

THEOLOGY OF HOSPITALITY AND
INTERRELIGIOUS PRACTICES

THE WELCOMING SPIRIT

Life Together at Evangel Temple

Douglas Olena • November 27, 2016

Chapter 5 of *Hospitality and the Other* by Amos Yong

I apologize for the level of abstraction included here, and the walls of text.

But parsing Amos' book requires a good bit of this.

Feel free to stop me at any point and ask for definition or illustration.

What should we as individual Christians do “in this between” time of our postmodern and pluralistic situation as we celebrate the redemptive hospitality of God revealed in Christ and yet await the eschatological hospitality of God to be ushered in finally by the Spirit?

Amos Yong, p 150

THE WELCOMING SPIRIT: THEOLOGY OF HOSPITALITY AND INTERRELIGIOUS PRACTICE

- ▶ Performing Christian Mission
- ▶ Performing Peace and Justice
- ▶ Performing Interreligious Dialogue

THE WELCOMING SPIRIT: THEOLOGY OF HOSPITALITY AND INTERRELIGIOUS PRACTICE

- ▶ Performing Christian Mission – Ecclesial Practices and the Hospitable God: Welcoming Others, Embracing Others, Discerning Mission
- ▶ Performing Peace and Justice
- ▶ Performing Interreligious Dialogue

THE WELCOMING SPIRIT: THEOLOGY OF HOSPITALITY AND INTERRELIGIOUS PRACTICE

- ▶ Performing Christian Mission
- ▶ Performing Peace and Justice – Kingdom Practices and Eschatological Hospitality: Religion and Violence; Hospitality, Shalom, and the Reign of God; Interreligious Ecumenism – Many Tongues, Healing Practices
- ▶ Performing Interreligious Dialogue

THE WELCOMING SPIRIT: THEOLOGY OF HOSPITALITY AND INTERRELIGIOUS PRACTICE

- ▶ Performing Christian Mission
- ▶ Performing Peace and Justice
- ▶ Performing Interreligious Dialogue – Christian Practices in “the Between”: Loving God and Neighbor in a World of Many Faiths; Befriending Strangers and Neighbors – Guests, Hosts, and the Holy Spirit; Living and Seeking the Truth – Interreligious Dialogue as Christian Practice

SUMMARY AND FOCUS

- ▶ I will summarize
 - ▶ Performing Christian Mission
 - ▶ Performing Peace and Justice
- ▶ We will focus on
 - ▶ Performing Interreligious Dialogue...
 - ▶ ... and ask questions about:



PERFORMING INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOG: CHRISTIAN PRACTICES IN "THE BETWEEN"

- ▶ Loving God and Neighbor in a World of Many Faiths
- ▶ Befriending Strangers and Neighbors: Guests, Hosts, and the Holy Spirit
- ▶ Living and Seeking the Truth: Interreligious Dialogue as Christian Practice

THE POSSIBILITY OF AN INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK

Inclusivism Exclusivism Pluralism

Amos' Proposal: an integrative framework

- ▶ "Might it be that a theology of interreligious hospitality provides not necessarily a fourth theological proposal but an integrative framework for redeeming and theologically grounding the most important Christian practices for our time?" 130

PERFORMING CHRISTIAN MISSION: ECCLESIAL PRACTICES AND THE HOSPITABLE GOD

- ▶ Welcoming Others:
 - ▶ *Misio Dei* and the Hospitality of God
- ▶ Embracing Others:
 - ▶ Ecclesial Hospitality and the New Evangelism
 - ▶ the open table
- ▶ Discerning Mission:
 - ▶ Many Practices in a Pluralistic World

- Misio Dei is God's mission in the world to all people. This is stranger centered, not Church centered, though the church invites people to engage with the hospitable God. The goal is to usher in the Kingdom of God, rather than enlarge the church. The church participates with the rest of the world in God's hospitality toward strangers, ourselves, and others. Hospitality in this sense is for all people being both host and guest under God's mission entailing risk and vulnerability. In this Christians should avoid needless offense, though the offense of the cross remains central to our faith. (Gal 5:11, 1 Pet 4:15)
- "Congregational hospitality includes at least the following elements, a visible and welcoming public face, a dialogical posture, and a commitment to public servanthood." 134 "1. There is an open table to which all people are invited to enjoy the hospitality of God. 2. Can an open table be a bridge through which Christians can practice a form of liturgical hospitality in their encounter with those in other faiths?" 136-137
- As Amos says on pg 127 and repeats here on 137-139 No one set of practices suffices. Each circumstance must be judged on its own terms. Sri Lanka, Nigeria, US.

