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Hospitality: The Place of the Guest in Missional Theology.

Graham Adamson

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1. Introduction

Christians have grown accustomed to being part of the dominant culture in every place where the faith has spread. Even though times have changed dramatically the church still likes to play the host in culture and have the world as our guest. However, in our post Christendom age the church is increasingly cast in the role of guest in society. The church has always desired to welcome people into the Kingdom, and into relationship with the Lord Jesus, but can we do this if we are no longer the host?

This dissertation says 'yes' to that question, but it will involve rethinking what hospitality is. The church must reevaluate how it offers and receives hospitality in ways which are faithful to its missional witness. The church, if it is to be missional, must rediscover what it means to be a guest on a cultural scale and also on local levels in practical ways. The implication of the question is that today's church must recapture a missional understanding of the theology of hospitality. We must listen to our neighbour and we must learn to be the guest on occasion too, not just the host. As we learn how to be more gracious as guest and host we will see how hospitable attitudes of welcome must be outworked in tangible practices.

This dissertation examines the ways in which the missional movement currently engages with hospitality, both as a practice and as a metaphorical attitude for mission. The particular focus is on the role of the guest; to demonstrate how crucial the role of the guest is in hospitality and to encourage the missional movement to adopt the posture of the guest. Providing an overview of voices on hospitality from a variety of

theological perspectives, this project will draw on current missional thinking and examples from missional practice and critique these in the light of scripture and theology. Scriptural critique will be particularly from Luke's Gospel, discovering a hospitable Jesus who is himself both guest and host and sends his disciples out in like manner, to be received as guests. This leads into a wider discussion on understandings of the *missio Dei* and the nature of God's hospitality, arguing that God's very character and being are reflected in the hospitality and welcome of Jesus. The aim of this dissertation is to equip missional leaders for practice in their culture, challenging the missional movement to reassert the importance of receiving hospitality and to envision the church to embrace the role of the guest in wider society and local neighbourhoods.

2. Method and Methodology

This dissertation is a theoretical thesis; presenting, critiquing and offering new insight into a specific train of thought within missional theology. It quickly becomes apparent that a project on the theory of a very practical issue must show an awareness of the inherent limitations of working in this way. For this reason, this methodology shall make the case for our chosen methodology and also outline some other options available for this area of research. It is abundantly clear that there is scope to undertake a much larger research project in the area of missional hospitality, with, for example, quantitative studies across the missional movement or detailed qualitative studies of local expressions of hospitality. This being the case, our conclusions and recommendations section will return to some potential further avenues for research.

2.1. Methodology: The Theoretical Thesis

The focus of this dissertation is on the interaction between recent missional praxis and missional theology; it is a critical evaluation of the missional church's approach to hospitality. The project will evaluate how hospitality is envisioned and enacted in the missional movement with examples from recent practice, with the aim of understanding the role of the guest in the missional church. Doubtless there would be much to be gained from further case studies, but the present question has its focus particularly on the relationship between missional practice and missional theology. Whilst not undertaking my own fieldwork case studies, my arguments will be illuminated by consideration of the missional praxis of the case studies referred to in the literature.

For this reason, a major part of this dissertation will take the form of a review of literature with an analysis of some missional theologians with regard to their interpretation of Scripture, exploring their theology of hospitality and the role of the guest in particular. Thinkers, practitioners and theologians will invited into conversation together, to draw out the nuanced interpretations of their theologies of hospitality.

This dissertation will ‘welcome in’ different and contrasting ideas about hospitality, especially listening to those who particularly highlight *receiving* hospitality. We begin briefly with a range of theologies of hospitality, to provide an overview of the field, and will then narrow our focus to investigate the various ways in which hospitality in Scripture has been interpreted.

The aims of working in this way are fivefold. First, to present a variety of perspectives of Christian hospitality within missional leadership, especially with attention to the role of the guest. Second, to explore the role of the guest in contemporary missional theology and practice, drawing on recent contributions and experiences. Third, to investigate some key passages in Luke, with respect to the welcome of guests. Fourth, to examine ways in which the missional church can articulate a stronger theology of the guest, looking to make suggestions for future practice. Fifth, to consider ways in which the role of the guest impacts the task of the missional leader.

As it is beyond the scope of this project to investigate the entirety of Scripture in depth, or the subject of hospitality as a whole, the focus will be on the receiving of hospitality in

Luke. There are good reasons for choosing Luke; hospitality is a key theme throughout Scripture, but of the four gospel writers, Luke's Jesus is pictured most in hospitality settings. As well as this, Luke-Acts is influential in missional theology and so the review will include critical assessment of the implications and potential of hospitality as a missional practice based on various interpretations of Luke. As well as the sources stated here, additional sources and references will emerge in the dissertation as the argument develops, so that the literature review element of this theoretical thesis is more spread out as the dissertation progresses.

2.2. Hospitality of Method

An interesting methodological avenue is pursued by John Swinton and Harriet Mowat.¹ They outline a framework, akin to the pastoral cycle, — which Paul Ballard and John Pritchard describe,² — within which interdisciplinary work can take place, safeguarding the integrity of each discipline. Interestingly, Swinton and Mowat use the term hospitality as a metaphor for this, highlighting a willingness to learn from other fields, requiring the researcher to be open to others. For Swinton and Mowat, interdisciplinary hospitality is 'vital for the process of doing Practical Theology.'³ The object of working in this way is not therefore,

to seek after the lowest common denominator within which dialogue can take place. It is rather to create a context wherein the voice of qualitative research can be heard, respected and taken seriously, but

¹ In chapter eight of *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (2006), entitled 'Participatory Research: Researching *with* Marginalized People', Swinton and Mowat explore the many possibilities and they also 'address some of the problematic issues surrounding the power dynamics of the research process' (p.227). Their example is from work with people who have learning disabilities, and their insight would also be useful for other qualitative work in researching hospitality.

² Ballard and Pritchard. (2006). p. 81-95.

³ Swinton and Mowat (2006). p. 91.

*with no a-priori assumption that theology needs to merge, follow or fully accept the perspective on the world that is offered by the qualitative research.*⁴

Within these potential methods there is also the possibility to undertake research on a much more intentionally interdisciplinary basis, to provide still greater depths of understanding to the practice of Christian hospitality. The search for collaborators opens many other avenues: for example literature critics have explored the theme of hospitality in Shakespeare,⁵ and interesting contributions could be made through interdisciplinary collaboration with scholars of Islam,⁶ or other religions.

The hospitable approach taken by Swinton and Mowat presents itself as appropriate for an investigation into hospitality. The very nature of the subject is one of welcome and so it is fitting to be open to the contributions from other fields. Hospitality must be prepared for the unexpected guest, and be attentive to the voice of the other. Likewise, it seems to follow that the study of hospitality should be approached in a similar attitude if it is to be understood at any depth. The aim, therefore, is to adopt a welcoming and hospitable posture towards all participants, recognising the value of contributions from different perspectives. We will invite in contributions from a range of sources, and 'open the shutters' to see if there are other potential contributors on the horizon who could also be welcomed into the conversation.

⁴ Swinton and Mowat. (2006). p. 91.

⁵ Lupton and Goldstein. (2016).

⁶ Siddiqui. (2015).

So in summary, the methodology for this dissertation (the tools used) will be to critique missional practice in the light of current literature and in relation to Scripture. Its method (the underpinning philosophy and approach) is to be hospitable. We will attempt to host our guests well, listening well to the points of view raised and being attentive to their voices, remembering the hospitable maxim — the guest brings a blessing.

3. Christian Theologies of Hospitality

Hospitality has been given a breadth of definitions, ranging from the *industry* of dining and hotels, to the popular meaning of entertaining guests in one's home. These are part of today's culture and the ways in which hospitality is understood in the popular mindset. There is more however, especially so for the Christian. There are two distinct ways in which hospitality is a key theme in Christian theology which I will give the terms physical hospitality and hospitality of attitude — both are interpreted variously and so create sub-definitions. Hospitality is both literal (physical) and metaphorical (attitude). Physical hospitality is a tangible practice and is related to its underlying attitude — a spirit of being hospitable, of truly welcoming the other. Some of the sources used in this dissertation refer to the metaphorical, the hospitable attitude. This critique focusses on the literal practice of welcome but, as shall be demonstrated, the attitude of hospitality infuses and illuminates many of the arguments made. Theological articulations of hospitality as an attitude are more than thought experiments—they need to be enacted in physical hospitality.

