

## INTRODUCTION

# The Issue of Blood

## Reinstating Women into the Tradition

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On a warm and sunny June morning nearly ten years ago, I sat in the cool, dark sanctuary of Calvary Episcopal Church in Columbia, Missouri, aware of the high holy church atmosphere, taking in the vivid colors of the small but dramatic stained-glass windows, the dark wood of the altar rail, the Eucharist table, the ornate elevated pulpit worthy of a seventeenth-century cathedral. This was a new field research position for me: to sit in a “high church” seeking to continue my studies of women in the pulpit. In the preceding years I had entered many warehouse-like Pentecostal assemblies and one-room “tabernacles” lucky to have a wood-burning stove, an American flag, and sometimes a donated piano. In contrast to the noisy ambiance of those “spirit-filled” congregations, the tone of this self-conscious Episcopal space was set by the hushed voices of arriving congregants, the quiet shuffling of feet, the swish of the priest’s garb, the smell of the candles, and the deep tones of the huge organ. And when the priest turned to face her audience, I caught my breath as I watched my friend Tamsen Whistler raise her arms in the voluminous butterfly sleeves of the priest’s robe and invite her congregation to worship with her. We stood at her invitation and joined in the standard, deeply ritualized, ancient liturgy associated with the Episcopal tradition.

This anthology is about the role of women in Christian preaching, broadly defined. It traces a tradition that helped to place Tamsen Whistler in the pulpit. Instead of conducting fieldwork with contemporary women preachers, as I do, most of the contributors to this book generally work within an intellectual space of historical reconstruction, re-membling, hypothesis, conjecture, and quilting together of fragments.<sup>1</sup> Because of a dearth of information, the loss of official records, and the bias against recognizing women’s contributions, their research is often based on the sketchiest of evidence; these scholars work steadfastly to recreate some sense of the heritage of

women preaching. And their persistence pays off; they reveal that women have been preaching in the Christian tradition from the earliest of historical moments, perhaps only days after Jesus Christ was crucified and his resurrection announced. Beginning with Mary Magdalene's instruction from the risen Christ to "Go and tell," a tradition of women preaching can be documented. It is a story, however spotty, about how women have followed Christ's directive, about how they have "told" even as they have needed to negotiate the contexts for that telling. Restoring the contribution of women to the history of preaching allows for the construction of a new story about the preaching tradition. Rewriting women into the record, re-memembering women whose names have been deleted, restoring women's place and voices in the record of Christian preaching is a vital first step toward reclaiming women's right to that space, both then and today.

Unlike the work of other researchers in this collective endeavor, my ethnographic research can take me, on any given Sunday, only a few blocks or miles to record a woman preacher preaching from any number of pulpits in the midwestern university town where I live and in the areas nearby. This is actually not unusual. Women are filling pulpits all over the country in record numbers, albeit often in the smaller and less prestigious churches, where the salaries are low and never match the grueling workload. Sometimes a single minister serves several small churches. Indeed, some ministers who are also new mothers serve churches that are miles apart, forcing them to juggle work and family, negotiating bottles and car seats while traveling rugged Missouri roads to reach small towns and far-flung rural areas.

In conducting my field research, I tape-record the actual, verbatim texts of women's sermons—a luxury enjoyed by few, if any, of my colleagues in this anthology. I can interview the preachers and the members of their congregations, as well as transcribe the texts of their tape-recorded sermons. The texts of their life stories, the interviews I have conducted with them, and the tape-recorded dialogues we have shared over the years of my research about their lives and their ministries provide a rich tapestry of information upon which I depend for my writing, thinking, and teaching. I do not need to hypothesize or reconstruct what women might be preaching in this moment which ushers in the momentous move into a new millennium. At least for the women in my field studies, I know what they are preaching, and I can share that with my readers. What I do have to reconstruct and hypothesize, however, is how their work illuminates the historical record of women preaching and how it may reflect back upon the prejudices and discrimination, the denial and the persecution, of other women who dared to claim the pulpit before them. What is the heritage of the women I have come to know so well? Can their lives and words help to uncover the depths of the biases against their voices in the pulpit? Do their messages provide a path toward their own inclusion in this largely male circle? Can the pulpit lan-

guage, imagery, and rhetorical style of contemporary women preachers help us to fill in the gaps where their foresisters' words have survived only in fragments? Are there clues in evidence that guide us toward an understanding of the substance of feminine voices, female spirituality, and women's way of knowing God?

