to happen again. The other three party leaders who spoke after Harper also expressed appropriate opinions, with the Liberal leader graciously acknowledging that his party had formed government for much of the 20th century and accepted its share of responsibility for what had happened. All the Aboriginal leaders who then spoke in the Commons, led by Grand Chief Phil Fontaine of the Assembly of First Nations, were positive and forward looking in their remarks.

In the aftermath of June 11, 2008, the unanswered question left hanging was “Now what?” Everyone involved recognized that the apology, as important as it was, was a beginning, not an end. Several Aboriginal political leaders called for concrete action on a number of economic and social problems as necessary next steps. It was widely anticipated that the next First Ministers’ Conference would address Aboriginal issues among other things, but the weight of the financial and economic crisis that descended on Canada and the world in the late autumn of 2008 raised the spectre that indigenous issues might be relegated once again to a low priority. That was the historic Canadian pattern: in times of depression or world war, Aboriginal programs were major sufferers at the hands of government.

The prime minister, on June 11, 2008, referred to the comprehensive settlement of residential school issues negotiated in 2006 as evidence of the government’s intent to continue to address survivors’ problems. He referred specifically and at length to a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) charged with investigating the history of residential schooling that had formally begun work on June 1, 2008. The TRC was, said Harper, “a cornerstone of the settlement agreement” and “a unique opportunity to educate all Canadians on the Indian residential schools system.” In the conclusion of the apology, he predicted that the Commission “will be a positive step in forging a new relationship between aboriginal peoples and other Canadians, a relationship based on the knowledge of our shared history, a respect for each other and a desire to move forward together with a renewed understanding that strong families, strong communities and vibrant cultures and traditions will contribute to a strong Canada for all of us.”¹¹ Unfortunately, in the autumn, Chief Commissioner Judge Harry Laforme pitched the Commission into crisis by resigning over what he alleged were difficulties with his fellow commissioners. Aboriginal organizations, government, churches, and representatives of survivor associations laboured for months trying to decide what to do, but as of March 2009, no solution had been announced. It is not clear if or when the public inquiry into residential schools which Chief Phil Fontaine first called

for almost two decades ago will go forward, or, if it does, whether it will be successful. The events of the fall and winter of 2008–2009 have been a gloomy denouement to the inspiring and potentially transformative events that took place in the House of Commons on June 11, 2008. The reconciliation must begin – and soon – or the legacy of Canada’s residential schools will continue to be a painful one.

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1 “Text of Prime Minister Harper’s Apology,” June 11, 2008: www.fns.bc.ca/pdf/TextofApology.pdf (accessed January 8, 2009).

2 For a history of these schools, see J.R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), especially chapters 1 to 5 and 13; and John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879–1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), especially Parts 1 and 3.

3 “Apology to First Nations Peoples ([August] 1986),” <http://www.united-church.ca/beliefs/policies/1986/a651> (accessed March 25, 2009); *United Church Observer*, Oct. 1986, 6, 8–13.

4 The various apologies are usefully reproduced in Janet Bavelas, *An Analysis of Formal Apologies by Canadian Churches to First Nations*, Occasional Paper No. 1 of the Centre for Studies in Religion and Society, University of Victoria (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria, 2004), 20–25.

5 Phil Fontaine, interviewed by Barbara Frum of CBC Television, October 30, 1990. http://archives.cbc.ca/politics/parties_leaders/topics/1622 (accessed April 29, 2008). See also *Ottawa Citizen*, “Chief recalls ‘bloody experience,’” June 17, 1992.

6 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Final Report*, 4 vols. (RCAP, 1996), Vol. 1, *Looking Forward, Looking Back*, 385.

7 Government of Canada, *Gathering Strength: Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1998), Statement of Reconciliation.

8 Indian Residential Schools Resolution Canada, “Settlement Agreement Backgrounder,” www.irsr-rqpi.gc.ca (April 30, 2008). Under the agreement, the churches agreed to contribute up to \$100 million in “cash and services.”

9 *Globe and Mail online*, March 27, 2007 (accessed March 27, 2007) (refusing an apology); *Globe and Mail*, May 2, 2007 (House of Commons apology); and www.sft.gc.ca, Speech from the Throne, October 16, 2007 (accessed May 6, 2008).

10 These developments were recounted to me by a Cree woman whom I sat beside on a flight on the way back to Saskatchewan on June 12, 2008. She recounted her experience of hearing the apology and meeting the prime minister with great enthusiasm and appreciation.

11 “Text of Prime Minister Harper’s Apology.”

“I’m Not a Women’s Libber, but ...”: Feminist Theology and Non-Feminist Women

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Feminist theology has taken a variety of forms. The “inclusion project” works to get women access to positions held by men; liberation feminist theology criticizes the patriarchal traditions, symbols, and images of Christianity while it promotes Christian themes of justice. Another approach has determined that Christianity can be nothing *but* patriarchal, and has moved on to appropriate goddess and other female-centred spiritualities. Needless to say, these feminist theologies, however diverse, do not speak for all women. It is not just men who do not want to be associated with feminism; plenty of women qualify. I call it the “I’m not a women’s libber, but ...” attitude. “Feminist” is still a bad word for some; the association with being angry and man-hating even now, almost 40 years after first-wave feminism in the US, continues to cast a shadow on being a “women’s libber.” Given this situation, as a feminist I want to reverse course and defend non-feminists. Not every category of non-feminists, of course, as I will argue later. I want to talk about groups of Christian women who refuse the label – women who have developed fascinating and creative practices through their faith. Further, I want to laud and celebrate certain non-feminist women and do so for feminist reasons.

Let me offer some background. Earlier in my teaching career at Duke Divinity School, I was struck by the limitations of liberation feminist theology’s categories. Of course, I do resonate with the critiques of the dominance of male symbolism and the structures of injustice that continue to maintain disparities between men’s and women’s salaries. These critiques are very important for my class, race, and social location as a woman. However, the critiques do not speak to or adequately about all women. Nor are they complex enough to describe the way Christian scripture and tradition actually shape and form women of different classes, races, and geographic locations.

Those who run from the term “feminist” are not simply wrong or hypnotized by patriarchy – although that happens. Perhaps they experience Christianity and culture in a great variety of ways that do not come into view when we insist that “sexist texts” always function

in the same way. I started paying attention to women’s communities that differed from my own, and searching for different categories for recognizing women’s agency. I call this search “feminist” because feminist theology’s goal of gender justice, defined as “the degree to which men and women have similar kinds or degrees of power, status, autonomy and authority,”¹ is also about honouring women – all women – as agents, as created in the image of God, not, first and foremost, about making all women feminist.

To take up this project of honouring the agency of non-feminist women, I will interpret the title of this article, “I’m not a women’s libber, but ...,” to mean “I may reject the notion of feminism, but that doesn’t mean I am not using my tradition to enhance my agency and impact in the world as a woman.”² Lots of women reject the label but support many of the goals of the women’s movement. The women I wish to talk about are not so clearly or explicitly supportive of feminism’s goals. They do, however, provide interesting examples of enhancing women’s agency in other ways. This is a study in women’s creativity. I then want to take up the question in a different way. Are there limits to such affirmation of non- or anti-feminists? Is some of this “agency” not creative? What kind of theological norms need to operate in such judgments?