3.1. Physical Hospitality

Christine Pohl (1999) defines hospitality as a,

*response to the physical needs of strangers for food, shelter and protection, but also a recognition of their worth and common humanity.*⁷

Similarly, for Martin Mittelstadt (2014) it is,

⁷ Pohl. (1999). p. 6.

*the basic practice central to all aspects of human activity from family and friends to strangers and enemies.*⁸

It is worthwhile considering the extent to which these understandings of hospitality are distinctly Christian. For Pohl the,

*distinctive Christian contribution [is] the emphasis on including the poor and neediest, the ones who could not return the favour.*⁹

In contrast Mittelstadt does not differentiate between the nature of hospitality as practiced by Christians and any other groups but is insistent that the church is called to freely and deeply learn to practice hospitality. Mittelstadt goes on to identify five distinct types of hospitality in the period of the gospels, each with a nuanced definition and arena: public, commercial, temple, theoxenic,¹⁰ and private hospitality. Arthur Sutherland (2006), draws these several threads together, proposing that,

*In the light of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and return, Christian hospitality is the intentional, responsible, and caring act of welcoming or visiting, in either public or private places, those who are strangers, enemies, or distressed, without regard for reciprocation.*¹¹

Sutherland 'resists the popular idea that hospitality is similar to "entertaining"',¹² and emphasises, along with Pohl and Mittelstadt, that Christian hospitality is characterised by fulfilling a *basic* need.

⁸ Mittelstadt. (2014). p. 132.

⁹ Pohl. (1999). p. 6.

¹⁰ 'Theoxenic hospitality refers to human generosity to gods, heroes, and semi-divine guests.' Mittelstadt. (2014). p. 132., Included in this could be what is alluded to in the charge of Hebrews 13:2, 'do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it'

¹¹ Sutherland. (2006). p. xiii.

¹² Sutherland. (2006). p. xiii.

Hospitality is certainly many things: it is counter cultural (Richard: 2000) and a sign of the coming Kingdom (Reynolds: 2009). Indeed, it is the seed of the Kingdom and the fruit of its coming. As Leonard Hjalmarson expresses, ‘the root and fruit [of hospitality] are intimately related’¹³ as an outworking of mission which is simultaneously growing from an intimacy with God and deepening that relationship.¹⁴ From an expressly missional perspective, for Alan Roxburgh (2006) hospitality is,

*the practice of receiving another person as a gift without the need to make him or her into something after one’s own image.*¹⁵

Roxburgh’s definition serves to open our conversation as to the merging of the acts of hospitality and the attitude of welcome for which hospitality is the metaphor. We shall turn our thoughts to this next.

3.2. Metaphorical Hospitality

Hospitality as an attitude of welcome towards the other is a metaphor at the heart of the Christian faith. This is outworked in many ways, so that Hans Boersma can state that the church is ‘a community of hospitality.’¹⁶ In a manner which fuses the metaphorical and literal definitions, Miroslav Volf proposes that hospitality is best understood with the categories of exclusion and embrace. For Volf, making space for the other is costly, whether that other is neighbour or enemy — or both. This foundational point is a springboard for Volf in his deeply personal and widely influential work on conflict,

¹³ Hjalmarson. (2013). p. 100.

¹⁴ Hjalmarson. (2013). p. 102.

¹⁵ Roxburgh. (2006). p. 78.

¹⁶ Boersma. (2004). p. 205-34.

forgiveness and reconciliation written against the backdrop of the Yugoslav war. In defending his use of the metaphor of *embrace*, Volf writes that,

*the most basic thought that it seeks to express is important: the will to give ourselves to others and 'welcome' them, to readjust our identities to make space for them, is prior to any judgment about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity. The will to embrace precedes any 'truth' about others and any construction of their 'justice.' This will is absolutely indiscriminate and strictly immutable; it transcends the moral mapping of the social, world into 'good' and 'evil.'*¹⁷

Apparent here are Volf's affirmation of both the simplicity and the profundity of hospitality. To welcome without prejudice is not an easy thing. Welcome—embrace—is a simple, basic human need and yet to truly provide it can require enormous amounts of strength, grace and self-giving.

3.3. Defining Hospitality

Having listened to the contributions of the varied definitions above, we propose that hospitality is, simply yet perhaps profoundly, the welcome of strangers and friends. It can, at times, be practiced amongst friends without a second thought — at others it can take great courage and a willingness to be vulnerable. Often connected with sharing food, hospitality at its best is also about sharing relationship. The guest, who may be a stranger, is welcomed in for sustenance, for their immediate needs to be met. This reveals the basic nature of relationship and warmth of welcome alongside the needs for shelter, food and drink. As such, all people will need hospitality, and at times many are reliant on the welcome of strangers.

¹⁷ Volf. (1994). p. 29.

Following these definitions and interpretations of what hospitality *is*, this chapter will continue by exploring more thoroughly hospitality's effects and what it represents, especially engaging with ideas pertinent to the role of the guest and the action of receiving hospitality. Our investigation of the themes of movement, roles and change will lead us to consider hospitality's inherent dichotomy, and into a discussion of being a host or recipient of hospitality. It is to the themes of movement and changing roles we turn next.

3.4. Movement, Roles and Space to Change

Mittelstadt highlights a metaphorical movement which hospitality creates; the way in which it 'facilitates the social process in which someone who is an outsider shifts from stranger to guest.'¹⁸ The concepts of change and the metaphor of movement are ideas which have been developed further in studies of hospitality to include a switching between the guest and the host: John Koenig (1985) surfaces an interesting interplay of roles in his appraisal of the Greek root words used in Scripture, whereby guest and host are readily reversed. *Philo* is to love and so *philoxenia* is initially a 'love for the stranger'. However *xenos* is not only 'stranger' (as in xenophobia) but can also be understood as referring to a guest or a host. And so *philoxenia* is not only the love of strangers, but, as Koenig puts it,

*a delight in the whole guest-host relationship in the mysterious reversals and gains for all parties which may take place.*¹⁹

¹⁸ Mittelstadt. (2014). p. 132.

¹⁹ Koenig. (1985). p. 7.

From this perspective reciprocity and the receiving of hospitality are given a high value, indeed the host must sometimes be the guest too: as Pohl asserts,

*the helper must also be able to receive — especially from those who look as if they have little to offer.*²⁰

Both guest and host have dignity and something to give and receive. These themes have been the subject of theological consideration as we shall explore further in this dissertation.

Henri Nouwen takes this approach further, identifying the shift from hostility to hospitality as one of three ‘movements’ vital to spiritual formation and an individual’s sense of growth in being and becoming whole.²¹ For him hospitality is more than a welcome into a home, it is an attitude towards all others, in which space is created where strangers are welcomed to become more fully themselves. The aim of hospitality is ‘not to change people but to offer them space where change can take place’.²²

Practitioners of hospitality have commented anecdotally that the hosts are often the most blessed. Pohl describes hospitality as ‘simultaneously costly and wonderfully rewarding’.²³ An implication of this reciprocity is that hospitality creates space for the host also to change, to be transformed by the interaction.

3.5. Welcome and the Other in Metaphorical Hospitality

²⁰ Pohl. (1999). p. 119.

²¹ Nouwen’s other two movements are: from loneliness to solitude, and from illusion to prayer, indicating his emphasis on the internal. Nouwen. (1975).

²² Nouwen. (1975). p. 49.

²³ Pohl. (1999). p. 187.

The understanding of physical hospitality as two parties meeting and engaging one another in dialogue, and being changed by the process, introduces a strong inherent sense of liminality, such as the illustration of the guest and host each crossing thresholds, as highlighted by Pohl.²⁴ Developing the metaphor of hospitality along these lines, Nouwen uses *confrontation and receptivity* in ways similar to Miroslav Volf's *exclusion and embrace*.

Volf notes the internal struggle of the giver in attempting to identify with the receiver, which can be a huge effort. The stranger is seen as other²⁵, yet through being valued individually, (or as Martin Buber puts it, being identified as *thou* and not an *it*)²⁶ each person is invited into relationship. For Volf, the host's sense of self is strong, but makes generous space for the guest, even allowing that self identity to be changed in the process of hospitable welcome. For Volf, the space for growth is internal, in making 'space in our hearts to embrace our neighbours.'²⁷ In summary, although physical hospitality, in the sense in which we are investigating it, is not Volf's focus, he surfaces themes which are closely related. And so, having introduced the potential role of guest in hospitality, we turn to look in greater depth at the relationship between missional theology and hospitality.

