

Safeguarding the Stranger

An Abrahamic Theology
and Ethic of Protective Hospitality

JAYME R. REAVES

SAFEGUARDING THE STRANGER

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Introduction

*...hospitality is not merely one ethics among others,
but the ethics par excellence.*

—JACQUES DERRIDA¹

Over the past fifteen years, there has been an upsurge of theological and religious writing on the topic of hospitality. On the whole, this body of literature reflects two primary approaches: either it discusses the theory of welcome and the other, or it attempts to recover what it perceives to be a forgotten spiritual practice. Yet, the discussions related to either of these facets are limited. In the theory-based literature, there is a lack of contextual evidence and lived experience that roots the practice of hospitality in everyday life. This body of literature also tends to focus on *why* the other should be welcomed rather than the variety of ways that welcome can be expressed and the realities faced when the other says “yes.” In the practical literature, the reality is considered, yet its attempt to recover hospitality is primarily limited to interpersonal relationships or considering communal identity, extolling the virtues of inviting others into one’s home, recovering the power the ritual of welcome as a personal spiritual practice, or challenging groups and communities who tend to be insular and homogeneous. This practical body of literature often speaks of hospitality in the context of issues related to immigration or homelessness, but it rarely goes beyond general “welcoming the stranger” scenarios as practiced by mainstream religious communities.

Perhaps because of the recent revival of the topic within scholarship or because of a lack of understanding as to the full potential hospitality entails, there appears to be a reluctance to consider hospitality’s practicality beyond the already pre-determined scope. The potential for hospitality to impact

1. Derrida, “Hospitality and Hostility,” quoted in McNulty, *The Hostess*, xvii.

and influence ethical behavior and theological understanding is limitless, yet the baggage the term “hospitality” carries with it and how it is interpreted limits how it is viewed and understood.

Therefore, this work is distinctive in that it extends the discussion related to hospitality beyond the usual topics of table fellowship and inclusion by considering the provision of refuge or sanctuary to an endangered other as a hospitable act. Throughout this research, the focus is on an exploration and analysis of protective hospitality and its faith-based motivations and resources. For clarity’s sake, protective hospitality is defined as *the provision of welcome and sanctuary to the threatened other, often at great risk to oneself*.

When practitioners are questioned about why they provided a safe place for someone in danger, they often declare, “It is just what we do” or “It’s what anyone would do.” For religious practitioners of protective hospitality, their actions often appear innate, as a matter of course. Yet, to the keen observer, there is something more. This book seeks to explore what that is and how it can be applied in a variety of contexts.

Furthermore, the call to provide protective hospitality is found in all three “Abrahamic traditions” of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Yet, despite this common ethical imperative, there has been no sustained effort in the literature thus far to consider hospitality through an inter-religious lens. Therefore, an additional unique contribution of this work is that it considers the Christian practice of protective hospitality by also examining its practice in the Jewish and Islamic traditions, noting commonalities as well as differences which provide new perspectives or opportunities for renewal and growth. Such an analysis highlights the positive potential for a “cooperative theology” between the Abrahamic traditions through the practice of protective hospitality that could be used to address issues of peacebuilding, conflict, marginalization, oppression and threat to the vulnerable in meaningful and effective ways.

I approach this work from a specific context. My interest in hospitality and protection arises from a personal place. My family background was anything but hospitable or protective. I am the third generation (at least) of women who were sexually and/or emotionally abused by male authority figures (husbands, fathers, religious leadership, etc.); yet, despite the knowledge of the abuse, nothing was done within the family structure to protect the vulnerable. Relationships and abuse continued and so the threatened had to seek refuge elsewhere.

I am also a child of the racially divided American South and have been profoundly formed by witnessing the inequalities and cruelty inflicted by racism, albeit from the somewhat safer white female perspective. I grew up with both invisible and real boundaries I was forbidden to cross because

people who had darker skin than I did lived on the other side. But also, in recent years, I have lived in two areas of the world—the Former Yugoslavia and Northern Ireland—where religion and its corresponding national identity has divided neighbor against neighbor, community against community as well, in very similar and yet very different ways.

My interest in hospitality began while living in the Former Yugoslavia. After residing in Sarajevo, Bosnia from 1998–2000 and in eastern Croatia in 2003–2004, the impact of hospitality made an indelible mark upon me. How could a society and all its constituent entities—be they Muslim Bošnjak, Orthodox Serb or Roman Catholic Croat—express such welcome to me and yet show such inhospitality to one another? How can such amazing warmth and generosity coexist beside hatred and xenophobia, even against those one had lived beside one's whole life? And what motivated those who risked their lives to save someone from the other side? I was perplexed and sought to understand more fully.

During and after my experiences of living in Bosnia and Croatia, a question began to form that this book seeks to address. Ethnic cleansing and genocide of the religious other in the Former Yugoslavia, Darfur, Rwanda, Iraq, Syria, and numerous other places is a well-documented reality. Yet, there are defiant examples of people reaching out beyond their own identity to welcome and provide safe haven or assistance to someone from the other side in practically every modern conflict narrative. I began to wonder why some choose to take others in for protection and some do not, and what is required for practitioners of protective hospitality to put themselves and their families at risk to give sanctuary to strangers. On a theological level, I sought to know what role faith plays in making these decisions, what resources were there to enable these actions to be fostered and utilized to make a difference in the future, and what the Abrahamic traditions might bring to this.

Therefore, the question addressed in these pages is as follows:

What are the resources and teachings in the Abrahamic traditions that take hospitality and, more specifically, its call to provide protective hospitality seriously enough to inform shared action and belief on behalf of the threatened other, often at great risk to oneself?

To answer this question, this work aims to be both ecumenical and inter-religious in its theological approach. While offering a Christian point of view, it seeks to broaden that same Christian theology by being in intentional conversation with the perspectives of other Christian denominations

beyond my own Baptist background, as well as the other Abrahamic traditions of Judaism and Islam.

