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Dynamic Expansion: An Exploration of Hospitality and its Application To Foster Children and Families in Crisis

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DYNAMIC EXPANSION: AN EXPLORATION OF HOSPITALITY AND ITS APPLICATION TO FOSTER CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN CRISIS

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To my sons: Jamil, Jahlil, and Jaycee

Our society seems to be increasingly full of fearful, defensive, aggressive people anxiously clinging to their property and inclined to look at their surrounding world with suspicion, always expecting an enemy to suddenly appear, intrude and do harm. But still—that is our vocation: to convert the *hostis* into a *hospes*, the enemy into a guest and to create the free and fearless space where brotherhood and sisterhood can be formed and fully experienced.

— Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out*

Contents

ABSTRACT

The concept of hospitality has many applications. This dissertation is an exploration of hospitality using the American foster system as an example of how hospitality can be applied to an at-risk group.

Chapter 1 looks at the state foster care. There is an exploration of the two main reasons children enter foster care: neglect and drug offenses. Lastly, there is a look at the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study and how its results are contributing factors to the current state of foster care in the United States.

Chapters 2 and 3 delve into the concept of hospitality, what it is and how it is applied. Chapter 2 focuses on the biblical and historical roots of hospitality within the Christian faith. Chapter 3 focuses on how hospitality has been conceived and applied outside of Christianity in postmodern philosophy and other religions.

Empathy is the subject of Chapter 4. This omnibus chapter looks at empathy theory, reflection as an empathetic skill, and how empathy can be restored as a primary characteristic within evangelicalism.

Chapter 5 looks at volunteerism as the American approach to hospitality. The history of volunteerism, its challenges, how to encourage it, and why churches are an ideal environment for inspiring it are all covered.

Finally, in Chapter 6 the threads of the previous chapters are tied together. The application of the hospitality cycle within a ministry context is broken down and application steps are provided. Lastly, there is a discussion of how the use of decentralized networks could lead to a mesh of hospitable care networks capable of

supporting and connecting communities together. The hope of all these steps is to help families in crisis avoid becoming part of the foster care system, thus slowing the rate of children entering the system.

CHAPTER 1:
THE STATE OF FOSTER CARE

Carrie's parents are struggling. Her dad injured himself at work lifting a crate and became addicted to the Oxycontin he was prescribed, then moved on to heroin. When the disability insurance ran out, things got rough. Carrie's mom, Megan, is doing her best to keep things together, but her job at the store is not supplying enough to pay all the bills. A couple of times a week, Carrie and her brother go without breakfast or dinner because there just is not enough food. Initially it was small meals, but then Megan realized she was going to have to make hard choices. Now they eat a few larger meals a week rather than several small ones. Thankfully, the family qualifies for free meals at their school, which means Carrie and her brother get breakfast and lunch – on school days at least.

Carrie's teachers have noticed a decline in her schoolwork and ability to focus in class. The telltale signs of a child in distress are present, even if Carrie does not realize it. Out of an abundance of concern her teachers have reported their concern to Child Protective Services (CPS). A meeting with CPS is set to happen in the next couple of weeks.

Every so often, a group of people visits the after-school program at Carrie's school to distribute backpacks of food to children in need. Carrie is always happy when they come because there is usually a treat for her in the backpack. Also, in the backpack is a brochure with services for families in need. It turns out the group of people is from a local church trying to help families that are struggling. Work training, Narcotics Anonymous (NA), and after school care are among the services offered. In the past, Megan has ignored these pamphlets, but on a whim, she decides to go to the church and begin one of the work training programs After a couple of weeks and a bit of nagging, Carrie's dad joins Megan at the church. The NA program is exactly what he needs to help him kick the habit. The church also offers childcare for parents who need it, so Carrie and her brother have fun, playing and getting help with their homework, while their parents attend individual sessions.

After several months in the work training program, Megan is ready to interview for a new job. Another church in town has a clothing closet that helps her with a professional looking outfit for the interview. Yet a third church has an afterschool program the kids can go to while Megan interviews for her new job. Dad got his ninety-day chip for being clean and sober a few weeks later. Megan does great at her interview and gets the job as an administrative assistant at a company downtown. It pays almost twice as much as the minimum wage job she had at the store, and it comes with regular hours. Now that dad is clean, and he has the support system to stay that way, he can get a job and is once again able to help contribute to the family. Carrie and her brother are now eating three meals a day – everyday. Things are still tight but getting better. The possibility of the kids being brought into the foster system, separating the family, is no longer a constant concern.

This story is an idealized snapshot of the way that churches could engage with their communities. The main component of this sort of engagement is that churches are going to the community rather than expecting the community to come to them. As the United States continues to see church attendance drop,[1] it is important for the church,

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[1] "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace," Pew Research Center, last modified June 9, 2020. https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/.

particularly Evangelicalism, to return to its roots in social activism.[2] One area where this social activism can find a footing is in being a source of hope to families in crisis. While this story is idealized, its components are not unreachable, and it is possible that we could see this ideal realized in the United States.

It is important to acknowledge that the enemy in this story is neither foster care nor adoption. The enemy is the unnecessary separation of a family that could thrive if given the opportunity. This fictional family finds themselves facing poverty because of a system that is unable to support their health care needs and an economy that is built upon paying workers less than a living wage. Massive systemic change is necessary to prevent these sorts of familial crises. Unfortunately, the United States has shown itself to be unwilling or unable to provide the sort of drive necessary to bring about that level of systemic change. While these conditions are undesirable, they do present the church with the opportunity to be the safety net families in crisis need, preventing the unnecessary separations that are the enemy of our story.

The church has the opportunity to intervene and assist families before Child Protective Services (CPS) becomes involved. This opportunity is dependent upon understanding the width and breadth of biblical hospitality. In later chapters I will explore both what hospitality has looked like in the church and what some of the leading theorists on the topic have to say, but the essence is that hospitable hearts will look for and create space where space is needed. Churches in the United States are blessed with an abundance of physical space, much of which sits empty and unused for the majority of

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[2] David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 2015), 16-17.

the week. Finding ways to use this space to help families in crisis is a way churches can open their doors and be hospitable to their communities. In chapter six I will examine possible solutions that can be undertaken by the church to assist families in crisis and support foster and adoptive families.

This paper is an exploration of hospitality, the act of welcoming the other. Hospitality is a broad concept that can be applied to many different areas within the church. The paper approaches the application of hospitality through the vector of the foster system and families in crisis but could easily use areas like homelessness, human trafficking, or even earth care instead. While the application area is foster care and families in crisis the focus is the discipline of hospitality.

Foster Care Now

Every year in the United States, approximately half a million children are engaged by CPS across the various state-level organizations. At the end of the October 2019, there were 437,283 children in CPS systems.[3] This number has been stable over the course of the past five years, with a variance of less than ten percent. A significant reason for this consistency is the capacity of the various CPS systems to handle that many children. Across the United States, CPS systems are underfunded,[4] and consequently understaffed, for the quantity of work that needs to be done. When the decision to remove children from a family is debatable rather than clear, the children are often left in the home

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[3] U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau, *Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) data for FY 2018,* (Washington, DC, 2019).

[4] "Cuts to Child Welfare Force States to Spend Smarter," Governing, accessed July 11, 2020, https://www.governing.com/topics/health-human-services/gov-cuts-child-welfare-force-states-spend-smarter.html.

because the CPS system lacks capacity. State CPS systems are overwhelmed with children. As an example, in the State of Washington last year there were 9,187 children in the system with only 5,131 foster homes available.[5] When there are not foster homes available, children will often end up in group homes until a foster family can receive the child.

In truth, CPS systems are over-performing when we consider budgetary and regulatory limitations. Unfortunately, the amount of work is causing a significant amount of employee turnover within the system. According to the social workers interviewed for this paper, the field faces a severe lack of qualified workers— especially workers with experience. The system is bogged down with legal responsibilities, which instills a fear of being sued in the case workers. This fear leads to an overemphasis on documentation and an overly conservative approach to the process of engaging with families. The interviewees consulted for this paper indicated that the focus on documentation and the hesitancy about intervention leads to burnout for social workers and an average time with the service of about two years. Without enough experienced social workers in the system, problems are not solved as efficiently as they would be if there were more experienced workers available.[6]

While the foster care population is one tenth of a percent of the population of the country, its impacts upon the culture in general are significant, raising a question about how public health is impacted by CPS. How are the number of children in the foster system and those being provided services affecting the health of the communities around

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[5] "Who Cares: A National Count of Foster Homes and Families," accessed July 11, 2020, https://www.fostercarecapacity.com/states/washington.

[6] Jennifer King and Lindsey Canley, interview by author, Lakewood, WA, March 20, 2019.

them? Politically this question often comes down to dollars and cents: are we getting the return on investment we think we should be getting from money spent on CPS? While inefficient spending is something to watch out for, the question should instead be focused on whether the children involved are seeing the best possible health outcomes. The question of health is more complicated than one might think.

> The meaning of [health] is contested at various levels, suggesting possible problems when people unquestioningly debate it, or seem to debate it when in fact they are conceiving quite different things. The key point, then, is to note that we must be prepared to scrutinize the way the term health is used, to ensure we understand what it means in a given case and what sort of weight is being given to it.[7]

Children who are being maltreated face numerous mental and physical challenges, requiring more resources. Many of the required resources are ancillary to the ones being provided by CPS. For instance, children who are not eating enough often find it difficult to focus at school, which then requires that they get special help so they do not fall behind in their schoolwork. Malnutrition of impoverished children is what brought about the free and reduced lunch program to public schools in the United States. Because these services are part of the school budget, the money being spent to feed children cannot be spent on other services. One would think that the free and reduced lunch program would offset the services needed for malnourished children, which to an extent it does, but because of the situations many of these children face, they also need more counseling and academic services. Much like the CPS system, schools in lower income areas are also underfunded. The problem snowballs because the more services these

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[7] John Coggon, "What Makes Health Public?" Introduction. in *What Makes Health Public?: A Critical Evaluation of Moral, Legal, and Political Claims in Public Health*, 1–8. Cambridge Bioethics and Law. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 13.

children need, the less money the service providers have on hand for other services. When the system is unable to support children with what they need to be healthy, it damages their mental well-being, and becomes a public health problem. Social workers are left to decide what is in the best interest of the child: to keep them in their home, where they are facing neglect, and try to provide the services needed, or to remove them from that home and place them into another home that can provide for them.

Children who have been removed from their biological families but have not been placed in a home where they were able to attach to a family group face additional challenges. Once these children, now adults, graduate out of CPS jurisdiction, their prospects are bleak. Sixty percent of males will end up with a criminal record and seven out of ten females will be pregnant before turning twenty-one. Only a quarter of children who age out will graduate high school or earn a GED, and only three percent of them will attain a college degree. Half of them will develop a substance dependency.[8] Each cohort that ages out will cost the public an estimated eight billion dollars over the course of their lifetimes.[9]

Clearly there is an economic consequence to these children aging out of the system, but the monetary cost is less important than the emotional damage done to these children. The older a child, the less likely they are to be adopted or even taken in by a long-term foster family. There are multiple biases that are associated with this phenomenon, such as the idea that if the child has not found a home yet they must have

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[8] "What Happens When Kids Age Out of Foster Care?," Children's Home Society of Minnesota, accessed July 11, 2020, https://chlss.org/blog/infographic-what-happens-when-kids-age-out-of-foster-care/.

[9] Jennifer Burnett, "The Cost of Aging Out of the Foster Care System", *The Counsel of State Governments*, October 30, 2015, https://knowledgecenter.csg.org/kc/content/cost-aging-out-foster-care-system.

significant problems. Even though this is generally not true, it is still a factor in why these children are not placed. Attaching to a family – adopted or foster – helps children to be rooted enough to find success outside of the home. It also provides them a level of self-confidence and connection with community; as a result, they are less likely to behave maliciously toward society. There are at least two possible solutions to the emotional damage done to children aging out of the system: either we stop removing children from their homes (or alleviate the need to remove them), or we need to have more foster families who are willing to, or better yet desire to, take in older children.

Removal vs. Services

The question of whether to remove or provide services for these children has been hotly debated for a long time. For most of the history of CPS in the United States, the debate has revolved around the question of the best interest of the child. The "best interest of the child" standard began with English Common Law[10] and has extended into our current day in the United States. No generally agreed upon definition of the best interest of the child exists. The question is necessarily vague, in that every situation where removal of children is considered is different. At the same time, it seems that there should be a minimum threshold by which the best interest standard is invoked. It could be argued that the best interest of a child is not being met because their parents are West Ham United fans, and we all know that will result in nothing but pain for the child. Since that is a decidedly silly reason to remove a child from a family, some base level of endangerment to the child's well-being should exist before removal. This takes us back to

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[10] Sarah A. Font and Elizabeth T. Gershoff, *Foster Care and Best Interests of the Child: Integrating Research, Policy, and Practice,* (Cham, Switzerland: Springer, 2020), 22

the question of the child's health which, as previously discussed, is a difficult topic to precisely define.

Font and Gershoff argue for a nuanced approach to child removal based upon the environment where they are most likely to thrive. Children have the best chance for optimum development when they receive consistent, safe, and responsive care from parents or parental figures, and have their basic physiological and emotional needs met. Attainment of developmental milestones allows children to grow into productive and well-adjusted adults. Thus, it is reasonable to suggest that a child's best interests are served by decisions that increase the likelihood they will be reared in a stable, high-quality environment headed by adults who promote their well-being.[11]

The challenge facing social workers and investigators should be whether the parents of a child are able to meet the standard stated above. In some cases, it is clear that the parents will not be able to reach this standard and removing the child(ren) is best. Forty-nine percent of children who are separated from their families are brought in after more than one investigation that proved maltreatment by a parent.[12] In cases where the capabilities of the parent are unclear, the choice becomes more difficult. Social workers must be futurists rather than observers, and a lot of the ability to make predictions about the future is based upon experience. As noted previously, the high rate of turnover within CPS means the worker pool is lacking in experience. Recent changes in federal law have sought to prevent children from entering the system, instead favoring in-home services to

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[11] Ibid., 22.

[12] Ibid., 27.

help keep families together. The Family First Prevention Services Act[13] (FFPSA) seeks to reframe the role of the CPS system away from child removal and toward care for families. The goal of the FFPSA is laudable; it is desirable to see families stay together and receive needed services.[14] Although seemingly a slight rhetorical shift, the implications are that, to be deemed a success, FFPSA need only decrease the foster care population, not increase child safety or well-being. As was stated earlier, foster care is not the enemy, but the FFPSA treats foster care as if it is the enemy. Unfortunately, when the FFPSA prescribed services are voluntary, there is a low rate of completion by high-risk families.[15] This raises the question of whether it is better to force these families into services they will likely not complete rather than separate the family, even for a short time, in order to provide the parent(s) and children with the opportunity to complete the work necessary. Separation is, and should be, a difficult choice but sometimes it is the best choice for a family.

The percentage of Black and Native American children in the foster system is nearly double their representation in the general population. This has led many people to suggest bias within the system. Some research shows that child mistreatment by Black parents occurs at a rate nearly double to that of white parents.[16] The "colorblind removal process" to prevent bias in removals has shown some promise in lessening the disparity of placements for these populations. Investigators present their findings, removing all

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[13] "H.R.253 - Family First Prevention Services Act of 2017," Congress.gov, accessed July 11, 2020, https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/253/.

[14] Font and Gershoff, 39.

[15] Ibid., 26.

[16] Ibid., 50.

indicators of race, to a second team which then recommends whether to remove the child(ren). Even with the colorblind removal process, children are removed from Black families at a rate twice what they represent in the general population.[17] One possible explanation for this phenomenon is the rate of poverty within Black and Native American communities; both groups have poverty rates double those of white communities,[18] and there is a link between poverty and child maltreatment.[19] It is reasonable to conclude that the high rate of Black and Native American children within CPS can be associated with the high rate of poverty within those communities. This is only one possible reason for this disparity, and research continues.

Major Causes of Removal

There are typically multiple reasons for removing a child from their home. The two most common reasons are neglect (62% of cases) and parental drug abuse (36% of cases). All other reasons are cited in less than 15 percent of cases.[20] Neglect and parental drug abuse come with a serious set of consequences for the children.

Neglect

Much like love, neglect is hard to define, but you know it when you see it.

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[17] Ibid., 51.

[18] "Poverty Rate by Race/Ethnicity," Kaiser Family Foundation, accessed July 11, 2020, https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/poverty-rate-by-raceethnicity.

[19] Paul Bywaters, Lisa Bunting, Gavin Davidson, Jennifer Hanratty, Will Mason, Claire McCartan, and Nicole Steils, *The Relationship between Poverty, Child Abuse and Neglect: An Evidence Review*, (Joseph Roundtree Foundation, 2016), 22.

[20] AFCARS, 2.

> Within the literature, it seems a universal understanding that abuse is characterized by an act done to a child, regardless of intent and physical or psychological consequences, whereas researchers propose that neglect is related to an absence of appropriate stimulation by the caregiver, resulting in a failure to meet the needs of a child.[21]

To put it in theological terms, neglect is a sin of omission while abuse is a sin of commission. A major difference between abuse and neglect is that, while abuse can be done by anyone within the household, neglect is primarily associated with the caregiver(s).[22] A child can be removed because a sibling is abusing them, but that same sibling cannot be the cause of neglect. In order for the child to be removed from the home, evidence of neglect by the parent(s) or guardian(s) would have to be proven.

There are many distinct subtypes of neglect, each with its own set of challenges. Some of the most common subtypes are emotional, physical, medical, educational, nutritional, psychological, and environmental. Because each state CPS system has their own definitions of neglect, not all of them observe all these subtypes. "The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services assesses for and identifies neglect as a general category, only delineating medical neglect and other child maltreatment."[23] Nonetheless, researchers have identified each of these as possibilities to help better treat the resulting effects.

Emotional neglect is the failure to provide adequate affection or emotional support to the child, which results in behavioral or mental illness. Physical neglect is failing to meet the physical needs of the child. This can often be combined with

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[21] Nicole A. Sciarrino, Tyler Elizabeth Hernandez and Jennifer Davidtz, *Understanding Child Neglect: Biopsychosocial Perspectives* (New York: Springer 2018), 2.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Ibid., 4.

nutritional neglect, though there are situations in which nutritional neglect is a distinct subtype. Medical neglect is the failure to provide adequate medical care.[24]

Some causes of neglect – like poverty – may seem obvious, but others are more difficult to pinpoint, making identification of neglect more challenging. This is particularly distressing because the long-term effects of neglect can be difficult to treat. Neglect rarely happens in a vacuum and is usually associated with another form of inappropriate behavior like drug abuse, physical abuse, or domestic violence. Because of the way it pairs with other forms of maltreatment, neglect is the most common reason for removing a child; it contributes to nearly all other reasons for removal.

Research into neglect is difficult because it is the absence of something. Objective research would be cruel, so researchers are restricted to interviews with both the offenders and those who have experienced neglect. Additionally, research is almost exclusively done with mothers. Mothers are most commonly the primary care givers and far too often there is no father in the picture. (Abandonment, by either parent but most often by fathers, itself is a type of neglect, but research into it is typically done outside the framework of neglect.) Researchers have identified two consistent risk factors for predicting maternal neglect: past neglect and less (or less positive) interaction between mother and children.[25] When researchers observed parenting pairs, they found a high correlation between neglect of children and couples that speak harshly with each other or exhibit a lack of cooperation with each other.[26]

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[24] Ibid., 3.

[25] Julie A. Schumacher, Amy M. Smith Slep and Richard E. Heyman, "Risk Factors for Child Neglect," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 6 (2001): 245.

[26] Ibid.

As will be seen later, when looking closely at the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study, the effects of neglect on children range from mild to catastrophic. One of the most significant impacts is that children who experience neglect will often fail to attach to their parents – or in some cases they will detach – resulting in an attachment disorder that prevents their ability to properly interact with the world around them.[27] “Neglectful parents are less likely to teach their children the necessary emotion regulation skills needed to be able to identify and discriminate between emotions, modulate emotions, or practice perspective-taking."[28] This sort of emotional stunting will prevent children from fully entering the adult population and, in most cases, from finding occupational or relational success. Without treatment, often those who have been neglected will find themselves repeating the situation they experienced as children and pass on their parents’ neglectful behaviors to their children.

Drug Abuse

Adult drug use in the house is the second most common reason children are from their home by CPS. As drug use dropped within the United States in the late 1990s and early 2000s there were fewer removals, but with the advent of the opioid crisis that trend was reversed. “Many in the child welfare field think that parental substance use—including prescription drugs, illicit drugs, and alcohol, but especially opioids—has been the primary cause of the increase in foster care placements.”[29] The strain of the opioid

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[27] Sciarrino, Hernandez and Davidtz. 21.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Laura Radel, Melinda Baldwin, Ph.D., Gilbert Crouse, Ph.D., Robin Ghertner and Annette Waters, Ph.D., *Substance Use, the Opioid Epidemic, and the Child Welfare System: Key Findings from a Mixed Methods Study*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018, 1.

crisis in America on CPS cannot be understated. In some regions the foster care population increased by over 50%.[30] Caseworkers reported children staying in care for longer periods of time, resulting in fewer beds available for other children who needed to enter care.[31] While the length of stay in foster care was particularly long for children whose parents were dealing specifically with opioid addiction, drug removals in general tend to result in longer stays than other types of child maltreatment.