²⁴ Pohl. (1999). p. 106.

²⁵ Volf. (1994). p. 29.

²⁶ Shepherd. (2014). p. 175.

²⁷ Volf. (1994). p. 51.

4. The Missional Movement and Hospitality

The contribution to hospitality of 'Missional Church' edited by Darrell Guder (1998) is in its focus on the ways in which missional communities can become communities of peace, and, in so doing, to participate in 'God's peaceable Kingdom' through the practice of hospitality.²⁸ The authors suggest that 'converting the enemy into a guest' will counter the fear of the other in the current Western situation.²⁹

Van Gelder and Zscheile's 'Missional church in Perspective' (2011) is a critique and contextualization of themes introduced in 'Missional Church'. In their analysis, and in the light of subsequent developments in the missional conversation, Van Gelder and Zscheile seek to,

*'resist the common tendency to reduce missional church to a set of rules to follow, discrete characteristics, or summary principles.'*³⁰

In a section entitled *God's Mission and Hospitality*, Van Gelder and Zscheile develop the proposal that the,

*neglect [of hospitality] in the modern Western church begs to be remedied, for hospitality is often the space where we encounter the 'other', the stranger who brings a blessing.*³¹

One of the six 'movements' of their argument for theology rooted in the *missio Dei* is Cultivating Community, under which they include the regular practice of hospitality.³²

²⁸ Guder. (1998). p. 177.

²⁹ Guder. (1998). p. 177.

³⁰ Van Gelder & Zscheile. (2011). p. 149.

³¹ Van Gelder & Zscheile. (2011). p. 153.

³² Van Gelder & Zscheile. (2011). p. 51.

There may be, on one level, little difference between a 'set of rules' and a set of 'movements', but Van Gelder and Zscheile suggest that there is a more nuanced way of working which is less prescriptive and more values led than results driven. Similarly, Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost plot a route through this emerging understanding of *missio Dei* in contemporary culture in 'The Shaping of Things to Come' (2003) which Hirsch develops further in 'The Forgotten Ways' (2007). Their work stands alongside Roxburgh (2011), (with Fred Romanuk (2006)), Eddie Gibbs (2005), Ryan Bolger (2006), and Patrick Keifert (2006), in proposing hospitality as a practice which is central to the outworking of missional theology. As David Bosch (1991) states, 'hospitality as a practice is a characteristic of the church'.³³

For Hirsch, the route towards a missional ecclesiology is to be found from the perspective of Christology, returning to what he views as a simple, 'primitive, unencumbered Christology of the NT church'.³⁴ His arguments are insightful: he makes a case for what he calls 'christocentric monotheism', a recovery of the centrality of Jesus to the church. He also suggests that the Christendom mode was defined by 'highly stylized dogmas and creeds'³⁵ which must be pushed against in our current culture; and he argues that there is something essential in the "formula" for engaging in mission in a post-Christian culture: *Christology determines missiology, and missiology determines ecclesiology*.³⁶

³³ Bosch. (1991). p. 169.

³⁴ Hirsch. (2009) p. 99.

³⁵ Hirsch. (2009) p. 68.

³⁶ Hirsch. (2009) p. 142.

We would agree with Hirsch's assessment of the centrality of the person of Jesus but would also note that his under-developed articulation of the Trinity and in particular, the role of *relationship* in the Godhead. We would suggest that this may provide an even firmer footing on which to build a missional ecclesiology, as we will discuss later.

Roxburgh and Romanuk explore the practice of hospitality in their book 'The Missional Leader' (2006) including it as one of several 'habits and practices of Christian formation'.³⁷ Roxburgh and Boren (2009) also use a picture of hospitality to illustrate the 'everydayness' of Christian living which missional theology promotes. For them, the first Christians were 'ordinary men and women waking up to their neighbourhoods and figuring out how to be the kinds of cooks who set the gospel table using local ingredients'.³⁸ And so Roxburgh and Boren ask, 'what kind of table does God want us to set in the name of Jesus in the midst of these particular sounds, smells, and sights?'³⁹

For example, in recalling the Emmaus road account⁴⁰, Roxburgh notes that,

*The true identity of the stranger becomes visible only at the table and in the elements of eating together. The truth about the people in our neighborhood, community, and culture is experienced in relationship around the table. The truth about the creation of a new kind of culture is experienced in the practice of hospitality.*⁴¹

A spirit of hospitality is much needed in today's society, and the church is well placed to encourage its practice, as John Drane writes in 'Mission-Shaped Questions' (2008),

³⁷ Others include *Lectio Divina*, regular fasting and silent retreat all of which have ancient roots and have been 'rediscovered' by the missional church. That is to say, they are practices which have been continuously part of the life of Catholic and other traditions, but they are now being adopted by the predominantly evangelical and charismatic missional movement.

³⁸ Roxburgh & Boren. (2009). p. 97.

³⁹ Roxburgh & Boren. (2009). p. 99.

⁴⁰ Luke 24:13-32

⁴¹ Roxburgh. (2006). p. 158.

*The sharing of food is a central aspect of worship within many emerging churches. We live in a society of lonely people, in which we are scared of making the very connections that we know we need.*⁴²

For Michael Moynagh (2012) a crucial method of participation and becoming part of the locality is 'receiving from the context'.⁴³ Changing the meaning of 'receiving' into a metaphorical understanding of how communities are approached is an interesting extension. In receiving from the community to which one is called one participates not only in that neighbourhood but in the work of God. Thus, the argument develops that a missional church should aim to be transformed through its being a recipient in a community; it should test its effectiveness by how far it has been changed by the process.⁴⁴ Churches working for deep change — both in the church and the neighbourhood — must be planning for the long-term. As we address in the following section, these are significant areas of application for the missional church as the attitude of metaphorical hospitality is given a distinct form in the acts of physical hospitality.

4.1. Mission and Friendship — Some Recent Conversations

Friendship is by its very nature reciprocal and based on equality, so it has close links with hospitality.

In their collaborative work, 'Friendship at the Margins', (2010) Christine Pohl and Christopher Heuertz highlight an imperative for 'career missionaries, community-based mission and cause-driven models'⁴⁵ to make way for *friendship* which is a better goal

⁴² Drane. (2008). p. 98.

⁴³ Monagh. (2012). p. 262.

⁴⁴ Moynagh. (2012). p. 267.

⁴⁵ Pohl & Heuertz. (2010). p. 27.

and modus operandi of missional engagement because, they propose, longevity is critical to this kind of mission. Their approach is characterised by intimacy with the recipients of ministry, as they remind us that, ‘the vulnerable women and children among whom we serve cannot afford another painful goodbye in the sad series of losses that characterize their lives.’⁴⁶ This is clearly especially true when working with people for whom long-term relationships are extremely valuable and rare, and one can see the need for this across contemporary society. Real hospitality will always have implications for the long term and, as some of the following examples demonstrate, it is not just at the margins where friendship is needed.

In ways which echo Pohl and Heuertz, Stuart Murray-Williams also argues that churches in the post Christendom era must be characterized by ‘authentic friendships rather than insipid “fellowship” or institutional belonging’.⁴⁷ There is a danger of polemicizing in Murray-Williams’ approach however, and it remains to be seen how many missional leaders will take up the challenge to genuinely listen to their neighbours.

An example of churches attempting to foster authentic relationships in their community can be found in an article in the *Journal of Missional Practice* entitled ‘Cultivating Desire in Mississippi’ in which Stan Wilson (2015) recounts a history of church experimentation with Northside Baptist Church in Clinton, Mississippi. The church he pastors has clearly taken seriously the call to be received in the neighbourhood and the struggles and joys they encountered are emphatic as they ‘participate in a new way of being church in the

⁴⁶ Pohl & Heuertz. (2010). p. 28.

⁴⁷ Murray-Williams. (2004). p. 55.