There are obvious limitations to this approach: I am neither Jew nor Muslim, and I have no Arabic and limited Biblical Hebrew experience, which requires me to rely upon English translations and interpretations. Therefore, when it comes to textual and interpretive work, I am aware that I am profoundly shaped by my own Christian, congregationalist, low-church background and training in hermeneutics and exegesis as well as my experience in inter-religious and international experiences.²

Thus, this research will primarily be an endeavor from an inclusive Christian point of view that utilizes resources from both Judaism and Islam to interrogate and challenge the Christian tradition's theology and practice of protective hospitality. I recognize that no religion is homogenous or monolithic, and that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam do not exist as single entities. Instead, there are a multiplicity of Judaisms, Christianities, and Islams, defined by the diversity of people who adhere to them. Muslim scholar Omid Safi writes that religions, as in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, teach nothing. Instead, the "[i]nterpretative communities do . . . [as d]ivine teachings [are] achieved through human agency" and that religion "is always mediated" since "Islam says nothing. Muslims do."³

So, while I focus upon the Abrahamic traditions, I recognize my limits in speaking with authority beyond the Christian tradition. Accordingly, this research does not speak for all Christians or every Christianity. Instead, it recognizes the complexity within each identified tradition, but it also recognizes the clumsiness and unwieldiness that can come from over-precision in naming just which Judaism, Christianity, or Islam is being talked about at every point. Within the context of Christian theology and Christianity mentioned here, it will in most cases be limited to Western Christianity, recognizing that there are even a multitude of Western Christianities. However, as it would be impractical to similarly differentiate Judaism and Islam in this work of Christian theology (unless particular traditions such as Sufism

2. Another example of this approach in the area of textual scholarship can be found in Byrne's, *The Names of God in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*.

3. Safi, "The Times They Are A-Changin'" introduction to *Progressive Muslims*, 22. Similarly Kwame Anthony Appiah emphasizes the individual and personal, noting: "It's not Muslims; it's particular people now and it . . . gives it a kind of concreteness . . . What binds me to Islam is my Sunni friends and my Shiite friends, my Israeli friends, my cousins who happen to be Muslim, and strangers whom I've come to know and like who are Muslim. What I have in common with these very diverse groups of Muslims that I know is different in each case. So that breaks up the sense of them as a kind of monolithic 'them.'" Appiah, "Sidling up to Difference," <http://www.onbeing.org/program/sidling-up-to-difference/transcript/5876>.

may apply in a specific area), I feel it is appropriate to take a similarly broad approach to “Christianity.” Therefore, the analysis of how protective hospitality is discussed in Judaism and Islam is intended as indicative rather than definitive. Whether adherents will wish to own it confessionally or not goes beyond the immediate task of excavating and identifying the resources to which this research appeals.

My argument will be as follows:

Protective hospitality and its faith-based foundations, specifically in the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, merit greater theological attention. More specifically, the practice of protective hospitality in Christianity can be enhanced by better understandings of Judaism and Islam’s practice of hospitality, namely their codes and etiquettes related to honor. Additionally, the positive potential for protective hospitality’s contribution to peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and reconciliation and the possibility for development of a “cooperative theology” among the Abrahamic traditions are particularly valuable.

Outline of Chapters

The book is divided into two parts. The first part is comprised of the first three chapters, focusing upon a greater analysis of hospitality, theology, and ethics. The second part, comprised of the final two chapters, look specifically at protective hospitality.

In Chapter One, I identify the theological movements and influences that shape the investigation to follow. I begin with contemporary examples of protective hospitality and then discusses two currents in contemporary Christian theologies—a contextual and political theological approach and a cooperative and complementary theological approach—that will shape a dialogical method to understanding faith-based hospitality. I then identify the capacity for complementarity in the theology of the Abrahamic traditions which lends itself to a shared heritage of ethical practice, emphasizing the voices within the traditions that seek to challenge rather than collude with the powers and national might. Lastly, I argue that a “hermeneutic of hospitality” is appropriate in order for the research to embody its contextual method and structure.

In Chapter Two, I extend hospitality through examination of its scope and complexity and highlight aspects that contribute its amorphous nature. Inherent tensions in hospitality’s definition and practice are explored, as seen in the relationships between hospitality and hostility, particularity

and universality, inclusivity and exclusivity, safety and threat, invited and uninvited, expected and unexpected, and culture and counterculture. I also argue in this chapter that three main themes can be identified in the practice of hospitality—table fellowship, intellectual welcome, and the provision of protection—and that hospitality is inextricably linked to the essence of ethics and ethical practice.

In Chapter Three, I analyze the practice of hospitality as exhibited in the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, considering their shared cultural and geographic origins and patterns related to models of behavior and impact of early experiences of persecution. I also identify the traditions' own unique understandings that contribute to the practice of hospitality, highlighting the emphases missing or forgotten in Christianity's theology and practice in light of the contributions of Judaism and Islam, namely in the more clearly articulated obligations and etiquette related to hospitality which I suggest are associated with a more explicit honor code. It is understood, however, that Christianity is not alone in its neglect of certain aspects of hospitality, and that each religion is never pure in theological systems or ethical practices. Therefore, critiques expressed toward Christianity could be applicable to Judaism or Islam as well.

In Chapter Four, I examine the stages of hospitality and the role of protection in hospitable practice, while also noting the motivations for action on behalf of a threatened other that have been identified by other scholars. I also specifically argue that issues of protection, force, and violence give meaning to and limit the practice of protective hospitality, particularly in light of hospitality's emphasis upon life, freedom from cruel relationship, and openness to the other. Additionally, I consider the role of boundaries, risk, and concerns for purity that enable and hinder communities and individuals from practicing protective hospitality. Moreover, I examine the challenge of negotiating boundaries, risk and concerns for purity, which necessitates the need for an ethic of risk to be adopted to inform responsible action.