My own work began in the mid-1970s with Pentecostal laywomen, preachers, and pastors in middle America and continues with mainline denominational pastors and chaplains. This work suggests a kind of religious breadth that may serve us well as we think about women who seek the pulpit. In the early 1980s, my training as a folklorist took me to very small, autonomous Pentecostal congregations in southern Indiana that were largely, if not exclusively, female. Generally, the pastors ministering to these small groups of female believers were male. In these small religious contexts, I was drawn to document the wide variety of religious expressive behaviors and verbal arts that were performed and displayed in a typical Pentecostal service. As I. M. Lewis and others have noted, the women predominated in their participation, standing in the pews to testify at great length, weeping, praying for God's mercy and intercession in their lives, singing, dancing, swaying and shouting in the spirit, seeking the spirit's manifestation through tongue speaking, "falling out" on the floor, being slain by the spirit, or jerking spasmodically as the spirit entered their willing bodies.<sup>2</sup> Women who had grown up in this charged religious atmosphere had cultivated the ritualized behaviors and the formulaic discourse through observation and participation.

At the time I did not recognize that I was observing "women preaching," for men stood in the pulpit, serving as pastors and guides for the female congregations. Yet in my earliest published work I addressed the possibility that the women's testimonies were acts of preaching.<sup>3</sup> Although these testifying women stood in their places in the pews (rather than behind the pulpit), they delivered long, elaborate testimonies that went far beyond what I had learned to anticipate as a testimony text.

In general, testimonies are short but often emotional declarations of the evidence of God's intervention and consolation in the testifier's life. Testimonies are viewed as obligatory; believers need to acknowledge God's goodwill in their lives.<sup>4</sup> Most often testimonies in the Pentecostal service begin with the standardized statement, "I just want to stand and give my testimony." Then, in a highly formulaic and (at times) nearly chanting delivery, the testifier recounts the miraculous deeds of God during the past days. These testimonies are perceived as important testaments to God's intervention in every believer's most mundane daily experiences and to more spectacular "miracles" that God has performed—a typical example might be the unexpected arrival of a check in the mail when the refrigerator was empty and the children had begun to get hungry, or a story about losing an important document only to have God reveal its whereabouts.

I found Pentecostal women's testimonies to be highly formulaic, typical of the oral tradition. These poetic texts exhibit the creative use of repetition, imagery, and structural format; they are rarely didactic, often emotionally charged, rhetorically persuasive, rhythmic, and artistically rendered. These oral, formulaic testimonies are contemporary examples of similar epic and poetic genres in folklore.<sup>5</sup> While the actual words, or the order of words, may change from testimony to testimony, the formulaic patterns inherent in this female verbal art are certainly discernible, as are the rhythmic patterns of the "lines" and the oral, poetic style of delivery. With study, I came to recognize both the dynamic and the conservative elements in these "spontaneously" delivered verbal affidavits, noting how the style, the language, the patterning, and the content are all part of their shared religious verbal art (folklore).<sup>6</sup> As is typical in the context of oral tradition, the group determined the form, content, and structure of the texts, while individual performers put their nuances upon a traditional form that had been passed down from generation to generation and from believer to believer. Inherent in the performances was the recognition of a critical audience ready to pass judgment upon the competence of the performance.<sup>7</sup> Good testimonies are warmly received by other group members. Often an "Amen" or "Tell it Sister" accompanies the delivery of a testimony or punctuates its end. Length is not regulated. It does not appear that shorter or longer testimonies are received differently or preferred.

But the analysis that took me beyond the oral formulaic aspects of the testimonies broke new ground in terms of genre identification. In one congregation, for example, I noticed that the testifying women, usually three or four in a single service, occasionally "took over" the entire service. And their testimonies often sounded more like sermons than like testimonies. Because they delivered their testimonies (sermons) from the pews (never from the pulpit), the testifying women did not pose a threat to the male who claimed the pulpit as his own. In many ways, though, the testifiers were preaching, and they frequently testified or preached long into the night, so long that the pastor was not able to deliver his own sermon. My suggestion that the women were actually "preaching" (when they were supposed to be testifying) raises two issues that have a direct bearing on this volume: one, what women say and do may be classified as preaching even though the content and format, presentation and performance, of the verbal act are not immediately discernible as preaching. Two, these performances of women in the religious context may be seen as political acts—as manipulative, strategic, thoughtful, and intentional acts of rhetorical empowerment. Women can and do preach when and where they are able. It behooves us then to pay close attention to all aspects of these "testimonies." Not only are form, content, structure, imagery, patterning, and formulas important in our study of women's religious verbal art, but also the very acts of when and where, how