“Joyful Speaking for God”

My first example comes from a group of Pentecostal women who were active in the earlier part of the 20th century. I had access to their testimonies and life stories through filmed interviews done by a scholar at Pentecostal seminary.³ What these women had in common were the Pentecostal faith and economic marginalization. From various sections of Appalachia, they came from the Church of God, Assemblies of God, and Independent Holiness denominations. Elaine Lawless, a pre-eminent writer on Pentecostal women, describes very similar practices by women she interviewed in impoverished rural Indiana and Missouri. There, the loss of livelihood in the limestone quarrying business was similar to economic problems in Appalachian coal-

mining.⁴ These women and their families struggle to make ends meet.

Classic Pentecostalism developed from nineteenth-century holiness movements. These folks had the desire for increasing purification/sanctification. Two historic events illustrate what that looked like: in 1901, in a Topeka Bible school, holiness preacher Charles Fox Parham sparked an outbreak of tongues speaking; in 1906 came the Azusa Street revival in Los Angeles. There, William Seymour, a black holiness minister formed by Parham, started an interracial, multi-class revival. Characterized by speaking in tongues, this revival lasted three years. And it spread. To make a gross oversimplification, tongues speaking came to stand for evidence of Holy Spirit baptism. Many churches with Wesleyan roots were open to this form of Spirit possession. They decided that Christian life is comprised of three stages: justification, sanctification, and the Baptism of the Holy Ghost. Even if you were Reformed rather than Wesleyan (and only believed in conversion combined with sanctification), the ecstatic baptism by the Holy Spirit was considered a distinctive, required experience.

Most relevant for my story about the Pentecostal women is not simply that they experienced and displayed this extra baptism – that they had the gift of tongues or heavenly language, although that is important. What is crucial to my feminist take on them is that this gift of the Holy Spirit is a status leveller among believers. These communities believe God's Spirit can speak through anyone, even a child. You don't have to be a man, you don't have to be white, you don't have to be educated for God to use you. The marvellous "democratic" character of this Spirit was evidenced in Azusa, where race, class, and gender boundaries were broken down. The typical hierarchies between men and women, old and young, white and black were done away with through the Spirit. They were made to disappear. As one scholar says, "Because 'tongues' was a supernatural gift of God, the actions of the speaker were considered actions of God rather than actions of the human person."⁵

This is not radical feminist egalitarianism, to be sure. However, some important and freeing energies emerge in this early 20th-century generation of Pentecostal women. These women, like other Pentecostals of that time, were called to mission – mission to their surrounding communities, but also to other parts of the country, even overseas. There was a kind of courage and freedom to travel that was uncharacteristic of other more

middle-class and upper middle-class congregations. They began their ministries in the 1930s and '40s, and went everywhere preaching and holding revivals. These women were real pioneers. But let me be more specific about the particular ways they employed the Christian tradition. They will, at first, appear counter-intuitive to my feminist interests.

Most of these women were experts at the rhetoric of self-denigration and submission to men. "I am nothing, nothing, nothing ..." is a favourite refrain. The language of autonomy and independence is probably the most underdeveloped part of their vocabularies. Feminists? Not on your life! Sister Staples says, "I always respect man ministers as my superiors." Indeed, there were limits on what these "democratic" Pentecostal traditions would allow. Women could certainly preach and be filled with the Holy Spirit and testify. They could even travel without men, as I have said. With the particular biblical traditions of Pentecost and the egalitarian habits of the Holy Spirit for defining these communities, there was no way to outlaw women's participation – there were, after all, women prophets in Scripture. There was a general sense, of course, that the prohibition passages of the Pauline letters had to be obeyed, but they got around this contradiction between the egalitarian Spirit and the submission passages by judging the latter only to prohibit women ruling over men in elders' councils. That is a rather generous restriction of these "bad" passages, at least if you compare it to the denominations that take such passages to refer to any activity of preaching or leading.

One finds claims by many of the women that they are following their tradition. Lest we too quickly write off Sister Staples's statement that "I always respect man ministers as my superiors" as a pathetic refusal to have agency, or the willingness to be submissive and oppressed, take note: Sister Staples will respect men as her superiors *unless a man gets in her way when it comes to preaching the gospel*. Then she stands fast, claiming God alone as her authority. Women like Sister Staples preached in the street in cities all over, founded churches, and travelled across the country holding tent meetings. Their loyalties to God authorized world travel as well as resistance to any male opposition that came their way.

What I have just described is important for a couple of reasons. First, it is important because Pentecostal women ministers could claim a vocation and a "right" to preach even when men tried to silence them. This, it seems to

me, is a very good use of the gospel. Masculinity should not be the prerequisite for a vocation. But, second, this example illustrates what is true of all communities of faith. There is no one way of applying scripture or doctrine. Not only do different denominations tend to use scripture and doctrine in different ways – staid and orderly white Presbyterians never speak in tongues; we certainly do not “fall out”; and we do not make much use of biblical texts on Pentecost, such as Acts and Joel – subgroups within denominations use scripture and tradition differently, too. As subgroups within denominations, women can use their traditions creatively; they can expand the space granted to them by their denominations by the creative use of the “rules.”

There is more to say about women’s creative use of their tradition. Women’s agency is more expansive than just the use of feminist ideas, as I have said. Given the conservative gender conventions of these Pentecostal communities, how else do these women enhance their lives? In addition to their power to preach and testify, spirit possession includes rhythmic chanting, crying, laughing, and the exuberant oral display of glossolalia. The bodily performances are equally dramatic, with arm waving, running, falling out, and dancing. Such behaviours are clearly not those of submissive, fearful, and totally oppressed subjects who are confined to the kitchen. These are joyful and spiritually freed activities that confirm the living presence of the living God – a presence in women, who are not only performing in authoritative ways, but inviting and receiving emotional response and confirmation as they do so. In fact, the more emotional and charged the response of the community is, the better the woman preacher has performed. Not only are such performances joyful, exciting, and pleasurable; they establish her as a skilled and desired vessel of God. She becomes an admired authoritative figure, at least in the worship space.

In brief, statements like “I am nothing, nothing, nothing” and acknowledgments of male authority do not simply translate into domesticated victims of lobotomies. Let me turn now to a different group of women, similar to these Pentecostal women only in the fact that they are also white.

“Decently and in Order”

I studied the literature of Presbyterian Women’s groups in the first half of the twentieth century and found very different practices: no preaching or falling out, but much creative use of their Reformed tradition.

Presbyterian Women (PW) is a predominantly white women’s organization in the Presbyterian Church (USA). The northern group used to call itself “United Presbyterian Women,” and the southern group was “Women of the Church.” With roots in the women’s mission work of late nineteenth-century Protestantism, they met regularly for circles (bible study and discussion), produced a lot of literature, and did tons of service work.