Old South'.⁴⁸ The leadership of the church took Luke 10 as a *leitmotif* and sought to engage the congregation with a stronger commitment to deeper gospel witness in their neighbourhood. One specific church project was explicitly organized for the congregation to learn to be recipients within their community, an area which had previously been very starkly racially segregated, and still suffers with racial tension. The project was,

*specifically designed to put team members into new relationship with those who were typically seen as the recipients of Northside's ministry. Ideally team members would find a way to be the recipient of a neighbour's hospitality or generosity, but they were encouraged at least to engage their neighbours as neighbours, and not as charity cases.*⁴⁹

This was met with some success, amid mistakes and misunderstandings, and was followed up with a sports-based project, called 'On Their Turf' through which the church met in a local diner with some young people to talk American Football. Wilson shares his frustration that this project was not as successful as he had anticipated, and particularly that the church group had found it hard to break deep-seated habits of 'paternalistic engagement', working *for* the community rather than with them or simply forming relationships with them. The project team ended up 1) holding a large meeting rather than several smaller ones to save time, 2) eating at separate tables to the young people, 3) paying the bill for everyone 'once again taking a position as a benevolent provider'.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Wilson. (2015)

⁴⁹ Wilson. (2015)

⁵⁰ Wilson. (2015).

We observe from Wilson's experience the realities of church life in wrestling theologically, practically and relationally with this issue of the church as guest. It is interesting to note the ways in which Wilson sought to integrate aspects of missional ecclesiology together in the church's projects, but was ultimately met with dissatisfaction.

We would highlight, as well, the problems which he encountered on the way; we may learn from these too. The objections of the church to missional principles, and perhaps a sheer lack of understanding regarding putting them into practice emphasises the difficulties which missional leaders will face in creating a missional mindset, and missional habits amongst the church. These issues also underscore the need for practices which, for Roxburgh are 'about entering (without domain, power, or a benefactor role), listening, participating, and communing with mutuality and receptivity.'⁵¹

In an online response to Wilson's article Sam Ewell reminds us that, as the contemporary church is a Gentile movement, its identity is as an 'outsider-being-brought-in.'⁵² We are persuaded by Ewell's argument for what he calls a 'Gentile imagination', based on the acknowledgement that, 'we were always outsiders before we were insiders.'⁵³ By removing this patronising, colonialist approach to the other in mission Ewell concludes that, 'this awareness shifts the conversation from, "How do we include them and meet their needs?", to "What gifts are we discovering through our

⁵¹ Roxburgh. (2013).

⁵² Ewell. (2015).

⁵³ Ewell. (2015).

being joined together?” These ideas of the outsider occur often in Scripture also — examples being: the Israelites in the Old Testament, Jesus, and the early church.

Angela Gorrell’s reflection on Wilson’s article suggests that *friendship* is a vital part of life which has been ignored and forgotten. She urges the church to,

*nurture habits that encourage Christians to engage in practices that help people to attend to one another in community, such as gratitude, listening, and forgiveness.*⁵⁴

This position strengthens our case that the church must reacquaint itself with the role of guest in our culture. We would agree with Ewell’s insight that ‘being with’ (or *with-ness*) should be a category of mission, and with Gorrell that a better word for this is friendship, as an intentional counter to Murray’s complaint of ‘insipid fellowship’ above. Friendship as a category holds much potential for mission, we would argue, and later we will explore the role of *witness*, which, we propose, should accompany it. It is also important that the church continually participates in habit-forming practices such as those to which we now turn our attention.

4.2. The Missional Habit of Practicing Hospitality

There is a common thread running through the missional perspective of hospitality. The message is that hospitality is a habit, and that habit-forming is a process requiring an investment of time and effort. It is a long-term direction of travel for a missional leader.

According to Roxburgh (2011) for example,

The missional leader requires skills to cultivate three new kinds of awareness in a congregation. First is the awareness of what God is doing among the people of the congregation... Second is awareness of how a

⁵⁴ Gorrell. (2015).

*congregation can imagine itself as being the center of God's activities... Third is an awareness of what God is already up to in the congregation's context. This requires a capacity for listening to and engaging the images, narratives, and stories of people with plenty of stress, anxiety, and confusion in their lives and world that keep morphing and leave them struggling to make sense of what was once familiar, comfortable, and manageable.*⁵⁵

He is eager to note that although recovering these as practices is the key to seeing missional transformation in a congregation, they are *habits* rather than *techniques*. This distinction implies an investment of time, and that there should be no expectation of a 'quick fix'.⁵⁶ Roxburgh's approach is to appeal to church leaders to enter into a new mindset of formation, which can then filter down to their congregations. He asserts that,

*our experience is that it is those leaders whose lives are formed by such practices who have the capacity to sustain themselves in this long and arduous journey.*⁵⁷

So for Roxburgh the practice of hospitality is also a sustaining one, the investment of effort in it will be beneficial in the long term. Roxburgh proposes that a willingness to fully engage with processes is crucial. A missional mind-set is formed through the formation of people in 'the habits and practices of Christian life'.⁵⁸

4.3. Hospitality as Practice and Response

We observe various descriptions of hospitality, potentially suggesting contrasting definitions or motivation. For example, whereas for Roxburgh hospitality is framed in

⁵⁵ Roxburgh. (2011). p. 31-32.

⁵⁶ Roxburgh. (2006). p. 64.

⁵⁷ Roxburgh. (2006). p. 35.

⁵⁸ Roxburgh. (2006). p. 34.

terms of being a *habit* or *practice* to be pursued, for Pohl a key descriptor is *response*, which seems to be a crucial word for her understanding of the term.

*Hospitality is not first a duty and responsibility; it is first a response of love and gratitude for God's love and welcome to us.*⁵⁹

One may see subtle divergence in emphasis here, and perhaps underlying distinction in motivation for hospitality. But what is the difference? Is a *response* a stronger emotion than a *practice*? Or does a *habit* go deeper than a *response*?

The verb translated as 'compassion' which Luke uses in the parable of the Good Samaritan⁶⁰ means to be *moved* — literally that the emotion causes physical movement in the intestines.⁶¹ A compassionate *response* is a deep-seated and powerful motivator for hospitality. However, it could be argued that *habit* indicates a deeper commitment to actively looking for opportunities to be hospitable, whereas a *response* might occur as a result of a specific need, and as such, not be as deliberate as a *pursuit* or *practice*. However, this idea of intentionality needs to be understood in the context of each author's setting.

Roxburgh's work highlights the problem of isolation in Western culture, and his aim is to exhort the self-absorbed, lethargic church into actively joining with God *in the neighbourhood*. To this end, for Roxburgh, spaces for hospitality must be sought out, it must become a practice to be engaged with, it must become a habit.

⁵⁹ Pohl. (1999). p. 172.

⁶⁰ Luke 10:33

⁶¹ Shepherd. (2014). p. 52.

On the other hand, Pohl's book 'Making Room' is a study of several communities of hospitality with which she journeyed over a period of time. For these groups, the need was on their doorstep every day, it did not need seeking out. Therefore, the active part of hospitality for Pohl appears to be more in the practice of it than in the seeking out of the opportunities for it proposed by Roxburgh which in turn informs Pohl's focus on the personal response. In short, Pohl and Roxburgh speak from different experience and to a different audience. Both *response* and *habit* seem necessary for hospitality to be recovered as a missional practice and the case can be made for the integration of the two.

A powerful example of the response and habit of hospitality being intertwined comes from Heuertz whose chapter on 'Reconnecting Righteousness and Justice Through Friendships'⁶² provides a provocative case study in deliberately seeking out ways to act hospitably. His compassionate response to injustice gradually became a habit as he sought to address global injustice in personal ways. We suggest that perhaps the move to consolidating the two factors of *response to need* and *practicing a habit* is found in the recovery of friendship — the personal connection. As Heuertz says, '[w]hen we get to know people who are vulnerable, we are challenged to take more seriously the power and opportunities we have.'⁶³

4.4. Habitus and the Missional Imaginary

Jamie Wilson proposes a 'Hospitality Imaginary' in the *Journal of Missional Practice* (2014), a framework to 'allow analysis of how a cultural group understands themselves

⁶² Pohl & Heuertz. (2010). p. 47-67.

⁶³ Pohl & Heuertz. (2010). p. 66.

with respect to the stranger. The fundamental elements of the Hospitality Imaginary are the home, the host, and the stranger.⁶⁴ For the church to engage with these fully, and especially for the church to recover the role of being the stranger, for Wilson, the practicing of a habit needs to become embedded, not only within individuals or congregations, but more broadly within Western church culture. This shift is more akin to what Bourdieu calls *habitus*, as Carolyn Kelly (2014) attests in her online response to Wilson. When a practice becomes a social norm, such as getting married and raising a family in Western culture (Frost: 2014), then it can be described as a *habitus*. ‘Habitus is created and reproduced unconsciously, without any deliberate pursuit of coherence’⁶⁵ the implication being that for the missional church to embed new practices and priorities (or recover ancient ones) a long term view must be taken. Having looked at some of the issues surfaced in recent missional dialogue with respect to hospitality we turn now to another aspect, the preponderance of ‘how-to’ advice within missional literature.