and by whom, these acts are delivered, critiqued, and acknowledged. Would anyone in the congregation exclaim, "Gee, Sister Helen certainly can preach!" if she had only stood in the "testifying" space? Or, is part of the safety of "preaching" from the pew inherent in the fact that both the women delivering these "testimonies" and their audience/group members would never refer to their text as a sermon or to their delivery as preaching. Rather, the critique for competence would rest solidly on the collective agreement that what had been delivered was, indeed, a testimony.

The following testimony, recorded on tape in 1980, illustrates some of what I have been discussing.<sup>8</sup> It may be significant to note that the performer of this testimony was a licensed, not an ordained, preacher (licensing is generally accomplished through a short correspondence course). Hence, she probably knew the characteristics of a sermon and the difference between a sermon and a testimony, as did her listeners. Yet, this highly charged, rhetorically marked "sermon" was delivered in the mode and space of a testimony:

Blessed Jesus. Thank you Jesus.  
 Tonight I love the Lord.  
 I thank him tonight  
 And I praise him  
 Because I know he's real in my heart  
 This night.  
 As we sang that song "Jesus on the main line"  
 It just made me think, you know,  
 When you dig around sometimes  
 You get down there  
 And you get these little streams.  
 You know, these little streams  
 They're just not enough,  
 There's just not enough water there.  
 But when we hit that main line,  
 Hallelujah,  
 You've got plenty of water,  
 You've got plenty,  
 When you get Jesus on the main line.  
 Hallelujah.  
 You've got just what you need.  
 You know, those little trickles  
 They don't do much for me,  
 Thank you Jesus,  
 For I've been under the Holy Spout.  
 Hallelujah.  
 It does a whole lot more for me,  
 Thank you Jesus.  
 Hallelujah.  
 You know I might make you stay up for a while

Because, praise the Lord,  
 Hallelujah,  
 I know he is real!  
 Whooooooooooooo!  
 Glory!  
 I know he is real tonight.  
 You know when I sing  
 And when I testify,  
 Everyone looks at me  
 And they think I'm kind of  
 Peculiar.  
 But you know tonight  
 We are a peculiar people.  
 But you know something?  
 I'm not ashamed of Jesus.  
 Hallelujah.  
 Because this is the Lord  
 That I sing  
 That I testify for  
 That I stomp my feet for  
 That I clap my hands for  
 It's Jesus Christ  
 And I love him tonight,  
 Lord,  
 And he is worthy  
 Of all praises,  
 Everything,  
 Everything  
 That we can possibly do for him  
 He is worthy of it  
 This night.  
 Hallelujah!  
 Whooooooooooooooooooooo  
  
 Blessed Jesus. Thank you Jesus.  
 Tonight I love the Lord.  
 I thank him tonight  
 And I praise him  
 Because I know he's real in my heart  
 This night.<sup>9</sup>

The first lines of this testimony offer two different aspects of the verbal repertoire of the speaker. "Blessed Jesus" and "Thank you Jesus" are formulaic phrases that one might find in several religious genres—prayer, testimony, sermon, even tongue speaking. Bruce Rosenberg might identify such phrases as clichéd "fillers" or "stalls" that give the performer time to think about the next line, or they may be inherent components of the testimony mode itself.<sup>10</sup>

The next lines identify the text more clearly as testimony, with the obligatory testifying language: "Tonight I love the Lord. I thank him tonight and I praise him because I know he's real in my heart." Yet, the next section of this testimony ought to focus on *how* this woman *knows* God is real in her heart; what made her say this? What did God do that week for her, specifically, that can attest to God's constant care and ability to deliver? But instead of offering these basic components of the Pentecostal testimony, this performer leaps directly into what I would argue is a "preaching mode." Her sisters in faith in that small congregation may also have recognized her rhetoric as preaching; they appeared to endorse and respond enthusiastically to her testimony, as well as that of others, supporting a collective effort that prevented the pastor from delivering the actual sermon.