In Chapter Five, I identify and explore various texts from the Abrahamic traditions that illustrate the practice and limitations of protective hospitality pointing to an often conflicted and imperfect practice, but a practice authoritatively modeled in the traditions nonetheless. Texts from the Jewish and Christian traditions will be limited to the Tanakh / Hebrew Bible for two reasons. First, the limitation seeks to highlight the shared textual tradition between Judaism and Christianity that shapes the practice of protective hospitality. Second, the limitation is a practical one related to the need for brevity. While there are significant passages in the New Testament that could be included, this work is not an exhaustive survey of all texts but an

analysis of sample texts that problematize, shape, and speak specifically to the provision of protection. From the Tanakh / Hebrew Bible, the texts to be analyzed are the Rahab narrative from Joshua 2; the Lot in Sodom narrative from Genesis 19; the Levite, concubine and Ephraimite in Gibeah narrative in Judges 19; and the cities of refuge texts in the deuteronomic witness. Analysis based in the Qur'an and elsewhere in the Islamic tradition center upon Lot/Lut's hospitality in the Cities of the Plain, God as protector, the Constitution of Medina and its implications for the *ummah* ("community") and the *dhimmi* ("protected people"), and a selection of other texts that address the issue of protection.

In the conclusion, I draw all of these elements together to present some distilled points that hopefully will be useful in moving forward with what has been presented. It is my hope that the future potential of this work is that it can contribute to the further development of a body of literature that encourages inter-religious cooperative action and the work of creating safe spaces on behalf of marginalized groups and individuals. Moreover, it ultimately aims to spark the imagination and provide a space to consider the development of a culture and cycle of courageous reciprocity and resistance through the memory of acts of protective hospitality provided in the past to counteract cycles of abusive power and violence.

PART ONE

Hospitality, Ethics, and Theology

1

Locating the Theological Approach

Theology begins with my life, but my life is inter-related with the lives of others.

Thus, “I am” is always also “we are.”

—JUNG YOUNG LEE¹

INTRODUCTION

This book is primarily a Christian exploration of protective hospitality informed by the Jewish and Islamic traditions. As such, it draws upon the hermeneutical principles and methodology of political theology as seen through the more specific lenses of liberation and feminist theologies in an inter-religious ethical context, and explores how the insights of political theology can be extended beyond the Christian tradition to explore the social issue of protective hospitality from an inter-religious perspective in an increasingly pluralist world.

What I seek to do here is to provide an analysis of Abrahamic protective hospitality in a way that is critical, creative, and constructive. I aim to accomplish this through the use of two currents in contemporary Christian theologies: a contextual and political theological approach and a cooperative and complementary theological approach. The first approach emphasizes the situating of this work upon context and lived experience

1. Lee, *Marginality*, 8.

and the methodologies of Christian political, liberation, and feminist theologies. The second approach emphasizes cooperative and complementary theological aspects that are informed by inter-religious, Abrahamic, and hospitable hermeneutics.

A CONTEXTUAL AND POLITICAL THEOLOGICAL APPROACH

A contextual and political theological approach is useful as it enables one to analyze and reflect on hospitality on three different levels—social, cultural and theological—taking into account both orthodoxy (doctrinal belief where it exists) and orthopraxy (practice and context). Starting with practical, contextual examples to set the stage, there will then follow an exploration of the political, liberationist and feminist theological foundations of these examples.

Arising from a Context: Contemporary Examples of Protective Hospitality

The highest virtue is always against the law.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON²

This section presents two brief case studies as initial anchors to contextualize the practice of protective hospitality. There are many examples which could be used, but for the sake of brevity and for the role of theological development, the case studies of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon and the Sanctuary Movement have been chosen.

The Village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon

One of the best-known examples of protective hospitality of the twentieth century are the relatively widespread actions of Christian, Muslim and other non-Jew rescuers³ who provided sanctuary and assistance to Jews and other

2. Emerson, "Worship."

3. "Rescuers" is the common term used to refer to those who hid Jews or helped Jews escape during the Holocaust. They are also referred to as "Righteous Among the Nations" or "Righteous Gentiles." They are memorialized and remembered at Yad

threatened individuals and communities in Nazi-occupied Europe, North Africa and Palestine in the late 1930s and early-mid 1940s. The motivations for rescue and refuge given were varied, but the common narrative is that during this time, over twenty thousand people from forty-five countries⁴ took in strangers, those who were different either religiously, politically, or ethnically, risking their lives for the sake of the other's well-being.⁵

Throughout the literature, however, the actions of the village Le Chambon-sur-Lignon (shortened to Le Chambon) in France are cited as a prime example of hospitality in the context of rescuers during the Holocaust. Under the primary leadership of Protestant pastors André Trocmé and Edouard Theis, the village rescued between three and five thousand Jews by providing sanctuary within the community, either by helping them get to safer locations (such as Switzerland) or by harboring them more long-term in private homes, local farms or public buildings in the village. Putting themselves in harm's way and giving up much of their own freedom while under the Vichy regime of World War II France, the villagers of Le Chambon, also referred to as Chambonnais, practiced hospitality in some of the most costly ways.

The understanding of protection for the Chambonnais was rooted in their own tradition as descendants of the Calvinist French Huguenots who had been severely persecuted during the European Reformation as a result of their criticism of the use of power by the kings of France and the Roman Catholic Church.⁶ This use of historical memory informs what theologian Letty Russell refers to as their "heritage of resistance."⁷

Russell's term "heritage of resistance" encourages a discussion of the term coined by Christian political theologian Johann Baptist Metz—"dangerous memory"—which, for Metz, stems from Christian Eucharistic theology and the concept of *anamnesis*, wherein adherents *remember* God's saving deeds as an act of worship.⁸ From meaningful, healthy remembrance

Vashem in Israel, but certain criteria must be met for them to be officially recognized. See Yad Vashem's website for more details: <http://www1.yadvashem.org/jv/en/righteous/about.asp>.

4. The precise number recognized as "Righteous Among the Nations" according to Yad Vashem is 25,685 as of January 1, 2015.

5. For examples, see Hallie, *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed*; Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness*; Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage*; Gushee, *Righteous Gentiles*; Hellman, *When Courage Was Stronger Than Fear*; and Satloff, *Among the Righteous*.

6. See Scoville, *Persecution of Huguenots*; Conner, *Huguenot Heartland*; and Sunshine, *Reforming French Protestantism*.