4.5. The Missional ‘How-To’

A common theme of missional literature is a predominance of the ‘how-to’ questions: following a diagnosis of the shortcomings of contemporary church practice, which are not suitable for the current situation, new processes and practical advice are given as a fix. Roxburgh’s (2006) emphasis on the practicalities of a change process is a good example of this,

Our experience with the change model is that when a church finds itself predominantly in the performative zone, the place to start is some quiet experiments working with certain aspects of the church, perhaps with

⁶⁴ Wilson. (2014).

⁶⁵ Frost. (2014). p. 15.

*mission groups built around practicing hospitality to a specific area or neighborhood. By starting with a small experiment, the leadership has a chance to see something at work that can't be imagined. This enables leaders to envision how other such experiments can be initiated. Gradually, this process encourages the congregation to talk about risking and imagine a new way of being church. The culture starts to change from within the experiments and the invitation to others to join with them.*⁶⁶

Within missional literature there is an emphasis on practical processes for change. This focus on the 'how-to' questions does not preclude in-depth analysis of the 'why-to' questions of the nature of church, mission and the Kingdom of God for example, but they are indicative of much in the missional focus. One might ask just how useful this is, and what the limitations of this focus might be. Does their analysis of the situation go deep enough - either sociologically or theologically? Is the advice given too prescriptive? What might the consequences be if practical advice is accepted without a thorough-going understanding of the broader issues?⁶⁷

For this present project we do also note an apparent imbalance. Roxburgh does not employ his usual 'how-to' approach when it comes to the *receiving* of hospitality. In missional literature one might expect to find accompanying practices towards the creation of *habiti*; processes and practical steps which are accessible to leaders and congregations. This is not necessarily problematic *per se*, as the 'how-to' approach presents its own shortcomings as we have stated. But it is notable by its absence and may indicate that this is an underdeveloped area in missional leadership.

⁶⁶ Roxburgh. (2006) p. 168.

⁶⁷ To address these questions is outside the scope of this dissertation, but in raising them we observe a sometimes problematic tendency within missional literature.

We have investigated missional theology's view of hospitality, and outlined its contours with reference to the place of the guest and explored the missional movement's contribution to the understanding of the guest. We have also highlighted some of the limitations of current missional practice and some areas where there is potential for further development. We turn our attention now to some of the Bible texts which are seminal to the missional movement, to more closely consider the guest-host relationship in the light of Scripture, particularly investigating the ways in which Luke's Jesus engages in hospitality.

5. Hospitality in Luke's Gospel

Whereas the Epistles provide direct instruction and simple exhortation to the church to 'practice hospitality'⁶⁸, Luke inspires with his rich narrative of its practice. Michael Goheen notes that of the nineteen meals mentioned by Luke there are thirteen unique to his gospel. In Luke's gospel Jesus is pictured at a meal at least eight times.⁶⁹ Goheen surmises that, 'in Luke Jesus' life seems to revolve around meals'.⁷⁰ Shared meals and the welcome of strangers are clearly important to Luke's Jesus, who, as Pohl puts it, condenses the 'spiritual, social, and physical dimensions of life into one potent practice' through hospitality.⁷¹ Luke's emphasis on this was taken by the first Christians as an exhortation to follow Christ's example, as Mittelstadt attests:

For Luke, failure in hospitality leads to a fractured community and, if left unattended, hinders kingdom exploits. From the gospels, Christians are called to the practice of hospitality for the sake of themselves, their neighbours, and the kingdom.⁷²

Most often Jesus is the guest, and not the host. In those instances where he clearly takes the role of host it is then that he is most explicit that good hosting is characterised by servanthood as opposed to 'lording over' guests.⁷³ With reference to the Last Supper, Koenig (1985) makes the insightful statement that Jesus' disciples are to be 'servant hosts'.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Romans 12:13. (NIV has 'pursue hospitality')

⁶⁹ Smith. (1987). p. 614.

⁷⁰ Goheen in Bartholomew et al. (2005). p. 24.

⁷¹ Pohl. (1999). p. 33.

⁷² Mittelstadt. (2014). p. 131.

⁷³ E.g. washing the disciples' feet at the Last Supper, and the feeding of the 5000.

⁷⁴ Koenig. (1985). p. 118.

In this chapter we will investigate several passages in Luke: the seminal missional text Luke 10, which provides three perspectives of hospitality; the parable of the Great Feast in Luke 14, and the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19.

5.1. Luke Chapter 10 — A Triptych of Hospitality

Luke 10 has become paradigmatic for the missional conversation (Hjalmarson:2013). It is worth unpacking the ways in which this one chapter has become so influential to missional leadership. Roxburgh writes of, 'Luke 10 relationships'⁷⁵ and 'a Luke 10 lifestyle'⁷⁶ characterised by asking,

What is God up to in our contexts today? How do we join in with what God is doing?... Luke 10 reverses the normal ways Christians in the West have thought about the gospel and how we live as God's people. Too often we think in terms of developing structures that might attract others to come to our church and be a part of our community.⁷⁷

Craig Van Gelder and Dwight Zscheile see the world in Luke 10 as a place of hospitality for God's people to 'recognize the gifts that lie within it to be shared—gifts that inform and enrich our own experience and understanding of the gospel.'⁷⁸ Luke places together three perspectives of received hospitality in this chapter in three different approaches: an exhortation from Jesus, a parable told by Jesus and an account about Jesus.

The Sending of the Seventy(-Two) (10:1-24)
The Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25-37)
The Home of Mary and Martha (10:38-42)

⁷⁵ Roxburgh. (2013). p. 65.

⁷⁶ Roxburgh. (2013). p. 66.

⁷⁷ Roxburgh. (2013). p. 81-2.

⁷⁸ Van Gelder & Zscheile. (2011). p. 133.

5.1.1. The Sending (and Receiving) of the Seventy(-Two)⁷⁹ (10:1-24)

For Roxburgh, (2013 in the Journal of Missional Practice and elsewhere), the sending of the seventy(-two) is an exercise for the church in being sent as guests, following the pattern of the people of Israel, who were God's guest in the desert. The pertinent lesson is one of trust; that the missionaries should become dependent on the hosts.⁸⁰ This is where comfort zones are left behind and the disciples learn to trust fully in God for their provision and protection.

Importantly, the disciples were not necessarily going to Jewish areas, and they may well have come into contact with people who did not abide strictly by the levitical purity laws. Whether they were welcomed by Gentiles, Samaritans or Jews, the implication in the instruction to 'eat and drink whatever they give you' (verse 7) is that the guests are to hold in higher regard than their own traditions the fact of being welcomed by the host. The disciples are being told not to ask questions about the food, its origin, preparation or provenance, to ascertain if it is 'clean' or not, but simply to receive it and be received by the hosts. Jesus is challenging his followers to move beyond what Beck calls the 'domain of sociomoral disgust'⁸¹ as he does in other meal situations too.

The imperative, according to Roxburgh, is to go to the place where the other is at home, not only to bring and proclaim something but according to missional theology also to be

⁷⁹ In referring to the number of those sent out in this account as seventy(-two) we are persuaded by Holly Beers' assessment (2015) that the differences in translation need not greatly hinder our understanding of this passage. Both numbers suggest the leadership and gospel-bearing of Gentile believers which will be fulfilled in the future. 'The number "seventy" might allude to Moses and the seventy elders in Numbers 11, whereas "seventy-two" points to the world's nations (LXX Genesis 10) and suggests global mission.' (2015:154)

⁸⁰ Roxburgh. (2006). p. 124.