Presbyterian Women is on record, at least in much of the 20th century, as disavowing interest in the feminist label. In this regard, they are like Pentecostal women. Unlike Pentecostal women, however, in the period of PW that I studied, members were mostly housewives whose spouses were earning middle-class and upper middle-class incomes. Now, what about scripture? For the US Presbyterian Church, scripture is and has been the defining text for the Christian life. Even with a high view of scripture’s authority, however, there have always been critical principles to resist fundamentalism. Instead of the Pentecostals’ egalitarian Holy Spirit to get around anti-woman passages, Presbyterians’ critical principles included the fact that the gospel of Jesus Christ, not just the literal words, is the central subject of scripture. Not only must there be doctrinal guidance in reading the Bible, but, most important, the “rule of love” of God and neighbour provides crucial guidance for how scripture is to be used. With the motto “the church reformed and always reforming,” all church decisions and practices are subject to reconsideration. In short, in the Reformed tradition there have always been principles that justify revisiting and reforming the patriarchal practices of the church.

However, the groups called Presbyterian Women did not choose to fight this “Bible battle”; they left the issue of ordination alone for a number of years. Instead, they expanded their agency and authority through well-organized communities that made especially creative use of the very stereotypical images of the white female. First, a little background. Judging by much of their literature, a lot of members of PW in the 1950s to 1960s were shaped by cultural images that romanticized the (white) domestic, stressing that women are innately nurturing, emotional, and of finer sensibilities than men. Not only is she the best qualified to carry out domestic functions, but childcare, cooking, and emotional care were her true calling. This romanticization is somewhat ironic. Some scholars say that the “golden age of domesticity” – periods during which being in the home enhanced

white women's standing and their self-esteem – took place when the home was very different from that of the modern nuclear family. The home was a larger kinship network; food was grown there. Before the modern shift away from home-based agriculture to industrialization, women had been essential to the economy and to the nation: they helped produce food, clothing, and “good citizens.”

With the emergence of industrialization, non-poor women who did not work in factories were increasingly de-skilled because factories and industries assumed the production of domestic goods, making food, clothing, women's “crafts,” entertainment, etc. Factories took over the skilled and honoured labour of most women. Thus, the home was no longer the site of production, and women were no longer essential producers, because the nation was developing a consumer culture. Consumer culture has an endless need to make more things into commodities, items that can be marketed and sold under the guise of life enhancement. While washing machines were definitely better than scrub boards, some of these developments – such as escalating standards of cleanliness (you should be able to eat off your kitchen floor) had detrimental effects on women. Such developments increased women's busy work, such as the need to have shiny and spotless floors. It also turned women into the managers of consumption for their families. The suburbanism that ensued turned women into the family taxi drivers, driving kids all over the place.⁶

Given this commodification of the domestic affected by industrial capitalism, PW came up with wonderfully creative ways to redefine the domestic. Such women's societies began in 1878, and were remarkably successful in raising money (a lot of pocket money: between 1873 and 1923, the northern group raised \$45 million). Their autonomy and skill are evidenced by the number of times the male-led national church reined them in (sometimes calling them “ecclesiastical suffragettes”). Their literature (*Presbyterian Women, Outreach, Concern*) displays a fascinating use of traditionally “feminine” images as the group leadership developed programs and travelled all over the world for mission projects.

A powerful example of this creativity is what I call expanding the domestic to the global family. Up until the mid-1960s (when literature on gender and feminist theology began to appear in the northern church), the primary subject of PW publications and circle material was the identity of the Presbyterian woman as the faithful Christian woman, who is first and foremost a

mother and homemaker. “There is no higher calling than motherhood,” as one 1947 article announces. In a 1953 essay, “Homemaking is My Vocation,” it is a “holy calling.” But this is not the privatized domesticity of American capitalist culture. PW literature laid an enormous responsibility on its members: domesticity in PW discourse was an inherently expanding domain. The home was defined as the base for influence that includes the church, the community, and the world. While their language is sometimes painful to read – for example, support for “Negro Work” – concerns included the plight of migrant workers, mission to Native American women and children, helping “Negro presbyterial groups,” civil rights activism, articles and projects on the poor, and educational projects for girls in the Third World. As one 1959 issue put it, “We exist in order to make a difference in the world,” defined as the responsibility to “go a ‘second mile’ in caring for ... the sick, the illiterate, the homeless, the ... child, to seek for constructive solutions to ... poverty, human degradation ...” A repeated refrain was “Who is my neighbor?” “Anyone in need.”

I don't want to overly romanticize these women's groups. The southern versions tended to have a bit more focus on winning persons for Christ. But there was always a convergence of the model for a faithful Christian woman, with this idea of expanding care for the “home” to the world in need. Written material in the 1940s concerned injustice around class, economic issues, and global suffering. What is striking is that the focus on needs of her children and husband and church never created boundaries for PW members (at least in the literature). The general narrative of the literature burst the bounds of privatized morality and individualistic religion.

In addition to the ideas PW generated, the production of this literature was an important exercise of agency. Issues are presented dialogically; they are educational and full of real-life stories that translate global suffering and injustice into concrete lives. Problems are personalized; they have faces. The Korean War and the Vietnam War are recounted as experiences of real broken bodies and horror, not as facts and data or political news. The life of a woman in the Congo is described, for example, and the reader is invited to think about what it would be like to live with that kind of hardship in your daily routine. In other words, white, privileged Presbyterian Women are training themselves to think and act in ways that humanize the suffering of the world and to understand themselves as agents called to help in whatever

ways they can. The home as the place where women belong is the source of caring and concern for others, but not just those in her family, class, local church, and neighbourhood. These women gave the domestic sphere an exciting imaginative expansion. By doing so, they expanded their own callings in ways that begin to break the bounds of the patriarchal plan.

“Testing Limits”

I have offered two examples of groups of women loath to identify themselves with the “f” word. These women are more complicated than I can present here. But I hope I have communicated the sense of how women can be incredibly gifted, talented, and imaginative. While that in itself is no surprise, one of the important implications of this fact is that much of history has been written without attention to such activities and accomplishments. Unless women imitate men – that is, become rulers, governors, warriors, inventors – their activities (such as childcare) do not rise to the level of “historical event.” Yet women have constituted most of the faithful in churches over the past two centuries. And their activities matter. They matter not because they achieve everything necessary to bring about gender justice, but as models of creative uses of traditions: Pentecostal women through the authorizing power of the Holy Spirit, and Presbyterian Women through expanding their limited social location by attaching the domestic to the neighbour love that is critical to Reformed faith. The point is not simply to highlight agency in non-feminist women, but to tell stories about the women who have rarely been written about. A wonderful book on this topic calls it *A Tradition That Has No Name*.⁷ Women have always burst the bounds of every sort of culturally, economically, and politically defined constraint. Whether they are feminists or not, we need to tell their stories.