7. Russell, "Hot-House Ecclesiology," 50.

8. While this understanding is particularly relevant to Christianity, there is room for different foundations within non-Christian traditions as well. In fact, the term

of past events and the communal narrative comes action, and it is action that can be described as “dangerous” as it often challenges the status quo, highlights injustice and will, on many occasions, inform and motivate acts of resistance. It must be said, however, that this reliance upon memory as fuel for tradition of resistance as seen in the actions of Le Chambon is not unique to the Christian tradition in its practice of hospitality. There are accounts of Muslims in South Europe, North Africa and Palestine conducting similar activities with similar motivations. Moreover, all three of the Abrahamic traditions have this “heritage of resistance” at its core and all subsequently advocate welcome and hospitality as a result, which will be explored later.

In the case of Le Chambon and their own dangerous memory, ethicist Philip Hallie notes that even the routes the Chambonnais used to take Jewish children and families through the mountains of southeastern France into the safety of Switzerland were the same routes their Huguenot ancestors took when fleeing persecution.⁹ As such, that heritage formed memories and self-identification that enabled the community to wed hospitality, which often came at a great personal price, to the provision of protection as a “faithful response to new social, political and economic developments and to particular historical crises,” resulting in the protection of thousands from death camps.¹⁰

This heritage of resistance also enabled the Chambonnais to understand “the importance of welcome and hospitality [as] . . . they stretched this welcome as far as they could.”¹¹ Those rescued by the Chambonnais remarked upon the hospitality they encountered there, enabling them, even in the midst of their suffering, to “find realistic hope in a world of persisting

“dangerous memory” does not necessarily need a religious foundation at all to still be effective in its meaning, albeit different from Metz’s original intent. The Christian understanding argued by Metz is based in Jesus’ proclamation that when followers share bread or drink from the cup, they are to do it “in remembrance” of him (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24–25). God’s saving acts include not just spiritual salvation, but also physical, as seen in deliverance of the Israelites from slavery and redemption from injustice. See also Metz, *Faith in History and Society*; and Metz, *A Passion for God*. However, it is worth noting here that the term “dangerous” can be problematic. Metz’s understanding of “dangerous” meant “defiant” or “remembering that endangers the abusive status quo.” Yet, “dangerous memory” in the minds of many can also refer to unhealthy memory, such as in relation to nationalistic, violent, martyr-related memories that divide and exclude.

9. Hallie, “From Cruelty to Goodness,” 27.

10. Bretherton, *Hospitality as Holiness*, 141.

11. Russell, “Hot-House Ecclesiology,” 50.

cruelty.”¹² For example, when a new refugee family found protection in the village, it was customary on the following morning after their arrival to “find on their front door a wreath with ‘*Bienvenue!*’ ‘Welcome!’ painted on a piece of cardboard attached to the wreath . . . [but] nobody knew who had brought the wreath; in effect, the whole town had brought it.”¹³

Yet, in the midst of this hospitality, the Chambonnais were keenly aware of the risks they were taking on behalf of the threatened other in their midst. Russell refers to Magda Trocmé, wife of André Trocmé, as noting that “the righteous must often pay a price for their righteousness; their own ethical purity” when it came to affirming life by providing sanctuary.¹⁴ Additionally, both André Trocmé and Edouard Theis along with others were arrested for their actions and sent to an internment camp. Upon their release, they were asked to sign a promise of obedience to the law, which they refused, and, as a result, were forced to go underground to continue their protection efforts after their release.¹⁵

Sanctuary Movement in the United States

The Sanctuary Movement in the United States in the 1980s “began as a movement of hospitality that aimed to provide for the humanitarian needs of vulnerable refugees” from Central America.¹⁶ From that practice of hospitality, however, a political movement was born that sought to protest U.S. President Ronald Reagan’s destructive policies supporting wars in Central America.¹⁷ Refugees from the violence in Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua who had entered the United States illegally lived “with the immediate expectations of death if they were deported back to their countries,” yet the US immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) demanded their return. Hence, the Sanctuary Movement was born.¹⁸ Churches, synagogues, and

12. Hallie, “From Cruelty to Goodness,” 27.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Russell, “Hot-House Ecclesiology,” 50.

15. See Hallie’s *Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed* for the history of the village and the risks they took for their actions.

16. Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 69.

17. *Ibid.* See also LaFeber, *Inevitable Revolutions*; Carothers, *In the Name of Democracy*; and LeoGrande, *Our Own Backyard*. For a theological perspective of the events in El Salvador at that time, see Romero, *Voice of the Voiceless*.

18. Golden and McConnell, *Sanctuary*, viii. For the sake of brevity, I will rely primarily on the Smith and Golden and McConnell texts for this section. However, see also Bau, *This Ground is Holy*; Crittenden, *Sanctuary*; Cunningham, *God and Caesar at the Rio Grande*; and Nepstad, *Convictions of the Soul*. For an exploration of feminist

community groups, and organizations responded to the needs of those fleeing the violence, torture, and trauma of their homelands by actively taking in and harboring the refugees.¹⁹

Members of the movement “declare[d] their buildings sanctuaries for refugees,”²⁰ and in so doing, their actions put them in direct defiance of the American government and its interpretation of the Refugee Act of 1980. The US government classed what the members of the Sanctuary Movement were doing in the 1980s as “criminal, punishable by a \$2,000 fine and up to five years in prison,” but “[b]y declaring sanctuary, white, middle-class congregations experienced something of the risk that the . . . church of Central America . . . [had] endured for years.”²¹

The members of the Sanctuary Movement did not take risks and violate the law casually. The decision to enter into the work of providing sanctuary was a thorough and much-discussed process, with some communities taking a couple months and others taking almost a year to decide if they were going to become involved.²² For those who decided to join the movement, their decisions were most often marked by a turning point upon which they refused to submit to secular authority, but only to God and the call for justice.²³ Golden and McConnell describe the decision to participate and conduct an illegal network of sanctuary as follows:

issues and the role of women in the movement, see Lorentzen, *Women in the Sanctuary Movement*. While it is not scholarly material per se, an interesting account of the Sanctuary Movement from the perspective of a thirteen year old Guatemalan refugee is found in Pellegrino’s *Journey of Dreams*. For a more contemporary look at the movement and implications for more recent immigration policies in North American post-9/11 context, see García, *Seeking Refuge*.