My study of sermons actually delivered by women from the pulpit has taken me to Pentecostal churches in southern Indiana and southern Missouri, where women serve both as traveling preachers and as official pastors of churches. Many Pentecostal associations officially deny women access to the pulpit, so how, I wondered, did these women secure their rights to the pulpit? I have concluded from my research that their access is a product of their claims to a personal "call from God." Because Pentecostals place such a high value on and believe so deeply in personal interactions with an immanent God (as opposed to a less accessible transcendent God), any "call to preach" is taken seriously and thus provides the validation for a woman's claim to the pulpit. God can and does, the believers all agree, work in mysterious ways and could be using a woman's voice for the work of the kingdom. And they would not dare to question the voice of God. Still, the woman making such claims must convince them that her call is genuine, her motives above reproach, and her aspirations not personal but spiritual and religiously based.<sup>11</sup>

But what about the women who now have access to the pulpits of some of the mainline denominations in this country—what and how do they preach? I find that their sermons address many of the same concerns that the contributors to this volume do. Often they remember the women who have been ignored in the biblical canon and left out of the official liturgy. Their sermons often collapse strictly defined genre markers in an attempt to expand the possibilities for spiritual and religious exploration—allowing testimonies, for example, to move in style and delivery toward sermonizing; allowing song and dance into liturgical performances; fusing modes of teaching and preaching, prophecy, and prayer. Their sermons reinforce female imagery of God as evidenced in relationships and connections; women preachers rely, in their sermons, on women's narratives, women's experiences, women's ways of knowing who God is as a way to tell "the other half of the story"; they preach inclusion, family, and community. They are bold, even revolutionary in their insistence that the biblical canon must be reviewed and redefined; that denominational and official religious stances

must be decentered and reexamined; that church hymns, prayers, Bibles, sermons, and all other genres of religious discourse must be stripped of their male bias and replaced with inclusionary language that embraces all religious seekers; that all persons deserve to be treated humanely, fairly, and with love; that age, race, and sexual discrimination must end before other global problems can be resolved; that the earth is God's body and that all persons living must learn to treat it as the very essence of God's being; and that their female voices are part of a new dialogic paradigm that is taking root in the religious arena, both here and abroad, and these voices ring clear and true, bringing God's people back to a truer reality of what it means to be Christian.

I want to examine how some of these themes are presented in a sermon delivered by the Reverend Tamsen Whistler at the Episcopal service I described earlier; the lectionary readings were Deuteronomy 15:7-11; 2 Corinthians 8:1-9; Mark 5:22-24, 35b-43 (June 26, 1988). She called the sermon "A Woman's Faith" and began with the following Gospel passage:

"And one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came  
and when he saw him, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly,  
'My little daughter is at the point of death.  
Come and lay your hands on her,  
so that she may be made well, and live.'  
So he went with him.

.....  
—Some people came from the leader's house to say,  
'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?'  
But overhearing what they said,  
Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue,  
'Do not fear, only believe.'  
He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John,  
the brother of James.

When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue,  
he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly.  
When he had entered, he said to them,  
'Why do you make a commotion and weep?  
The child is not dead but sleeping.'  
And they laughed at him.  
Then he put them all outside,  
and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him,  
and went in where the child was.  
He took her by the hand and said to her,  
'Talitha cum,'  
which means, 'Little girl, get up!'  
And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about  
(she was twelve years of age).  
At this they were overcome with amazement.



He strictly ordered them that no one should know this,  
and told them to give her something to eat.”

The Gospel passage this morning  
is a fairly straightforward miracle story,  
particularly dramatic  
because beyond healing,  
Jesus raises someone from the dead.  
A twelve-year-old is restored to life  
because of her parents’ faith.  
There’s a pattern to miracle stories in the Bible,  
and what we have heard this morning  
follows the pattern pretty well:  
Human resources are exhausted.  
Jairus in desperation approaches Jesus.  
Jesus encounters opposition in the pressing crowd  
and the jeering mourners.  
The miracle itself is private —  
only parents and three disciples  
witness Jesus’ raising the girl.  
Jesus both touches and speaks to the child.  
Everyone is astonished  
when she gets up and walks.  
After requesting silence about the miracle  
and making sure that the child eats,  
Jesus leaves.

At issue here for us  
in the twentieth century  
is often the question,  
“Is this really a miracle?  
Did it really happen?”  
But we can trap ourselves  
so effectively  
in the “Is it real” question  
that we may not move beyond it  
to the real issue:  
the issue of faith.  
Do we believe that God  
can intervene in our lives?  
Can we reorganize God’s action?  
And there’s another issue also,  
which lies in the fact  
that what the lectionary provides for us  
this morning  
in the healing of Jairus’s daughter  
is only part of the story.  
You may have noticed in your bulletins

that what we heard a short while ago  
 were verses 22–24 and 35–43  
 of the fifth chapter of Mark.  
 Verses 25–34, which we did not read,  
 contain another story,  
 another healing miracle,  
 which interrupts the story of Jairus's daughter,  
 while providing an explanation  
 of Jesus' delay in reaching Jairus's house.  
 Let me read this passage.