PERFORMING PEACE AND JUSTICE: KINGDOM PRACTICES AND ESCHATOLOGICAL HOSPITALITY

- ▶ Religion and Violence in the Late Modern World
- ▶ Hospitality, Shalom, and the Reign of God
- ▶ Interreligious Ecumenism:
 - ▶ Many Tongues
 - ▶ Healing Practices

- header: “What counts here is not only the orthodoxy of Christian proclamation but the orthopraxis through which the Spirit of God accomplishes the eschatological transformation of the world.” 140 Recall again the *Misio Dei*, bringing on God’s kingdom. This is part of the framework for interreligious dialog.
- “It seems plausible that religion is caught up with violence for some of the same reasons that absolute hospitality, gift giving, and forgiveness are impossible: because they are all bound up within an economy of exchange, scarcity and reciprocity.” 140 The impossibility arises from the inability to see the world in terms of anything but a zero-sum game with winners and losers. But the hospitality of God promises life in abundance for all, however, only as an eschatological ideal, but anticipating that ideal by practices that are modeled on it. How can we reject violence? God is violent. Can Christians emulate God in that violence, only allow that God can justify his own violence, or can we commit ourselves as historical beings to pursue peace nonviolently? 141-42 3 guidelines for avoiding violence. 1. Christians should be mediators in a violent world. 2. Violence is the last resort, after just war principles have been invoked (*jus ad bellum*), then only just war practices (*jus in bello*). 3. The quest for peace must be accompanied by the eradication of injustice. 142-43
- The appeal is to God’s hospitality in the final account, and today in the movement toward peace, justice, and righteousness. This involves the breakdown of social barriers to race, class, gender, and the dissembling of unjust power structures as part of the movement toward that final state of God’s Reign, and cooperation toward these goals in interreligious practice. Develop an interfaith platform to address international economic, sociopolitical, and environmental issues. “Religion is manifest violently ... only when allied with political means and mechanisms capable of mobilizing its powers in violent ways.” 145 See bottom 145- 46 for the list of ethical means to satisfy the need for justice internationally, and between faiths.
- Ecumenism can only be possible when there is cooperation in the justice and peace issues. But one must protect the essentials of one’s faith in interreligious practices. Even in interreligious prayer, one can’t assume that we are speaking the same language. There are many tongues of prayer, not all of which favor the movement toward God’s kingdom. Our behavior could be taken to be complicit in the very practices that as Christians we would not agree to. The requirement of being sensitive to the issues in any particular context can’t be overstated. Amos examines interpersonal, multireligious, public prayers, and occasions of national tragedy as possible contexts for interreligious practices.

POSTMODERNISM, PLURALISM

**WHAT IS “THE BETWEEN”
AN EXCURSION...**

WHAT IS THE ENLIGHTENMENT?

- ▶ From mystery to rational certainty
 - ▶ Charles Taylor:
 - ▶ from the enchanted world to the secular
 - ▶ from authority to the light of reason
 - ▶ from the catholic to the protestant
 - ▶ Kant: have the courage to use your own reason
 - ▶ Foucault: modern sciences and humans as objects, self examination, the body as object of the disciplinary matrix

The purpose of this exploration is to establish the reality of pluralism, not to challenge any particular orthodoxy. Also

COLLAPSE OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT...

- ▶ Os Guinness mourns the loss of Enlightenment certainty in *the Dust of Death*.
- ▶ Human society has lost its way.
 - ▶ Alienation
 - ▶ Mystification
 - ▶ Romanticism
 - ▶ The Twilight of Western Thought
- ▶ And so we arrive at postmodernism and pluralism

WHAT IS THE BETWEEN?

- ▶ Postmodernism is a critique of the Enlightenment.
 - ▶ Why is this a problem for the church?
 - ▶ The Enlightenment expected all truth to emerge from its brand of rationality based on its scientific presuppositions.

- The evangelical church has built much of its theology on the certainties of biblical statements, biblical principles, and the logic that holds our theological objects together in a coherent unified package. This is OK as far as it goes, but...

WHAT IS THE BETWEEN?

- ▶ Theologians expected their corpus to represent the final word of that rationality, as did scientists, and political theorists.
- ▶ But the variety of conclusions and some outright intellectual warfare brought these optimistic expectations to an end.
- ▶ Reality impinged on these expectations, and no complete solution presented itself.
 - ▶ Witness current Christian theological pluralism...

- ▶ Postmodernism challenges the expectation of a single way of thinking by demonstrating its failure across a variety of fields, including theology.
- ▶ That means a variety of interpretations of the biblical text and theologies derived from it are possible, even within the church.

The Enlightenment response is that we are left with relativism, but relativism is a denial of universal truth, and that's not what we mean. Since there is no unified reason, relativism cannot serve as the denial of universals.