⁸¹ Beck. (2012). p. 75.

received and develop a mutual relationship. Missional church is to be centrifugal⁸²; an incarnational sending movement.⁸³ It is here, being active and being sent, where ‘church happens’, and where discipleship can truly take place, indeed, for Roxburgh the church cannot learn unless it goes, for, ‘to frame the practices of a missional people based upon abstract ideas about discipleship and formation, or sanctification and holiness, is to miss the point.’⁸⁴ Further, Roxburgh wonders if ‘the nature, meaning, role and function of the church will be rediscovered only to the extent we learn to discern what God is up to in the interactions with people in the public space and homes of our towns and villages?’⁸⁵

Van Gelder and Zscheile surface the missional focus on the mutuality and reciprocity in relationships in this passage. ‘Hospitality in mission here is reversed’ they say, ‘not offering hospitality *to* the stranger but seeking the hospitality *of* the stranger, with all the vulnerability that implies.’⁸⁶ The way in which this ‘reverse hospitality’ is described is striking,

*Relying on the hospitality of the community to which you have been sent—especially in the radically vulnerable way that Jesus commands the disciples to do—changes the terms of the missionary encounter. The one to whom you are sent is offering gifts to you—the gifts of safety, food (with all the cultural distinctiveness embedded there), protection, and an opportunity to enter into her or his way of life. You are dependent upon that person, household, or community. Whatever you offer in the way of sharing the peace, healing, or proclaiming the good news of the kingdom is shared in a relationship of reciprocity, mutuality, and vulnerability.*⁸⁷

⁸² Guder. (1998). p. 249.

⁸³ Stetzer & Putnam. (2006).

⁸⁴ Roxburgh. (2013).

⁸⁵ Roxburgh. (2011). p. 146.

⁸⁶ Van Gelder & Zscheile. (2011). p. 131.

⁸⁷ Van Gelder & Zscheile. (2011). p. 133.

Mittelstadt also identifies this as a ‘great reversal’⁸⁸ of hospitality, but is this really the case? If we agree with Koenig that the essence of hospitality is a ‘delight in the...mysterious reversals and gains for all parties’⁸⁹ then there are *always* reversals in hospitality. It is *always* a reciprocal exchange by its very nature. Van Gelder and Zscheile’s assertion inadvertently demonstrates well the prevailing view that hospitality is something done *by* the host *to* or *for* the guest. But this idea of ‘reverse hospitality’ is not known in the gospel of Luke. If Jesus is involved in the visit then one may sometimes be a host and sometimes a guest. Both are needed and both have equal dignity, but we agree with Roxburgh’s emphasis that this notion is antithetical to the way Christian life is imagined in our culture.

*In this passage it is the Christian who becomes the stranger, the other, in need of welcome at another’s table.*⁹⁰

Having investigated the ways that missional theology have reflected on the sending of the seventy(-two) we now turn to the next episode in this chapter, the parable of the Good Samaritan.

⁸⁸ Mittelstadt. (2014). p. 136.

⁸⁹ Koenig. (1985). p. 7.

⁹⁰ Roxburgh. (2013). p. 83.

5.1.2. The Parable of the Good Samaritan: A Story of Hospitality (10:25-37)

The ideas connected with contact, purity and sociomoral disgust in the previous section are magnified in Jesus' parable, highlighting the tension between religious (or societal) purity and love of the stranger. It is probably impossible to overstate just how provocative the use of a Samaritan in this story would have been to Jewish ears. Bosch writes that,

Jesus' audience, including his disciples, must have found this parable unpalatable, indeed obnoxious. The Samaritan... stands for non-humanity.⁹¹

Jesus subverts tradition and his answer to a question about fulfilment of the law disrupts the hearer's confidence in regulations. In the story the priest and the Levite are the sinners,⁹² and the one who is righteous is not one who has kept the letter of the law but the one who has kept its heart.

For Pohl the parable is about 'including one's enemies in the circle of love',⁹³ and as she maintains, 'the twin moves of universalising the neighbour and personalising the stranger are at the core of hospitality.'⁹⁴ These are the very moves which the priest and Levite refuse to make, and John Wesley strongly criticises those in the church who also refuse to cross the social distance.

Many of them do not know, because they do not care to know: they keep out of the way of knowing it — and then plead their voluntary ignorance as an excuse for their hardness of heart.⁹⁵

And then we recall Carlos Ortiz' assessment of calling the Samaritan 'good':

⁹¹ Bosch. (1991). p. 91.

⁹² Bosch. (1991). p. 107.

⁹³ Pohl. (1999). p. 23.

⁹⁴ Pohl. (1999). p. 75.

⁹⁵ Pohl. (1999). p. 76.

The Samaritan was nothing special. We have called him the 'good Samaritan,' but Jesus didn't. He just said, 'a certain Samaritan who was on a journey, came upon him...' (verse 33). He was simply obeying the old commandment. He left some money to pay for the man's care, and then went on to do his own business.⁹⁶

With our focus on receiving hospitality, we note especially Bosch's comment that,

Jews were forbidden to receive works of love from non-Jews and were not allowed to purchase or use oil and wine obtained from Samaritans.⁹⁷

This factor is pertinent: the proud repugnance of the *other* prevents not only charitable offers of help, but, more significantly, it hinders the dual blessings of being a recipient and valuing a potential giver. Jesus had no problems with receiving, and taught other 'hosts' this attitude too, as we see in the final vignette of Luke chapter ten.

⁹⁶ Ortiz. (1975). p. 48.

⁹⁷ Bosch D, 1991, p.91

5.1.3. Jesus the Welcome Guest of Mary and Martha (10:38-42)

The chapter continues with the account of Jesus and the two sisters. Mittlestadt describes the hospitality in the account:

According to hospitality custom, Mary and Martha open their home to the traveling Jesus and, as honourable hosts, take care of Jesus their guest. As Martha works hard (and justifiably so), she implores Jesus to insist that her sister Mary participate in the service of hospitality. In an affectionate manner, Jesus not only praises Mary for choosing to be nurtured by him, but invites Martha to settle down and receive his hospitality.⁹⁸

Here Jesus is receiving hospitality of the sort which the seventy(-two) were sent out to rely on in Luke 10:1-24. This passage has been read in various ways, contrasting the notions of being with Jesus or being active for him. 'The learning of Mary and the doing of Martha belong together'⁹⁹ as McCarthy and Hochschild put it. There is much to be learned from this episode about the relationship between contemplation and activism, but our focus here is on the idea of being a recipient of welcome. Jesus commanded it of his disciples, and here we witness it.

Jesus is the grateful guest but turns conventions around, as the guest and host roles are interwoven. Jesus is a guest but he is still the teacher, and as such he appears to expect to engage his hosts in conversation. Jesus honours Mary, allowing her to take the posture of a learner and seems less interested in the typical tasks traditionally associated with hospitality. We don't hear him chide Mary for not hosting properly, but he rebukes Martha for worrying excessively about these things. In his example of receiving hospitality we see that Jesus is happy to be a guest, but unconventionally he

⁹⁸ Mittlestadt. (2014). p. 136.

⁹⁹ McCarthy & Hochschild. (2014). p. 69.

does not remain uncritical of his hosts when required, something we witness as he is hosted by a Pharisee in Luke 11:37-54 and also in the following account from Luke 14.

5.2. Luke Chapter 14. The Parable of the Great Feast

It is significant that the parable of the Feast is told in a setting of table fellowship, with the tension of the interaction with the Pharisees contrasted with the generosity and grace shown by Jesus in healing the man with dropsy (verses 2-4) and the story of the feast which Jesus tells. With Bosch (1991) we see that,

The Jesus Luke introduces to his readers is somebody who brings the outsider, the stranger, and the enemy home and gives him and her, to the chagrin of the 'righteous', a place of honour at the banquet in the reign of God.¹⁰⁰

As Pohl puts it, 'God's guest list includes a disconcerting number of poor and broken people, those who appear to bring little to any gathering except their need'.¹⁰¹ In other words, the Christian is to offer generous welcome to the 'least' without concern of benefit. Pohl continues, 'Just as God would welcome all to the feast in the Kingdom of God, so earthly hosts ought to open their tables to those in need and without the ability to repay the kindness.'¹⁰²

As Craig Evans and James Sanders (2001) propose, the Lukan Jesus' priority of table fellowship and hospitality creates connections back to the Hebrew Scriptures, providing a glimpse of the messianic nature of the Old Testament.¹⁰³ Jesus draws the hearers' attention to the eschatological significance of the parable. The three excuses given in

¹⁰⁰ Bosch. (1991). p. 109.

¹⁰¹ Pohl. (1998). p. 16.

¹⁰² Pohl. (1998). p. 23.

¹⁰³ Evans & Sanders. (2001). p. 112.

Luke 14, (having recently bought a field and needing to inspect it, recently bought oxen and wanting to test them, and having just got married) are to be understood as echoes of the exemptions for fighting in war given in Deuteronomy 20:5-8.¹⁰⁴ Understood in this light, the invitation is for a victory banquet, a feast to celebrate the subjugation of the enemy. There is a suggestion that the host's anger at those who refuse his invitation stems from their unbelief in the victory of God in Christ and his coming Kingdom. To refuse the invitation is an affront, to welcome the one who comes in the name of the Lord brings blessing, as the following account of Zacchaeus illustrates.