19. Golden and McConnell note that Native Americans in the United States also participated in this movement, using their reservations as sanctuaries. They were “very much concerned about the plight of Guatemalan Indians,” as “[o]ne branch of the Mohawk nation in upper New York state . . . declared its sacred land a sanctuary” and “near Indiantown, Florida, Seminoles . . . harbored hundreds of Guatemalan Indians,” which “paralleled [their involvement] in the original [Underground] railroad when Seminoles harbored escaped slaves making their way to Oklahoma and Mexico” (*Sanctuary*, 60).

20. Golden and McConnell, *Sanctuary*, viii. The sanctuary, however, was not based primarily as a physical place but as a “collective will of a faith community taking a stand for life” and served as a safe place where truth could be spoken (*ibid.*, 11).

21. *Ibid.*, 1–2.

22. *Ibid.*, 132. Golden and McConnell reference an article in the *Wall Street Journal* (June 24, 1984) where members of the sanctuary movement are accused of committing a “willful and casual violation of American law.” It is noted that while the “willful” claim was true, casual it was not.

23. Golden and McConnell, *Sanctuary*, 134.

The calls came, coded conversations—midnight emergency calls from a Colorado highway driver, from the Rio Grande valley, from a pastor in Ohio, from a Methodist housekeeper in Nebraska, from refugees alone in a room in a dark church, from the clandestine Mexican church, from a Trappist monastery, from an Amerindian tribe in upstate New York, from a Concordia, Kansas, retreat center, from a farm collective in Iowa, from a synagogue in Madison, Wisconsin . . . The decision was made to keep everything in the open, to allow the public to see as clearly as possible what sanctuary was and who was involved in it. But this did not preclude caution and security efforts to protect refugees from arrest, especially when they were en route to a sanctuary. To date [1986], no refugee has been taken from a sanctuary or the railroad and deported . . . from 30 sanctuaries in 1982 to 3,000 in 1984.²⁴

A unique aspect of the Sanctuary Movement compared to other instances was its public aspect. While often the provision of protective hospitality is conducted in secret because it was often risky and/or illegal, leaders of the Sanctuary Movement recognized that if the provision of sanctuary were made public, it would “give the refugees a platform to tell their stories about atrocities experienced in Central America”²⁵ and bear witness to the brutality supported by the Reagan administration. Furthermore, the decision to remain public was an attempt by the providers of sanctuary to circumvent the INS and “claim the high moral ground [by] openly explain[ing] themselves to the media and their denominations.”²⁶ As providers of sanctuary began to be arrested, the arrests “only served to increase the movement’s visibility and produce an outpouring of support from around the country.”²⁷ That support grew to include condemnation of the arrests and support of the provision of sanctuary from the National Council of Churches and groups of Roman Catholic bishops and religious orders. This support was followed by the announcement that “the city of Los Angeles and the state of New Mexico declared themselves Sanctuaries.”²⁸ As a result, in 1987, the number of Sanctuary groups, according to Smith, totaled over four hundred:

24. *Ibid.*, 52–53.

25. Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 67.

26. *Ibid.*, 66.

27. *Ibid.*, 70.

28. *Ibid.*

Table 1.1—Types of Sanctuary Groups, 1987²⁹

Types	Number	Percent
Protestant Churches	93	22
Anabaptist Churches	80	19
Unitarian Universalist Churches	67	16
Roman Catholic Churches	65	15
Jewish Synagogues	41	10
Ecumenical Religious Groups	25	6
Cities	24	6
Universities	15	4
Other Secular Groups	13	3
Total Religious Groups	371	88
Total Secular Groups	52	12

In 1984, the INS shifted its strategy toward the Sanctuary Movement and began arresting offenders who provided sanctuary to illegal refugees. When interviewed, Christians claimed in court that their motivation was that they were “fulfilling a Christian moral duty” by providing sanctuary.³⁰ One person in particular, Nena MacDonald from Lubbock, Texas, had been arrested with fifteen others for providing sanctuary and rationalized her actions by stating:

29. Table sourced from Chicago Religious Task Force Sanctuary Directory 1987 (table 7.7 in Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 185). The numbers reflected here do not correspond with the numbers given in Golden and McConnell (*Sanctuary*, 53), which are much higher, but Smith’s book looks at the group called Sanctuary through which primary provision was given, whereas Golden and McConnell register any church, synagogue or group that were primary or secondary providers of sanctuary, sometimes in connection with and other times independent of the organization Sanctuary. One should also point out that, as noted in the above table, the role of the secular groups in the provision of protective hospitality in the Sanctuary Movement was a small but important one. Nicaraguan theologian Juan Hernández Pico is referenced in Chicago Religious Task Force for Central America’s 1986 organizing manual, stating that “those who are faithful to the God of history may be those whose motivating convictions stand outside religious categories” and “[In the revolutionary process] seeing people die for others, and not hearing any talk from them about faith in God being the motivating factor, liberates Christians from the prejudice of trying to encounter true love solely and exclusively within the boundaries of faith. It also helps to free them from the temptation of not considering a revolutionary process authentic unless it bears the label ‘Christian.’” In *Organizing for Resistance*, 1.

30. Golden and McConnell, *Sanctuary*, 68.

If I walked down a street in Lubbock and saw a person lying in the street hurt, people would think there is something wrong with me if I didn't help. What I have done with refugees is no different. If people come here to drink from the well of kindness and we turn them away, we will have poisoned the well. Someday when we ourselves may need to drink from that same well, we will find it poisoned with floating bodies.³¹

Similarly, one of the founders of the Sanctuary Movement, Jim Corbett, found that the laws that were broken as a result of his actions were of less importance compared to the moral imperative he felt to protect the endangered lives of Central Americans seeking safety in the U.S. For Corbett, the Nuremberg trials, which he had grown up hearing about because of his father's legal profession, had proven moral responsibility was greater than inhumane laws of a nation-state.³²

While the churches and religious communities overall in the U.S. tend not to be particularly liberationist, Golden, McConnell, and Smith all noted they have a history which points to revolutionary tendencies at certain times when the need arose, seeking liberation for those who were victims of injustice and oppression.³³ The Sanctuary Movement also found inspiration in the "dangerous memory" of protective hospitality enacted by the faithful in times past, again highlighting a "heritage of resistance" that practicing communities claimed as their own. Smith, Golden and McConnell summarize these as:

- In the declaration of "entire cities as sanctuaries of refuge for accused criminals" in the Hebrew Bible³⁴
- In Christian churches "during the Roman Empire and in medieval England [which] had offered themselves as sanctuaries for fugitives of blood revenge"³⁵
- In the early American colonial era when churches "protected escaped political prisoners from British agents" and Quakers were known for "harboring . . . religious dissenters"³⁶

31. *Ibid.*, 77.

32. Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 65. For more information on Jim Corbett and his role in the Sanctuary Movement, see Davidson, *Convictions of the Heart*.

33. Golden and McConnell, *Sanctuary*, 4; Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 65–67.

34. Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 67.

35. *Ibid.*

36. Golden and McConnell, *Sanctuary*, 4.

- During the era of American slavery and the work toward its abolition, churches “provided refuge and protection to fugitive slaves in direct defiance of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850” via the Underground Railroad³⁷
- During World War II, religious communities harbored Jews and other threatened groups or individuals.³⁸
- And during the Vietnam War, when “many churches sheltered conscientious objectors”³⁹

In addition to the memories of these models of protective hospitality, the Sanctuary Movement also looked to the history of the religious traditions involved—primarily Judaism and Christianity—which were both “born in the travail of escape.”⁴⁰ For those involved in the work of the Sanctuary Movement, liberation theology became more real as they came to see God as “the force acting in history on the side of those first refugees, leading them from slavery to freedom” and whose “identity was rooted in action and proclaimed in verbs of struggle—leading, delivering, freeing.”⁴¹

Golden and McConnell also noted a paradigm shift among communities that participated in the provision of protective hospitality in the Sanctuary Movement. They noted that with the “learning process and the wrestling with faith that occur[s] before a declaration of sanctuary” came a process of conscientization, a “shift of consciousness,” which signals a “change of understanding and a change of heart that leads to deeper commitment.”⁴² Concurrently, Smith argues the conscientization occurred because as more communities “considered declaring sanctuary, they were forced to learn the reasons why so many traumatized and anguished Central Americans were flooding northward.”⁴³

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 67.

40. Golden and McConnell, *Sanctuary*, 14–15. Islam also has this history, but there is no mention in the referenced materials of Muslim involvement in the particular actions of Sanctuary Movement.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., 135. Golden and McConnell refer to Paulo Friere’s term *conscientization* as “a process of critical reflection at deeper and deeper levels about how human beings live and die in this world” as it “invariably destroys old assumptions and breaks down mythologies that no longer explain reality because of new information.” Smith’s use of the term is much more practical and concrete, utilizing it as a means of education that informs resistance and social action.

43. Smith, *Resisting Reagan*, 69.

Political, Liberationist, and Feminist Theologies

Now that the context has been set, let us now consider the theological foundations upon which such activities can be analysed. Political theology arises out of the reality of history, suffering, and memory usually connected with some form of political upheaval. As such, political theology has been defined as “the analysis and criticism of political arrangements (including cultural-psychological, social and economic aspects) from the perspective of differing interpretations of God’s ways in the world.”⁴⁴

While the term “political theology” is most commonly used in the context of Christian theology, there is no good reason to argue Christianity is the sole proprietor of such theological thought. Nevertheless, in spite of this, the majority of the literature related to “political theology” is Christian. Therefore, as far as methodology is concerned, we will consider what is available, and expand and enhance it where applicable in relation to other religious traditions.

Political theology as seen in its early days, sometimes referred to as European or German political theology, began as an ecumenical endeavor developed as collaboration between Protestant and Catholic theologians. It arose from a context of post-World War II Europe as both churches faced the common problem of secularism and lack of capacity to respond to the horrors that the previous years of conflict had inflicted upon the continent and the rest of the world.⁴⁵ Two of its primary thinkers, Johann Baptist Metz and Jürgen Moltmann, who are Catholic and Protestant respectively, reflected the inter-church nature of this theological development. While context was not as specifically identified as it would be later in liberation and feminist theologies, political theology began to lay the groundwork for considering religion’s role in a world of conflict, modern explorations of ethical behavior toward one’s neighbor, and the social implications of theological belief albeit from a more theoretical approach. Utilizing Marxist criticisms and a hermeneutic of suspicion that refuses to take any underlying principles at face value,⁴⁶ political theology began to emphasize praxis, considering the effect theological teaching had upon the social and political as well as the spiritual

44. Cavanaugh and Scott, *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, 1.

45. Moltmann, *On Human Dignity*, 98.

46. The origins of the hermeneutics of suspicion are discussed in more detail in the context of the thoughts and writings of Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Karl Marx in Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy*, 32–35; and Ricoeur, *Hermeneutics and The Human Sciences*, 34. See also Segundo, *Liberation of Theology*; O’Donnell, “Influence of Freud’s Hermeneutic of Suspicion,” 28–34; and Williams, “Suspicion of Suspicion,” 36–53.

and psychological realms.⁴⁷ Through careful scrutiny, political theologians considered various theological doctrines and deemed them to be “oppressive or liberating, alienating or humanizing.”⁴⁸ In this way, political theology as a method was seen as “a corrective to situationless theologies” as it counteracted naïve idealism and sought out the more difficult of human experiences for theological reflection.⁴⁹ Working particularly on the themes of memory, suffering and hope, Moltmann and Metz saw there was no such thing as an “apolitical theology”⁵⁰ and they began to formulate critiques of long-held concepts such as the nature of God, the nature of humanity, freedom, and interpretation of history necessitated by the manipulation of these ideas in war-time Europe in the early twentieth century.⁵¹

This early political theology had its weaknesses, namely in that it was predominantly androcentric *and* Eurocentric. It has been justly criticized as primarily reflecting “the voice of the bourgeoisie, questioning their own basic assumptions and seeking grace and hope in conversion.”⁵² These limitations meant political theology did not offer the full potential it encouraged when taken seriously. There were other voices to be heard other than European middle and upper class males. Over the years, the work of theologians such as Dorothee Sölle began to draw together the work of the German predecessors and the new theological voices arising from other parts of the world, and political theology’s boundaries expanded into what would become known as liberation theology.⁵³