[Reads Mark 5:25–34]

"And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him.  
 Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages  
 for twelve years.  
 She had endured much under many physicians,  
 and had spent all that she had; and she was no better,  
 but rather grew worse.  
 She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd  
 and touched his cloak,  
 for she said, 'If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.'

Immediately her hemorrhage stopped;  
 and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him,  
 Jesus turned about in the crowd and said,  
 'Who touched my clothes?'

And his disciples said to him,  
 'You see the crowd pressing in on you;  
 how can you say, "Who touched me?"'  
 He looked all around to see who had done it.

But the woman, knowing what had happened to her,  
 came in fear and trembling, fell down before him,  
 and told him her whole story.

He said to her, 'Daughter, your faith has made you well;  
 go in peace, and be healed of your disease.'

An obvious question here,  
 of course,  
 is why did the designers of our lectionary  
 leave the woman with the twelve-year issue of blood  
 out of the story of Jairus's daughter?  
 We could get caught for a long time  
 in speculation about this,  
 and probably the explanation  
 is something simple like,  
 "The story of Jairus's daughter  
 stands on its own" or

“one healing makes the point as well as two”  
or “the hemorrhaging woman is less tasteful  
than the little girl.”

It’s apparently fairly clear  
in the oldest Greek manuscripts of Mark  
that the healing of the hemorrhaging woman  
is written in better Greek  
than the healing of Jairus’s daughter.

So the writer of Mark  
probably inserted the story to begin with.  
Perhaps our lectionary designers left it out  
because it began as an insertion.

Whatever the reason,  
it’s been left out.

But I think it’s important that we consider it;  
first, because the use of the “story within a story”  
is fairly typical to the Gospel of Mark,  
but primarily because  
the two stories together  
offer us more about the nature of Jesus  
and faith  
than either story does on its own.

Without the story  
of the hemorrhaging woman,  
the healing of Jairus’s daughter  
invites us to concentrate  
on the beautiful vision of a child lost,  
now restored to her parents.

It is possible for us to talk about  
the great spiritual meaning  
of the child’s return to life  
without giving much thought  
to the physical—  
beyond the touch of Jesus’ hand  
and his command  
that she be given something to eat.

We can be thrilled  
that Jesus has acted  
in such a dramatic way,  
and we can recognize that children,  
as well as adults,  
are recipients of God’s grace.

But we can stand outside the story  
and watch.

And we can speculate  
about the reality of miracles.

We can sidetrack ourselves,  
while we admire the great spiritual revelation  
of the child's return to life.

If we consider the healing  
of the hemorrhaging woman  
in the context of the healing of Jairus's daughter,  
we find powerful contrasts.

The hemorrhaging woman  
is not somebody we'd want to be around.

She's drained and desperate.

She's spent all her savings

seeking a cure,

and she's only grown worse.

For twelve years—

as long as Jairus's daughter has been alive—

the hemorrhaging woman

has been denied access

to the practice of her religion,

because she's unclean.

Close contact

with another human by her

renders that other person unclean, also.

The woman is an outcast,

one to be avoided,

one for whom life

within the structure of a supportive community

is impossible.

She is unclean;

and no decent person

should have anything to do with her.

In her desperation,

the woman forces herself through the crowd

toward Jesus,

seeking only to touch his clothing

to heal herself.

But the healing comes from Jesus.

She touches his garment

and feels within her body

that she is cured.

And he feels within his body

that someone has touched him.