5.3. Luke Chapter 19 — Zacchaeus the Host

Jesus takes the lead in his encounter with Zacchaeus, becoming the guest, inviting himself in. Jesus is the one initially receiving hospitality. This would have broken conventions and caused a stir because as the *chief* tax collector Zacchaeus was viewed as one with 'perpetual ritual impurity due to his immoral and traitorous lifestyle'.¹⁰⁵ Craig Blomberg favours the most popular reading of Zacchaeus, that he was indeed immoral and in need of salvation in spite of some interpretations which assert that the text does not necessarily imply this, and that his 'reparations' were in fact a reflection of his usual behaviour. We would agree that the narrative does not allow this. The story is of Jesus who is the 'guest of a sinner' (verse 7). Zacchaeus is a changed man after their meal, saying, 'today salvation has come to this house'¹⁰⁶ as he repents, promising to repay those he has wronged. As so often, the 'salvation' brought by Luke's Jesus is a multi-

¹⁰⁴ Evans & Sanders. (2001). p. 111.

¹⁰⁵ Blomberg. (2009). p. 52.

¹⁰⁶ Luke 19:8

faceted rescue, more than political, personal or 'spiritual'. Here it is marked by 'acceptance, fellowship [and] new life'.¹⁰⁷

The roles of honoured guest and honoured host are important to note in this account. Zacchaeus has been honoured to receive his guest and in this case the host has nothing to bring but hospitality. In this, Jesus honoured Zacchaeus, allowing him to be a giver, and Zacchaeus did not refuse the invitation to be a host. As it turns out, this host was transformed; he was challenged and inspired to grow in generosity.

Pohl emphasises the importance of honour in this account highlighting the empowering role of being a host; 'the host role affirms that what you have and what you offer are valuable',¹⁰⁸ and again, 'to be willing to be someone's guest is an expression of respect for them'.¹⁰⁹ There are connections here with the insight from Trinitarian theology which we will address later, and explore the ideas of the hospitality of the Godhead. The Son takes the posture of guest, the 'Son of Man [who] came to seek and save what was lost' (Luke 19:10).

In terms of a missional practice, we may note the importance of allowing others to express hospitality in their own way, an insight which Pohl shares especially through her experience of working with refugees from cultures where welcome is a fundamental

¹⁰⁷ Bosch. (1991). p. 108.

¹⁰⁸ Pohl. (1998). p. 121.

¹⁰⁹ Pohl & Heuertz. (2010). p. 82.

practice. For example, it is something of a truism that Middle Eastern cultures are much more attuned to hospitality as a part of every day life than we are in the West.

5.4. Summary: Luke's Jesus — the Hospitable Guest

In this section we have highlighted the hospitality of Jesus in Luke's gospel. We note how the role of the guest is magnified; it has value and honour and is a position which Jesus was glad to be in. These findings are a contrast to the traditional and contemporary understandings of hospitality in which the recipient is the lesser because of his or her needy state. We have seen the vulnerable position of the seventy(-two), and are reminded that Jesus calls his disciples to be received as guests in strange places.

Andrew Francis argues that hospitality is biblically mandated,

Generating hospitality strengthens relationships, builds friendships and can help to nurture Christian discipleship. As a practice, Jesus is our exemplar and it is biblically advocated. It is not culturally bound and is easily contextualized. Hospitality is an everyday practice, which can be offered to friend and stranger.¹¹⁰

We would agree wholeheartedly with the sentiment of Francis' statement above.

However, following our investigation of Jesus' hospitality in Luke, we would now argue that it is not so much in the *offering* of hospitality to friend or stranger but significantly more so in *receiving* it that we have Jesus as our exemplar. This is not to discount Paul's petitions to practice it, (Romans 12:13) or to 'do good to all people' (Galatians 6:10) or the requirement that elders be hospitable (e.g. 1 Timothy 3:2). It would appear,

¹¹⁰ Francis. (2012). p. 56.

however, that these acts of hospitality — and the willingness to be available, to open one's house — are actually practised in a context of mutual welcome, within a culture where the guest/host roles are reciprocal. We would agree that Roxburgh and other missional practitioners read Luke 10 well when they see in it the charge for the church to be a people who go into the neighbourhood — and new neighbourhoods — prepared to be the guest and not always the host, ready to be vulnerable and relying on the presence of the Holy Spirit. Roxburgh is right to urge the church out of its passivity, but we would argue that there is more. Having looked at the ways in which the missional church has used Luke, we see potential for a stronger articulation of the role of the guest and also a more secure footing on which to base a theology of hospitality. In the next section we will address some of these issues.

6. Rooting Hospitality in the *Missio Dei*

We have highlighted some of the ways the missional movement has approached hospitality. However, there are also other views of hospitality, firmly in the missional tradition, but with a much clearer *missio Dei* focus, such as those articulated by Van Gelder and Zscheile. Their view exemplifies the missional critique of the modern 'attractational emphasis in favour of an incarnational approach to the world'.¹¹¹ A move from attractational church to incarnational mission is a common thread for missional literature, but Van Gelder and Zscheile's reasoning is not that this is a pragmatic step but that it is rooted in the heart of the *missio Dei* and in the life of the Godhead. Similarly, Amos Yong proposes a direct link between the mission of God and a focus on the Other,

*Missio Dei is a stranger-centred theology... the Christian mission is nothing more or less than our participation in the hospitality of God.*¹¹²

6.1. Hospitality and the theology of the Trinity

Bosch writes, with respect to the origin of mission,

*Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is the fountain of sending love. This is the deepest source of mission. It is impossible to penetrate deeper still; there is mission because God loves people.*¹¹³

¹¹¹ Van Gelder & Zscheile. (2011) p. 130.

¹¹² Yong. (2008). p. 131.

¹¹³ Bosch. (1991). p. 400.

This point has become axiomatic in missional leadership, and yet there is a case for doing what Bosch states as impossible, and going deeper still to discover the source of mission, in a step which holds strong implications for the practice of Christian hospitality. John Flett makes this move in 'The Witness of God' (2010), his detailed treatment of the *missio Dei*. He argues contra Bosch that there is not only mission 'because God loves people'¹¹⁴ but because God *is* love. Because the nature of the Trinity is one of mutual love and witness to God's glory, so too the mission of the church is to reflect that nature of God, and to participate in God's love.

*God humbles himself to be the God of the human (Phil. 2:6-11), and this is the glory of God. The Father's sending of the Son in the power of the Spirit is not merely remedial work for a fallen world. God's act is not out of any contingency, even if that be human sin. His redemptive mission is God's self-declaration of who he is in himself from all eternity. In this determination to be with and for the human, the apostolic mission belongs properly to the eternal life of God.*¹¹⁵

Flett uses *witness* as a category to dispel the notion that acts of mission are merely temporary. For if witness and worship are intertwined, then both retain eschatological permanence. As Markham summarises,

*This move expresses the missionary character of God as an adjectival reality, rather than an interim necessity. God's economic mission is to share, with creation, the eternal missional life and glory he shares with himself.*¹¹⁶

For Flett the important question is not therefore, 'what need will there be for mission in the consummated Kingdom?' but 'how will we witness in that Kingdom?' In a similar

¹¹⁴ Bosch. (1991). p. 400.

¹¹⁵ Flett. (2010). p. 212.

¹¹⁶ Markham. (2013).

manner, Zizioulas' trinitarian theology is adamant that the essence of the Godhead is one of participation, community, welcome and relationship,

*The being of God is a relational being: without the concept of communion it would not be possible to speak of the being of God.... The Holy Trinity is a primordial ontological concept and not a notion which is added to the divine substance or rather which follows it.... The substance of God, 'God, has no ontological content, no true being, apart from communion.'*¹¹⁷

In using these trinitarian perspectives as a lens to bring our view of the guest into focus, we can assert that the practice of Christian hospitality — welcoming the other — not only deeply reflects the character of God but it is also anchored in the very essence of God which is one of relationship. With this in mind, mission becomes something which the church is invited to partake in, joining the *missio Dei* as co-witnesses of God.