WHAT IS THE IN BETWEEN?

- ▶ The observed response of modern thinkers inside and outside the church is that many rationalities coexist in theology, philosophy, and science.
- ▶ The end result of all our work may not be a unified rationality. We may have to satisfy ourselves with Pluralism. At least we will not be able to successfully **enforce** our version of rationality on any other group.
- ▶ It may turn out that what is universal is ethical, not emerging solely from reason, and not denying it either.

WHAT IS THE IN BETWEEN?

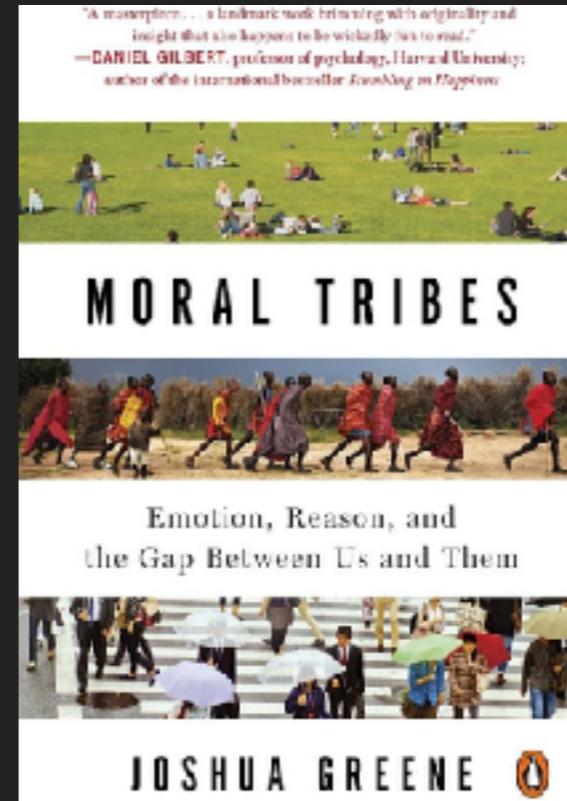
- ▶ Pluralism in theology, philosophy, and science are the observed realities.
 - ▶ Can anyone give me an example of pluralism in evangelical theology, or generally in the Church? (hard)
 - ▶ Why is this example instructive?
 - ▶ How about pluralism between religions? (easy)
 - ▶ What theological objects are up for grabs between religions?

WHAT IS THE IN BETWEEN?

- ▶ The “In Between” is the place where the strength of our arguments is fine inside our tribe, but perhaps not applicable outside of it.
- ▶ Postmodernism challenged linguistic absolutes and metanarratives for their failure to cross the boundaries of the tribe where they are applicable.
 - ▶ Does that mean there are no absolutes or grand stories under which all humans can live?

JOSHUA GREENE

- ▶ Moral Tribes is an effort to help us recognize pluralism in political affairs. This is consistent with interreligious affairs.
- ▶ There are a variety of successful models for tribal ethics. But when common ground is contended for, those models break down.
- ▶ Greene proposes a version of ethical rule-making that promises equitable negotiation over common resources.



MORAL TRIBES: EMOTION, REASON, AND THE GAP BETWEEN US AND THEM

- ▶ Absolute monarchy, Anarchy, Authoritarian, Commonwealth, Communist, Confederacy, Constitutional, Constitutional democracy, Constitutional monarchy, Democracy, Democratic republic, Dictatorship, Ecclesiastical, Emirate, Federal, Federal republic, Islamic republic, Maoism, Marxism, Marxism-Leninism, Monarchy, Oligarchy, Parliamentary democracy, Parliamentary government, Parliamentary monarchy, Presidential, Republic, Socialism, Sultanate, Theocracy, Totalitarian

<<http://www.livescience.com/33027-what-are-the-different-types-of-governments.html>>

Christianity can not only survive in all these forms of government, but thrive.

MORAL TRIBES: EMOTION, REASON, AND THE GAP BETWEEN US AND THEM

- ▶ The point to this exercise in choosing an ethical frame is to find a rule that provides a neutral ground for adjudicating the issues of justice that arise.
- ▶ Greene suggests that consequentialism (a form of utilitarianism) will provide common ground.
- ▶ In that spirit, I want to look at the handout.

INTERFAITH CONTEXTUALIZATION
HANDOUT NOTES

WHAT ARE THE RULES OF DIALOGUE?

What should we as individual Christians do “in this between” time of our postmodern and pluralistic situation as we celebrate the redemptive hospitality of God revealed in Christ and yet await the eschatological hospitality of God to be ushered in finally by the Spirit?