Drug abuse treatment frequently requires in-patient service for several weeks, if not months. If there are no suitable kinship relationships for the child, CPS will have to place the child in a foster home. When children are removed because of a drug arrest, the work of reuniting the family is more difficult. Case workers face systemic challenges when working with courts to bring about reunification, and there is historic distrust between CPS and the criminal justice system. That said, the use of "drug courts" — which promote rehabilitation rather than punishment — is proving helpful in reuniting families that have been separated because of a drug offense arrest. Children whose parents completed a family drug treatment court exited foster care 73% faster than those whose parents either enrolled and did not complete or did not enroll at all.[32] . The use of drug courts and programs like Narcotics Anonymous are valuable tools for helping children succeed despite their parent's addiction, preventing a long list of negative outcomes for children

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[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid., 7.

[32] Elizabeth Joanne Gifford, Lindsey Morgan Eldred, Allison Vernerey and Frank Allen Sloan, "How Does Family Drug Treatment Court Participation Affect Child Welfare Outcomes?" *Child Abuse & Neglect* 38 (2014): 1665.

Adverse Childhood Experiences and Adult Outcomes

In 1998 a landmark study on the effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) was published showing a "strong graded relationship between the breadth of exposure to abuse or household dysfunction during childhood and multiple risk factors for several of the leading causes of death in adults."[33] For the purposes of the research, the team defined ACEs as any experience of long-term trauma or stress for a child, such as divorce of parents, drug use in the house, abuse of any sort, or neglect. The researchers surveyed patients at the Kaiser Permanente clinic in San Diego, CA, correlating how many ACEs they experienced as children with the number and severity of health issues as adults.[34]

> We used three categories of childhood abuse: psychological abuse (2 questions), physical abuse (2 questions), or contact sexual abuse (4 questions). There were four categories of exposure to household dysfunction during childhood: exposure to substance abuse (defined by 2 questions), mental illness (2 questions), violent treatment of mother or stepmother (4 questions), and criminal behavior (1 question) in the household. Respondents were defined as exposed to a category if they responded "yes" to 1 or more of the questions in that category.[35]

The result of the research is staggering: they found that 61% of adults had at least one ACE, and one in six had more than four. Potentially, up to 1.9 million cases of heart disease and 21 million cases of depression could have been avoided by preventing ACEs.[36] One of the most noteworthy findings from this study is that children who have four or more ACEs are significantly more likely to develop the physical and mental

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[33] Vincent J. Felitti, et al. "Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 14 (1998): 245.

[34] Ibid., 246.

[35] Ibid., 248.

[36] "Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences," Centers for Disease Control, accessed July 18, 2020, https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/fastfact.html.

diagnoses that result in the leading causes of adult death.[37] For instance, "the likelihood of childhood/adolescent and adult suicide attempts increased as ACE score increased. An ACE score of at least 7 increased the likelihood of childhood/adolescent suicide attempts 51-fold and adult suicide attempts 30-fold."[38] Much of what has been thought to be a result of personal behavior or genetic disposition can now be directly connected to childhood experiences. By reducing the number of ACEs in children, we will be able to help lessen many of the health issues facing the world today. Additionally, the researchers found evidence that many childhood diseases and disorders can be directly linked to the number and frequency of ACEs a child suffers. Children with a higher number of ACEs are more likely to begin acting and thinking in ways that over time will lead to the adult health issues found in the study.

Research has found that foster children experience a greater number of ACEs than their peers.[39] There is a direct connection between the types of behaviors that would be necessary to remove a child from the home and ACEs. This puts children who are eventually placed in foster care at a distinct disadvantage to their peers in terms of their ability to focus and learn in school as well as succeed later in life. To prevent this situation, several things need to happen. First, there needs to be earlier intervention with children who are likely experiencing maltreatment to subvert the effects of ACEs. Additionally, services, both at school and in general, need to be made available to at-risk

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[37] Vincent J. Felitti, et al., 250.

[38] Shanta R. Dube, MPH; Robert F. Anda, MD, MS; Vincent J. Felitti, MD; et al, "Childhood Abuse, Household Dysfunction, and the Risk of Attempted Suicide Throughout the Life Span: Findings from the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study," *JAMA* 286, no. 24 (2001): 3093.

[39] Kristin Turney and Christopher Wildeman, "Adverse Childhood Experiences among Children Placed in and Adopted from Foster Care: Evidence from a Nationally Representative Survey," *Childhood Neglect* 64 (2017): 124.

children to help them properly process and deal with the effects of the ACEs they are facing or have faced.

Research into the effects of ACEs on adults has found that people who have not properly engaged with the psychological results of their experiences are more likely to participate in risky or destructive behavior, which can lead to negative outcomes both physically and socially.[40] This seems to correlate to the negative outcomes in adulthood experienced by foster children who age out of the system. Not only would society benefit from focusing on helping children with ACEs but doing so would help them grow up into mature and functioning adults, reducing their burden on the system.

Preventing ACEs is ultimately the best way of lessening the impact they have on society generally and foster children specifically. Yet it is often difficult to predict maltreatment of children or prove that it is happening. Fortunately, there is a solution to the problem that ACEs like neglect and parental drug abuse pose. When children who have been exposed to ACEs also have an adult — a parent, teacher, social worker or kindly old man down that street — that is reliable and safe, much of the damage caused by the ACEs themselves is offset. It is thought that part of the reason ACEs are so damaging is that they cause the body's fight or flight response (the limbic system) to be constantly activated. This causes health outcomes like high blood pressure, anxiety, Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). When a reliable safe adult comes into the child's life, it provides the necessary state of calm for the child's fight or flight response to pause and allow the body to return

[40] Anne Murphy, Miriam Steele, Shanta Rishi Dube, Jordan Bate, Karen Bonuck, Paul Meissner, Hannah Goldman, and Howard Steele, "Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Questionnaire and Adult Attachment Interview (AAI): Implications for Parent Child Relationships," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 38 (2014): 231.

to its normal state and heal from the damage done during the constant stress. Mentoring networks like Big Brothers & Big Sisters provide this sort of service for children. Foster children need that sort of relationship until they are placed in a final home. As a society we would be wise to fund programs that provide this type of service.

And Hope Does Not Disappoint

Looking over the state of the foster system and the challenges it faces is sobering. In many ways it is a system that is struggling, and in many cases failing, to be able to fulfill its charter. In other ways the social workers and staff of CPS systems across the country are doing tremendous work. If our goal is to provide better outcomes for children and their families, then we need to change how government family services operate. Volunteers can provide some support to lessen the load on the local CPS system, which I will discuss in chapters five and six, but a lot of the work needs to be done by trained individuals who are empowered with the proper jurisdiction to do the work. Systemic change is required, but without the legislative will to make it happen, there is little chance for change. Nonetheless, a lack of will should not prevent us from dreaming about what systemic change would look like and how we can go about working on better outcomes for children.

Often when change in CPS is discussed, it is spoken of in terms of incremental change. Any positive change is to be celebrated, but at times we need to step back, look at the whole, and ask what this would look like if we were building it new today. Clearly, it is not possible to destroy and rebuild the system; there would have to be a transition plan. With that caveat out of the way, how should we dream of a newer, better CPS?

Utopia as a concept is generally looked down upon because of its infeasibility. As the old saying goes, “utopia is great until someone has to wash the dishes.” Outside of the functional disparity that comes with utopia, the art of thinking through it is important for finding out what we value.

> A *utopian* discourse such as cosmopolitanism can earn its legitimacy only if it provokes and invokes the passion and longing for *the impossible*, the impossibility of ever-enlarging the *decentered center* so that everybody can be the center, but no one claims an absolute ownership of the center... Cosmopolitan discourse involves dreaming of the world that fulfills what is missing or lacking in our reality: It provokes us to dream *the impossible.*[41]

In the context of the foster care system, a utopian perspective might lead us to ask: given that adults will continue to make harmful choices impacting children, what would the perfect (utopian) CPS system look like? I think the question is better stated: how can we help families in crisis become more functional while also seeking the best outcomes for all involved? In looking to reframe CPS, it is easy to forget that the parents are part of the equation as well. In some cases, parents and children must be separated, but in many situations the goal should be to help the family become more functional and intact. Considering the utopian system will lead us to remember that the family unit is what we are seeking to help heal.

For families that do not require long-term separation, communities of faith can step in and be a bridge to help them through the rough times of growth and change. Leaning into the practice of hospitality is how the church can help these families find hope and courage to continue the work of healing. Being hospitable does not mean that we are trying to convert people to our worldview. It is too easy to turn the practice of

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[41] Namsoon Kang *Cosmopolitan Theology: Reconstituting Planetary Hospitality, Neighbor-Love, and Solidarity in an Uneven World,* (St. Louis: Chalice, 2013), 3.

welcoming people into an opportunity for evangelism. Evangelism is important, but this is not the time for it – or at least not the time for explicit evangelism. Hospitality is providing the space to allow these families to change into the people God intends for them to become.[42] Evangelicals are fond of doing things exactly the way they have always done them. Hospitality demands that we put aside those behaviors to be a means of grace to families in need of healing.

Western society loves to see an underdog succeed. Our greatest stories tell the way the person who was supposed to be locked in their weakness overcomes that weakness. In the same vein, we love the story of an orphan who achieves greatness. Luke and Leia Skywalker, Clark Kent, Peter Parker and so many other characters from movies and fiction start as orphans but become the hero of their stories. There is a deep sense of hope that the impossible is possible provided the right environment.[43] Luke had his uncle, Spiderman had Aunt May, and Superman had the Kents. These people kept our to-be superheroes safe and provided the launchpad for their success. In seeking to find a means toward better outcomes for families in crisis, we are leaning into that same hope. The hope is not always for an orphan to succeed. Sometimes the hope is that a family is given the space to heal and not be separated, other times the hope is that, through separation, the children find a home to lift them up while their biological parents find the peace and healing they need. We lean into this hope not because we want to pretend the difficulties of the world do not exist, but because hope does not disappoint (Romans 5:5).

> …hope can give us the ability to live with courage. Hope and anxiety can sometimes feel like quite similar emotions, they both induce stress and a kind of

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[42] Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out,* (New York: Image, 1975), 72.

[43] Krish Kandiah, *Home for Good: Making a Difference for Vulnerable Children,* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2013), 146.

> agitation about the future, but they anticipate different outcomes. The difference between the kind of anxiety that can lead to despair and the kind of hope that can lead to courage lies partly in what one believes is possible – hope holds on to the possibility of a brighter future while despair does not.[44]

In studies of holocaust survivors, researchers found that the people that were most likely to survive were able to imagine themselves escaping alive, that a better life was possible.[45] It is this hope that we, as the church, need to inspire in families in crisis.

Before starting to lean into that hope, let us take a deep dive into the practice of hospitality. Hospitality has its roots in scripture and Christian history. Before we take on the work of reforming CPS, we need to be well versed in what hospitality has to offer.

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[44] Ken Badley and Amanda Ross, *Now How Shall We Be? This Cultural Moment and our Christian Response* (Toronto: Tyndale Academic Press, 2020), 77.

[45] Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve, Revised Edition: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York: Church, 2017), 162.

CHAPTER 2:

BIBLICAL & HISTORICAL APPLICATIONS OF HOSPITALITY

A woman loses all her sons, but her daughter-in-law stays with her in a new land. A man welcomes three strangers into his house for dinner and is blessed with a son. A woman of the night hides spies from a foreign land and is saved from destruction. A man provides care to his mortal enemy when he finds him injured on the road. Stories of hospitality are spread throughout the scriptures and are as varied as the scriptures themselves, but what unites them is an acknowledgement that kindness to strangers is part of the call of God. The history of Christian hospitality is built upon these stories as principles for how to welcome the other.

Within the Bible, particularly the Old Testament[1], the use of the term "hospitality" is rare. Consequently, defining biblical hospitality requires instances and pronouncements describing concepts that fulfill, or expand, our understanding of cultural hospitality. For the purposes of this section, I define hospitality as "welcoming the other." The broadness of this definition provides the necessary freedom to examine the books of the Bible that are equally broad in their content and approach.

On the macro level, the scriptures encourage greater love, acceptance, and mercy toward our fellow humans. From God's choice of Abraham and his progeny, to the Jewish people, to those with faith in Christ, and then to the whole world, God is continually calling humanity to welcome each other with more love. As will be discussed

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[1] This paper is being written for a Christian audience, making the term Old Testament appropriate for describing the Tanakh. There is no disrespect intended in describing it it as old, rather it is a statement of the order in which it was written.

in a later chapter, God becomes the scapegoat to our hatred for the purpose of allowing us to welcome each other more fully. Hospitality plays an integral role in this story because it requires us to consider our fellow human beings as worthy of welcome.

While the New Testament is more explicit about the concept of hospitality, the Old Testament is filled with stories that illustrate the concept. A resounding message of both testaments is a clear call to welcome the stranger, the orphan, and the widow in our midst.

Old Testament Hospitality

Abraham, Lot, and a Levite

There are many stories that exhibit hospitality within the Old Testament (OT). For my purposes here, I will explore three stories that deal directly with hospitality. Genesis 18-19 contains the stories of Abraham and the three visitors and the story of Lot and the two strangers. These two stories are similar in many ways but conclude with widely different consequences. They also exhibit the cultural hospitality common throughout the Ancient Near East. The story of the Levite and his concubine in Judges 19 will serve as a mirror to the events of Genesis 19.

In Genesis 18 we are told that Abraham was outside his tent when he saw three men standing in front of him a way off. He runs to them and bows, offers water to clean their feet, and provides them sustenance (Gen. 18:2-3). This is consistent with the hospitality pattern found in the Ancient Near East.[2] The visitor presents himself, and then

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[2] Lee Roy Martin, "Old Testament Foundations for Christian Hospitality" *Verbum et Ecclesia* 35, no. 1 (2014): 752.

the host welcomes the visitor and "extends a modest offer of hospitality."[3] Once the offer of hospitality is accepted, Abraham increases the extent of his hospitality by having Sarah make a large batch of bread[4] and roasting a calf. His initial offer of a little food morphs into an entire feast. Hosts have the prerogative to welcome as they see fit, and Abraham chooses to go all out. In accordance with tradition, the guests only stay for a short while. Traditionally in West Asia, guests stay for three days or fewer,[5] and these guests are no different, leaving after the meal and a short negotiation with Abraham over the future of Sodom. During their conversation, Abraham's hospitality is rewarded by the promise of a son within the next year. Providing a gift or blessing is not a required component of the hospitality ritual, but it is a welcome part and Abraham's visitors offer him a very special one.

Abraham's encounter with the visitors is typical of how hospitality happened in West Asia, but there are some interesting details that need to be considered. Firstly, who are the visitors? YHWH appears to Abraham just before the three visitors appear. There has been much debate about what happens next. Does YHWH transfigure into the three visitors or does YHWH simply disappear with the arrival of the visitors? The actual mechanics are less important than the question of who the visitors are. It seems clear, based upon the discussion that happens over dinner, that these are not normal men. Most often they are described as either angels, an appearance of the Trinity, or a pre-incarnate

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Abraham tells Sarah to make a batch with 3 measures or *seahs* of flour. This is the equivalent of approximately 22 liters of flour, which would make roughly 26 loaves of bread. Abraham was making sure no one went hungry for this dinner.

[5] Martin, 752.

appearance of Christ with two angels.[6] The most common interpretation is that they are an appearance of the Trinity, but to me, three angels or Christ and two angels makes more sense as it is consistent with the two leaving for Sodom (there is little debate the visitors in chapter 19 are angels). Whoever the visitors are, it is clear this is a test wrapped in an epiphany, and Abraham's hospitality causes him to pass whatever test was being given.

After Abraham's conversation, two angels depart and go to the city of Sodom where Abraham's nephew, Lot, lives. It is unclear what position Lot holds within the city,[7] though because he is at the city gate when the angels arrive, he has achieved some level of acceptance among the residents of Sodom. He welcomes these visitors into the city, then into his home. Why the residents of Sodom become intrigued with these visitors is unclear. The encounter with the men of Sodom is where the story of Lot's hospitality diverges from Abraham's. Whereas Abraham has a pleasant visit with strangers from out of town, Lot is forced to consider exactly how much he wants to protect his visitors. The purpose of the angelic visitors is to test the hospitableness of the city, not Lot, which is why they want to stay in the city square rather than Lot's house. Given Abraham's negotiation in the previous chapter, it seems possible that the visitors are testing if the agreed upon number of righteous men exist in the city. Lot, on the other hand, knows the dangers of the square and forcefully encourages the visitors to stay at his house. The reaction of the men of Sodom in this light seems less surprising, though there is a reasonable question as to what got them so aroused. From a cultural perspective,

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[6] Grigory Benevich, "Maximus Confessor's Interpretation of Abraham's Hospitality in Genesis 18 and the Preceding Orthodox Tradition" *Scrinium* 13, no. 1 (2017): 44-45.

[7] Scott Morschauser, "'Hospitality', Hostiles and Hostages: On the Legal Background to Genesis 19.1-9." *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 27, no. 4 (June 2003): 464.

Lot's hospitality is as expected. Lot tries to negotiate with the crowd, but they will have none of it, he even goes as far as offering up his own daughters as a replacement for the visitors. It is at this point that we discover that whatever level of acceptance Lot has achieved in the city it is not enough as the crowd disparages him for *his* otherness – he is a resident alien in their city – and threaten him with violence as well.

Lot's story asks us to question how much hospitality is necessary to truly be hospitable. If not for the supernatural ability of the visitors, it is likely that Lot and his family would have been destroyed by the men of the city. Yet despite the level of arousal among the men of the city, Lot still tries to protect these visitors. There are questions to ask about the offering up of Lot's daughters in trade for the sexual assault of the visitors that are beyond the scope of this paper, but the one that must be asked is whether this was necessary to fulfill the requirement of hospitality. A similar occurrence happens in Judges 19 where a crowd of men decide they want to violate a male visitor. The visitor saves himself by offering up his concubine to the crowd. This time the crowd is amenable to the offer, raping and killing the concubine. In both stories the offering up of women as sexual scapegoats for the protection of male visitors is presented as a viable option – or at least the hosts in each story seems to think of it as such.

Strangers, Resident Aliens, And the Experience of the Sojourner

Once Israel is established and secures a land of its own, the principles of a broader sense of hospitality are established.

> When Israel finally inherited the promised land after its sojourn in Egypt, God reminded the people that the land belonged to the Lord and that "you are strangers and sojourners with me" (Lev. 25:23). They were to view themselves as aliens in their own land, for God owned the land and they were to be its stewards and

> caretakers, living in it by God's permission and grace. They were the chosen people – chosen, yet still aliens.[8]

Possession of the land was not a license to be discriminatory towards those from outside it. Yet because life could be dangerous, not all outsiders were offered hospitality. Within the context of the OT, there are three types of "others." First, there are strangers who were travelers or sojourners. They were generally considered safe because their existence depended on the hospitality of others. Second, there were resident aliens who were people from other lands that had come to live in Israel's land. Often resident aliens lived in the land because of marriage or work, or sometimes as refugees from their homelands. Lastly, there were foreigners who were considered dangerous. Foreigners maintained allegiance to their homeland and that allegiance meant that they could betray the people of Israel at any time. While there was a distinction between strangers and resident aliens, a single Hebrew word, *gēr,* covered both types of people.

It is in the use of *gēr* that we find the principles of hospitality at play.[9] For instance, Deuteronomy 10:19 instructs "you shall also love the stranger (*gēr*), for you were strangers (*gērîm*) in the land of Egypt." Exodus 22:21 states "you shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien (*gēr*), for you were aliens (*gērîm*) in the land of Egypt."[10] While these passages do not constitute hospitality in the welcoming sense, they do display hospitality in that they provide a space for the other to live peaceably and not be treated

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[8] Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1999), 27.

[9] Shani Tzoref, "Knowing the Heart of the Stranger: Empathy, Remembrance, and Narrative in Jewish Reception of Exodus 22:21, Deuteronomy 10:19, and Parallels," *Interpretation* 72, no. 2 (April 2018): 121.

[10] Ibid., 119.

badly. There are at least thirty-six such passages within the Pentateuch imploring the people of Israel to care for and not abuse or take advantage of the stranger in their midst. An intriguing thing about these passages is that God roots the care of the stranger in Israel's own history of being strangers and sojourners. It is all too easy for people to become absorbed in their state as possessors of the land and make that their identity. Identity as possessor makes it easier to justify cruelty towards those who are not blessed with the possession of land or property. "Recalling one's own former victimization functions as an impetus towards empathy and meritorious conduct."[11] God's command to the Israelites is to keep their identity as sojourners primary; by doing so they will be welcoming of those who are also without place. Hospitality, then, means holding loosely to that which is possessed in order to create space for those in need. It is this principle that makes it possible for Ruth to exist in Israel even after all of her (legal) familial relations to Israel have died. The book of Ruth is itself an example of how hospitality to the stranger is to be practiced by the people of Israel – though probably without all the trickery to get a husband at the end of it.[12]

The experience of being a stranger started early for Israel with the calling out of Abram from his family, but it became more formalized once the family had been established and his grandson's family had to find refuge in Egypt. The experience of Egypt and what followed is tied to the very psyche of what it is to be Jewish.[13] The welcome by Egypt, facilitated by Joseph, is the high point of hospitality: the family is

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[11] Tzoref, 125.