So the basis for Christian mission is not, at essence, simply a response to the fact that 'God is a missionary God'¹¹⁸, but a reflection and a participation in the life of God, for, 'in the incarnation, God, the great host of the universe, comes to rely on the world's hospitality.'¹¹⁹ This is a provocative statement, implied also in Pohl's assertion that,

*Jesus welcomes and needs welcome; Jesus requires that followers depend on and provide hospitality.*¹²⁰

We are beginning now to see that hospitality is emerging as a vital to the heart of Christian mission. Having placed hospitality and the role of the guest as foundational to

¹¹⁷ Zizioulas. (1989). p. 17.

¹¹⁸ Bosch. (1991). p. 400.

¹¹⁹ Van Gelder & Zscheile. (2011). p. 130.

¹²⁰ Pohl. (1999). p. 17.

theology, we will now examine some of the ways in which the church has hindered this view of hospitality.

6.2. Hospitality and Power

A significant barrier to the church seeking to be the guest is an understanding of power which is based in Christendom. The relationship between faith and politics contributed to the creation of a status quo wherein the church, at the centre of society and buttressed by it, could enjoy a relative security, at times with absolute dominance over culture. This led to excesses and abuses of power, and one resultant factor is the Western Christendom mindset, imagining that the host role of the church is the normative one. Paternalistic attitudes inherited by the church have proven difficult to be rid of. It has been noted that post Christendom is not the same as a return to pre-Christendom (Murray: 2004) and that therefore a new framework and theology is needed to navigate this new season.

This is true also for a post Christendom understanding of power and the recovery of the church's stance as a guest in the world. Contributions from post Christendom are helpful as the church charts a course through this unknown territory. One issue is that hospitality in contemporary imagination borrows heavily from the hierarchy of Christendom, reinforcing the ideas of the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'. The language of host and guest in our culture is laden with notions of power and hierarchy, the dualities line up together like polar opposites: giver-receiver, and need-supplier, become synonymous with stronger-weaker and richer-poorer.

The church has become so accustomed to having everything of privilege, that to be sent out almost empty-handed as the seventy(-two) were, feels wrong for many in the church, out of keeping with the role and position they feel they should be theirs by right. And yet, returning to Luke, the seventy(-two), empty-handed as they were, were bearers and heralds of the Kingdom; they came with something marvellous to offer in their being with the community. It is towards this understanding which missional theology attempts to move the church.

Shepherd (2014) reminds us of Zizioulas' contention that power and hierarchy do not necessarily have to be violent and as such can be accepted as beneficial.¹²¹ So, for Zizioulas in particular, roles within the Trinity do not mean superiority of value or being, but rather that deferring to the Other is the basis of true relationship. Western views of the Trinity would caution that one cannot assume too much about the nature of God from his revelation of his acts—that we should not extrapolate out from God's acts to his being—but the categories of witness and welcome discussed here do provoke much reflection.

We have presented a case for the grounding of hospitality more significantly in the *missio Dei*, and argued that the role of guest can be afforded much more significance through deeper integration in missional theology. We have shown that current missional practice has not yet fully articulated the place of the guest, but also that notable experiments are being made from which the missional movement may learn new practices. If the missional conversation could articulate some of these ideas to local

¹²¹ Shepherd. (2014). p. 187.

congregations then they could have a significant impact on the church's understanding of its role as guest. We turn now to our concluding discussion, drawing together some implications for missional leaders.

7. Recommendations for Missional Leadership

We hope that we have drawn attention to the need for an integrated view of hospitality, rooted more firmly in the theology of *missio Dei*, more deeply fixed in rich trinitarian theology where the interaction of the Godhead is a guest/host relationship of mutual welcome.

We have drawn from the example of Christ in Scripture that being a guest is a posture to be sought out and embraced. It is a crucial place of vulnerability and depth of relationship, to be enjoyed for the vibrancy which it brings to life.

7.1. Applications for Missional Leadership and Praxis

An implication of this dissertation for missional leaders is that to follow the example of Jesus in the gospels is for the church to recover the vitality of being a sent people, as is the call of missional theology. This will require the practical recovery of the habits of being sent and the rediscovery of the priority of being guests. If the church is 'sent' then it must be either received or rejected, reminding us of Hjalmarson's words, 'it turns out that mission looks a lot like life: like hospitality.'¹²² The people of God must prepare to be guests, and to relish the opportunity and challenge of being received as strangers. We have argued, with the help of the current missional conversation, that the attractational mode of church really only helps Christians to grow in confidence on their *own* turf or in a very controlled environment.

¹²² Hjalmarson. (2013). p. 107.

Our hope is that this project indicates a way forward, or at least a clear direction of travel. We have brought into conversation many who are headed the same way. Our determination is this: that a stronger theological grounding of the role of guest can provide a way for the church to recover the potential of hospitality as a missional practice.

The church should learn to communicate the dignity of the guest, to revive in the imagination of the church the place of being a guest. There could be several applications of this:

First, we may see the church more inclined to receive the other. If those in need are viewed as equals, as co-bearers of the *Imago Dei*, then the step toward the other is made easier. On a broad, global scale the church must step up in its reception of the outsider, particularly with regard to the current refugee crisis and migration of so many people into Europe. On a smaller scale local churches have the opportunity to reimagine their outreach and witness in their communities, being more aware of the value of physical and metaphorical hospitality in their theology and practice.

Second, the church, even in its current attractional-host role, will have a stronger understanding of what it means to be a guest, with all the vulnerability and dignity which that entails, and will become a better and more gracious host.

Third, a greater appreciation for the role of the guest in theology should equip the church to be more confident in being the guest, and to embrace the role as Jesus and his first disciples did.

Fourth, the church will realise the 'signs of the times', with regard to the burgeoning post Christendom era, that the church may no longer hold a place of privilege and traditional dominance in society. Instead of being part of a world-view at the centre of culture, the church will find itself at the margins. The challenge and invitation of post Christendom is to embrace the world where many are at the margins. There are many contrasting, positive responses to post Christendom, but a greater understanding of the church as becoming marginalised and a guest in society is a common thread.

7.2. Potential for Further Research

There are several possible avenues for future research into missional hospitality. Two such methods are highlighted here as suggestions to test the findings of this dissertation through practical case-based investigation.

7.2.1. Oral History Interviewing

Oral History Interviewing holds much potential for surfacing the untold stories from within a particular group, for example a local church community. Many missional organizations work with certain practices over a period of time, and the telling of the stories over the course of time could provide some welcome depth to a very personal and person-centred practice. As Alessandro Portelli sets out, oral history is able to 'convey the sense of fluidity, of unfinishedness, of an inexhaustible work in progress,'¹²³ all of which seems very applicable to Christian ministry!

¹²³ Portelli in Abrams. (2010). p. 1.

7.2.2. Longitudinal Research

Some types of research provide just a snapshot of a situation, but developments in practice, attitudes and approaches to hospitality could be tracked if a study is conducted over time. An example of this could be to research the hospitable responses of Christians in the UK to the current and ongoing refugee crisis. What effect is this situation having on Christian theologies of hospitality? How effective is the church, and particularly the missional movement, at working with refugees? These and other questions could be best addressed with the long view over a period of time.

8. Conclusions

This dissertation set out to challenge the church to rethink what hospitality is, to reevaluate how it offers and receives hospitality in ways which are faithful to its missional witness, and to rediscover what it means to be a guest on a cultural scale and also on local levels in practical ways. Will we learn to listen to our neighbour? Will we learn to make room for the stranger? Will we take on the role of the guest?

Many questions have arisen through this project. There is a broad and resounding agreement across space, time and the theological spectrum that hospitality is essential to Christian life and witness. However, it is no contradiction to state that despite this agreement there exists a breadth of contrasting ideas as to the very nature and purpose of hospitality itself. There are indeed very many differing viewpoints and a wide range of nuanced emphases have been welcomed into our present discussion.

But as Christine Pohl rightly notes, 'the work of hospitality is rarely finished'.¹²⁴ There is an ongoing need to search out new ways to practice this hospitality, to make habit and *habitus* of our response.

'The guest brings a blessing' says an old proverb. The missional movement has begun to rediscover the potential of hospitality, and opportunities surely abound for the church to relearn how it feels to be a guest in the neighbourhood, and to rediscover the

¹²⁴ Pohl. (1999). p. 170.

missional potential of becoming true receivers of hospitality. We have highlighted the need for the people of God to become more confident in being recipients of hospitality, to become accustomed to being the guest. Where the church understands the centrality of hospitality—both its attitudes and actions—it will have a clearer lens through which to understand the *missio Dei*. And when the church adopts the attitude of the guest, it will have much to contribute, rediscovering new and old ways to join in God’s mission.

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