But are there limits? Is all agency to be honoured simply because it is designated “female”? Of course, something is not good merely because a woman does it. It is important to ask where to draw the line between recognizing the insights of marginalized groups and honouring anything that group does. Take my third example: the True Woman Conference in Chicago in October 2008 to support “biblical womanhood.” Biblical womanhood is defined as God-revealed complementarian relations between heterosexual men and women. One of its outcomes was a document entitled “True Woman Manifesto.” The manifesto claims that God decreed the complementary natures of men and

women and ordained their respective roles. Scripture, it says, reveals this “holy pattern for our womanhood, our character, our priorities, and our various roles, responsibilities, and relationships.” Those priorities include supporting “godly masculinity” and “God-ordained male leadership in the home and in the church.” The Manifesto states that women are to “respond humbly to male leadership in our homes and churches,” by which they “demonstrate a noble submission to authority that reflects Christ’s submission to God His Father.” Indeed, secular affirmations of women’s autonomy are downright unchristian: “(s)elfish insistence on personal rights is contrary to the spirit of Christ who humbled Himself, took on the form of a servant, and laid down His life for us.” God’s plan for gender entails not only heterosexual, female-submissive marriage, but, in addition, women’s exhibition of “a distinctive modesty, responsiveness, and gentleness of spirit.” And “at times [they] will be called to suffer for doing what is good – looking to heavenly reward rather than earthly comfort – for the sake of the gospel.”⁸

According to my feminist logic, I should expect that there are creative uses of this baldly self-submissive language. Indeed, I have already defended the way Pentecostal women used self-denigrating language to create space for their own agency. The True Woman Conference does involve an explicit proposal of some of the categories of gender justice, defined as autonomy, status, power, and authority. First, this is a woman-driven movement, not simply a male, patriarchal autocracy. There were many women speakers at the conference, which was organized by a Christian radio personality, Nancy Leigh DeMoss. DeMoss runs a women’s ministry called “Revive Our Hearts.” These women certainly have power to act. In addition, the rationale of the movement is about women’s status and a very distinctive understanding of women’s “agency” – we might say “autonomy” of a sort. The features of gender justice emerge here in a unique gender vision.

Submission is not understood as caving in to patriarchy, nor as the sign of women’s inherent weakness. Nor is it a denying or subjugating of women’s selves by giving up all power. Indeed, a “new vision” of selfhood, agency, and power is claimed and viewed by its participants as a revolution. Even as she insisted that feminism has been a disaster for American culture, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor Mary Kassian walked onto the stage at the conference accompanied

by Helen Reddy's old feminist classic song, "I Am Woman." Kassian is quoted as saying,

I'm praying that God is going to raise up a counter-revolution of women, women who hold the knowledge of our times in one hand and the truth and the clarity and the charity of the Word of God in the other; women whose hearts are broken over the gender confusion and the spiritual and emotional and relational carnage of our day and who, like those men of old, know what to do.⁹

DeMoss proposes an evangelical "counter-revolution" that calls women not to marching and public activism, but "back into their homes ... [requiring] only that we humble ourselves, that we learn, affirm, and live out the biblical pattern of womanhood, and that we teach the ways of God to the next generation."¹⁰ This vision does more than refuse accommodation to the secular world. This is a vision of women's power. A male speaker, theologian John Piper, insists that a wife's divine calling to submission is the best, most faithful kind of power. "I distinguish between authority and influence. A woman on her knees sways more in this nation than a thousand three-piece-suited Wall Street jerks. There is massive power in this room, so I do not take lightly this moment."¹¹

In short, by virtue of being faithful, women create a status for themselves that is, as DeMoss said, "counter-revolutionary," and attain a kind of power juxtaposed to and favoured over that of the most economically powerful agents in society.

There are complexities in this vision and in the joyful support so many women give it that a feminist cannot understand. I must wonder, though, about this valorizing, this aggrandizing of "submission" that is specially reserved for female bodies. What is it about this power that so compels theologian John Piper, yet is not something that he himself would want to emulate? If submissive women's power is so "massive," and indeed the best kind of power, why in the world would not Piper want it for himself? While evangelicals have complexified the power of masculinity, from Promise Keepers' reclaiming of headship to recent critiques of its effeminacy, it is clearly different from the power ascribed to the feminine. What we need, then, is more about the affective character of complementarity.

By affective, I mean not only pleasure and the erotic, but also fear and anxiety.

For the properly biblical "manly" man, the image of the modest, meek, and submissive woman must

somehow be as alluring and sexy as the (disavowed) eroticized whore. While secular advertisement trades off of erotic pleasure associated with women's bodies, something else is going on here with regard to eroticized female bodies that has to do not only with pleasure, but with anxiety and fear as well. What I mean by that is the deeply entrenched insistence upon the binary of complementarity. The implicit horror at disruption of complementarity in these definitions of power cannot be unrelated to anxiety and fear – anxiety and fear signalled by male terror of being feminized. Not only does this work to maintain "masculine men," its hetero-masculine imaginary warns evangelical women against being "wimpy women" shaped by a "wimpy theology" that does not put them in submission to Father God as well as dominator husband.¹² Frankly, I simply do not know how else to interpret it, especially when that fear expresses itself as resistance to female bodies in positions of authority in secular domains where self-valorizing power is available.

It is not difficult to imagine that men such as John Piper find the presence of women in social locations with power over men discomfiting. However, another important question is how the Manifesto on True Womanhood might also represent the anxiety and fear of women when they see a woman in charge. (Note the paradox here: DeMoss leading as a woman, with the power to influence women to submit.) Over 6,000 women wanted to reject feminist autonomy. This and the plethora of other anxieties around sexuality create interesting puzzles that, once again, must be explored by theology much more deeply.

However, my final worry about divinely ordained submission and willingness to suffer described in this Manifesto is its potential oppressive use in relation to Christian themes such as forgiveness, self-denial, self-sacrifice, and the cross. Appeals to such values have all too often contributed to support for and continuation of domestic and sexual abuse. Comments known to have been used by some pastors in response to battered women seeking help illustrate this point: "No matter what he's doing to you, he is still your spiritual head"; "Respect those behaviors that you can respect and pray for those that you can't respect. But remember, no matter what, you owe it to him and to God to live in submission to your husband"; "Pray for your husband; God will protect you"; "Try harder not to provoke him"; "Forgive him the beatings just as Christ [forgave you] from the cross". Or these larger problematic but biblical themes: "If you suffer, it's a sign that you are a sinner."¹³

While there is evidence that these forms of violence occur more frequently in non-churchgoing households, when domestic violence does occur in Christian households, such accounts of biblical womanhood and the function of scripture are significant, as these “pastoral” quotes suggest.¹⁴ Even as we are called upon to respect the agency of non-feminist women, the danger of such invitations to self-destruction in this evangelical model of “femininity” is a loud warning of its limitations.

In conclusion, respect for women who reject feminist thinking is important. It is crucial to honour their agency and its creative display, as evidenced by Pentecostal and Presbyterian women. Adherents of “true womanhood,” however, present a challenge to unlimited valorizing of non-feminist women’s practices. Neither Pentecostals nor Presbyterian women valorized self-denial and suffering in the same way as these evangelical women do. “True women” types have claimed a kind of agency, but its status as confined to the domestic is not comparable to PW’s expansion of that sphere, nor is the language of self-denial adequate to Pentecostal women’s (partial) challenge of male hegemony. The sacrifice of the cross must be an act of choice, not the blessing of status quo subordination. The very refusal of this group to challenge male domains is itself a premature relinquishment of the worth of the female self. Its real danger, however, is in the possibility that power defined as submission and potential suffering may invite violence, and contain and repress fear on all sides.