[12] Ananda Geyser-Fouche and Carli Fourie, "Inclusivity in the Old Testament" *HTS Theological Studies* 73, no. 4 (2017): 5.

[13] Tzoref, 127.

invited in, and they are provided clothing and food. The exodus from Egypt is hospitality's low point: the Jews have been enslaved and are chased from the land only to wander for forty years without any land of their own. Despite Egypt's treatment of Israel at the end, the act of hospitality at the beginning is to be respected. Deuteronomy 23:7 instructs Israel not to hate any Egyptian because of the hospitality provided to them. This ties back not to the time of enslavement but rather to the Israelites remembering their existence as sojourners and what it meant to find a place to rest.

Within the Old Testament there is also a macro story of God's hospitality toward Abraham and his progeny. God welcomes Abram as a stranger into God's story of salvation and continues to offer God's protection and blessing even as Abraham and his family repeatedly cause problems for seemingly everyone else. Yet, despite all the trouble, God continues to welcome people who are not of Abraham's line into His chosen people, such as Rahab and Ruth. Relationship with God, and by extension God's hospitality, seems to be the criteria, not family line.

> If Israel's identity is determined by being in relation with YHWH, and if 'Others' are in dialogue with YHWH, the implication is that outsiders may become insiders. Job serves as a good example: he is introduced as a man from the land of Uz, a non-Israelite who was in direct dialogue with YHWH and whose discourse formed part of Israelite discourse. Another similar case is presented by the relations of Esther/Mordecai against Haman/Ahasuerus. In the case of Esther: although there are 'Otherised' figures, like Esther as a woman and Ahasuerus the non-Israelite Persian King, Israel had to put their trust into these 'Others' for the survival of Israelite history[14]

This type of divine hospitality is a reason why identification as a sojourner is so significant: it reminds Israel of God's hospitality. And God's hospitality is not granted because of family line but, rather, because of relationship, serving as a reminder that

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[14] Geyser-Fouche, 4-5.

chosen-ness is a gift. It is through this lens of God's hospitality to Israel, that we understand hospitality presented in the New Testament.

New Testament Hospitality

Jesus was instrumental in laying the groundwork for the significance of hospitality as a Christian practice. This started with sayings like "truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Matt 25:40) and "anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me" (Matt 10:40). As the imitation of Christ is a major part of the development of Christian life, sayings such as these shifted the focus of hospitality away from following laws toward behaving as Jesus would.

The transition from the sayings of Jesus to the works of the early church is most clearly seen in the writings of Luke. "The very structure of Luke's work witnesses to a conviction on his part that some deep link exists between the verbal content of God's good news and its historical embodiment in the boundary situations involving guests and hosts."[15] Luke structures his account of the gospel, which could arguably be said is the early church's as well,[16] as a series of travel stories. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus rarely stays in one place for long. He is regularly receiving hospitality and teaching on it as well. "In a similar manner the Acts of the Apostles may be read, structurally, as a collection of guest and host stories about the missionary ventures generated in the Spirit-

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[15] John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission*, (Philidelphia: Fortress, 1985), 86.

[16] Luke being both student and travel companion to Paul makes it highly probable that many of Luke's views on the nature of Christianity mirrored Paul's.

led communities of Jerusalem and Antioch."[17] In showing that hospitality is part of the everyday life of Jesus, Paul, and the other apostles, Luke is showing that hospitality is (or should be) part of the everyday life of all believers. Similarly, Paul regularly thanks those who have been hospitable to him in the greetings and epilogues of each of his letters.

While there is an abundance of passages within Luke and Acts that emphasize hospitality, I will focus on three of them. The first is Luke 4:14-30.

While the other synoptic gospels have Jesus starting his ministry before he visits his hometown, in Luke his visit to Nazareth launches the start of his work on earth. Jesus returns home after preaching in the synagogues around Galilee, gaining a certain amount of local fame. The people of Nazareth are excited to see their local boy, now well known, at synagogue. For this reason, it makes sense that he reads the scroll and gives a sermon. Jesus opens the scroll to Isaiah 61:1-2 and reads what is there, excluding the portion about the vengeance of the Lord and mixing in a section from Isaiah 58:5-7.[18] It is common for rabbis to weave together passages of scripture to make a point, and it seems clear that is what Jesus is doing with this reading.[19] The question, then, is what point is Jesus trying to make? Numerous preachers and commentators agree: Jesus is preaching about liberation. Liberation itself is an interesting topic, especially when speaking to an oppressed people being ruled by a ruthless empire, but even more intriguing is the when and how of the liberation Jesus preaches. It is by weaving in Isaiah 58:5-7 that Jesus

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[17] Koenig, 87.

[18] Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 3.

[19] Ibid., 4.

makes his point. Jesus draws from a prophecy which declares God's frustration with Israel's worship because they offer it while neglecting hospitality:

> 6No, this is the kind of fast I want:
> I want you to remove the sinful chains,
> to tear away the ropes of the burdensome yoke,
> to set free the oppressed,
> and to break every burdensome yoke.
> 7I want you to share your food with the hungry
> and to provide shelter for homeless, oppressed people.
> When you see someone naked, clothe them!
> Don't turn your back on your own flesh and blood. (Isaiah 58:6-7)

In verse 7, setting free the oppressed is about offering care – or hospitality – to hungry, homeless, and naked people. By adding a portion of this passage, which the attendees would have been familiar with, to the Isaiah 61 reference, Jesus brings new context to the idea of liberation. Jesus is not talking about liberation from Rome so much as he is talking about how caring for those in need creates freedom. The context of hospitality changes what is a messianic prophecy from being political to being social and spiritual. The Messiah is coming to fulfill God's call to social justice and hospitality. Righteousness comes by offering space for the other, not by rote repetition of a liturgy. Jesus closes with "to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" out of Isaiah 61:2. "The 'acceptable year of the Lord' is the season of God's 'hospitality' to the human race, which it is Jesus' mission to proclaim and enact. It is a time when people are simply accepted, not judged."[20] By combining these scriptures, Jesus is declaring that the season of hospitality has begun. God is hospitably welcoming all humanity to God's self. Salvation and hospitality are now tied together, which is inconvenient for anyone hoping that a simple ritual or genetic association will save them. By putting this story at the front

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[20] Ibid., 5.

of Jesus' ministry, Luke is making the point that Jesus' ministry is going to be about how hospitality is intricately tied to salvation. "The programmatic function of Jesus's Nazareth sermon invites the reader to pay attention to the way in which the entirety of Jesus's ministry *and particularly his meals with strangers* enact divine hospitality to the poor, the captives, the blind and the oppressed."[21] This is played out in Luke 7:36-50 with the story of the Pharisee and the sinful woman.

In Luke 7, Jesus is invited to dinner at a pharisee's house and he agrees to attend. When Jesus arrives at the pharisee's house, none of the required social customs are observed. A "sinful" woman, who is clearly not part of the dinner party, comes and washes Jesus' feet with her hair, kisses them, and anoints them with oil. The pharisee is frustrated by this act, largely because in his eyes Jesus has defiled himself by letting this woman touch him. Jesus senses the pharisee's frustration and tells a story of two people who owed a debt to a lender with one owing significantly more than the other. The lender cancels both debts. Jesus asks the pharisee who would be more grateful to the lender, and the pharisee correctly answers that the one with the larger debt would be. Jesus then connects what is happening in the room with the story. The woman is the one with the greater debt and so she is more grateful, which has led her to this act of hospitality. "The woman's hospitality functions as a tangible expression of her love for Jesus and her faith in him as the divine and prophetic agent who can forgive her sins."[22] From Jesus' perspective hospitality is the same as an act of faith and as such even though the woman

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[21] Joshua W. Jipp, *Saved By Faith and Hospitality (*Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017), 21.

[22] Joshua W. Jipp*, Divine Visitations and Hospitality to Strangers in Luke-Acts : An Interpretation of the Malta Episode in Acts 28:1-10* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 180.

does not proclaim faith her act of hospitality is rendered as faith.[23] Here, as in Luke 4, salvation and hospitality are inextricably tied together.

In the book of Acts, the connection between hospitality and salvation appears again in Peter's interaction with Cornelius the centurion. At this point, the church has spread from Jews to include Samaritans and Ethiopian Jews but has not yet made the important jump to welcoming Gentiles, largely because rules of ritual purity prevented Jews from interacting with Gentiles. In Acts 10, Cornelius is described as a devout man of faith who did many acts of charity. While praying, he receives a vision of an angel who tells him his prayers and acts of charity have been acknowledged by God. Cornelius is instructed to send men to Joppa to find Peter and bring him back. The end of the story makes God's point clear: Cornelius' faithfulness and hospitality to the poor has moved God to bring salvation to Cornelius' house.

In the next scene, Peter is praying when he receives his own vision of a sheet holding many animals, some acceptable to eat under Jewish law and others not. Because the animals are mixed together, they are all ritually unclean.[24] A voice tells Peter to kill and eat, but Peter, ever the good Jew, rejects the command to eat what is unclean. The voice speaks again to Peter, "do not call anything impure that God has made clean" (Acts 10:15). In some ways, the vision is literal as God is telling Peter that eating these things is acceptable, but more importantly, the vision is metaphorical, telling Peter that God expects him to welcome people considered unclean. Peter has only a short time to consider God's call on him to be hospitable. Cornelius' men arrive just as Peter's vision

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[23] Ibid., 181.

[24] Ibid., 208.

ends with God telling Peter to go with them. The vision underscores that being welcoming is more essential than ritual purity. The act of welcoming serves as a form of spiritual purification.

The third scene starts with Peter having to decide whether or not to travel with these men, who are ritually unclean, defiling himself by being in contact with them. Peter is instructed by the Spirit not to hesitate to go with the men, which carries a double meaning: Peter should not hesitate to go, and he should not hesitate to be with men who are not Jewish.[25] Peter's interaction with these 'others' is an act of hospitality that surely shocked any knowledgeable observers.

The ultimate question of obedience for Peter is whether he will he go into Cornelius' house and worship with him. When Peter enters the house, Cornelius falls prostrate at his feet, offering the customary Gentile hospitality ritual reserved for one carrying divine authority.[26] Peter realizes it is a public worship service; he is not simply there to see Cornelius. At this point Peter makes the hospitable choice to see these Gentiles as his peers and welcome them as equal in their ability to worship God disregarding concern about defiling himself. In fact, he explicitly says this very thing in verse 28, "But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean." Peter speaks with the Gentiles, they believe, and the Spirit falls upon them signifying God's welcome and acceptance of them.

This story magnifies the importance of welcoming the other. Cornelius is charitable. God instructs Peter to forgo purity laws. Peter welcomes Cornelius's envoy,

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[25] Ibid., 210.

[26] Ibid., 212.

and Cornelius welcomes Peter. Finally, Peter welcomes Gentiles into full fellowship with the church. As with Jesus' pronouncement in Luke 4 and the story of the sinful woman in Luke 10, salvation and hospitality are inextricably tied together.

Luke is not the only New Testament author who writes about hospitality. The authors of both James and Hebrews place high importance on the care of others. James emphasizes the care of widows and orphans as a sign of true religion (James 1:27). For him hospitable actions, worship, and declarations of faith are all equally important parts of spiritual practice (James 2:26). Adapting Jesus' words in Matthew 10 and alluding to the story of Abraham's hospitality to divine strangers, the author of Hebrews encourages her readers to understand caring for others as caring for Christ (Heb. 13:2).

Within the New Testament theologically there is a reciprocity cycle at hand. God, in Jesus, is offering humanity – who is other to God – the hospitality of God's presence and friendship with God. "God's embrace of humanity into friendship with him is the ultimate form of welcoming the stranger."[27] We reciprocate our fellowship with God by welcoming others into our lives, who in turn may learn of and enter into God's welcome. Evangelism, when understood in this context, is itself an act of hospitality.

> And if Jesus's extension of hospitality is the basis of our friendship with God, then the fact that he is markedly unconcerned with purity or contamination by the intimate act of sharing meals with sinners and society's stigmatized should have consequences for how we, too, think about the vocation of the church.[28]

Welcoming the other in, first as guest, then as friend, and finally as coworker with Christ is the primary work of followers of Christ. At the same time, Christ comes to us as

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[27] Jipp, *Saved By Faith and Hospitality*, 17.

[28] Ibid., 18.

a guest that we may hospitably welcome him into our lives and work. These two currents are the heartbeat of the New Testament and the source of the early church's drive to expand.

The scriptural, social, and theological background of hospitality in Judaism forced it to the forefront of importance as the Christian church began to develop. But rather than having hospitality as a law to be followed within the church, there is a sense that hospitality is not just an act but an attitude. *Philoxenia* which "refers literally not to a love of strangers per se but to a delight in the whole guest-host relationship, in the mysterious reversals and gains for all parties which may take place."[29] In the earliest development of Christianity, hospitality went from being a requirement of the law to an outlook on interaction with society. I think it can be argued that nearly all the features of hospitality we have distinguished up to this point fall into a category that may be called "partnership with strangers." By using this term, I mean to suggest that New Testament hospitality has to do with the establishment of committed relationships between guests and hosts in which unexpected levels of mutual welcoming occur, whether or not the participants are already known to one another. In a sense everyone involved is or can become a stranger.[30]

This undergirding of hospitality was of vital importance to the church as it started to grow and become a force within the Roman Empire. "Important to the entire community of believers, hospitality was also a special mark of fitness for leadership

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[29] Koenig, 8.

[30] Koenig, 20.

within the household of God (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:8)."[31] For the first century church, hospitality was something that exemplified what it meant to be a follower of Christ, not simply a nice add-on to the faith.

Hospitality in the Early Church

The writers of the second century had much to say about how the church should and should not offer hospitality. But before that happened, the church needed systems to take care of those in need. Initially, hospitality was an individual choice, but as the church became more structured, various leaders began to delegate the provision of hospitality services. Initially, bishops were responsible for the hospitality within their regions. Later, as Christianity was accepted as the official religion of the Empire, deeper bureaucracy was built, managing guest houses, feeding the poor, and creating orphanages.[32]

As the church moved out of the apostolic era and into its second-generation, hospitality was most often experienced through eating together. The practice of eating together had started with Jesus and was later used extensively by the apostles as they spread the gospel throughout the Mediterranean region. "These meals were intended to reflect transformed relationships in which worldly status distinctions were transcended, if not disregarded, and formerly alienated persons could view themselves as brothers and sisters at God's Table."[33] There was a deeper meaning to these meals than simply eating

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[31] Pohl, 32.

[32] Pohl, 43.

[33] Pohl, 42.

together. For members of the first century church, faith in Christ constituted entry into a new spiritual economy – the household of God – where hospitality was an expectation.[34] Eating together was an extension of this new economy.

Being members of the household of God fulfilled three dimensions of hospitality: shared humanity among people of different social and ethnic strata, meeting the physical needs of strangers, and hosting worship assemblies. Meeting the needs of strangers was a highly valued practice. The value was passed down from the Matthew 25 passage where Jesus says,

> Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these siblings of mine, you did for me.' (Mathew 25:37-40)

Because welcoming the stranger was an act of service to God, ignoring strangers was also an act of disservice to God. Within the spiritual economy of the church, welcoming the stranger reciprocated God's welcome o humanity.[35] "Because the guest is actually more than just a guest, but is Christ, then there is another surprise as well. Christ becomes the host and the host becomes the guest. When we attend to the guest, we are not left unchanged."[36] The reciprocity cycle perpetuates as humanity continues to welcome God and God, in turn, welcomes humanity. Additionally, seeing the image of God in the stranger was of great importance. Treating the image bearer with due respect

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[34] Amy G. Oden, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abington, 2001), 16.

[35] Oden, 51.

[36] Ibid.

was akin to treating God with due respect. This can be clearly seen in this passage from Pseudo-Clementine:

> You are the image of the invisible God. So, don't let those who would be pious say the idols are images of God, and therefore that it is right to worship them. For the image of God is a human being. … In other words, whatever good things any one wishes for oneself, so give to another in need, and then a good reward can be reckoned to one as being pious toward the image of God. And by like reason, whoever will not undertake to do these things, shall be punished as neglecting the image.[37]

During the first few centuries of the church, hospitality to strangers, even prisoners, was a distinctive aspect of Christianity. The church's status as a persecuted minority meant having to care for each other while the call of Christ required they also help those who were in need outside of the group. Christianity was not considered acceptable society, but successfully survived because of the hospitality it offered to other persecuted groups.

For Christianity, the first few centuries were about struggle, but in the fourth and fifth centuries, it was welcomed fully into the Empire as the religion of the state. With acceptance came less persecution, but more responsibility. The church became accountable for the social services of the Empire. For example, nearly all orphanages were run by the church. With the church as the social services wing of the government, the sense of personal responsibility to provide hospitality waned; people became focused on social status rather than care for the stranger. Initially, this dwindling of personal responsibility led to much preaching on the topic. John Chrysostom, the most well-known of preachers during this era, regularly preached on the need for parishioners to honor

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[37] Pseudo-Clementine, "Homily 11" in *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity,* ed. Amy G. Oden (Nashville: Abington, 2001), 55.

their responsibility to welcome strangers regardless of their social status. For example, in his *Homily 45* he railed against the common excuse that hospitality would gladly be offered if the Apostle Paul showed up at the door, but not necessarily someone of lesser stature.

> For whoever receives the great, often does it from vainglory also, but the one who receives the small, does it purely for Christ's sake. It is in your power to entertain even the Father of Christ as your guest, and you refuse! For, "I was a stranger," He says, "and you took me in," and again, "To one of the least of these of my family, you have done it to me." Though it may not be Paul, yet if it is a believer and kindred, although the least, Christ comes to you through that one.[38]

Orphan Care in the Early Church

Orphan care was a critical component of hospitality for the early church. Before examining how orphans were cared for by the church, it is important to consider the related rules and regulations in the Roman Empire. Within the greater Greco-Roman world, a child without a known or living father or grandfather was considered an orphan.[39] Once a child was declared an orphan a guardian was appointed to care for the child. Often this guardianship was abusive and exploitive of the child. For example, a guardian taking all the estate passed to the child as their own as a fee for guardianship. Constantine put an end to this practice by prohibiting guardians from profiting from their charges.[40] The unintended consequence of this move was that guardianship became more difficult. There was no extra income provided to the guardian for the expenses of the extra child, and consequently fewer people volunteered to become guardians. Later

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[38] John Chrysostom, "Homily 45 on the Acts of the Apostles" in *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity,* ed. Amy G. Oden (Nashville: Abington, 2001), 61.

[39] Timothy S. Miller, *The Orphans of Byzantium: Child Welfare in the Christian Empire* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 24.

[40] Ibid., 69.

Constantine instituted other restrictions on guardians such as charging them with rape if a girl under their care lost her virginity before she reached adulthood – in the Empire that was 25 years old.[41] Later emperors would remove many of Constantine's modifications in order to encourage more people to volunteer for guardianship.

Outside of guardianship, there were two types of adoption common in the empire: *tutela legima*, the adoption of a child by next of kin, and *tutela atilana/dativa*, adoption by magistrates. On a rare occasion, a child was adopted into a well-off family (via *tutela atilana)* because the child showed exceptional promise.[42] Prior to the development of Christian orphanages, a child who was not adopted or placed in guardianship was on their own, likely to die or end up in some form of slavery. While the official determination of a child as orphan revolved around the loss of paternal relationships, it was also common that a child was declared to be an orphan because no familial relations could be found. Quite often a child's parents were unknown because of a practice called exposure, where children were left on the side of the road or the garbage dump because they were in some way inconvenient. Most commonly the deserted child was from a poor family that could not afford to feed another mouth, the child had a deformity, or the child was the illegitimate offspring of a well-off person or family.[43]

The development of the Christian church changed orphan care in the Empire. By the second century, there were already writings encouraging Christians to care for

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[41] Ibid., 69.

[42] Ibid., 109.

[43] Miller, 145.

widows and orphans, such as the *Shepherd of Hermas* and the writings of Clement.[44] Clement argued strongly that hospitality was a moral duty of the Christian.[45] Early in the third century the *Didascalia Apostolorum* was written as the first official document of the church dictating the care of orphans and widows. In it the bishop was charged with the care of orphan girls until they were of marriageable age and also responsible for finding them husbands. Orphan boys were to be cared for, also by the bishop, until they had mastered a trade. The bishop was also responsible for encouraging childless Christian couples to adopt orphan boys and families with boys to marry orphan girls. Lastly, wealthy families were warned that they had an obligation to assist orphans by sharing their wealth with them.[46]

When Christianity became the official religion of the empire, there was already a structure set up by the church to handle orphans. However, this structure was largely internal to the church, only caring for the children of the church.[47] Starting in the fourth century, state-sanctioned orphanages managed by the church were created. During this period, Constantine was the first to experiment with child support by ordering that all parents in Italy who could not afford to raise their children would receive money from the government to help support them. This program was soon discontinued because it was too expensive.[48] Along with offering child support and the previously mentioned changes

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[44] Rowan A. Greer, *Broken Lights and Mended Lives: Theology and Common Life in the Early Church* (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), 123.

[45] Ibid., 126.

[46] Miller, 45-46.

[47] Greer, 122.