Liberation theology was influenced by political theology as it took root as its own movement, but it evolved into something distinctive.⁵⁴ It carried with it substantial political and social critique, but increasingly focused upon the realities of poverty and oppression, namely in the development of the hermeneutic that emphasized God’s preferential option for the poor and oppressed. It sought to go one step further than earlier European versions of political theology had done; it sought to put theory into practice

47. Moltmann, *On Human Dignity*, 98.

48. *Ibid.*

49. Metz, *A Passion for God*, 23–24.

50. Moltmann, *On Human Dignity*, 99.

51. Chopp, *The Praxis of Suffering*, 4.

52. *Ibid.*

53. See the works of Sölle: *Political Theology; Suffering; Celebrating Resistance; and The Silent Cry*.

54. All of these theologies (political, liberation, and feminist) could be discussed in the plural, rather than the singular, such as political theologies, liberation theologies, and feminist theologies. Usage of the plural reflects the understanding that even these different methodologies are not monolithic.

through creating base communities, fostering dialogue, and coordinating resistance around certain political issues such as social class and economic deprivation, oppressive government regimes, and the rights of indigenous and marginalized peoples. Yet, liberation theology would go through its own evolution; it was susceptible to the similar charge of androcentrism and was critiqued as being primarily Roman Catholic, particularly in its development in Central and South America.

Out of these critiques of male-centered theology both in the political and liberationist realms, feminist theology gained ground.⁵⁵ Believing women's experiences and issues related to women were not being adequately represented, feminist theologians asked serious questions about concepts of gender, power, violence, and trauma. Utilizing some of the same hermeneutical tools as liberation theologians, feminist theologians went further in that they sought to give voice and support not only to the case of the poor and the oppressed, but also to the experiences of women and the effects of women's issues upon on the faith community and society.⁵⁶

All three of these theological approaches inspire, challenge, and borrow from one another, and the lines between them are continually blurred with the emergence of related theologies such as queer, womanist, *mujerista*, or Asian women's theologies.⁵⁷ Furthermore, it is possible that all three also fit within schema of contextual theology as one can interpret their theological hermeneutic as "explicitly [placing] the recognition of the contextual nature

55. Feminist theology in a variety of forms had existed previous to this time, as seen in Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?" speech given in 1851, where she states: "[The preacher] says women can't have as much rights as men, 'cause Christ wasn't a woman! Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him. If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again! And now they is asking to do it, the men better let them." See hooks, *Ain't I a Woman?*, for further information. Similarly, Elizabeth Cady Stanton's work with the Seneca Falls collective on *The Woman's Bible* was influential, as it was the first time the Christian Bible had been published with commentary and critique that spoke to the needs of women. Nevertheless, the modern period of feminist theology quickly developed with the works of Daly, such as *The Church and the Second Sex* and *Beyond God the Father*, and with Ruether's *Mary, the Feminine Face of the Church*.

56. See also Brown and Bohn, *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse*; Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror*; Kyung, *Struggle to Be the Sun Again*; and Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said*.

57. For queer, womanist, *mujerista*, and Asian women's theology examples, see the following respectively: Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God*; Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness*; Aquino et al., *Reader in Latina Feminist Theology*; Kyung, *Struggle to Be the Sun Again*.

of theology at the forefront of the theological process,⁵⁸ whether it be in the form of a geographical, cultural, sexual, economic, or political context.⁵⁹

While liberation and feminist theologies arguably lie under the more general umbrella of political theology, each have their unique place, and yet in cooperation with one another they each bring different aspects to the investigation of a theology and ethic of protective hospitality.

First, there is the issue of audience. My primary concern is to consider the needs of the powerless, marginalized, and threatened other by addressing those who are in the position to provide protective hospitality, those who have the power to host.⁶⁰ Those who are within the powerful mainstream are usually the ones who are in the easiest position to provide protection of the persecuted. Therefore, I wish to keep in mind the needs of the threatened other, which requires the tools of liberation and feminist theologies. Yet, it utilizes the tools of political theology by identifying theological and ethical imperatives that contribute to meaningful action for those who have the power to provide protective hospitality.⁶¹

Second is the issue of hermeneutics. Most useful are two particular hermeneutics within political theology: the hermeneutic of suspicion, found in all expressions of political theology, and the hermeneutic of liberation for all, found mostly in liberation and feminist theologies. The hermeneutic of suspicion can shed light on long-held, but often forgotten, ideas and traditions related to welcoming the other in the Abrahamic tradition of hospitality. Additionally, as the practice of protective hospitality calls into question ideas related to power and authority, both hermeneutics of suspicion and liberation are likely to be of particular value for theological analysis.

Third, the engagement with political, liberation, and feminist theologies highlights that the approaches here are centered upon social practice

58. Pears, *Doing Contextual Theology*, 1.

59. It is understood, however, that while all theology is contextual, not everyone recognizes it as such, *explicitly* emphasizing the context within theological construction. See *ibid.*, 1–4.

60. Jacques Derrida argues that hospitality relies upon one having the “power to host,” as noted in “Hospitality,” 110–12. This acknowledgement to hospitality’s need for “the power to host” is also referred to by Reynolds, *Merleau-Ponty and Derrida*, 177–79; Newlands, *Hospitable God*, 77–78; and Carroll, “Reimagining Home,” 179–81.

61. Nevertheless, there are protectors as well as those in need of refuge who are part of the marginalized of this world. I think specifically of networks of women who have been victims of domestic abuse who join forces to protect one another. In their case, utilizing only general political theology as an approach can be lacking and would benefit from more specific feminist perspectives. Therefore, since this research seeks to address their plight as well, the more specific disciplines of liberation and feminist theologies are required.

and lived experience. The theological formulations presented here were not incubated in a vacuum, but were shaped and matured in response to concrete experience. Feminist theologians assert “[t]heology follows life; it does not precede it.”⁶² Moreover, this emphasis upon applied praxis understands that theological formulations are of no value to anyone if they are not disseminated and lived out in a constructive way. If left in the realm of doctrine only, theology becomes mere conjecture rather than practical, concrete expression of dynamic faith. Similarly, liberation theology exhorts contextual praxis, seeing everyday concerns as integral to theological formation and considering the recitation of creed and tradition without corresponding action as lifeless and empty. In this way, liberation theology sees itself not as “a new theme for reflection but as a *new way* to do theology.”⁶³ Liberation theology does not, however, stop at reflection, but seeks “to be a part of the process through which the world is transformed.”⁶⁴ Transformation is essential to the narrative of protective hospitality, and, therefore, should not be ignored.