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1 Nancy P. McKee and Linda Stone, *Gender & Culture in America*, 3rd ed. (Cornwall-on-Hudson, NY: Sloan Publishing, 2007), 7.

2 See Anne Follis, *I’m Not a Women’s Libber; But ...* (New York: Avon, 1982).

3 David Roebuck at the Church of God School of Theology, Cleveland, Tennessee.

4 Elaine J. Lawless, *Handmaidens of the Lord: Pentecostal Women Preachers and Traditional Religion* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1988).

5 David Roebuck, ““Go and Tell My Brothers’?: The Waning of Women’s Voices in American Pentecostalism” (unpublished paper).

6 Glenna Matthews, *“Just a Housewife”: The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America* (New York: Oxford: 1987).

7 Mary Field Belenky, Lynne A. Bond, and Jacqueline S. Weinstock, *A Tradition That Has No Name: Nurturing the Development of People, Families, and Communities* (New York: Basic Books, 1997).

8 Quoted in Kathryn Joyce, “Women’s Liberation Through Submission: An Evangelical Anti-Feminism is Born,” *Religion Dispatches* (January 11, 2009): http://www.religiondispatches.org/archive/sexandgender/890/women’s_liberation_through_submission:_an_evangelical_anti-feminism_is_born (accessed March 26, 2009).

9 Joyce, “Women’s Liberation Through Submission.”

10 Joyce, “Women’s Liberation Through Submission.”

11 Joyce, “Women’s Liberation Through Submission.”

12 Joyce, “Women’s Liberation Through Submission.”

13 See Carol Adams, *Woman-battering* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

14 I thank Duke Divinity School student Ryan Harper, author of “Visible and Invisible Scars: Evangelicalism and Domestic Abuse,” for research on this point. He cites the Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report entitled “Violence Against Women: Estimates from the Redesigned Survey” (Washington, DC: NCJ-154348, 1995).

A Rooted Openness: Hospitality as Christian “Conversion to the Other”

by Thomas Reynolds
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In a diverse and often divided world, much work is needed to find resources for dwelling together in peace. For Christians, I suggest, this is not so much a matter of finding common ground among cultures and belief systems, but, more practically, a matter of living out faith’s witness of neighbourly love. Indeed, the first step towards brokering peace and reconciliation between differences is made not by agreeing on shared terms, but by agreeing to be together at all. A central feature of Christian faith, the practice of hospitality, can be an important way for Christians to gesture agreeably towards others. It is a moral performance that welcomes “the stranger” as one worthy of being considered a household member, marking a willingness to make room for another’s unique presence.

The paradox, however, is that hospitality welcomes the other “inside” in a way that changes the house, changes us. And this paradox means that welcoming also involves accepting the hospitality offered by others, who invite us into different “houses,” challenging us to entertain different ways of being. In this article, I want to argue that hospitality is a way of recognizing that the “inside” is really not “inside,” but already an “outside.” That is, the house of faith is already built open towards others. Christians have neither to deny by neutralizing faith nor to speak of faith in vague terms to build bridges of commonality with other traditions. The possibilities for mutual understanding and peace-making with other faith traditions are already there, rooted in Christianity. The catch, however, is that in honouring these resources, we shall be invited through them to honour the distinctiveness of others and the resources they bring with them. Hospitality involves a dual-honouring, of both guest and host. It is a rooted openness that deepens the home tradition by welcoming others, and, in turn, welcoming their own particular ways of welcoming. In fact, more radically, I contend that the home is first founded upon the guest-right of hospitality.

The root meaning of the word “hospitality” connotes the surprise arrival of a guest who is accepted and invited inside a home. In the ancient Near Eastern world

of the biblical traditions, hospitality emerged as a way of tending to sojourners, travellers requiring refuge and nourishment. Such persons were conspicuous in their strangeness and difference, indicating that they hailed from outside established social and kinship frameworks, from beyond the tribe. Made vulnerable by this “lack of place,” the stranger was regarded as a person in need, on a par with the marginalized in the community (e.g., orphans and widows). Accordingly, the moral obligation of gracious hosting became paramount. For, especially in a nomadic context, all people experience being a stranger in one circumstance or another. This ethic of exchange insinuates that human beings share a baseline vulnerability that is worthy of protection and covering when exposed, fostering a dependence upon the generosity of others. Indeed, justice requires an economy of compassionate reciprocity that welcomes the vulnerable stranger.

From early on in biblical experience, this notion is given religious support. Indeed, the Israelites are exhorted by God not to oppress or harm the stranger – not simply out of imposed duty, but in the shared remembrance that they, too, endured similar circumstances in the land of Egypt (Ex. 22:21). Moreover, God commands the Israelites to provide for and attend to the stranger as a native among them, loving him or her equally as one of their own (Lev. 19:33-34). The logic of such a mandate works from inside out: as the covenanted people of God were once themselves aliens, and now remain vulnerable sojourners with God, provided for and loved by God, so, too, should they provide for and love others (Lev. 25:23, Deut. 10:19). As Thomas W. Ogletree puts it, “the ramifications of hospitality are not fully manifest unless ... the meaning of being a stranger” is personally experienced.¹ The recollection of being an outsider and subsequently being welcomed thus provides impetus to empathize with other outsiders. Out of the abundance of having received a gift, a place to call home, the gift of receiving others is made possible. The home is for giving. Strangers become neighbours.

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What is going on here extends far beyond mere civic expressions of politeness and professionalized forms of etiquette that are commonly taken for hospitality. First, hospitality is a radicalized form of reciprocity that creates space for identifying with and receiving the stranger “as oneself.” It is what we share as vulnerable human beings – that is, the capacity to be exposed, denied, and even destroyed – that grants the ability to recognize and empathize with the foreign as someone not entirely different from ourselves. All human beings are strangers in one sense or another and at one time or another. The stranger has inherent value as a human being precisely in his or her dependence, momentarily lacking the power to reciprocate in kind, but fundamentally like the person who presently dwells “at home,” for having a home at all means relying upon the gifts of others.

Indeed, the origin of the ability to offer hospitality lies in having first received it. The experience of being welcomed is the wellspring of welcoming. In Pierre-François de Béthune’s words, “to enter into the mystery of hospitality, one must know the experience of receiving hospitality.”² Such an experience knows the risk and vulnerability of being dependent upon another, yielding a humility that recognizes shared humanity and the preciousness of welcome. It also underscores how being a guest involves a kind of hospitality, insofar as the one welcomed comes to welcome the host’s welcome and yields way in accepting the invitation to share the home dwelling. So hospitality entails a readiness to enter the world of the other, risking being welcomed into a strange home. The meaning is typified in the old adage that we learn to be good hosts by learning to be good guests. And it trades upon the fact that both host and guest share a common humanness that is vulnerably interdependent.