[48] Miller, 149.

to guardianship, Constantine also declared that birth parents whose child had been exposed and later showed promise could not take them back from guardians or adoptive parents. Later, Emperor Justinian declared that adopted children could not be enslaved and that the practice of exposure would be treated as murder.[49] The more hospitality – and orphan care in particular – became entangled with the state, the less it was practiced on an individual level. By the sixth century, orphan care was almost exclusively done by orphanages or monasteries.

The Later Patristic Period to Present

As hospitality became a social convention, hospitable practices were no longer personal expressions, but rules followed by monks in the monastery. The rule of St. Benedict, for instance, makes it abundantly clear that hospitality is of utmost importance.

> Let all guests who arrive be received like Christ, for He is going to say, "I came as a guest and you received Me." And to all let due honor be shown, especially to the domestics of the faith and to pilgrims … In the salutation of all guests, whether arriving or departing, let all humility be shown. Let the head be bowed or the whole body prostrated on the ground in adoration of Christ, who indeed is received in their persons … In the reception of the poor and of pilgrims the greatest care and solicitude should be shown because it is especially in them that Christ is received. [50]

From the sixth century onward, hospitality was largely outsourced to either government groups or for-profit organizations. Personal expressions of hospitality were restricted to helping these organizations or donating to their causes.[51] During the Protestant Reformations, there was an uptick in calls for personal hospitality by Luther,

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[49] Ibid.

[50] Benedict, "Rule" in *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity*, ed. Amy G. Oden (Nashville: Abington, 2001), 77.

[51] Pohl, 51.

Calvin, and Wesley, but by that point hospitality was already largely privatized in guest lodges, hospitals, and orphanages.[52]

Conclusion

There is an unbroken line from Abraham's welcome of the divine visitors to Jesus' words to the woman washing his feet to the early church's focus on welcoming the stranger. Finding space for those who are in need is deeply intertwined with the life of faith. Hospitality begins with God welcoming humanity and is reciprocated with humanity's welcome of God – sometimes directly and other times through the stranger who is a bearer of God's image. The reciprocal cycle of hospitality will be discussed at length later in this paper, but it is important to see that it is a cycle first initiated by God.

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[52] Pohl, 52.

CHAPTER 3:

HOSPITALITY OUTSIDE OF CHRISTIANITY

For centuries hospitality was practiced by Christians, Jews, and Muslims as an act of service to those in need without much thought as to why; it was the expected behavior of a civilized person. Over time this expectation decreased in importance and hospitality became an industry and a concept to be studied. Many philosophers theorized about hospitality without a consensus on its definition. It was not until Immanuel Kant came up with his "universal hospitality."[1] theory that a common definition was accepted, and Kant's view is still the most widely recognized. Kant argues that hospitality requires guests to conform to the host. He explored hospitality in the light of international politics, with a focus on how, when, and for how long a non-citizen may visit a country. [2]

In the mid-twentieth century, postmodern philosophers began to deconstruct and reimagine hospitality. Two such philosophers were Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida. In this first section of this chapter, I will explore the views of these two philosophers and the influence they have had on the study of hospitality. In the second section, I will address hospitality within Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism in order to illustrate how it is understood by the other major religions of the world.

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[1] Hans Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality and The Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 31.

[2] Ibid.

Section 1: Postmodern Philosophical Approaches to Hospitality

Emmanuel Levinas

Born in 1905 to a Jewish family in Lithuania, much of Emmanuel Levinas' early life was shaped by the two world wars. Due to persecution of Jews by the revolutionary government, his family moved out of Lithuania for a time, returning once Lithuania achieved independence from that government. Levinas later moved to France to study philosophy. He joined the French military to fight in World War II but was captured and remained a prisoner of war for five years. During his imprisonment, his Lithuanian extended family was killed for their faith; his wife and children were hidden by nuns and survived.

Levinas' work ended up being an "ongoing, critical dialogue with three philosophers: Husserl, Heidegger, and Hegel."[3] Along with this continued discussion, it seems that he was wrestling with his own history. He did not produce his most significant work, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority,* until 1961. He had explored many of the themes of *Totality and Infinity* (TI) in earlier writings, but they find their culmination and unity in TI. It is in this work that he first explores the idea of our absolute responsibility to the other.

Levinas held that his views were a first philosophy; he sought to understand the primary, or primal, ideas that formed us as humans. "Whereas traditionally first philosophy denoted either metaphysics or theology, only to be reconceived by Heidegger

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[3]*Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, s.v. "Emmanuel Levinas," https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/levinas/.

as fundamental ontology, Levinas argued that it is ethics that should be so conceived."[4] He strongly believed that western metaphysics "has had a penchant for ontological categories"[5] and this categorization by its very nature leads to a necessary violence towards otherness. From this vantage point, Levinas "came to view fascist totalitarianism as the natural outcome of the Western metaphysical tradition."[6]

Levinas' attempt to change the fundamental issues with western ontology starts with the face.[7] The face for Levinas represents an object that can be seen but not fully understood. As humans, when we look at a face, we see an object, but that object is not like other objects. For example, if we look at a tree, we understand the fullness of the existence of that tree; there are no underlying emotions or preconceptions held by the tree. We encounter every tree as a tree. By contrast when we look at the face of another person, we can experience that face as a face, but we are only able to partially understand the existence of that face. We can assume some emotions from the face, but not all, and we cannot know the preconceptions held by the person. Levinas held that the otherness of the face – in comparison to other objects – draws us toward it and causes us to feel responsibility to it. "In human social life, the face of the other, a thing that is more than

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[4] Ibid.

[5] Boersma, 28.

[6] Ibid.

[7] There are several developmental philosophies that have taken Levinas' understanding of the face and used it as a way of understanding childhood development. I have even heard a discussion comparing Piaget with Levinas as to who has the better ideas.

any thing could be, perpetually imparts more to the separated, egocentric being than it can contain."[8] Levinas calls this the epiphany of the face.

The epiphany of the face brings on changes in a couple of stages. First, witnessing the other forces us to take stock of ourselves and interrupts our self-centered activities. Second, it causes us to open up to the possibility of dialogue, which expands the relationship between ourselves and the other, then confers upon us the responsibility to the other.[9] "The other facing me makes me responsible for him/her, and this responsibility has no limits."[10] The viewer's responsibility to the other standing in front of her places an immediate and unlimited requirement of hospitality upon her towards this other, while placing no conditions or restrictions upon this other. In this way Levinas has turned Kant's views on their head. In attempting to remove the inherent violence toward the other in Western metaphysics, Levinas has opted to remove the violence from the other and place it on the host. By arguing absolute responsibility to the other, Levinas has accepted that hosts may suffer violence when allowing the other free reign. But Levinas would argue that the act of welcoming, causes a "good" violence to the host[11] in that it forces him to accept the other on the other's terms rather than his own preconceived ideas. As Levinas says,

> The relation between the Other and me, which dawns forth in his expression, issues neither in number nor in concept. The Other remains infinitely transcendent, infinitely foreign; his face in which his epiphany is produced, and

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[8] Jacob Meskin, "The Role of Lurianic Kabbalah in the Early Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas," *Levinas Studies* 2 (2007): 62.

[9] *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* "Emmanuel Levinas".

[10] Adriaan Peperzak, *To the Other, An introduction to the Philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas* (West Lafayette, IN.: Purdue University Press, 1993), 22.

[11] Boersma, 29 (see footnote 14).

> which appeals to me breaks with the world that can be common to us, whose virtualities are inscribed in our *nature* and developed by our existence.[12]

There is an idealism in the way that Levinas writes about the host's responsibility to the other, as there must be a limit to the number of ways an individual can be responsible for another. Nonetheless, it seems to be imperative to reduce the limits of responsibility to only those that are necessary.

Much of Levinas' philosophical thought was inspired by Lurianic Kabbalah.[13] This form of Jewish mysticism was first developed by Rabbi Isaac Luria in the mid-sixteenth century. There are too many themes from Kabbalah used by Levinas to be fully explored in this project, but the one that is of most importance is the concept of the *tzimtzum* (zimzum). Within Kabbalah the zimzum is typically defined as "the contraction of God." Before the creation of the universe, God consumed all of space. To create the universe, God first had to condense (or contract) God's self to leave space for the universe.[14] The universe is not divine and, therefore, other to God's divine self.

Levinas draws from the contraction of God to make space for otherness in a couple of ways within TI. First, in his book's title, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority,* Levinas draws a distinction between totality, the unity of everything, and infinity, which is the divine presence. In this comparison, Levinas is both espousing a philosophical concept – on the significance of alterity – and commenting on the

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[12] Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Interiority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 194.

[13] From this point forward Kabbalah will be referring to Lurianic Kabbalah specifically and not the other forms of the mystical tradition.

[14] It is worth noting here that in the zimzum, God does not lose any of God's self in becoming smaller. The zimzum is a condensing not a lessening of God.

philosophical project to find an ideology that is all encompassing. Levinas was critical of the philosophical community for their continued effort to find unity in all things when he found the most significance in acknowledging otherness. “For Levinas, metaphysics is essentially the thrust toward *alterity* rather than a unity, a stretching to what is perpetually other to us. If the general direction of western thought is akin to the journey of Ulysses to his native soil, explains Levinas, metaphysics is the uprooted sojourn of Abraham on his way to an alien landscape.”[15] The second way Levinas draws upon the contraction of God is the otherness that causes the epiphany of the face.

> Here we can begin to see that the overall argument of *Totality and Infinity*, the other, just like the separated being, gains its character precisely from the withdrawal of the infinite. The infinite, which has contracted itself to make room for a world, makes its presence felt in the same world from which it has graciously exiled itself, only through that nonpresence whose very nongraspability calls to us. The face of the other is the corporeal site of this nonpresence; the concrete face of the other person compellingly intimates to us the infinite’s having withdrawn – as if the other’s face draws us in the direction of infinite's withdrawal. The face in this sense awakens us to ethical desire.[16]

Part of absolute responsibility requires a contraction of the ego to make space for the other before us. Ethical desire is a way of describing the contraction of one’s self to make this space.

While Levinas strives to show how ethical desire undergirds humanity’s relationship to the other, a question that must be asked is how we, as humans, interact with those who have betrayed the principles of this relationship. The question of forgiveness is vitally important given humanity’s penchant for violence and failure.

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[15] Jonathan Weidenbaum, “Alterity, Transcendence, and the One: Levinas and the Perennial Philosophy.” (paper presented at the 8th annual meeting of the North American Levinas Society, Duquesne University, July 31, 2013).

[16] Meskin, 65.

Levinas approaches this question in a few of his commentaries on the Talmud and the Mishna. In "Toward the Other" he argues that repentance and reconciliation must happen daily, but they can only have meaning if there is a day set aside to focus on them.[17] He believes that the only way for the process of forgiveness to start is for the person who caused the offense to acknowledge that an offense has occurred.[18] For this to happen, a relationship is required. The other cannot be a general other but, rather, the specific other who has a relationship with a host. There is a struggle between the amenable type of otherness described in Levinas' philosophical works (where one is drawn into relationship with the other precisely because of the alterity of the other) and the otherness that comes from betrayal of held beliefs. Levinas' ideas on the larger transcendent or philosophical type of otherness should inform our understanding of how to engage with the intimate otherness that is experienced in human relationships. In other words, our desire to be in relationship with another human should be influenced by recognizing we cannot understand their full existence and, as such, should make space for the complexity of their humanity – warts and all. In this light, forgiveness reflects our understanding that part of the act of creating space means moving past betrayal and toward redemption. On the other side of the equation, the betrayal of the other needs to be understood as the creation of an unnatural space – a separation – within the relationship and every effort should be made toward removing that unnatural space. Because he sees both

[17] Tim Noble, "Emmanuel Levinas and Vladimir Jankélévitch: The Possibilities and Limits of Hospitality," *Communio Viatorum* 58 (2016): 181.

[18] Ibid. 182.

reconciliation and repentance as daily acts, Levinas is suggesting how hospitality can work without ignoring the fact that humans will always end up causing offense.

It is worth mentioning that Levinas was a devout Jew for his entire life and produced many commentaries on both the scriptures and the Talmudic texts. Interestingly, the way these apply to hospitality is often seen in Jacques Derrida's interpretation of them.[19]

Jacques Derrida

Much like Levinas, a sizable portion of Jacques Derrida's views on hospitality came from his life story. Derrida was born a Jew in Algeria. During the Vichy regime, "Jewish laws" were passed and enforced in Algeria, which made his life quite difficult. After the war, Derrida moved to Paris to study philosophy. His experience of being "other" within the French context shaped his understanding of hospitality and welcoming of the other.

Derrida's work is most known for what he describes as deconstruction. It is in this vein that he approaches hospitality. While Levinas' views are opposed to Kant's, Derrida tackles them head on. Derrida rejects the conditions Kant places upon hospitality in favor of unconditional hospitality that does not impart violence upon the guest. In doing so Derrida leaves open the possibility of welcoming in the devil himself, which could in its own way be the cause of future violence.[20]

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[19] Boersma, 29.

[20] Boersma, 31.

Derrida's universal hospitality is tied to his view of the future – in fact some have described these views as eschatological. In his view there is an ideal future that none of us can cause to happen; he describes this as messianicity. In messianicity, humanity should be absolutely open to the future,[21] unafraid of what will happen. It is in this lack of fear about the future that we see hospitality. If a person knocks on our door, we should agree to welcome the stranger in even before we know who or what they are. According to Derrida, placing conditions on our welcome, as Kant would have us do, is to cause violence to the person on the other side of that door. Derrida acknowledges that, in welcoming any person into our house, we face the distinct possibility that the visitor will claim ownership of the house and cause violence toward us.

Derrida, despite the idealistic view proclaimed in universal hospitality, believes that unconditional hospitality is impossible.[22] The inherent danger of unconditional hospitality prevents it from ever being an option within a world of laws. If unconditional hospitality were to be universally accepted, it would cause a level of anarchy the world has never seen.[23] Also, hospitality cannot be enforced. In such a situation, the law-making authority is the host and the citizen is the guest. Forcing the guest to obey the conditions (laws) of the authority betrays the very nature of unconditional hospitality. Hospitality is, then, a paradox in the world as it exists today. It is both something that should be performed and something that is impossible to fully execute. Yet, despite this paradox, Derrida believes that striving towards universal hospitality is an endeavor worth

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[21] Boersma, 30.

[22] *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, "Jacques Derrida", https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/derrida/

[23] Ibid., 25.

pursuing. Later in his life, he argues that hospitality is not a concept as much as it is an experience. As host we experience hospitality in opening the door to the other; as the other, we experience hospitality in the door being opened to us.[24]

Derrida's understanding of hospitality was largely an act of expanding his view of what justice looks like in the future. Being hospitable is an act of justice towards the other. Derrida writes about this concept considerably during periods where the French were struggling with the acceptance of Muslim immigrants. It is as if his own experience, first as an outsider in France and then as one of France's most respected figures, causes Derrida to reflect on what justice looked like in his own life. It is in this sort of biographic writing we get the sense that Derrida understood the stakes involved when writing his theory of hospitality.

In his insistence on the acceptance of the other, Derrida echoes Levinas. But he pushes back against Levinas with the recognition of the extent of the violence inherent in hospitality. The two were friends for most of their lives.[25]

Interpretations of Derrida and Levinas

Thanks largely to Derrida's popularity as a philosopher, there has been a significant amount of work in the field of hospitality in recent decades. While both Derrida and Levinas approached hospitality as a pure concept, those who have come after them are making great strides in applying hospitality's general concepts to more specific

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[24] Anne Dufourmantelle, "Hospitality – Under Compassion and Violence," in *The Conditions of Hospitality: Ethics, Politics, and Aethetics on the Threshold of the Possible*, ed. Thomas Claviez (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 17.

[25] *Stanford Encyclopedia of Hospitality*, "Jacques Derrida".

fields like immigration, justice reform, and hospice. In doing so, these theorists offer important questions to ponder.

While Levinas and Derrida both contend that the other has free reign over the host, what rights do the oppressed have regarding their oppressors? According to Levinas, if the self has an absolute responsibility to the other, by extension an oppressed person would have an absolute responsibility to their oppressor. This could lead to an abusive relationship, as it is unlikely the oppressor will honor a responsibility to the oppressed. This is one of the limits of Levinas' and Derriada's idealism. In theory there is a reciprocal hospitality caused by the responsibility each person has for the other. As is clear by any number of examples, this reciprocal hospitality is not common and in many cases is not at all present. At what point does a person's absolute responsibility cease to be in force? Given that conditional hospitality causes violence to the guest and unconditional hospitality causes violence on the host, might it be worth exploring a hospitality that is not based in conditions or their lack, but rather in covenant?[26] There should be a natural give and take within the guest-host relationship; this is the implicit covenant in hospitality. Any negative violence (as opposed to the good violence spoken of above) would be a betrayal of that covenant and cause for voiding the covenant. For oppressed communities this seems like a fair compromise, since it frees them of the requirement of hospitality towards those who would seek to do them harm. But who decides if the violence is negative or positive? It seems the one to whom violence is

[26] Lani Anaya Jiménez, "Between Hospitality and Hostility: Ethical Perspectives on Refugees in Times of Rising Radicalization in Sweden," *The Ecumenical Review* 71, no. 3 (July 2019): 358.

caused should be the one to make that decision, which requires trust that a person will not abuse the right to declare violence.

Another commentator, Mireille Rosello, argues that rather than seeing hospitality as a principle, we should start to emphasize the friendliness of hospitality. Instead of seeing hospitality as a grand narrative to implement, we should see it as actions taken. "If we shift our focus to practices, it is possible to emphasize different moments of hospitality during which the position of hosts and guests constantly fluctuate, as we theoretically know that they do."[27] She points out that when hospitality becomes a grand narrative it can often turn into identity politics, with the potent question of who is other or guest. "The paradigm of conviviality emphasizes encounters and practices rather than identity, which would enable us to get away from the stereotypical constructions of guest and host."[28] This is in many ways an extension of the first ethics that Levinas addressed. When conviviality becomes the mode of operation for a person, it will change the way he acts and receives others. In Rosello's understanding, I am going to act in friendship to all who I encounter, therefore when I see you, I will feel a responsibility to act friendly toward you. Similarly, if I take conviviality as a mode of operation, I will act in a way that is in your best interest when you welcome me in hospitality. While conviviality relieves some of the built-in conflict of unconditional hospitality, it is still essentially an ideal and difficult to perform all the time.

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[27] Mireille Rosello, "Conviviality and Pilgrimage: Hospitality as Interruptive Practice," in *The Conditions of Hospitality: Ethics, Politics, and Aethetics on the Threshold of the Possible*, ed. Thomas Claviez (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 128.

[28] Ibid., 131.

An interesting application of Levinas' and Derrida's theories on hospitality is to the hospice sector. As a hospice worker, you are presented with an "other" that is dying. How you approach the relationship with that person is of utmost importance. In addition to the dying person, you are entering into a relationship with a number of other family members and friends. Levinas' absolute priority of the other becomes valuable in this situation. Because the likelihood of bad actors is reduced, it is a pristine environment in which to welcome people without regard to their qualities of being good or bad. In welcoming them wholly, it is possible to fully meet their needs as they process the approaching death.

> Faced with the challenge of responding to the great demand for care at the end of life, the modern hospice movement has the task of constructing a path leading either to giving priority to the other who requests it unconditionally, or being absorbed as just another mechanism of medicalization of the social organism in the process of dying and death.[29]

The application of unconditional welcome seems ideally applied to hospice care, but it also allows the worker to learn to accept the unconditional welcome of the person who is passing. All too often in our society, the ones passing are without a person to give themselves to fully in the last days of their lives. Often the most important work of a hospice worker is to allow the dying person the freedom to be hospitable to someone else.

Section 2: Interreligious Understandings of Hospitality

Every major world religion holds hospitality as a primary value. The approaches vary, much like the religions themselves, but close to the core of each of them is an

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[29] Ciro Augusto Floriani and Fermin Roland Schramm, "How Might Levinas' Concept of the Other's Priority and Derrida's Unconditional Hospitality Contribute to the Philosophy of the Modern Hospice Movement?," *Palliative and Supportive Care* 8, no. 2 (2010): 220.

expectation of hospitality. This section evaluates how Judaism and Islam (Abrahamic religions), Buddhism, and Hinduism approach hospitality.

Abrahamic Faiths

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all begin with the same source: Abraham. While Christianity and Judaism share much of the same tradition through the Old Testament period, Islam diverts after the exile of Hagar and Ishmael. All three faiths include the story of Abraham and the three visitors, which I discussed in chapter two and illustrates the crux of hospitality. The emphasis of welcome found in that story laid the framework for hospitality embraced by all three faiths. It is important to remember that these faiths developed in a region where the climate is often inhospitable. Not providing hospitality when the weather is difficult would be the same as giving a stranger the death penalty. It seems likely that at least the cultural applications of hospitality in these faiths – if not the theological ones – were based upon care for fellow humans.

Islam

To understand hospitality within Islam, Christians and Jews must make a paradigm shift away from the primary focus being the immanence of God and increase their focus on the sovereignty of God. Allah's love for humanity is all-encompassing, but not personal.[30] Acts of hospitality, *diyafa* in Arabic, are not done in imitation of God or as a reaction to God's great love, but rather as ways of honoring the love that Allah has offered humanity.