Fourth, the emphasis upon violence, trauma, exclusion, and the needs for security as emphasized in feminist theology has a great deal to contribute to the discussion of protective hospitality. Whereas European political theology and liberation theology tend to give more patriarchal understandings of suffering, feminist theology takes a different approach by giving voice and bearing witness to those who have been abused and neglected, tortured, and persecuted. Feminist theology challenges justifications for suffering as a means of redemption.⁶⁵ The refusal to “grant [violence] power”⁶⁶ and, subsequently, the emphasis upon acts of resistance to power is a foundational concept of feminist theology that can offer crucial sensitivity. Likewise, issues of social inequality, systems of patriarchy, and exploitation of the weak and vulnerable are ever present in discussing the concept of protective hospitality, and so the feminist perspective is useful to this discussion.

Fifth, the use of other types of literature beyond simply the sacred texts as evidenced in feminist theological constructions is valuable. Particularly in the practice of hospitality, looking to other sources and authorities that challenge and shape cultural practice of welcome and safety is helpful. Furthermore, in light of the fact that those in need of protection are often those

62. Brown and Bohn, *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse*, xii.

63. Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 15.

64. *Ibid.*

65. See Brock and Parker, *Proverbs of Ashes*, for an example of how feminist theologians are questioning the role of violence, suffering, and trauma as being redemptive.

66. Brown and Bohn, *Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse*, xii.

who have been marginalized even by the formal structures of the religious traditions, feminist theology's inspiration from extra-textual sources and primary narratives is necessary to give voice to those experiences.⁶⁷ Such sources provide "helpful insights to the human condition" and can also articulate the "experiences of those who have been marginalized by the dominant tradition."⁶⁸ In turn, they have the potential "to challenge theology, deconstructing its authoritative status and 'unmasking' theological narratives."⁶⁹ Therefore, the stories of practitioners and other instances of protective hospitality to the threatened other during conflict, even in recent history and current events, are vitally important to theological analysis presented here.

Lastly, this work emphasizes the poor as found in liberation theology, but seeks to explore the definition of who exactly "the poor" are. It does not rely upon economic poverty, per se, as liberation theology practitioners have traditionally sought to do. Economic realities certainly play a role, but are not the sole contributing factor to the need for protective hospitality. One of the most valuable contributions to this discussion comes from the liberation theologian Jon Sobrino, who asserts "the poor are those who die before their time." For most of the poor, death comes slowly through grinding poverty. For a few, however, their death is a "swift, violent death, caused by repression and wars, when the poor threaten these unjust structures . . . [and] are deprived even of their cultures in order to weaken their identities and make them more defenseless."⁷⁰ According to Sobrino, those targeted for persecution in such a way that they need protective hospitality are, indeed, "the poor." Similarly, other liberation theologians such as James Cone and N. L. Eiesland define the poor as those who have been subjected to discrimination, marginalization, and dehumanization because of their race, ethnicity, class, or disability.⁷¹ Therefore "the poor" are not simply the economically deprived, but are all who are oppressed or marginalized within a society, anyone who is suffering because of injustice or in need of protection.

Accordingly, what is presented in the following chapters builds upon the understanding that the respective Abrahamic traditions have a strong foundation in social justice traditions. While the three traditions carry out their commitments to social justice in a variety of ways, there is a shared end

67. Graham, *Theological Reflection*, 71–72.

68. *Ibid.*, 72, referring to Walton, "Speaking in Signs," 2–6.

69. Graham, *Theological Reflections*, 72.

70. Sobrino, *The Principle of Mercy*, 50. Cf. Tombs, *Latin American Liberation Theology*, 213.

71. Eiesland, *The Disabled God*; Cone, *God of the Oppressed*.

result to these commitments: to live lives that honor God and the dignity of one's fellow human beings.⁷²

A COOPERATIVE AND COMPLEMENTARY THEOLOGICAL APPROACH

In addition to a contextual and political approach, the second theological current drawn upon is a cooperative and complementary theological approach informed by three particular distinctive emphases identified as the inter-religious, Abrahamic, and hospitable. To succeed in this endeavor, both disciplines of Christian theology and religious studies are drawn upon, taking a step beyond a solely Christian outlook by seeking to engage more directly with lived experience in a pluralist world.

Towards an Inter-Religious Approach

The reality of a pluralist world and its role in developing self-understanding was acknowledged in the nineteenth century by thinkers such as Max Müller and Goethe, who both argued that “to know one is to know none.”⁷³ Comparative religion scholar Ruth ApRoberts utilizes Müller’s assertion, and declares “to know Judaism and Christianity we must study non-Jewish, non-Christian cultures, especially of the surrounding peoples.”⁷⁴ Therefore, to truly understand Christianity’s theology and ethic of protective hospitality, it is beneficial to consider other non-Christian traditions that shed light on particular aspects that may be invisible otherwise. Therefore, I seek to examine Christian theology and protective hospitality through the interpretative lenses of Judaism and Islam’s own practice in such a way that is respectful of difference and highlights complementarity and enables cooperation for mutual benefit. More specifically, the theology analyzed and developed here seeks to emphasize complementarity in thought and identify potential cooperative action through extending protective welcome to the endangered other.

Furthermore, these two main theological approaches—the contextual and political, and the cooperative and complementary—are interlinked.

72. See Esack, *Qur’an, Liberation and Pluralism*; Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation*; and Yong, *Hospitality and the Other*.

73. Müller made this observation in the area of religions; Goethe, in the area of language. This statement is credited to both in several sources, including ApRoberts, *The Ancient Dialect*, 28; and Courville, *Edward Said’s Rhetoric of the Secular*, 66.

74. ApRoberts, *The Ancient Dialect*, 28.