This line of thinking leads to a second point, which goes deeper than social décor and is more challenging than “niceness.” Hospitality trades on a prior sense of abundance and gratitude that of its own accord spills outward in a gesture of welcome that does not expect like return. As indicated previously, its generosity evolves from an acknowledgment of having been given something to offer, a home, coupled with the remembrance of being a stranger welcomed into home and hearth, and the acknowledgment of a shared vulnerable humanity. The sense of abundance, then, does not signify superiority, privilege, or power “over” another; instead, it marks the humble recognition that one has been gifted with something to give. Hospitality is founded upon the

premise that a host *can* and *should* give because she or he has first received – i.e., since it has already been given to you, you are now able to give to others. For the Israelites, receiving the gift of God’s hospitality spills over into an ethic of welcoming others.

Out of the gift grows an inner obligation, though this obligation involves much more than giving as one would have another give. For this can easily slip into giving in order to receive. If hospitality is conditioned by the intent to receive something back from the guest in return, the home becomes more a hostel or hotel, a place for paid lodging. Or worse, it can hold another hostage to the gift with excessive indebtedness, even treating the guest with suspicion or hostility until exchange value is secured. But hospitality’s initiative depends upon having received hospitality; the sense of abundance and gratitude that results in turn stimulates a momentum of responsibility that gives freely towards the other without expecting return. Thus, the two themes stated here join creatively into a single thread: gratitude is possible only in light of the humble recognition that one is vulnerable, a stranger who has now been given the gift of being able to host. And generous welcome flows outward as consequence.

Yet such generosity is not condescendingly one-way. Here we come to a third theme. The offer of hospitality fosters a mixing between guest and host that undoes the distinction between outsider and insider. Doors are held open and strangers are welcomed temporarily as part of the household. Boundaries shade into one another, guest and host mingling in the sharing of hearth and table. In this, the generosity of hospitality consents to a kind of role reversal that now leaves the host vulnerable and dependent as well. Space is made within the household for the stranger, an act that depends upon a presumption of goodwill and favour that could be abused or violated. After all, the host does not know “who” the stranger is. For, by definition, the stranger hails from somewhere else, and is not someone for whom one can prepare. There are no guarantees. Genuine hospitality is nullified if the householder merely selects in advance those who are either by legal right or status fit to receive welcome. Out of a sense of abundance, the host simply welcomes another, trusting that, on the basis of a shared sense of vulnerable humanity, there is a good at hand. And such trust places one in the hands of another, dependent on their goodwill. For once the stranger is invited in, the host yields total stability and control, adjusting the household to accommodate and attend to the unique needs of the guest as they became apparent.

The offer of hospitality in this way entails risk of vulnerability. Indeed, it invites disruption into household order and routine. And this cannot help but challenge the status quo. The home is made different, even strange, because of the presence of the stranger. The familiar is defamiliarized. Things do not remain intact as they were. The centre of gravity shifts. Created is a liminal zone of mutuality and sharing, a kind of covenantal exchange that both receives and gives. And in this risky exchange something counterintuitive happens. As the host gives to the guest, the host paradoxically gains a gift, unexpectedly becoming more than he or she was before. The host becomes honoured and enhanced. Of course, genuine disagreements and conflicts may occur. But through it all, a larger mutual indebtedness emerges in which both host and guest remain distinct yet fundamentally connected, vulnerability to vulnerability. This yields the possibility of genuine transformation. Indeed, the indebtedness cultivates a humility that readies the hearts of both host and guest to receive hospitality as it is offered in other circumstances.

With this, the discussion rises to a fourth theme: the theological root of hospitality. In a phrase, God is revealed in and blesses through the stranger. In hospitality, the centre of gravity lies neither in the home nor in the stranger, neither in host nor guest, but in the God of both who is discovered redemptively in the encounter – indeed, in the role reversal. Hospitality welcomes guest as host. The reversal is displayed poignantly in stories that depict hosts “entertaining angels unaware” (Heb. 13:2). The guest who receives honour ironically turns out to be a divine visitor who bestows honour. An example is Genesis 18, when Abraham and Sarah welcome three mysterious guests. Through such generosity and risk, God blesses the hosts by granting Sarah a child. Unexpectedly, the strangers become a harbinger of divine abundance. As rabbi Jonathan Sacks writes, this “is the Hebrew Bible’s single greatest and most counterintuitive contribution to ethics. God creates difference; therefore it is in one-who-is-different that we meet God.”³ Hospitality, then, is a window into blessing, opening to veritable traces of God’s presence. Not only is the stranger a neighbour, he or she is a cipher of the divine.

This kind of message carries over into the New Testament Gospels. Jesus himself is a vulnerable sojourner who depends upon the hospitality of others. More than this, however, Jesus embodies hospitality towards others, welcoming all to share in the divine ban-

quet that he associates with his ministry.⁴ His is a love that transgresses boundaries, a love that does not ask first by what right the beloved deserved welcome. A gift is given, the value of which cannot be estimated via conventional mechanisms of exchange based in self-interest or calculated outcomes. Here, the stranger is welcomed as a neighbour, recognized and embraced as kin. And the effect is subversive. It disorients and overturns standards of value founded upon status, race, gender, religion, and so on, forcing a re-evaluation of what it means to “have a household,” an identity. The home is for giving – indeed, for giving way to others. For Christians, the model of hospitality dramatized by Jesus, therefore, undercuts self-righteousness or self-protection, postures that treat with condescension, suspicion, or outright hostility those others – those outsiders – whose difference threatens the status quo. The stranger, the despised, the poor, the unclean, and the sick are all invited into the household of God. Radical implications follow.

Jesus identifies the redemptive work of God in him with that of the stranger, the weak and destitute “outsider,” suggesting that by welcoming such persons, one welcomes him. This identification affirms humanity to the core by embracing it at its most vulnerable points. It disrupts the human tendency to secure itself by strength, power, domination, wealth, status, and even religious association. Blessed are the meek, the needy, the vulnerable, for God is especially present to them. Matthew’s Jesus states it bluntly: “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (25:45). Christians meet Jesus in showing hospitality to the stranger. As Christ welcomes, so he calls his followers to welcome others (cf. Rom. 15:7). And in turn, by receiving others, Christ’s followers receive divine blessing. Welcome leads to welcome, leading to further welcome. The saving presence of God, Jesus, and the stranger are three interwoven threads in one tapestry.

The redemptive logic of such a tapestry is spelled out metaphorically in terms of a banquet. For example, in Luke’s gospel we find these words: “But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just” (14:14). Being a follower of Christ, for Christians, then, means to be taken up into the circle of God’s hospitality, which flows outward towards others in the shape of a radically welcoming and inclusive community symbolized by an open table fellowship. The sharing of food and drink is perhaps the most vivid example of the redemptive circle

of hospitality. And in God's encompassing banquet, no one can claim special entitlement; rich and poor, righteous and sinful, women and men, sick and healthy alike are welcomed.