Amos Yong, p 150

PERFORMING INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: CHRISTIAN PRACTICES IN "THE BETWEEN"

- ▶ Loving God and Neighbor in a World of Many Faiths
 - ▶ "Christian Mission is not only about bringing Christ to our neighbors of other faiths, but also ... of our meeting Christ in them." 152
 - ▶ Read top 153.
 - ▶ "I suggest that the practices of hospitality—of being hosts as well as guests—become the concrete modalities through which the gifts of the Holy Spirit are poured out on all flesh." 153

• The judgment of the goats is reserved for the priest and levite who pass the robbed man on the road to Jericho. Can the stranger, the good Samaritan be Christ for us as reproof of our inability to engage the justice issues presented to us. What examples of this sort are there in our current society?

PERFORMING INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: CHRISTIAN PRACTICES IN "THE BETWEEN"

- ▶ Befriending Strangers and Neighbors:
 - ▶ Guests, Hosts, and the Holy Spirit
- ▶ "What then are the implications of a theology of neighborly hospitality for the interreligious encounter today?" 153
- ▶ Three concrete scenarios for practicing interreligious fellowship: immigrants or migrants, the exile, and refugee.
- ▶ "Any theology of immigration must attend to the religious diversity that is encountered through this experience." 153

PERFORMING INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: CHRISTIAN PRACTICES IN "THE BETWEEN"

- ▶ "The experience of immigration ... serves as what Nancy Bedford calls an 'epistemological rupture' for theology since now the perspective from the margin ... becomes the starting point for theological reflection." 154
- ▶ "Christians are called to relativize the authority of the state and qualify the claims of the national community." 155
 - ▶ Also the Christian can be an influence for changing law and producing the openness required for these relations. Romans 13 can't be read strictly as a justification for authoritarianism in the modern state.
- ▶ Read bottom paragraph 155-156.

- The difference between immigrants and exiles or refugees is that immigration is voluntary. Immigration or migration comes with a plan to continue in a chosen land. The refugee/exile is forced into a provisional, incomplete, and problematic disorder. "It is nomadic, decentered, contrapuntal; ... no sooner does one get accustomed to it than its force erupts anew." 154
- The exile is more adrift than the refugee, because they are wanted by the authorities in the land they left. Refugees and exiles are more vulnerable than the immigrant.
- Some immigrants, refugees, and exiles are also Christians, and yet their theologies may not be immediately compatible with the local ones, i.e. for us, Western versions of pentecostal, evangelical, protestant, catholic, or orthodox theologies.

PERFORMING INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: CHRISTIAN PRACTICES IN “THE BETWEEN”

- ▶ Living and Seeking the Truth:
 - ▶ Interreligious Dialogue as Christian Practice
- ▶ What are the “concrete features of the interreligious practice of hospitality, friendship, and dialogue?” 157
 1. Aliens and Strangers need basic accommodations.
 2. “The coming together of aliens and strangers is the appropriate occasion ...
 3. We need to develop moments, places, and spaces ...

- ... for exchanging stories, learning to live together, and, out of this basic sharing, envisioning a future together.” 156
- ... that address the pains and hurts that all immigrants, exiles, and refugees carry in their hearts.” This can happen in liturgical spaces as well as in the “sacred space opened up by the Spirit’s outpouring on interreligious relations and friendships.” 157

PERFORMING INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: CHRISTIAN PRACTICES IN "THE BETWEEN"

- ▶ Not only is Amos implying the provision of practical services like:
 - ▶ welcome ministries, friendship centers, employment and social service agencies, child care facilities, or adjustment and relief assistance, but ...
- ▶ Ventures that are jointly envisioned, owned, and operated.
- ▶ Only in this way can we be the Good Samaritan to each other.

Amos' point: "To build on the reflections about neighborly love and the stranger to suggest viewing interreligious dialogue as a practice of mutual transformation in these eschatological times of the now-and-not-yet, between the initial and final outpourings of the Spirit of God on all flesh." 158

PERFORMING INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE: CHRISTIAN PRACTICES IN "THE BETWEEN"

- ▶ "Interreligious dialogue ... is not an accidental luxury that we can take or leave, but an essential practice that we must cultivate in order to live the truth and to grow in truth." 158
- ▶ "The results cannot be but mutually transformative, ...
- ▶ "Is it possible that the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh depends in part on whether or not we remain faithful followers of the hospitable God?" 159
 - ▶ Is the outpouring conditional?

- Amos' point: "To build on the reflections about neighborly love and the stranger to suggest viewing interreligious dialogue as a practice of mutual transformation in these eschatological times of the now-and-not-yet, between the initial and final outpourings of the Spirit of God on all flesh." 158
- ... yet such transformation also cannot be a naïve syncretism because the identities of guests and hosts are not blurred but enriched." 159