His disciples think he is silly

to seek a particular person

in a pressing crowd,

but he recognizes

that a particular individual

has encountered him,  
 and he looks for her.  
 Overwhelmed by the fact of her new wholeness,  
 the woman is frightened.  
 Nevertheless,  
 she goes to Jesus as he seeks her,  
 and she tells him her whole story.  
 His response to her?  
 "Daughter, go in peace.  
 Your faith has healed you."  
 Another miracle, to be sure,  
 but the two stories together  
 help bring home to us  
 that an encounter with Jesus Christ  
 on any level  
 involves both the physical,  
 concrete world  
 and *dialogue with Jesus Christ*.  
 The reality of experience  
 is imperative  
 in our relationship with God.  
 We don't simply encounter Jesus Christ  
 on some esoteric plane  
 separate from our daily lives.  
 Instead, we encounter God in Christ  
 in our physical being,  
 our life in the world,  
 and our death.  
 The encounter involves both touch  
 and conversation.  
 Without the dialogue  
 between Jesus and the woman,  
 Jesus and the child,  
 and the child's parents,  
 the miracles have little meaning.  
 Without the dialogue,  
 what happens simply happens  
 and there's nothing to allay  
 the resulting fear.  
 When the woman is healed,  
 she is frightened.  
 Jesus gives peace  
 by acknowledging her faith,  
 and that's a miracle  
 beyond the physical healing.  
 We are like the hemorrhaging woman  
 and the little girl

because we are embodied beings.  
 We will undergo physical and emotional pain;  
 and we will die.  
 We are like them also  
 in that we know the world  
 through our physical presence,  
 through our senses as well as our thoughts,  
 and we need both  
 for wholeness in our daily lives.  
 The physical aspect of our lives  
 is not somehow separate  
 from our spiritual development.  
 We have to live that development out  
 in our bodies,  
 in the world,  
 in the here and now,  
 in the decisions we make,  
 in our connections with those around us.  
 How do we participate  
 in God's healing action?  
 We touch each other;  
 we talk to each other.  
 We love.

These stories are given to us  
 that we might learn something about faith,  
 not that we get sidetracked  
 on the issue of whether they really happened,  
 whether they're really miracles,  
 but that we might focus on the issue  
 of how it is that we encounter God.

Do we believe in the resurrection?  
 How do we live that belief,  
 act it out in our physical lives?  
 Can we recognize that concrete action—  
 touch and dialogue—  
 are the way we know each other  
 and the Christ within us?  
 Body and blood,  
 word and action—  
 the miracle of faith  
 lies in the concrete,  
 the particular,  
 the physical,  
 our daily lives.

We eat and drink together  
 that we might more fully know

our connection with each other,  
with the hemorrhaging woman,  
the dead and living child,  
the crucified and risen Christ.  
Amen.<sup>12</sup>

What is immediately evident in this sermon is that the priest has dared to question the authority of the lectionary writers. Not only has she read the portions of the Scripture that were left out of the lectionary, she proceeds to preach the sermon on that “left-out” portion and, in the process, to chastise the lectionary writers for their discrimination and their unwillingness to deal with the disturbing story of the hemorrhaging woman. She has elected to restore this unlikely story into the lectionary scripture reading and re-member the hemorrhaging woman into the religious canon. Furthermore, in focusing on this woman’s story she has provided a framework for reinstating women into the biblical story on the one hand, and into the contemporary religious scene on the other.

Why did the lectionary writers omit the story of the hemorrhaging woman? Tamsen Whistler offers several possible reasons: the story of the healed child stands alone; perhaps they felt one healing story would suffice; or perhaps the story of the hemorrhaging woman was too distasteful. But, she argues, none of these reasons will suffice. Both stories are needed to provide a complete picture, just as we might argue that the experiences of women are essential to getting the full picture. The innocent twelve-year-old girl, mourned by her parents, is a child healed, brought back to life by Jesus. But by itself, this healing story focuses too much on the miraculous as awe-inspiring. The story of the risen child cannot stand alone. The faith exhibited is not her faith; it is not even, in some ways, her story. The story is about the father’s faith and Jesus’ own assurance that he could bring the child back to life. But the story of the hemorrhaging woman is a story of one woman’s experience with a blood flow that would not stop—a raging flow of blood that has lasted as long as the young child visited by Jesus has been alive. Because of the Jewish culture in which she lived, which labeled her perpetually unclean, not fit to engage in any religious or sexual activities, and because of the physical debilitation rendered on her by the excessive blood flow and the failure of the physicians to heal her, she is a broken woman, an outcast. Tamsen described her in strong details.

What separates this woman from the rest of her community is her femaleness, of course—the blood flow that will not cease. The society had created elaborate ways to deal with women’s “unclean” nature as it occurred naturally once a month: via the mikvah (cleansing bath at the conclusion of the menstrual flow) a woman could be reincorporated into the collective whole and become active again in the religious community.<sup>13</sup> But this woman has been isolated and denounced because she is in a constant unclean state. Jesus’