However, the most pervasive image Jesus uses to mark this work of hospitality is the kingdom or reign of God. "Reign" (*basileia*) is a relational praxis, a communal and social metaphor for a realm informed by God's empowering "rule" of welcome. It is an eschatological ideal, a future hope, but one that is productive in the present, challenging the world's economies of domination and exclusion, not through coercion, but by the power of compassionate, gratuitous, and unconditional regard – in a word, hospitality. This reign is more a "kin-dom," a new family, demonstrated by a love that crosses boundaries, where distinctions between inside and outside become blurred, where one's neighbour includes one's enemy (cf. Matt. 5:43-45 and the "good Samaritan" story of Luke 10:29-37).⁵ Announcing that such a kin-dom is at hand, Jesus calls people to participate actively in God's present work of reconfiguring the world.

Hospitality has an unconditional character that implies the infinite hospitality of God, the divine embrace reaching out to all. And this is why the command to show hospitality to the stranger has priority of place in Jewish and Christian scriptures. In welcoming strangers, God's own welcome comes to hearth, for God loves strangers (Deut. 10:17-19). The idea of God's saving presence in the stranger is radical in that it has the effect of rupturing provincial closures. Indeed, the love of God breaks the hold of idols and ushers into effect a boundary-transcending momentum towards the other in a praxis of openness, a praxis that risks relation with the other as loved by God. In such openness, the stranger is met and welcomed as one from whom hospitality is ultimately received. And it is only because one experiences oneself as a sojourner, a recipient of the hospitality of God and others, that the performance of welcome becomes possible. Precisely this paradox led Louis Massignon, in his missionary engagement with Muslims in the early 20th century, to rethink Christianity. His experience of the hospitality offered by Muslims led him to discover hospitality at the core of the three Abrahamic traditions.⁶ His respect for Islam helped him see that conversion to God is a conversion to the other.

The rooted openness of hospitality holds great promise for intercultural and interfaith peace-making. By peace I do not mean the absence of tensions and

disagreements. Rather, I mean the state of unique differences encountering one another in a kind of counterpoint, each contributing to the ongoing conversation and each becoming something new because of it. Of course, hospitality is not a matter of regulations and procedural codes, a law to be applied univocally in every context. To be sure, it is a universal ethic of compassionate regard. But its application is always particular and ad hoc, arising as needed in different ways and according to different sets of circumstances. If the stranger comes unforeseen, this requires receptiveness to surprise and a willingness to make oneself – one's home – available, open, and flexible to change once the stranger is revealed. Such availability may entail renegotiating the household, or perhaps a church community or public school, reconfiguring the shared space according to those who now occupy it. This means that hospitality has to be negotiated and renegotiated in each instance and according to different exigencies. The key to unlocking the door of hospitality is maintaining an open and ready heart. The details get worked out in the process.

Together, as we seek ways to share our world and resist those forms of practice that threaten peace and shut down dialogue, "strangers" may be the bearers of unexpected gifts, allowing us to rediscover that the centre of God's love lies at the marginal meeting place between guest and host, in hospitality's role reversal. Perhaps the centre is not "inside," but in between differences. For in hospitality, guest and host converse, their identities becoming transposed through the encounter, each converting to the other and becoming an other for the other. The result is blessing, a dual-honouring by which the presence of God becomes palpable.

Thomas Reynolds is Associate Professor of Theology at Emmanuel College, Toronto.

1 Thomas W. Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 4.

2 Fr. Pierre-François de Béthune, O.S.B., "Interreligious Dialogue and Sacred Hospitality," *Religion East and West*, 7/1 (October 2007), 12.

3 Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 59.

4 Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 17.

5 See Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, "Solidarity: Love of Neighbor in the 21st Century," in *Lift Every Voice: Constructing Christian Theologies from the Underside*, Revised and expanded edition, eds. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite and Mary Potter Engel (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998), 30–39.

6 See Snjezana Akpinar, "Hospitality in Islam," in *Religion East and West*, 7/1 (October 2007), 26–27.

Jewish Voices Critical of Israel

Protests against Israel's heavy military action against Gaza have been held all over the world. There is a danger that this opposition to Israel will feed anti-Semitism and make innocent people suffer. In many Western countries, Jews opposed to the politics of Israel hold that it has become important to protest publicly against these expansionist policies, demonstrating that Jews are not united in their support of the Jewish State. Their public witness expresses solidarity with the Palestinians and, at the same, disproves the myth that all Jews stand behind Israel's actions. These critical voices are of different kinds: some speak as Zionists calling for the end of the occupation and respect for the Palestinians, while others oppose Zionism altogether. Because their voices are at odds with the policies of the US government and the present Canadian government – and because some establishment Jews exert pressure on the mass media – these voices are rarely reported in the press or on television. They are easily found on the Internet, however. In Canada, the Vancouver-based Jewish review *Outlook* has been an outspoken critic of Israel for years. To forestall the spread of anti-Semitism, it is important that the critical voices be heard. I have decided to republish two bold statements made by respected Jewish commentators: one a Canadian and the other an Israeli.

Gregory Baum

Olive oil, opposition and Gaza

Rick Salutin

The Globe and Mail, January 9, 2009

On Tuesday, I wrote my friend and sometime doctor, Miriam Garfinkle, to say I'd run low on the olive oil, from Palestine, that she sells. She is normally diligent, even fanatical, about it. It soothes her, she says, as she has grown ever more distressed by Israel's occupation there, and more involved in dissident Jewish actions. I didn't hear back from her.

Then, on Wednesday, I saw in the news that she was among a group of Jewish women who occupied the Israeli consulate in Toronto, in symbolic protest against the reoccupation, or "incursion," by Israel's military into Gaza. The olive oil, too, is symbolic – of the many trees uprooted there and a way of life largely destroyed with them.

Later, I spoke to a Jewish friend who says that, when she reads news from Gaza, she gets sick to her stomach. I asked why. It's a mix, she said: Horror at what is done by Israel to the people of Gaza, and fear that her reaction lends support to a group, Hamas, bent on destroying Israel and killing Jews. I started to say Hamas's record is more complex than that, but it didn't really matter. These are issues where you lead with your emotions, and your reason fills in the tracks that your gut has laid down.

Yet, this kind of Jewish dissent is now widespread. It's no longer just individuals. There is a Canadian umbrella group of groups called Independent Jewish Voices, including Jewish Women Against the Occupation; the well-named NION (Not In Our Name) etc. There is an Independent Jewish Voices in the U.K., and groups in South Africa, Sweden, France, Italy, Germany, Belgium and the United States, which also has a new Jewish lobby in Washington, J Street, founded to counter the mighty right-wing Israel lobby, AIPAC. This level of activity is a stage beyond lone voices such as Noam Chomsky or, in Israel, Yeshaya Leibowitz in the past, and Amira Hass or Avrum Burg in the present.

The brew of emotions is often intense; when it involves your people and your past, it's rarely about taking a simple position. Let me give a personal example. In 1967, as a seminarian in New York, I swelled with pride to hear Israel's United Nations ambassador, Abba Eban, defend Israeli attacks on its Arab neighbours, because they had blocked one of its outlets, the Straits of Tiran. This, he thundered, was universally recognized as an act of war – Israel acted in self-defence! I had been hired to research material for a book Abba Eban planned to write on Jewish history. I never met him but was honoured to think my work passed into his hands.