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[30] Mona Siddiqui, *Hospitality and Islam: Welcoming in God's Name* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 126-127.

Once the sovereignty of God within Islam is understood, it is possible to start accurately discussing the basis for hospitality found within it. The idea of *tawhid* serves as a foundational concept for Islam in general and is of vital importance to hospitality within the faith. *Tawhid* refers to the unity of Allah as well as the unity of all things, including humanity.[31] Allah's unity with humanity is the basis for peoples continued hospitable action toward each other. "As a basis for an ethic of hospitality in Islam, *tawhid* has immense power as it implies that whatever dehumanizes one dehumanizes all. … Therefore, as all of humanity is one, being inhospitable and inflicting violence or perpetuating injustice is seen as anti-*tawhid*."[32] Taken in a very inclusive way, this means that within Islam there is a desire to see generosity (*karam/karim*) extended to all people, which will benefit all people. *Tawhid* is one of the reasons for the declaration that Islam is a religion of peace; war and strife affecting some people in turn affects all people.

Extending out of *tawhid* is the idea of *adab,* which is the basis for much of the functional application of hospitality within Islam. "Encompassing connotations of etiquette, social manners, and interpersonal ethics, *adab* is an elaborate framework for the code of Muslim behavior, which is bound up in values of honor, kindness, humaneness, civility, generosity, and courtesy."[33] Within the context of *adab,* Muslims offer hospitality to both the other within their midst and the non-Muslim other. It is not possible to separate out one virtue from *adab;* rather it must be applied in fullness. However, among the values of *adab,* honor plays an important role. For example, for

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[31] Jayme R Reaves*, Safeguarding the Stranger: An Abrahamic Theology and Ethic of Protective Hospitality*, (Lutterworth:Cambridge, 2017), 113.

[32] Ibid., 114.

[33] Ibid., 118.

hospitality to be offered properly, it is not enough for a Muslim to be generous; their generosity needs to be kind and honorable to its recipients. The idea that hospitality must be honorable is an aspect of the practice that I think is often missed, and perhaps what separates hospitality from mercy. *Adab* discourages thoughtless generosity and, as such, careless hospitality.

Within Islam, two more aspects of generosity are the sibling ideas of *sadaqa* and *zakāt*. Both terms relate to being generous to those in need; they are often translated as "almsgiving." The difference between the two terms is that *sadaqa* is voluntary giving but *zakāt* is mandatory. The *zakāt* is one of the pillars of the Muslim faith and is not optional. Some Muslim scholars would say that the refusal to give *zakāt* is stealing from the poor because the *zakāt* belongs to the poor. In contrast, *sadaqa* is an optional giving that is provided when a need is displayed.

> While the institution of almsgiving (*zakāt*) in the Medinan period remains in the sphere of compulsory obligations, a basic pillar of Islam, giving one's wealth away voluntarily (*sadaqa*) to a certain category of people, demands a different kind of generosity and attitude. In his seminal work on reciprocal gift giving, Marcel Mauss claims that justice was a prior meaning of *sadaqa* encompassing the twin moral ideas of gifts and wealth, and sacrifice.[34]

These two types of giving are so similar that it can be difficult to determine which is being employed. In fact, in many places within the Quran and supplementary writings, the line between *zakāt* and *sadaqa* is blurred to the point of losing any differentiation. Nonetheless, the imperative of both is to be generous toward those in need, particularly widows, orphans, and travelers.[35] In the early days of Islam, when nations were

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[34] Siddiqui, 41-42.

[35] Ibid., 42.

theocracies, *zakāt* was taken like a tax on the residents of the nation. Now that most theocracies have faded into history, *zakāt* is practiced at the discretion of the individual follower. This lack of enforced almsgiving further diminishes the distinctions between *zakāt* and *sadaqa*. Regardless, both concepts have helped establish a culture of giving among adherents to the Muslim faith.

> Rich and poor are not defined in any categories, and wealth and poverty are not measured in any systematic way. But giving what one can to others went beyond a one-way obligation on the rich towards the poor. Giving to others is both a personal as well as institutional way of expanding our social conscience and recognizing that others have a stake in our wealth. If one had nothing to give, then doing good for others and to others was also an act of charity. But even though the Qur'ān does not elaborate beyond the act of giving in multiple ways, as part of a wider narrative of hospitality to the stranger and the needy, Muslim societies developed a culture of ubiquity of charity.[36]

It is worth noting that the approach taken here is based on an inclusive reading of Islam. There are some Islamic scholars who would argue that hospitality within the faith is to be extended only within Islam. Nonetheless, I believe there is much to be drawn from the deeply rooted ideas of charity and hospitality found in Islam.

Judaism

From a Christian perspective, it would be easy to assume that Jewish hospitality is similar to that of Christianity. While Christianity and Judaism share the Old Testament (or *Tanakh* from the Jewish perspective), modern Judaism depends more on the rabbinic tradition of commenting upon the *Tanakh* (and commenting upon the comments) as well as mystical traditions like the Lurianic Kabbalah. While Christianity and Judaism have a similar root, they have grown in different directions.

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[36] Ibid., 56.

Rabbinic Judaism considers hospitality a part of its larger charity framework. Consequently, understanding hospitality requires a clear grasp of Jewish charity and how it is dispersed within the community.

In the early rabbinic period, the concepts of charity and hospitality were largely informed by the writings in the *Tanakh*. Discussion about the meanings of various passages led to both more generalized concepts and more specific actions.[37] Charity was generalized such that it could be carried out in any community of Jews, regardless of location. An example of increased specificity is that “a widow was given the right of inheritance to her husband's property (instead of his relatives) and the guarantee of remaining in her husband's house even if it meant having to sell some of his belongings (Kethuboth 12.3).”[38] Changes like these represented an increasing progressiveness among the rabbis, underscoring an understanding of humanity made in the image of God.

During this period, charitable action was largely seen as a communal requirement with little to no emphasis on independent personal charity. It was not until the Middle Ages that charity began to be understood as something individuals chose to do. But even in this context, the choice to offer charity was still connected to communal actions. For instance, the Jewish philosopher Maimonides “called for charity programs that would not only support the needy in their dependency but would root out the problem of dependency and need altogether. He argued that the aim of charity should be to put the poor person ‘where he can dispense with other people's aid ... [and] strengthen him in

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[37] Frederick B. Bird, “A Comparative Study of the Work of Charity in Christianity and Judaism,” *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 151.

[38] Ibid., 153.

such a manner that his falling into want is prevented' (Maimonides, 1972:137)."[39] Even by modern standards this would be considered a progressive suggestion. This type of charity was part of a communal action to prevent begging, but it was also entirely voluntary. To this day, charity within the Jewish context is not entirely independent but is partially wrapped in a communal understanding of it.[40]

Within Judaism, hospitality is a component of communal care for those in need. In some ways, it is the most independent of the charity concepts because providing space for people is a very personal action. The term for hospitality in Hebrew is *Hachnasat Orchim*, which is typically translated as "bringing in of guests." "Hospitality in Judaism is regarded as the 'kind reception of a stranger or traveler.'"[41] It is considered a *mitzvot,* or a good deed done out of religious duty. The Talmud describes hospitality as "one of the pleasures enjoyed in this world and which is rewarded in the world to come" (Shabbat 127a).[42]

The golden rule, found in Leviticus 19:18, declares that Jews are to love their neighbors as themselves. This is the root of the Jewish concept of charity, and by extension hospitality. In the early second century, Rabbi Akiva saw self-love as a framework for love of the other, calling it "the preeminent principle of Judaism."[43] Loving the other honors the existence of the other, which recognizes that the other bears

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[39] Ibid., 161.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Reaves, 98.

[42] Barbara Binder Kadden and Bruce Kadden, *Teaching Mitzvot: Concepts, Values, and Activities* (Denver: Alternatives in Religious Education, 1996), 151.

[43] Reaves, 101.

the image of God. Hospitality is a way of honoring both the image of God in another person and loving that person as one would love oneself. Within rabbinical Judaism, "honoring the other was exhorted as one of the highest *mitzvoth*, whereas shaming another was equated to murder."[44]

There are some specifics for how and when hospitality is to be extended in Judaism. For example, "the host [is] expected to wait on guests, responding to their needs, but the host [is] forbidden to watch the guests too closely lest they refrain from eating their fill."[45] There are, of course, rules for how and when charity is to be extended, which seem to have been extended to hospitality. Because of hospitality's special place as a *mitzvot,* it does hold the distinct privilege of, on occasion, superseding the rules of Shabbat. "So important is this Mitzvah that, if necessary, it was permitted to clear a warehouse full of straw on shabbat in order to make room for guests."[46]

Placing hospitality within the framework of charity means that it is also seen as a way of addressing society's afflictions. Depending on the movement of Judaism, this charity can be offered only to Jews or extended to the world in general. The diasporic nature of the Jewish people has made it so that charity and hospitality practices are commonly culture and place specific. How safe the Jewish community feels will often dictate how liberally hospitality practices are dispensed. This is an important reminder that, as Derrida indicates, hospitality always comes with a level of danger. Because of

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[44] Ibid., 102.

[45] Kaden, 151.

[46] Ibid.

their history, Jews are not afforded the freedom to believe in absolute hospitality, yet they continue to offer hospitality to the outcast and refugee whenever possible.

Eastern Faith Traditions

Hinduism and Buddhism developed around the same time in what is now northern India. The two traditions share many beliefs but arrive at those concepts by different means. Hospitality is an example of a concept they share. Hinduism is a theistic faith and Buddhism is not; this changes the direction by which believers are motivated to be hospitable.

Hinduism

The foundational concept of hospitality within Hinduism is *Athithi devo bhava*, which translates to "the guest is god." This phrase itself is part of an Upanishadic prayer that also includes "the mother is god, the father is god, the teacher is god." The way Hindus interact with other humans is to treat them with the respect due to a god. Hospitality within Hinduism particularly emphasizes how to treat guests in the home. The Tirukkural[47] contains a whole chapter dedicated to the idea of hospitality. Couplets 81 through 90 highlight this focus:

> The whole purpose of earning wealth and maintaining a home is to provide hospitality to guests.
>
> When a guest is in the home, it is improper to hoard one's meal, even if it happens to be the nectar of immortality.
>
> If a man cares daily for those who come to him, his life will never suffer the grievous ruin of poverty.
>
> Wealth's Goddess dwells in the hospitable home of those who host guests with a smiling face.

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[47] The Tirukkural is a book of Hindu wisdom dated between 300 BCE and 400CE.

> If a man eats only after attending to guests' needs, what further sowing will his fertile fields require?
>
> The host who, caring for guests, watches hopefully for more, will himself be a welcomed guest of those whose home is Heaven.
>
> Charity's merit cannot be measured by gifts given. It is measured by measuring the receiver's merits.
>
> Those who never sacrifice to care for guests will later lament: "We hoarded wealth, estranged ourselves, now none will care for us."
>
> The poverty of poverties is having plenty yet shunning guests. Such senselessness is only found in senseless fools.

The delicate anicham flower withers when merely smelled, but an unwelcome look is enough to wither a guest's heart.

The text emphasizes the blessings of being a good host, but it also focuses on the self-sacrifice necessary in order to offer appropriate hospitality. Hindus must behave as if Krishna himself has come to visit. Throughout the Hindu scriptures, there are stories of the gods themselves being hospitable to people, serving as examples of how followers should be hospitable on earth. For instance, in one story Krishna provides hospitality to a boyhood friend who has become impoverished:

> When his boyhood friend, Sudama—hungry, impoverished and in rags—arrived at the palace, the guards refused to allow him in. But Lord Krishna, overjoyed to see his old friend, received him with open arms and joyfully led him to his throne. He personally washed Sudama's feet and fed him with his own hands. Sudama had brought a humble gift, a handful of parched rice tied in the corner of his shawl and was too ashamed to give it to Lord Krishna in front of all the fine courtiers, but Lord Krishna opened it with delight and ate the grains with pleasure and appreciation.[48]

The hospitality of the gods is an encouragement to followers to behave in the same way toward others.

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[48] Lavina Melwani, "Hospitality How Guests Are Treated as God in the Hindu Home," *Hinduism Today,* Oct/Nov/Dec 2013, https://www.hinduismtoday.com/modules/smartsection/item.php?itemid=5431, Accessed Sept 12, 2020.

Although the ethic of treating the guest as god is woven into the very fabric of the Hindu faith, the treatment of the Dalits, or untouchables, continues to be a point of contradiction. The Dalits are the lowest of the castes within ancient Hinduism. Even though the tradition tells followers to treat every human as god, and to see god in *everything, Athithi devo bhava* is not applicable to the Dalits. As India's middle class has grown and some traditional practices have been abandoned, this issue has become less of a problem in cities but persists in rural areas where traditions are maintained.[49]

Buddhism

While Hinduism invokes its theistic tendencies to encourage hospitality, Buddhism focuses upon hospitality as a virtue that "relates to our social, moral, and spiritual value system."[50] A main focus of Buddhism is the emptying of one's self to find freedom. Hospitality is one practice encouraged to create the freedom of emptiness. Four main values are cultivated within the practice of hospitality: generosity (*dāna*), endearing words (*peyya-vajja*), beneficent conduct (*attha-cariyā*), and impartiality (*samānattatā*).

Much like in Islam and Judaism, Buddhism sees the practice of hospitality as partially the act of providing charity. *Dāna*, which is often translated as "almsgiving," is the practice of being generous to those in need. The noncompulsory giving of material

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[49] Ibid.

[50] G. A. Somaratne, "The Buddhist Concept of Hospitality: A Value That "Connects" People," *IBC Journal of Buddhist Studies IBCJBS* (2019): 213.

wealth – in the form of money, energy, or wisdom – is a way of providing for the other, and the pure intention behind it is a means of purifying the mind.[51]

The practice of *samānattatā* is the idea that one's ideals should match one's actions; it encourages offering hospitality without partiality. This pairs with the ideas behind *dāna* and recognizes all humans as deserving of hospitality.

Lastly, it is worth noting that Buddhists see the practice of hospitality as a way of bonding people to each other. Through hospitality we create friendships that help to make the world a better place. This bonding provides the hospitable person with "confidence, virtue, generosity and wisdom" and enables them "to act with the confidence of the confident, with the virtue of the virtuous, with the generosity of the generous and with the wisdom of the wise."[52]

Conclusion

I find it intriguing that hospitality is a vital component of all four of these religious traditions. The theological understandings of hospitality, though, are different. In Islam, hospitality is honoring God; in Judaism, it is emulating God; in Buddhism, it is a virtue that cleanses the mind and bonds humanity to itself; and in Hinduism, it is almost an act of worship. Much of the Christian understanding of hospitality has been carried over from pre-rabbinic Judaism, making clear connections there. But Jesus saying, "what you do to the least of these you have done to me" and the writer of Hebrews warning not to neglect showing hospitality since many have "shown hospitality to angels without

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[51] Ibid., 216.

[52] Ibid., 221.

knowing it" (Hebrews 13:2) sounds a lot like *Athithi Devo Bhava*. In many ways, hospitality, even when trying to emulate God, is a way of honoring God. Hospitality is a point of connection that can be found in all of these faiths. In both French philosophy from the late twentieth century and the tenets of ancient religions, we find a common exhortation toward impartiality in our hospitality. Religions have encouraged us to see acts of charity as necessary practices to help those in need. While the form of application differs, the principle is the same and necessary. Hospitality is an idea that connects civilizations and should be included in our efforts toward a better world.

CHAPTER 4:

EMPATHY: EMOTIONAL HOSPITALITY

In the early thirteenth century, a rich young pilgrim was traveling to Rome to worship when he noticed the contrast between the riches in the cathedrals and the poverty just outside of them. He found a beggar and convinced him to switch clothing; the pilgrim spent the rest of the day begging on the streets of Rome. The experience of that day stayed with the pilgrim his whole life and caused him to become an advocate for the poor. Because of this experience, St. Francis, as he is now known, empathized with the poor, and it was his ability to empathize that changed the future of the Catholic church.

The psychiatric concept of empathy is relatively new; the word itself was created in the early 1900s.[1] Yet empathy has been a part of the human experience since the beginning of time. Over a century of research into empathy – what it is, why we do it, and where it comes from – has increased our understanding exponentially.

What is Empathy

The common understanding of empathy is to share or vicariously feel the emotions of another person. While that understanding works for most of the population, a more nuanced definition would be "an emotion that is more appropriate to the state or situation of someone else than to that of the person who experiences it."[2] If a friend wins

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[1] Helen Demetriou, *Emotion and Education* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 18.

[2] Heidi L. Maibom, "Affective Empathy", in *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Empathy*, edited by Heidi L. Maibom (New York: Routledge, 2017), 23.

the lottery and I am empathetically happy for her, my happiness is more associated with her happiness – having won the lottery – than with my experience as an observer. Empathy is different from a direct experience of emotion; it is a mediated state.[3] Within the study of empathy, there are two primary types: cognitive and affective. "Cognitive empathy denotes the ability to ascribe mental states to others, such as beliefs, intentions, or emotions … By contrast to cognitive empathy, affective empathy essentially involves affect on the part of the empathizer."[4]

Cognitive empathy is the ability to assume what someone else is feeling based upon the other person's situation. For instance, if a woman just lost her grandmother to cancer, cognitive empathy would assume that she is sad. The way the human psyche reaches that assumption is up for debate between two different camps: Theory Theory (TT) and Simulation Theory (ST). Within TT, humans apply a type of folk psychology to sense what a person is feeling. In essence it is a logic problem: her grandmother is dead; when other people's relatives die, they become sad, therefore she must be sad. In contrast ST argues that we do not need to use folk psychology to understand how the other is feeling in a particular situation. In our example above, a person following ST would ask himself how he would feel if his grandmother had died. The primary differences between the two theories are the amount and quality of information. In TT there is a high quantity of folk psychology information required to make the necessary assumptions. Without the requisite amount of information, the TT empath is left without a basis for feeling,

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Heidi L. Maibom, "Introduction to Philosophy of Empathy", in *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Empathy*, edited by Heidi L. Maibom (New York: Routledge, 2017), 1.

whereas the ST empath only needs enough personal experience to be able to decide which emotion to feel. The high amount of information required for TT also lends itself toward a higher quality of information. More information will theoretically weed out false positives and result in a better assumption. The quality of the information provided to the ST empath is entirely dependent upon his own experiences. In our example, if the ST empath has experienced the death of his own grandmother, he will be able to better extrapolate the feelings of his friend. But if he has never experienced the death of a grandparent, or someone close to him, he will not have the necessary information about how to feel and will have to do complex personal analysis to come up with the needed data.

> The basic idea of the ST is straightforward and intuitive, but the details of how this happens are quite nuanced (Spaulding, 2012, 2015). First, we retrodictively simulate to figure out what the target's mental states could have been to cause the observed behavior. Then we take the target's mental states in the form of pretend beliefs and pretend desires as input, run them through our own cognitive mechanisms, take the resulting conclusion and attribute it to the target in order to explain and predict the target's behavior.[5]

Neither of these theories exists within a vacuum. Humans use both theories, sometimes at the same time. A difficulty with cognitive empathy is that it can seem rather sterile. The assumption is that all of this is happening unconsciously, but it can seem contrived and impersonal to analyze a friend's experiences and emotions. In contrast to cognitive empathy, affective empathy is more of a reaction than a processed result. Where cognitive empathy is based upon considered theories, affective empathy is a process based upon observation. Returning to our example, if a friend is crying because

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[5] Heidi L. Maibom, "Cognitive Empathy", in *The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Empathy*, edited by Heidi L. Maibom (New York: Routledge, 2017), 15.

of the loss of her grandmother, affective empathy perceives sadness and mirrors it. Affective empathy is what is typically being discussed when people generically use the word empathy.

There are several emotional states that could be described as affective empathy but are typically thought of as distinct from it. The first of these is sympathy, which is technically known as “empathetic concern.” Sympathy is feeling badly *for* someone as opposed to feeling badly *with* someone. In terms of literature, it could be said that empathy is a first-person emotion and sympathy is a third-person emotion. The emotion expressed in sympathy is not mirrored by the sympathetic person but is a reaction of the sympathetic person to the person in pain. The second emotional state, emotional contagion, is when a person feels an emotion because of the assumption that another person is feeling that emotion. Emotional contagion sounds like cognitive empathy but differs in that it is based upon the observation of an emotional state and not derived from cognitive analysis of the situation. Often, emotional contagion is based upon a faulty understanding of the emotion being expressed. For example, if a friend starts to cry because of something another person said, it could be assumed the friend is sad when, in fact, the friend is crying tears of joy. Emotional contagion would result in comforting a person that is not in need of comfort. The final emotional state is personal distress, a person feels sad because of the situation of his friend not because his friend is sad but because he thinks if he were in the same situation, he would be sad. It would be a faulty assumption to believe that all these emotional states exist on their own.[6] They can be experienced in any number of combinations, either simultaneously or consecutively. In

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[6] Ibid., 22.

fact, some theorists consider them all to be part of affective empathy without being affective empathy itself.

Empathetic Arousal

Empathy is a necessary component for properly functioning societies. To become more empathetic people, it is important to understand the process we, as humans, undergo when acting empathetically. By better understanding this process, promoting empathetic response to crises will be more successful and result in societies that function better.

There is some debate as to why empathy developed within humans. The leading theory is that empathy developed because it is required for social structures to exist. Purely egocentric behavior would prevent the cooperation that is necessary to maintain a functioning social contract; it would lead to anarchy resulting from personal impulses. "As a society we function through empathy. It has the potential to establish unity, enable congruity, achieve harmony, solidify society, invigorate community and enhance humanity."[7] Empathy is considered a prosocial behavior because of its ability to promote social acceptance and friendship. The prosocial nature of empathy is what makes it so necessary for the development of communities and societies.

Empathetic distress (the feeling of the need to help someone in discomfort) is the catalyst for empathetic action (acting upon the feelings caused by empathetic distress), and the source of the prosocial quality of empathy. There are three ways that empathetic distress promotes prosocial behavior. First, it is associated with helping. Multiple studies have shown that when naturally empathetic people (of varying ages) encounter someone

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[7] Demetriou, 17.

in a difficult situation, they are more likely to help than people who are not naturally empathetically inclined.[8] Second, researchers have found that the intensity of empathetic distress is directly correlated with the speed at which an empathetic person engages in helping. And third, those experiencing empathetic distress feel better after helping. As the intensity of the distress subsides the reduction of stress is subconsciously treated as a reward by the helper.[9] The three primary reasons for not acting upon empathic distress are: pluralistic ignorance (no one else is helping so it must not be a big deal), egoistic motives, and the cost of helping is too high. A person's decision to help or not is largely subconscious but does play a large part in the functioning of a community.[10]

Empathy is also associated with a lessening of aggressive tendencies. Being able to understand the position of a transgressor helps prevent aggressive behavior toward the transgressor and promotes peaceful resolutions to situations.

Researcher Martin L. Hoffman suggests there are five modes of empathetic arousal – ways that empathetic distress is acted upon – which he further divides into two camps: preverbal and high-order cognitive. The preverbal modes are mimicry, conditioning, and association. The high-order cognitive modes are mediated association and role-taking.[11] The preverbal modes are part of our development as we grow from infancy onward and are involuntary.

> The three preverbal modes are crucial for arousing empathy in childhood especially in face-to-face situations, but they continue to operate and provide

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[8] Hoffman, 30.

[9] Martin L. Hoffman, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice,* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 31-33.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 5.

> empathy with an important involuntary dimension throughout life. They not only enable a person to respond to whatever cues are available, but they also **compel** him to do it – instantly, automatically, and without requiring conscious awareness.[12]

The higher-order modes are typically dependent upon a greater level of cognitive ability and initially require purposeful activation to be used effectively.

> These modes may be drawn out over time and they may be subject to voluntary control, but if one is paying attention to the victim they can be involuntary and triggered immediately on witnessing the victim's distress. What they contribute to a person's empathetic capability is scope; they also enable a person to empathize with others who are not present.[13]

When fully developed, empathetic arousal will cause a person to be able to engage with another person both face-to-face and remotely. While there is much to learn about how empathetic arousal works, it is important to remember that it is a necessary component to the prosocial nature of empathy.

Empathy Development

For a long time, it was believed that young children lacked the ability to empathize and that empathy was a skill developed in adolescence and early adulthood. As late as 1968, theorists argued that a child's inability to differentiate herself from her "non-self" prevented her from being able to understand the emotional state of another person.[14] Jean Piaget's work on childhood development helped to lend credence to this idea with his "Three Mountains" experiment, which asked children aged four to twelve to show which of three mountains a doll was looking at based upon how the doll was

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Demetriou, 36.

situated. His conclusions were that children under seven years old were incapable of understanding the world from another's point of view.[15] He was using a very literal understanding of point of view in this case, but it was enough to maintain the theory that young children were incapable to of empathy. In 1971 Helene Borke introduced a study that showed that "children as young as 3 years of age were able to identify other people's feelings."[16] Further research showed that the conditions of Piaget's study were flawed and resulted in inaccurate data.[17]

Researchers have since discovered that infants can recognize prosocial actions and by six months are "successful in socially evaluating the motivations of actors involved in positively and negatively motivated acts in that they show a preference for those who are helpful towards others in achieving their goals, compared with others who purposely hinder and who they tend to avoid."[18] Further experiments have shown that children learn how to evaluate new situations by taking cues from adults. It is the process of experiencing new situations, evaluating them, and applying what is learned that helps children to develop their empathetic responses.

Given that we did not know until the mid-1970s that children develop empathetic skills in infancy, the 1946 emergence of *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* by Benjamin Spock, which focused on a child-centered approach with ideas about child engagement, is especially impressive. Spock's approach contrasted with the

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[15] Ibid., 37.

[16] Ibid., 39.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid., 41.

commonly held assumption that children should receive as little affection as possible and be punished physically, in order to mold them into the people their parents wanted them to become. Spock – and later Stone, Smith, and Murphy – understood that children respond better to positive reinforcement and are more likely to successfully adapt to society.[19] From what we have learned through research, Spock and Stone et al. were on to something. If we want children to develop into empathetic adults, we must spend face time with them to help them learn how to better evaluate and apply empathetic responses to the situations they encounter. It is only through this development that children will be able to respond to empathetic distress and apply the modes of empathetic arousal to maintain a society dependent upon empathy as they grow into adulthood.

Scriptural Examples of Empathy

Within the scriptures, there are multiple examples of empathy initiating hospitality. I will explore three of them here: Israel's mandate to remember their status as sojourners, the incarnation, and the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The exodus of the people of Israel from Egypt was significant for several reasons, including the evolution of civil society. Prior to the writing of the Jewish law, societies were primarily based upon an exclusive model: if a person is not like us, and is not useful to us, we will exclude him from our community. This type of protection method was meant to keep out the bad people and protect the good people. Hospitality was offered as a means of maintaining one's honor, but that hospitality was limited to a few days. It was

[19] Demetriou, 7.

done largely to fulfill one's sacred duty.[20] The Jewish law brought a new understanding of the outsider. As mentioned earlier, there was a differentiation made between outsiders who maintained allegiance to a different nation-state (called foreigners) and those who had no connection to their homeland (called sojourners and resident aliens). According to the law, foreigners were to be treated with some skepticism, but sojourners were to be welcomed. Israel's corporate memory of being sojourners created the ideal environment for this sort of law to evolve. This was more than a sacred duty; it was an act of empathy based in Israel's similar experience.

Much of the law regarding sojourners or resident aliens addressed how to care for them. In order to properly care for these people, Israel remembered the nature of nomadic life. While these laws encouraged hospitality, they began with an empathetic response, an identification with the emotions and state of the sojourner. For instance, in Exodus 23:9, "You shall not oppress a stranger; you know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt."[21] This empathetic response is the basis for much of the care of sojourners in Israel. Without these laws sojourners and resident aliens would have lived in a difficult legal situation.

> Sojourners or aliens (Hebrew: *gerim*) were often landless in an agrarian society where land was usually distributed by inheritance and where access to land was essential to life. Without special attention, resident aliens would be marginal to most Israelite institutions – to extended families, as well as to legal, economic, political, and religious situations. Their status was precarious and their well-being depended on the willingness of the community to welcome them into its life.[22]

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[20] Pohl, 28.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

The distinctiveness of the sort of care extended to resident aliens in ancient Israel is sometimes difficult to understand in the modern democratic west, where we have embraced the ideal that everyone should be welcomed and have a place to feel safe. Documents such as the Universal Statement of Human Rights illustrate this presumption:

> **Article 13.**
> (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
> (2) Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country.
>
> **Article 14.**
> (1) Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.[23]

The ideas behind these statements had been developing for hundreds or thousands of years in multiple societies including Judaism. The hospitality found in welcoming the other is important, but the fact that – at least in Israel's case – it is based on an empathetic response is equally important as it shows that hospitality is the result of identification with the status of the other. It is within these laws that the "golden rule" to love your neighbor as yourself is first found.

The instruction to "love your neighbor as yourself" was first given as the culmination of a series of rules on how to be a good citizen, one who is just and also points out injustice. "You must not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you must love your neighbor as yourself." (Lev. 19:18) The response to injustice is to love your neighbor as yourself, which is an empathetic response to that injustice. Rather than bringing about vengeance or holding a grudge, the Israelite

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[23] UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948, 217 A (III), available at: https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/ [accessed 10 October 2020]

community is told to consider how they would want to be dealt with in that situation. The verse ends with the proclamation “I am the Lord,” emphasizing who is telling them how to treat their neighbor while also reminding them that vengeance is the Lord’s.

When asked to enumerate the most important commandments, in Luke 10, Jesus responds by giving the Shema – Deuteronomy 6:4-5 – as the most important, which would be expected of an observant Jew. But then he places loving your neighbor as yourself as the second most important. “In Luke the two commandments are closely intertwined in a single sentence. The seamless character of the love of God and the love of one’s neighbor is emphasized: one cannot love one without loving the other.”[24] After a follow up question, Jesus proceeds to tell the parable of the Good Samaritan. The parable of the Good Samaritan falls in a series of parables that the exegetes call the *Beispielerzählungen*.[25] This series of parables – which includes the parables of the foolish rich man, the rich man and Lazarus, and the Pharisee and the tax collector – are stories containing examples or models of conduct. The objective in these parables is not to draw a grand spiritual point but, rather, to provide models of behavior that are to be followed. Luke’s placement of the Good Samaritan within this grouping of parables is an indication of its importance in Christian life.

The story of the Good Samaritan starts with a teacher of the law asking Jesus to list the greatest commandments. Jesus provides his answer, which the teacher of the law agrees to, but then the teacher asks for a definition of “neighbor.” Luke adds that the reason for the teacher’s response is to justify himself. Leviticus 19:18 has a long history

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[24] Katell Berthelot, *The Quest for a Common Humanity: Human Dignity and Otherness in the Religious Traditions of the Mediterranean*, ed. Matthias Morgenstern (Boston: Brill, 2011), 129.

[25] Ibid., 125.

of discussion among rabbis and the question of what defines neighbor had been brought up more than once within rabbinical circles.

> As to the field of application of the precept, in the context of Leviticus 19:18 the word "neighbor" is parallel to expressions such as "your brother," "the sons of your people," which refer to a somewhat restrictive application of the precept itself; and this tendency toward a restriction of the field of application of the commandment in Leviticus 19:18 is confirmed by a large part of the Jewish tradition, where its validity is normally restricted to the members of the people of Israel. The precept of love can also be enlarged to the *gerim*, strangers living in Israel (Lev19:34; Deut 10:19), but the rabbinical interpretation of these verses restricts their application to proselytes alone. However that may be, the debates around this issue must have been very heated in Jesus's time and drew the rabbis toward more or less restrictive interpretations of the precept.[26]

Given the nature of rabbinical teaching, where questions often lead to more questions rather than answers, asking for a definition of the word "neighbor" would be expected. From a western perspective, we see Jesus giving a complete and succinct answer, which we would likely accept and move on, but midrash means taking that answer and asking deeper questions of it. Perhaps Luke was making his own assumptions about the teacher, rather than understanding the teaching or conversational pattern at play. Nonetheless, Jesus responds to this deeper questioning with the parable of the Good Samaritan.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan is set on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho. This road has qualities that are important to the story. First it was windy and had many narrow passages that made it easy for a person to be ambushed. Second, it was frequently traveled by priests and Levites going to and from Jerusalem to perform their religious duty. Jesus' audience would be familiar with these elements and, as such, the conditions of the parable were understood from the outset. The focus of the story is not

[26] Ibid., 127-128.

actually on the man that is ambushed and requires help, but upon the reactions of the people who encounter him. That a Levite and a priest would be on the path would not surprising, but their reactions are. There is an argument that the priest and Levite step past him because they need to maintain ritual purity, which is fair but ultimately unfulfilling considering the end of the story. The last person Jesus' listeners would have expected to be the hero of the story was a Samaritan. For Jews of his day, Samaritans were at best heretics and at worst terrorists.[27] The animosity between Jews and Samaritans during this period is hard to overstate. Jesus' use of the Samaritan is explicit; it is meant to shock and force his audience to consider the behavior. It is surprising that the Samaritan has an empathetic response for this man who is his enemy, especially in contrast with the lack of empathy from both the priest and the Levite. Empathy, and in turn neighborly behavior, is not concerned with religious purity if the wholly impure Samaritan is able to perform it. By being self-focused, both Jewish leaders lose their holy appearance in comparison to the empathic action of the Samaritan.

Jesus concludes the encounter with the teacher of the law by having him answer his own question. The teacher answers correctly, that the neighbor in the story is the one who showed mercy. In response, Jesus instructs the man to "go and do the same." In this interaction with the teacher of the law, Jesus has broadened the idea of who a neighbor is, but more importantly, he has shifted "neighbor" from being a static demographic to the recipient of a type of behavior. Acting neighborly – empathetic and hospitable – makes one a neighbor, not religious, cultural, geographical, or familial categories. And by

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[27] Ibid., 131.

extension, being neighborly is the path to holiness, along with loving God with all your heart.

Jesus as the incarnate Christ is himself a living example of the neighborliness he describes in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. The very nature of God constraining God's self to the form of humanity via the incarnation is an act of empathy. As Athanasius says,

> All this He saw and, pitying our race, moved with compassion for our limitation, unable to endure that death should have the mastery, rather than that His creatures should perish and the work of His Father for us men come to nought, He took to Himself a body, a human body even as our own. … Thus, taking a body like our own, because all our bodies were liable to the corruption of death, He surrendered His body to death in place of all, and offered it to the Father. This He did out of sheer love for us, so that in His death all might die, and the law of death thereby be abolished because, when He had fulfilled in His body that for which it was appointed, it was thereafter voided of its power for men.[28]

In the gospel of Matthew, we are told that Jesus would be known as Emmanuel, which translates to "God with us." In this title we see a literal application of the concept of empathy, but within it is a more metaphorical idea. Jesus was with us in his humanity and in his temptations. Jesus not only existed in human form, but in community with fallen humanity. As Karl Barth reminds us, "it is God's *deity* which, rightly understood, includes his *humanity."*[29] God's humanity was with our fallen humanity, and in that "with-ness" we find Jesus as Emmanuel.

> Certainly in *Jesus Christ,* as He is attested in Holy Scripture, we are not dealing with man in the abstract: not with the man who is able with his modicum of religion and religious mortality to be sufficient unto himself without God and thus himself to be God. But neither are we dealing with *God* in the abstract: not with one who in His deity exists only separated from man, distant and strange and thus a non-human if not indeed an inhuman God. In Jesus Christ there is no isolation

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[28] St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1953), 34.

[29] Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 46.

> of man from God or of God from man. Rather, in Him we encounter the history, the dialogue, in which God and man meet together and are together, the reality of the covenant *mutually* contracted, preserved, and fulfilled by them. Jesus Christ is in His one Person, as true *God, man's* loyal partner, and as true *man, God's.* He is the Lord humbled for communion with man and likewise the Servant exalted to communion with God.[30]

As we see in Barth, the "with us" of Emmanuel is not simply in Christ coming down to us, but also his lifting us to be with him. Athanasius provides a similar idea when he states that "He, indeed, assumed humanity that we might become God."[31] Empathy creates a type of bond that, when properly applied, bonds two people together in ways otherwise impossible. In Christ's empathy, humanity is lifted toward God, revoking what had previously separated us.

While the old Eastern Orthodox saying that "the life of Christ is the work of Christ," holds true, the empathy found in the incarnation is more than the simple act of becoming physically human. In the crucifixion, we see Jesus' empathy played out to the bitter end. In René Girard's seminal work, *The Scapegoat,* he argues that in the crucifixion, Christ took away humanity's need to find a sacrifice to bridge our separation from God. According to this argument, what separates humanity from God is not God's holiness nor a need for a blood sacrifice but rather humanity's anxiety over its sinfulness and the belief that a scapegoat is necessary to relieve that anxiety. In his death, Christ took on the role of scapegoat, providing a clear path for humanity to come into full relationship with God – a relationship humanity had resisted because of its sinfulness. Christ's empathy is expressed as he relieves humanity's anxiety over its sinfulness. The

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[30] Barth, 46.

[31] Athanasius, 93.

crucifixion begins as an act of empathy toward humanity and ends as an act of hospitality, providing a space where humanity can come into a full relationship with God.

In these three examples – Israel's mandate to remember being sojourners, the Parable of the Good Samaritan, and the incarnation – empathetic action leads to hospitality. Empathy is the beginning of creating hospitable spaces and actions within Christianity.

Losing Empathy

A critical skill for empathetic people is to understand their context, both where they have come from and where they presently exist. Reflection and study play an important part in understanding one's context. This next section is an exploration I have undertaken to better place myself, a progressive Christian that grew up in the Evangelical wing of the church during the 1980s and 1990s. A full dissection of this era of Evangelicalism is outside of the scope of this paper, but this reflection serves as an example of reexamination of one's history to better understand his context.

In September of 1969, 4,600 prominent American evangelicals gathered to discuss the direction of the movement at the U.S. Congress of Evangelicalism. The slate of topics to be discussed was theologically conservative and would, in 2020, be described as socially progressive. There were talks about care of the environment, racial justice, and the evils of the Vietnam War alongside discussions about how to further and deepen relationships with Jesus and how to evangelize the world. If a person were to guess at the trajectory of the movement, she likely would have pointed toward a socially progressive and theologically conservative direction. Over the course of the next decade, though, white evangelicals in the US became staunchly socially conservative. To the degree their social conscience moved to the right, so did their theological beliefs.

Prior to the late 1970s, evangelicalism was able to maintain the balance between being socially progressive and theologically conservative largely due to the lack of stratification among the political parties. Issues of morality were primarily left to faith communities, while policy was the realm of politics. The parties had divergent ideas about how to achieve the common good, but policies were rarely dictated on purely moral terms. This separation of concerns started to disintegrate with the sexual revolution in the late 1960s and was essentially demolished by the time the 1980 presidential election came about.

> If many evangelicals in the late 1960s and early 1970s embraced *both* moral traditionalism and social justice concerns, it was because the Republican and Democratic parties had yet to stake out clear positions on issues such as abortion and homosexuality. During Carter's single term in office, however, the parties began to embrace starkly different philosophies on moral issues, with Republicans endorsing "traditional" values and the Democrats advocating greater personal autonomy in the moral realm. In consequence, evangelicals were forced to choose between moral traditionalism and social justice. Most opted for the former, aligning themselves with Republicans and embracing the party's positions, not only on moral issues but even on subjects seemingly far removed from personal morality, such as welfare, deregulation, and taxes.[32]

By moving to the right, white evangelicals began a marriage with the Republican party that has been responsible for much of how politics and conservative theology have behaved over the last forty years. It is commonly thought that the move from center-left to right by evangelicals in the late 1970s was a result of President Carter supporting "radical" left ideas like the Equal Rights Amendment while not addressing other

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[32] John W. Compton, *The End of Empathy: Why White Protestants Stopped Loving Their Neighbors* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 251.

evangelical concerns like abortion. However, data on voting trends among whites in the US do not support this theory. Whites had been consistently voting more conservatively since the 1960s, but the Watergate-dominated elections in the early and mid-1970s seem to have obscured that trend. In essence, Carter's election was an aberration brought on because of an ethically crippled Republican party. Whites returning to a conservative voting pattern after Carter's presidency was a correction to the trend rather than a sea change.[33] Additionally, there is no discernable difference between the voting patterns of white non-evangelicals and white evangelicals during this period, indicating the trend was not directly connected to moral policy differences. If this shift was both part of a larger pattern and not a result of moral policy deficiencies, what was the cause? "Upon close inspection, it seems likely the race-based antipathy toward federal social welfare programs, not outrage at the decline of traditional mores, was the driving factor behind the partisan realignment of the early 1980s."[34] With this realignment, the Republican party, egged on by evangelical organizations like the Moral Majority and Christian Voice, continued its move to the right, away from social justice and social welfare programs.

This stratification of politics began a trend among evangelicals: they appeared more concerned with people's souls than their welfare. Social justice was relegated to liberals and mainline churches and evangelicals sought to save people from eternal damnation rather than poverty. This shift drained evangelicalism, as a movement, of the empathy shown in the scriptures toward those in need. The AIDS crisis of the 1980s and

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[33] Ibid., 258-259.

[34] Ibid., 259.

1990s provided a feedback loop, of sorts, for evangelicals. They could now see their mores as saving them from a disease that was (wrongly) considered to be only affecting drug users and the gay and lesbian community. Evangelicals' lack of empathy toward the LGBTQ community during this period was as appalling as it was devoid of Christlike character.[35] [36] It began a trend of vilifying those thought to be morally or spiritually corrupt and refusing to empathize with them. The veiled racism of the 1970s, bigotry of the 1980s toward the LGBTQ community, and the religious discrimination in the early 2000s towards Muslims after the events of September 11, 2001 points to a trend of politically motivated empathy refusal that corrupted the movement.

By the early 2000s, the evangelical movement and Republican politics were so intertwined that in some places it was hard to tell the difference between a political policy meeting and a church service. Empathy and hospitality within evangelicalism was at its deepest low, but would sink even lower when Barack Obama, a Black man, was elected president. Veiled racism and religious discrimination came together in a particularly vile form of evangelicalism, which eight years later led to the election of Donald Trump, who objectively lacked the moral qualities evangelicals claimed to value but did share their prejudices. At the time of his election, many questioned how eighty percent of white

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[35] I am painting with a broad brush here. There were certainly some evangelicals that did not show the outright antipathy for the LGBTQ community that much of the movement did. For instance Ronald Sider was responsible for much thought on the issue as witnessed by his article in *The Christian Centrury*, "AIDS: An Evangelical Perspective" (January 6, 1988). Though on the whole, the evangelical response to homosexuality in general and this situation in particular was greatly lacking in empathy and the care for neighbor found in the parable of the good Samaritan.