Now, the same Israel has blocked *all* access to and from Gaza for a year and a half – land, sea and air – tightening the noose recently, so disease and malnutrition are pervasive and no economy really exists. Surely this, too, is an act of war, directed at civilians, like the rockets fired from Gaza in the past two months, which I also find inexcusable. Whew.

And what about Jewish unity in a time of crisis? I think unity matters when your group is under attack, but what's in question here is whether Israel is under attack or is the attacker. There's no doubt Hamas fires rockets, but who broke the truce? Did Hamas abide by it till Nov.

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4, when Israel bombed Gaza, killing six Palestinians, and again on Nov. 17, killing four more, as well as intensifying its siege – and Hamas reacted only then?

I think this kind of debate about Israel is healthy. I don't agree with Robert Fulford, who wrote in the *National Post* that Israel's Gaza assaults are a clear case of civilization versus terror. That kind of language oddly mimics forms such as anti-Semitism, whose essence is stereotyping large groups with scanty labels: All Jews are evil, or Islam is inherently violent. Reality is usually more mixed. So is Israel. Some of its achievements – like the revival of the Hebrew language and culture – are a marvel. Other elements, not so much.

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The end of Zionism

Avraham Burg*

The Zionist revolution has always rested on two pillars: a just path and an ethical leadership. Neither of these is operative any longer. The Israeli nation today rests on a scaffolding of corruption, and on foundations of oppression and injustice. As such, the end of the Zionist enterprise is already on our doorstep. There is a real chance that ours will be the last Zionist generation. There may yet be a Jewish state here, but it will be a different sort, strange and ugly.

There is time to change course, but not much. What is needed is a new vision of a just society and the political will to implement it. Diaspora Jews for whom Israel is a central pillar of their identity must pay heed and speak out.

The opposition does not exist, and the coalition, with Ariel Sharon at its head, claims the right to remain silent. In a nation of chatterboxes, everyone has suddenly fallen dumb, because there's nothing left to say. We live in a thunderously failed reality. Yes, we have revived the Hebrew language, created a marvellous theatre and a strong national currency. Our Jewish minds are as sharp as ever. We are traded on the Nasdaq. But is this why we created a state? The Jewish people did not survive for two millennia in order to pioneer new weaponry, computer security programs or anti-missile missiles. We were supposed to be a light unto the nations. In this we have failed.

It turns out that the 2,000-year struggle for Jewish survival comes down to a state of settlements, run by an amoral clique of corrupt lawbreakers who are deaf both to their citizens and to their enemies. A state lacking

justice cannot survive. More and more Israelis are coming to understand this as they ask their children where they expect to live in 25 years. Children who are honest admit, to their parents' shock, that they do not know. The countdown to the end of Israeli society has begun.

It is very comfortable to be a Zionist in West Bank settlements such as Beit El and Ofra. The biblical landscape is charming. You can gaze through the geraniums and bougainvilleas and not see the occupation. Travelling on the fast highway that skirts barely a half-mile west of the Palestinian roadblocks, it's hard to comprehend the humiliating experience of the despised Arab who must creep for hours along the pocked, blockaded roads assigned to him. One road for the occupier, one road for the occupied.

This cannot work. Even if the Arabs lower their heads and swallow their shame and anger forever, it won't work. A structure built on human callousness will inevitably collapse in on itself. Note this moment well: Zionism's superstructure is already collapsing like a cheap Jerusalem wedding hall. Only madmen continue dancing on the top floor while the pillars below are collapsing.

We have grown accustomed to ignoring the suffering of the women at the roadblocks. No wonder we don't hear the cries of the abused woman living next door or the single mother struggling to support her children in dignity. We don't even bother to count the women murdered by their husbands.

Israel, having ceased to care about the children of the Palestinians, should not be surprised when they come washed in hatred and blow themselves up in the centres of Israeli escapism. They consign themselves to Allah in our places of recreation, because their own lives are torture. They spill their own blood in our restaurants in order to ruin our appetites, because they have children and parents at home who are hungry and humiliated. We could kill a thousand ringleaders a day and nothing will be solved, because the leaders come up from below – from the wells of hatred and anger, from the “infrastructures” of injustice and moral corruption.

If all this were inevitable, divinely ordained and immutable, I would be silent. But things could be different, and so crying out is a moral imperative.

Here is what the prime minister should say to the people: the time for illusions is over. The time for decisions has arrived. We love the entire land of our forefathers and in some other time we would have wanted to live

here alone. But that will not happen. The Arabs, too, have dreams and needs.

Between the Jordan and the Mediterranean there is no longer a clear Jewish majority. And so, fellow citizens, it is not possible to keep the whole thing without paying a price. We cannot keep a Palestinian majority under an Israeli boot and at the same time think ourselves the only democracy in the Middle East. There cannot be democracy without equal rights for all who live here, Arab as well as Jew. We cannot keep the territories and preserve a Jewish majority in the world's only Jewish state – not by means that are humane and moral and Jewish.

Do you want the greater land of Israel? No problem. Abandon democracy. Let's institute an efficient system of racial separation here, with prison camps and detention villages.

Do you want a Jewish majority? No problem. Either put the Arabs on railway cars, buses, camels and donkeys and expel them en masse – or separate ourselves from them absolutely, without tricks and gimmicks. There is no middle path. We must remove all the settlements – all of them – and draw an internationally recognized border between the Jewish national home and the Palestinian national home. The Jewish law of return will apply only within our national home, and their right of return will apply only within the borders of the Palestinian state.

Do you want democracy? No problem. Either abandon the greater land of Israel, to the last settlement and outpost, or give full citizenship and voting rights to everyone, including Arabs. The result, of course, will be

that those who did not want a Palestinian state alongside us will have one in our midst, via the ballot box.

The prime minister should present the choices forthrightly: Jewish racism or democracy. Settlements, or hope for both peoples. False visions of barbed wire and suicide bombers, or a recognized international border between two states and a shared capital in Jerusalem.

Why, then, is the opposition so quiet? Perhaps because some would like to join the government at any price, even the price of participating in the sickness. But while they dither, the forces of good lose hope. Anyone who declines to present a clear-cut position – black or white – is collaborating in the decline. It is not a matter of Labour versus Likud or right versus left, but of right versus wrong, acceptable versus unacceptable. The law-abiding versus the lawbreakers. What's needed is not a political replacement for the Sharon government but a vision of hope, an alternative to the destruction of Zionism and its values by the deaf, dumb and callous.

Israel's friends abroad – Jewish and non-Jewish alike, presidents and prime ministers, rabbis and lay people – should choose as well. They must reach out and help Israel to navigate the road map toward our national destiny as a light unto the nations and a society of peace, justice and equality.

* **Avraham Burg** was speaker of Israel's Knesset in 1999–2003 and is a former chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel. *The Jewish Daily Forward* translated and adapted this essay from an article that originally appeared in *Yediot Aharonot*.



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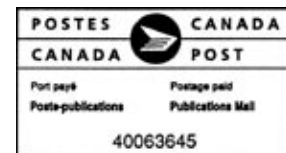
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