[36] Lydia Bean and Brandon C. Martinez. "Evangelical Ambivalence toward Gays and Lesbians." *Sociology of Religion* 75, no. 3 (2014): 399.

evangelicals could vote for him.[37] Understanding the trend of the movement, though, makes their support of him seem inevitable.

Donald Trump continued to hold the support of a substantial majority of evangelicals for the first two years of his term, until news broke of the family separation policy among asylum seekers at the US-Mexico border. This deeply unpopular policy[38] seems to have awakened the sense of empathy lacking in much of evangelicalism, while not shaking their support for him.

Restoring Empathy

Being a parent is a shared experience unlike any other. It has been said that being a parent is like watching your heart walk outside of your body; only those who have parented can fully understand this feeling. When the news broke of children being taken away from their parents as a means of deterrence, this shared experience of parenting prompted an empathetic reaction on a grand scale. The demonization of people crossing the border was subsumed by the imagined experience of what it would feel like to have a child forcibly taken away. As the country expressed horror at this policy, a shift started to happen: evangelicals began to imagine themselves in the asylum seekers' shoes - a form of cognitive empathy. They allowed space to experience another's emotions; it was

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[37] Sarah Pulliam Bailey, "White Evangelicals Voted Overwhelmingly for Donald Trump, Exit Polls Show," *The Washington Post*, Accessed October 17, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2016/11/09/exit-polls-show-white-evangelicals-voted-overwhelmingly-for-donald-trump/.

[38] John Sides, "The Extraordinary Unpopularity of Trump's Family Separation Policy (in One Graph)" , *The Washington Post*, Accessed October 17, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/06/19/the-extraordinary-unpopularity-of-trumps-family-separation-policy-in-one-graph/

hospitality on an emotional level. Empathy can be known as emotional hospitality, providing a space to embrace and experience the emotions of the other.

Restoring empathy starts with helping people to create emotional space to consider the situation of the other. Empathetically skilled people can push aside their own emotions and experience the emotion of the other without letting it consume their own emotional state. Feeling with the other does not mean being overcome by the feelings of the other. To restore evangelicalism's sense of empathy, there needs to be a shared push by evangelicals of all stripes to provide space for the experience of the other.

Maureen Linker argues for five skills necessary to improve a person's ability to empathize with the other. The five skills are: understanding the invisibility of privilege, knowing that social identity is intersectional, using the model of cooperative reasoning, applying the principle of conditional trust, and recognizing our mutual vulnerability.[39]

Given that evangelicalism's move to the right was based upon racial animus and distaste for social programs, it seems the primary issue was a failure to understand privilege. Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, those seeking racial equality in the United States made a lot of progress, and evangelicals were part of that progress. At some point, diversity fatigue, the state of being overwhelmed by constantly being placed into a reductive category,[40] started to overwhelm much of white evangelicalism and the result was veiled racism. Most evangelicals were not outwardly racist. Rather, they were exhausted from being told they had privilege and needed to make space for the Black community. Their racism manifested in unconscious attitudes about what they should and

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[39] Maureen Linker, *Intellectual Empathy: Critical Thinking for Social Justice* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2015), 14.

[40] Ibid., 56-57.

should not have to do to accommodate the Black community. White evangelicals' freedom to maintain these attitudes was an advantage of the privilege they held as white people in the United States.

The restoration of empathy among white evangelicals includes helping people overcome diversity fatigue by ceasing to reduce people into reductive categories. This process starts by understanding the intersectionality of life.

> Intersectionality allows us to see that social categories have historically only made sense when they reduced and limited the possibilities for identity. So, for instance, if our default schemata for the concept of "person" is male, white, and heterosexual, then women, people of color, and same-sex partners lie outside the schema and can therefore be considered inferior or even socially deviant. Similarly, gender fluidity, racial fluidity, and sexual fluidity, which all challenge the static categories of social identity, become invisible as social identities.[41]

The nature of intersectionality is learning that the experience of one person is distinctly different than another's based upon their life experience, which is the result of the amalgamation of categories with which they identify. Intersectionality also means that shared experiences can provide an avenue for connection between people that seem demographically different. Diversity fatigue can be overcome when diversity becomes more about shared life connections, and the contrasts between experiences in those connections, and less about reductive categories that place blame or shame. In doing this, our capacity to be emotionally hospitable to the other increases as we provide space for both the connections and contrasts in life experience.

Understanding the intersectionality of life is an important skill, and it requires the belief that the other person is trustworthy in declaring his or her experience. Empathy requires honesty between both participants. Emotional manipulation on either side

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[41] Ibid., 59.

betrays the purpose of empathy and will be detrimental in its further development. Even prior to the election of President Trump, the Republican party's rhetoric fostered distrust of the other. This consistent narrative impacted policy makers' conversations about social services and the presentation of evangelical theology.

Max Weber reminds us that the theme of "God helps those who help themselves" was present early on in Protestantism. That theme was exaggerated by a political party that urged people to pull themselves up by their bootstraps. These two themes mixed became the idea that poverty is a result of lack of trust in God or worse rejection by God. Restoring empathy in evangelicalism requires trusting the oppressed, whether that oppression is a result of economic hardships, racial animus, or political realities. There must be space provided to acknowledge and be with the oppressed in their oppression in order to help them overcome their circumstances.

Ultimately, restoring empathy means being willing to change. Empathy should cause a desire for change. Sympathy should not be the goal for evangelicalism. It is easy to feel sad for the state of racial relations in the US or the plight of refugees from Guatemala. Empathy, on the other hand, causes us to be with those who are struggling and desire to see their circumstances changed. This desire starts with a change in attitude of the empath. The empath needs to be vulnerable enough to admit when his own biases have caused him to discount the situation of the oppressed. When his own biases are no longer blinding him to the state of the oppressed, he will be able to feel with her and see her struggle, and there is the possibility of him desiring change for her. This change in attitude will not happen for evangelicalism as a movement but must happen at a personal level. There is an opportunity for leaders within the movement to encourage this sort of emotional discovery among their followers. But if evangelicals are going to learn to be with the oppressed again, change will have to happen at the individual level.

There is a lot of work to be done within white American evangelicalism to heal the scars from nearly fifty years of empathetic decline. It is not an impossible task, but it is one that needs to be tackled head on. The work of restoring a corporate sense of empathy across the movement will help to move it to a position of welcome once again. As has been demonstrated earlier, hospitality is a primary function of the people of God. Restoring the primacy of hospitality within evangelicalism starts with re-learning how to be empathetic to those in need.

Much like St. Francis seven-hundred years ago, the evangelical movement needs to trade its fine clothes with the oppressed in order to restore a shared sense of care for them. Having empathy and teaching that empathy to the next generation can reverse the movement's trend and return to it the hope that was present at its inception.[42]

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[42] David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989), 29.

CHAPTER 5:

VOLUNTEERISM: AMERICAN HOSPITALITY

In 1995 the parishioners of Tacoma First Baptist Church gathered to discuss how they could help alleviate the growing homelessness problem in Tacoma.[1] Many options were tossed around, but in the end, they decided to host a free breakfast on Sunday mornings for the homeless. Every Sunday for the past 25 years (apart from a few when the kitchen was being renovated) the church has opened its doors to the poor and homeless in the area for a warm breakfast. At first the church served just two individuals, then four, then twelve. Over the years, the program has grown large enough to serve as many as 400 meals each week, currently averaging over 200 meals on any given Sunday.[2] The guest list has grown, as has the number of people volunteering to help serve breakfast, set up tables, and welcome the most vulnerable in their community. The breakfast has its regular volunteers, but there is also a waiting list of people wanting to help.

In many ways the breakfast at First Baptist (now renamed Urban Grace) is a massive success. It has become well known in the area for the quality of the food and the love of the volunteers, and it is a model for other services. The most amazing thing about the breakfast, though, is not that it succeeded, but that its success was predictable. As we will see, in the United States volunteerism has been bred into citizens' DNA. The

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[1] Matt Driscoll, "Matt Driscoll: Throwing Rocks at Tacoma's Homeless Problem Isn't the Answer," *Tacoma News Tribune* (Tacoma News Tribune, June 9, 2015), https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/news-columns-blogs/matt-driscoll/article26298283.html)

[2] Ibid.

breakfast is one of hundreds of thousands of volunteer opportunities in the United States. Whether it is to serve the homeless, care for orphaned pets, clean up parks, or any of a hundred other activities, Americans show up to help.

The Status of American Volunteerism

According to the 2018 Volunteering in America report, U.S. citizens donated 6.9 billion hours to volunteer organizations over the course of the year.[3] Those hours were compiled by over 77 million people (just over 30% of the population), adding over $160 billion in value to organizations. Notably, this calculation does not include informal volunteering that Americans do at an incredible rate. According to the study, nearly half of all Americans are supporting family, friends, or neighbors with donated time.[4]

Religious organizations comprise the largest portion of volunteer opportunities, making up a third of all volunteer organizations. After religious organizations comes "sport, hobby, cultural or arts" programs, making up nearly a quarter of all organizations, followed by "educational or youth service" organizations, with just shy of a fifth of the total. Those groups combined make up three quarters of all volunteer organizations; the remaining 25% includes organization types with less than five percent of the total.[5]

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[3] "Volunteering in U.S. Hits Record High; Worth $167 Billion," *Corporation for National and Community Service*, November 13, 2018, https://www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/volunteering-us-hits-record-high-worth-167-billion)

[4] Ibid.

[5] "Volunteer Organizations - National: CNCS Open Data," Volunteer Organizations - National, October 24, 2018, https://data.nationalservice.gov/Volunteering-and-Civic-Engagement/Volunteer-Organizations-National/y8vc-v65c?referrer=embed)

Unsurprisingly the most common volunteer activity is fundraising.[6] The nature of non-profit work requires that a hefty amount of time is spent raising funds to continue the work. While many organizations are fortunate to have a funding body behind them, most groups must continually fundraise to keep themselves afloat. When volunteers do the fundraising, staff are able to focus on the work of the organization. Perhaps predictably, the Volunteering in America report also shows that people who are active volunteers within an organization give money to charities (both the one they support and others) at a higher rate than those who do not actively volunteer (80% of participants versus 40% non-participants).[7] This makes the work of volunteer recruitment doubly important, as volunteers are also a large source of funding. After fundraising, the breakdown of volunteer activities is as diverse as one might expect, with food services being a close second followed by many participatory activities like mentoring, teaching, and yardwork for seniors.

I believe we need to examine the motivations behind these numbers. If this volunteering is done for the purpose of making ourselves feel better or to solve an annoyance, then we need to reconsider our understanding of volunteerism as an indication of the goodwill of Americans. On the other hand, if the numbers indicate that Americans are naturally altruistic and willing to sacrifice their time for a good cause, then we have a reason to commend our fellow Americans.

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[6] "Volunteering in America," *Corporation for National and Community Service*, accessed November 30, 2019, https://www.nationalservice.gov/serve/via

[7] "Volunteering in U.S. Hits Record High; Worth $167 Billion," *Corporation for National and Community Service*, November 13, 2018, https://www.nationalservice.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2018/volunteering-us-hits-record-high-worth-167-billion

Because it is difficult to study their motivation, there are few studies on the motivation of volunteers.[8] While there are many studies on why individuals help those who are in crisis, volunteering is different:

> ...volunteerism appears to be exemplary of a rather different kind of helping, a kind that is prototypic of planned helping, which often "calls for considerably more planning, sorting out of priorities, and matching of personal capabilities and interests with type of intervention"[9]

Essentially, volunteerism represents premeditated helping, which indicates an understanding that help is needed. The bigger question is how people come to this understanding. According to the research, there are six primary motivations: values, understanding or learning, social expectation, career ambitions, guilt, or enhancing one's self.[10] Motivation to volunteer is deeply personal, engaging "processes that encourage individuals to look inward to their own dispositions, motivations, and other personal attributes for guidance in deciding whether to get involved in helping, in the selection of a helping opportunity, and in the maintenance of helping over an extended course of involvement."[11] While there are purely ego-based reasons for volunteering, research indicates people volunteer because of both ego and external forces. One such force is cultural tradition.

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[8] E. Gil Clary et al., "Understanding and Assessing the Motivations of Volunteers: A Functional Approach.," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 74, no. 6 (1998): 1517.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.,1517-1518

[11] Ibid., 1529.

Tradition of Volunteerism in the United States

Since its earliest days, the United States has been a country in which citizens form organizations to combat issues. During his travels in the U.S. in the early nineteenth century, Alexis De Tocqueville noted that "they have not only commercial and manufacturing companies, in which all take part, but associations of a thousand other kinds—religious, moral, serious, futile, extensive, or restricted, enormous or diminutive."[12] Tocqueville was the first of many observers of the early American experience to note the importance of what he called "associations," which in modern parlance were roughly the same as non-profit (NP) or non-governmental organizations (NGO). Tocqueville not only notes the prevalence of associations, but also theorizes that they are more necessary in democracies than in other types of societies. His argument is that in an aristocracy, if someone can impress upon an aristocrat or two that a service is needed, the aristocrats can make it happen. In a democracy, however, there is (supposedly) no ruling class, so it is the work of society to form groups and articulate the importance of the service.[13]

Among the most important associations in the early years of the United States were churches.[14] Most American states followed the European model and chose a state-sponsored denomination. Ministers in these churches were state employees and the government owned the church property. When the concept of the separation of church

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[12] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Bantam Books, 2004), 672.

[13] Ibid., 673-674.

[14] Ram A. Cnaan, Stephanie C. Boddie, and Gaynor I. Yancey, "Bowling Alone But Serving Together: The Congregational Norm of Community Involvemen," in *Religion As Social Capital : Producing the Common Good,* ed. Smidt, Corwin (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2003), 26-27.

and state was codified, these state-run churches needed to become entities independent of the government. This separation process meant that for churches to keep their doors open, they needed people to support them financially. This need became the catalyst of social action by churches in the U.S.

> Thus, in the U.S., the clergy are expected not only to bring the word of God but also to establish a community of members who voluntarily support the congregation. This expectation created a new brand of clergy. American clergy are much more accountable to their congregants, are frequently hired and fired by the congregation's executive committee, and are generally expected to attract sufficient numbers of members. The financial independence of congregations forces them to make sure that they are fiscally solvent and attractive. One method that has been shown to enhance group loyalty, to prevent members from leaving, and to improve the congregation's public image is to become collectively involved in caring for needy people in the community. Congregations with strong social ministries (services) are capable of attracting and retaining members who find their place of worship a source of "good works."[15]

It is unlikely that churches would describe their outreach ministries in such blunt terms, but churches in the U.S. need ministries that encourage people to volunteer their time and money. The methods for achieving this goal are varied, but their effect is to cultivate a culture of volunteerism and charity.

The American inclination to form organizations that care for people is the heart of American philanthropy. The public sector (government and its entities) and the private sector (privately owned businesses) are well known concepts. Philanthropy is commonly referred to as the third sector, differentiating itself from both the public and private sectors while in some cases also overlapping them. In modern America, it has become commonplace for affluent people like Bill Gates or Jeff Bezos to give away large sums of money to NGOs and NPs, and that is considered philanthropy. In a way, this is a

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[15] Ibid., 27.

throwback to the aristocracy model mentioned earlier. In the earliest stages of the United States, though, philanthropy was about more than money: philanthropy was giving both money and time.[16] Joining a group was about more than simply influencing it with money. Instead, a person had to volunteer time to see a goal realized. Because of this commitment of time and money, the third sector was designed to complete what was not (or could not) be done by the public and private sectors. While many external observers of early American society saw the dependence on non-profits as a flaw, many modern scholars, and in fact Tocqueville himself, saw it as an important feature. Much of what was achieved in society would not have been possible without voluntary associations.

The prevalence of associations stayed the same for the majority of the nineteenth century with a bit of an increase around the time of the civil war. With the advent of the social gospel in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, volunteerism began changing into what we know it to be today.[17] Because of the new influx of immigrants into the country, churchgoers desired social change. The government was generally unwilling to contribute to the wellbeing of these newcomers, so the social gospel encouraged financial contributions to organizations supporting new immigrants. In this way, philanthropy and volunteerism diverged into separate entities that would frequently, but not always, intersect. Though tempered by the impulse to give money rather than participate physically, the heart of volunteerism - or association - persisted.

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[16] Kathleen D. McCarthy, *American Creed: Philanthropy and the Rise of Civil Society*, 1700-1865 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 3.

[17] Kelly Dean Schwartz, Buetta Warkentin, and Michael Wilkinson, “Faith-Based Social Services in North America: A Comparison of American and Canadian Religious History and Initiative,” *Social Work & Christianity* 35, no. 2 (2008): 131.

Faith-Based Organizations

As stated earlier, faith-based organizations (FBOs) make up a third of all volunteer organizations. There have been some questions in the recent past, particularly with President George W. Bush's push for more integration between the federal government and FBOs, about whether these organizations should be doing work in the public sector. To answer those questions requires analysis of effectiveness and techniques used by FBOs. But we must first recognize that FBO's are not one monolithic thing; rather FBO's include several types of groups that have faith as a core tenant. Gerald Clarke developed a model for understanding and separating them into five categories:

1. *faith-based representative organizations or apex bodies* which rule on doctrinal matters, govern the faithful and represent them through engagement with the state and other actors;
2. *faith-based charitable or development organizations* which mobilize the faithful in support of the poor and other social groups, and which fund or manage programmes [sic] which tackle poverty and social exclusion;
3. *faith-based socio-political organisations* [sic] which interpret and deploy faith as a political construct, organizing and mobilizing social groups on the basis of faith identities but in pursuit of broader political objectives, or, alternatively, promote faith as a socio-cultural construct, as a means of uniting disparate social groups on the basis of faith-based cultural identities;
4. *faith-based missionary organizations* which spread key faith messages beyond the faithful, by actively promoting the faith and seeking converts to it, or by supporting and engaging with other faith communities on the basis of key faith principles; and
5. *faith-based radical, illegal or terrorist organizations* which promote radical or militant forms of faith identity, engage in illegal practices on the basis of faith beliefs or engage in armed struggle or violent acts justified on the grounds of faith.[18]

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[18] Julie Adkins, Laurie A. Occhipinti, and Tara Hefferan, *Not by Faith Alone: Social Services, Social Justice, and Faith-Based Organizations in the United States* (N.P.:Lexington Books, 2010), 4-5.

This chapter will focus on Category Two groups and their work. It is important to remember that while a group can be categorized as a two, it could also be categorized as a three or a one or a five at the same time by different people. The Palestinian group Hamas is a good example of this possibility. Depending on what aspect Hamas you discuss, and with whom you are discussing them, they are either a Category Two, a Category Three, or a Category Five and at times a mixture of all three. When President Bush suggested greater interaction with faith-based groups, he was focusing on category two groups, who can work within the context of the separation of church and state issues within the U.S. Since these groups operate on a mostly functional level, there is a low likelihood that they would seek to proselytize participants. Religious faith is a core motivation for their actions but is not prescriptive of the functional things they do.

Since at least the mid-1970s, there has been an increasing focus on community development (both faith-based and secular) in the United States. As each community is unique, there are very few patterns for how development work should be done across the board. This has led to difficulty in systematizing how to do development work in the varied communities of the United States. A byproduct of this difficulty has been the challenge of determining what work can be done by volunteers and what must be done by professionals. To help overcome these difficulties, the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) began an experiment in the 1990s to test theories on the effectiveness of volunteers in three communities.[19] One significant finding is that building social capital within a community is very helpful in both establishing an organization and

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[19] Ross J. Gittell and Avis Vidal, *Community Organizing: Building Social Capital as a Development Strategy* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publ., 1999), 2.

seeing the organization's goals fulfilled. Volunteers provide an instant form of social capital because they are already part of the communities being served. For this reason, well-funded organizations that bring in staff are less successful than organizations which have a local volunteer staff but less funding. The social capital of the local volunteers provides instant credibility. Social capital is only one of many factors impacting an organization's success, but it is an important one.

Local faith-based organizations have historically had an advantage in forming social capital because they have been pillars of the community and are composed of members of the community. With church attendance down, this is no longer the case in many places around the U.S. Faith-based organizations must work harder to prove their value to the community. They must do more recruiting and networking to gather the necessary social capital; in the past they already had it because of their prominence in the community.

Recruiting employees is rarely easy, and the limited financial capabilities of most faith-based, and charitable organizations makes it even more difficult. The work done by these organizations often requires a handful of trained professionals who could earn more working in the public or private sectors. This reality has meant looking for what one scholar calls a "'voluntary sector ethos' (VSE),"[20] which he defines as "an altruistic orientation to work, with some employees joining the voluntary sector because of their commitment to serve a cause and/or a client group, philosophical or religious commitments, or to generally contribute to the community/public good."[21]

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[20] Dennis Nickson et al., "A Job to Believe in: Recruitment in the Scottish Voluntary Sector," *Human Resource Management Journal* 18, no. 1 (2008): 24.

[21] Ibid.

When employees have a VSE, they "often tolerate lower wages and extrinsic rewards and a degree of job insecurity, while expecting autonomy in their work and active involvement in decision-making within their organizations."[22] While in some ways that may sound as if working for a charitable organization is a form of exploitation, most of the time it is not, and it provides employees a level of freedom to do their work as they deem necessary or fit. This freedom also allows for greater flexibility in the placement of volunteers.

Because the methods of non-profit work are less structured, they can change based upon what the employees and volunteers are capable of doing. The sometimes-amorphous nature of non-profit methodology extends into what is legally acceptable based on whether or not the organization is faith-based. A study of welfare-to-work programs determined that faith-based organizations significantly emphasize soft skills, while nonreligious or moderately faith-based organizations tend to focus on hard skills.[23] To an extent, this is expected because faith-based organizations emphasize social change — that is, it is at least part of their mission, if not the primary reason for their work — whereas non-faith-based groups focus on function. The focus on soft skills is not detrimental to faith-based organizations. Certainly, the emphases of both types of charitable organizations are important: the hard skills of being able to do a job and the soft skills of being able to succeed in a work environment are both necessary for success in the job market. In a massive study, Google found that engineers with better soft skills were able to progress in the organization more efficiently than those who possessed

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[22] Ibid.

[23] Stephen V. Monsma, "The Effectiveness of Faith-Based Welfare-to-Work Programs," *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought* 25, no. 3-4 (2006): 183.

significant hard skills but had little understanding of soft skills.[24] Because both types of programs are important, there is an opportunity for symbiosis, helping people to gain skills and be able to succeed in their newly minted careers. Faith-based organizations provide necessary services regardless of whether they focus on soft or hard skills. As such, faith-based organizations serve a vital purpose in society.

Churches and Volunteerism

Among faith-based organizations, churches and other houses of worship have the advantage of a captive audience when they need volunteers to help provide a service. This advantage is the result of two primary factors: shared beliefs and congregational culture. "Religion and congregations more specifically are thought to provide individuals with beliefs and values that facilitate pro-social behavior as well as social networks that encourage these values, integrate individuals into their communities, sanction noncompliance, and provide information about and opportunities for civic engagement."[25]

As I discussed in Chapter three, the major religions of the world all share a commitment to caring for the poor or disadvantaged. The spiritual practice of hospitality is a thread that runs through them all and results in beliefs that are conducive to volunteerism. The focus here will be on Christian churches, but it is good to remember

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[24] "Re:Work," Google (Google), accessed December 4, 2019, https://rework.withgoogle.com/print/guides/5721312655835136/)

[25] Katie E Corcoran "Emotion, Religion, and Civic Engagement: A Multilevel Analysis of U.S. Congregations," *Sociology of Religion* 81, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 21.

that the underlying belief of hospitality within the Christian church can also be found in Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

> There are three important points to be noted regarding theological teachings on helping the needy and preserving social justice. First, teachings of all major religions emphasize mutual responsibility, the need to assist strangers in need, and most importantly, the legitimate claim of the weak and needy upon the community. Second, the major religions have advocated for social care and compassion for the needy regardless of location and economic conditions. Third, religious teachings, even when they are not put into practice, are still part of the socialization process of younger generations into adult roles in society and serve as instructions for desired behaviors of compassion and social care. If we assume that religion has a powerful and lasting effect on people's attitudes and behaviors, then religious teaching may contribute to a more civil and caring society.[26]

One of the most commonly quoted phrases of Jesus is, "as you have done to the least of these, so you have done to me." For many churches, this idea of doing good to those in need as a spiritual practice fuels their outreach ministries. This environment makes it more likely that church attendees will give of their time to voluntary causes. While they often volunteer for the work of the church itself, church attendees are also more likely to volunteer in secular charity work than non-attendees. Not only are they more generous with their time than those who do not attend church, but churchgoers also give more financially, to both religious and secular philanthropic causes. "Religious individuals are more likely to participate in both formal civic engagement, such as volunteering and charitable giving, and informal civic engagement (i.e., helping behaviors/neighborliness), such as caregiving, than the nonreligious."[27]

For churches, caring for "the least of these" includes having a sense of responsibility for the community. These communities can be geographic, racial,

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[26] Ram A. Cnaan, Stephanie C. Boddie, and Gaynor I. Yancey, 29.

[27] Corcoran, 20.

denominational, cultural, or even global. The care might be offered in recognition of the shared struggles of church members with the broader community, but it is also in response to the biblical admonitions to care for orphans, widows, and strangers. "Congregations play a critical role in community life by providing resources for the homeless, teaching religious classes, creating choirs, and engaging in many other important social activities. Such activities, performed by individuals who organize under the auspices of religious congregations, enable people to control and influence their immediate environment rather than remain helpless victims."[28]

The more theologically conservative a congregation is, the less likely it is to participate in external voluntary service. Theological exclusivity tends to produce a more inward focus for ministry:

> Biblical literalism has significant negative relationships with all types of formal civic engagement, but has significant positive relationships with caring for someone and helping someone find a job. Theological exclusivity has negative and significant relationships with congregational volunteering, noncongregational social service, loaning money, caring for someone, and helping someone find a job, but has a positive and significant relationship with donating food.[29]

The more progressive a congregation, the more likely they are to participate in outward social services. Conservative congregants, though, are more likely to give money to both their churches and other faith-based ministries. "The reason that [Arthur Brooks] and others give (see Ozorak, 2003) is that highly committed and theologically

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[28] Ram A. Cnaan, Stephanie C. Boddie, and Gaynor I. Yancey, 21.

[29] Corcoran, 39.

conservative people may be motivated to give in ways that theologically liberal and secularists are not. They are stimulated both from within and from without."[30]

In addition to donating more money to charities the shared beliefs of church goers inevitably lead to a shared culture of volunteerism. There are a couple of factors at play in this area: the development of friendship or social networks, and the relationship of those networks to volunteer opportunities.

First, friendship networks are more likely to develop when people share a belief system and are in close proximity to each other regularly. A truly intergenerational church is rare in the United States. Most churches have congregants that span age ranges, but are dominated by a specific age group. The members of this dominant age group usually have a lot in common – typically an amount of social, economic and/or racial similarity, but also a shared stage of life. These similarities, along with the shared belief system, make for an optimal environment for friendships to develop. Along with these friendships comes a level of trust, so that when an issue in the community is raised there is a shared sense of concern about that issue. "We know from past research that small group participation and having friends in one's congregation have positive relationships with civic engagement."[31] The shared concern will allow a friendship network to accomplish more together than a single individual could. These sorts of social networks are a feature of churches and one of the driving factors of volunteer participation.[32]

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[30] Troy Gibson, "Religion And Civic Engagement Among America's Youth," *The Social Science Journal* 45, no. 3 (2008): 505.

[31] Corcoran, 39.

[32] Roger J. Nemeth and Donald A. Luidens, "The Religious Basis of Charitable Giving in America: A Social Capital Perspective," in *Religion as Social Capital : Producing the Common Good,* ed. Smidt, Corwin (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2003), 109.

Second, a church's participation with an organization will increase exposure to and knowledge about that organization. Increased awareness about an organization will prompt the church's congregants to volunteer with the organization. Participation with one organization will increase church volunteers' exposure to other community organizations, which can be transferred to friends within the church, thus further strengthening the culture of volunteerism within the church. When this culture is paired with the social networks that naturally develop in churches, an ideal environment is created for maintaining a series of organizations within a community. The culture of volunteerism also increases an expectation of social engagement. If a driving force behind the outreach ministries of a church is member participation, then engaging in those ministries also increases peer pressure on other church members to participate. The desire to "keep up with the Joneses" cannot be underestimated within the American context. When a church has an increased expectation of member participation in outreach ministries, more than likely participation levels in that congregation will increase.

An additional dynamic at play within the church context is the amount of positive emotions people experience by participating in worship services. People also experience joy when volunteering and have even more positive emotions when worship and service are combined. These good feelings are often referred to as emotional energy (EE),[33] which provides the desire to repeat the activity. "Overall, EE is positively associated with nearly all forms of formal and informal civic engagement. In terms of formal noncongregational civic engagement, EE's effect seems to be specific to volunteering as it is not significantly related to charitable giving." Additionally, EE seems to be a driving

[33] Corcoran, 23.

force behind informal volunteering like making a meal for someone, driving a friend to an appointment, or even giving cash. "Of all the individual-level religion variables, EE had some of the strongest relationships with informal civic engagement, which suggests that it may be particularly important when predicting this type of civic engagement."[34] High levels of EE are desirable as they produce good feelings in the recipient. Pairing volunteerism with corporate religious service seems like a logical connection, as they both produce high levels of EE, reinforcing an individual's desire for both service and worship.

While consistent church attendance produces the results discussed above, casual attendance does not. Multiple studies have shown that weekly attendance makes it more likely that a person will both participate in a voluntary activity and give money to a charity:[35]

> …church attendance appears to have little effect on the likelihood of members contributing to nonreligious charities—except for weekly churchgoers. While over one-half of all church members contribute to nonreligious charities, it is only among those who attend church on an almost weekly basis that we find any significant increase. Roughly two-thirds of those who attend church on a weekly basis make contributions to nonreligious charities; in contrast, only 57 percent of those attending church less than one to two times a month do so. But this is exactly what one might expect with regard to social capital—the norms and expectations of a group are likely to be strongest among those who interact frequently and on a regular basis.[36]

If churches want to see increased participation in their outreach ministries, they need to develop methods to help congregants move from casual attendance to high participation. There are many theories on how to produce these high participation

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Gibson, 509.

[36] Nemeth and Luidens, 113.

members, the consistent theme of which is that drawing them into the community is more effective than a "hard sell."

Churches have a naturally high potential for producing active volunteers. For churches to best utilize this potential, they must attend to how social networks and small groups develop and also create a culture that encourages volunteerism. If churches are able to maintain these two areas, the natural results of EE will help to propel their membership toward engagement in the community.

The Future of Volunteerism

The success of the third sector depends on attaining the resources to continue the work that needs to be done. Resources here means two things: finances and people.

In terms of finances, current U.S. tax law encourages philanthropy. Wealthy people may put money into a philanthropic trust and receive a tax benefit. Unfortunately, the tax code does not require that the money in these trusts be spent, only the interest.[37] The task of the next generation is to convince the wealthy, who are storing up these resources, to release it to charity organizations.

The storing up of philanthropic trusts has led to the development of venture philanthropy. Venture philanthropy is "an entrepreneurial approach to philanthropy that combines a variety of financial and non-financial resources to identify, analyze, coordinate and support self-sustaining, systemic and scalable (for and not-for profit)

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[37] "Charitable Trusts" *Internal Revenue Service,* https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/private-foundations/charitable-trusts, accessed December 21, 2020.

solutions to development challenges aimed at achieving the greatest impact."[38] This type of philanthropy intends to be multifaceted in its approach to social change. In order to access these funds, organizations, especially faith-based ones, will need to be able to make a clear argument about how they are able to make significant social change. Faith-based organizations that are dogmatic about their approach or the theological underpinnings of their ministry may find it more difficult to produce the results that venture philanthropists are seeking. That is not to say that these types of ministries will disappear; rather, it will be more difficult for them to gain access to funds that are more focused on community and cultural change than simply what is happening in an individual church.

With increased cost of living, Americans have less money to give to volunteer organizations, which makes finding alternative funding sources increasingly necessary for organizations. While there are other ways for organizations to raise money, venture philanthropy is a growing trend. Organizations will need to make a more concerted effort towards fundraising and grant writing in order to access these funds.

In addition to financial resources, organizations need volunteers. As stated earlier, about a third of U.S. citizens are currently involved in volunteer work. Most communities are composed of three groups of people. The top third are completely committed to the work of the community. The bottom third are required to be there or have been guilted into being there. Then there is the middle third, who believe in the work but are neither

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[38] Rob Garris, "8 Characteristics of Successful Venture Philanthropies," The Rockefeller Foundation, March 28, 2015, https://www.rockefellerfoundation.org/blog/8-characteristics-of-successful-venture-philanthropies/

entirely devoted to it nor knowledgeable about how to make an impact.[39] In the future, organizations will need to focus on engaging the middle third of the population

The key to getting the middle third more involved is to provide opportunities that are easy for them to engage in – low hanging fruit as it were – allowing them to step up and find out what motivates them. All too often, an organization's leadership focuses on their own motivation to do the work, assuming volunteers will share the same motivation.[40] Organizations need to listen to their middle third volunteers, the ones doing work but never leading, to find out what would motivate them to take a more active role in the organization. Organizations will then be able to provide a "carrot" to encourage these people to engage. The top third is going to engage and lead no matter what, because that is how they are wired. Motivational techniques need to be focused on the middle third.

This concept also works within the context of volunteer recruitment. Research indicates that a sizable portion of the population wants to get involved in helping their community. Organizations need to find out what would motivate these people to move into a volunteer position. Engaging these individuals will increase the number of volunteers, helping organizations complete the work they have set out to do.

Volunteerism is clearly a core part of the American ethos, but we have reached a fork in the road. Will the U.S. be a society that is actively engaged in social projects or will it continue the trend to focus solely on monetary engagement? The work of the voluntary sector is to motivate society toward understanding that being a volunteer is

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[39] T. J. Sullivan, *Motivating the Middle: Fighting Apathy in College Student Organizations* (Tucson, AZ: Wheatmark, 2016), 1.

[40] Ibid., 23.

worth the time invested. Whether it is a Sunday morning breakfast for the poor and homeless in Tacoma or a back to work program in Philadelphia, someone needs to do the work. Motivating under-engaged American citizens is the task at hand, and if it is done well, we will see the America Tocqueville wrote about blossom again.

CHAPTER 6:

EXTENDING HOSPITALITY TO FAMILIES IN CRISIS

How does a congregation implement ministries steeped in hospitality and empathy? What does it mean to offer a place of welcome to families in crisis? The underlying question is how humans provide space for the other without condescension. Over the course of the past five chapters, I have discussed the foster system in the United States, what hospitality is, and how to apply it. I have examined empathy at length, including ways the evangelical movement has lost it, and evaluated volunteerism in the United States. To tie it all together: empathy should trigger American evangelicals to voluntarily provide hospitality-based ministries to families in crisis and children in the foster system. My argument is packed with both the possibility of success and the potential for failure.

American evangelical churches are overflowing with the riches of space and potential volunteers. As I mentioned in chapter 5, churches (and other religious groups) are the greatest source of volunteers in the country. Connecting even a fraction of that potential workforce with hospitality ministries would provide tremendous support to families in crisis. Churches can open their doors to those in need six days a week, when their primary ministries are not active. The list of potential service opportunities is nearly endless. All a church needs to do is find one of the needs in its community and provide a potential solution. Developing networks of churches is necessary to both support the creation of ministries and holistically meet the needs of the community. Additionally, making these networks interreligious by including mosques, temples and other houses of worship will disperse the load of the work to be done while emphasizing the welcome inherent in these networks.

Decentralized networks of care open the possibility of creating ministries that fill in for the largely non-existent safety net in American social services. To an extent, the lack of a safety net is a feature, not a bug, in the system. The American inclination to form organizations and support groups has allowed the United States government to avoid developing a services network like those found in most developed nations. As the likelihood of increased government funding for social services is low, people of faith need to work together to provide for those in need. Creating decentralized networks of hospitable care will not be quick, but it is a task worth attempting, and one the church has been called to perform.

Synopsis of Key Points

In the United States, the various Child Protective Services (CPS) agencies are overflowing with children. CPS is struggling in a couple of different areas: the number of foster families available to care for children and the ability to maintain the services needed to help families in crisis. To help with the former, solutions need to be found for the latter. If families in crisis are better supported, fewer children will need to be removed from their families. Yes, there will still be families that must be separated because the issues they face are more significant than the services available. But if better services can keep a percentage of families together, that will reduce the number of children placed in foster care.

In most child removal cases, the charges against the parents include either neglect or drug-related offenses. Neglect is the absence of appropriate care for the child and is typically the result of the situation the family finds themselves in rather than a choice. Purposeful neglect is categorized as abuse.[1] Neglect is often the result of other undesirable behaviors within the family such as drug abuse, physical abuse, or domestic violence. Neglect is the most common reason for child removal because it is connected to so many other offenses. If we can reduce the non-criminal causes of neglect, by providing food, healthcare, and housing security, we could help keep more families together.

Drug offenses – including drug trafficking and drug abuse charges – are the second most common reason children are removed from their home by CPS. Drug abuse charges are more common than drug trafficking. Laws that utilize punishment rather than treatment for drug abuse necessitate child removal when a child is involved. The establishment of drug courts, which focus on rehabilitation through treatment and community service, has shown a great deal of success. A side effect of increased use of drug courts could be fewer children permanently removed from their families.

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study[2] has shown that the types of stress children experience as members of families in crisis have long-term physical and mental consequences. The study has also shown that a stable adult in the life of a child experiencing ACEs can help to alleviate their long-term effects. Ministries and organizations that connect these children with a stable adult can help to lessen the long-term effects of ACEs and help the children grow into more well-adjusted adults. The

[1] Nicole A. Sciarrino, Tyler Elizabeth Hernandez and Jennifer Davidtz, *Understanding Child Neglect: Biopsychosocial Perspectives* (New York: Springer 2018) 2.

[2] Vincent J. Felitti, et al. "Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study," *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 14 (1998), 245.

hospitality ministries of churches can help lessen the load on CPS by providing support to families experiencing ACEs.

The spiritual practice of hospitality traces its roots to the story of Abraham and the three visitors. In this story Abraham provides space for the visitors to rest and recover. It is in this act of hospitality that God’s promise to Abraham is activated in the announcement of Isaac’s birth. Just after the text about the three visitors comes the story of Lot and Sodom and Gomorrah. In Lot's story we see hospitality as a sign of righteousness. Because of Lot’s hospitality to the divine visitors, he and his family escape safely before God’s destruction of the city.

The Jewish holiness code is filled with rules and regulations for how orphans, widows, and strangers are to be treated. The Israelites were to provide space and provision for these marginalized groups within their society. These laws are largely based on remembering Israel’s experience as sojourners during the exodus from Egypt.

In the New Testament, Jesus ties salvation to the practice of hospitality. In the announcement of his ministry in Luke 4, Jesus declares that hospitality to the poor is the source of freedom. In the story of the pharisee and the sinful woman, Jesus connects the woman’s hospitality to her salvation.

Later in the New Testament, the story of Peter at Cornelius’ house illustrates how hospitality is necessary in order for the kingdom of God to expand. The book of James defines true religion as caring for widows and orphans. And the author of Hebrews reminds readers that those who continue to do good have unwittingly served angels.

The early church took their lead from the examples given in the New Testament and continued to offer hospitality to orphans, widows, and travelers in need. House churches were a major source of hospitality, showing equality between people of disparate socio-economic statuses. Once Christianity became the religion of the state, the practice of hospitality became systematized. The imperial church was responsible for many hospitality services including caring for orphans and the sick. As hospitality ministries became a function of the government, the personal practice of hospitality as caring for the other was largely abandoned.

Several philosophers have addressed the topic of hospitality. Immanuel Kant, while exploring how hospitality and immigration worked together, formulated a widely accepted theory that it is the responsibility of the host to welcome the guest, provided that the guest is willing to conform to the rules of the host. This host-centric view of hospitality persists, particularly in areas like immigration and refugee resettlement. In 1961 Emmanuel Levinas published his seminal work *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* where he formulated his theory of absolute responsibility to the other. Through what he calls the "epiphany of the face," humans find responsibility to the other. This responsibility happens in two phases: first it shocks people out of their self-centeredness, and second it opens people up to dialogue with the other. Through dialogue we create a relationship that then develops into responsibility for this specific other. Levinas is working off the Kabbalah concept of *tsimtsum,* which describes how God condensed God's self in order to make space for the creation of the universe. In Levinas' thought, the host condenses herself to make space for the guest through the creation of relationship.

Working from Levinas' ideas, Jacques Derrida developed his theory of unconditional hospitality. Derrida argued that hospitality must be performed unconditionally. True hospitality means that when people knock on the door, they are welcomed in without any thought to who they are or what they might do. Derrida pushes back specifically on the host-centric hospitality of Kant. Derrida argued that since unconditional hospitality is functionally impossible in the world as it exists today, the work of humanity is to decrease (or deconstruct) the conditions we have placed upon hospitality.

Hospitality is a core tenant of every major religion. The Abrahamic faiths (Islam, Judaism, and Christianity) share the story of Abraham and the three visitors as the root of their belief in hospitality but diverge from that point. Within Islam hospitality is largely a means of expressing the goodness of Allah by sharing Allah's goodness with others. Within Judaism, especially rabbinic Judaism, hospitality is shown through acts of charity and is considered one of the highest mitzvahs. Among the eastern religions, Hinduism has embraced the idea that “the guest is god.” In many ways Hindus have exemplified the guest-centric understanding of hospitality that both Derrida and Levinas promote. Within Buddhism hospitality is a way of decreasing one’s selfishness and decreasing an attachment to things. Being hospitable is a method of achieving spiritual enlightenment.

In order to embrace hospitality, we must first learn to empathize with those in need of hospitality. Empathy, or emotional hospitality, is the process by which a person shares in another person’s emotional experience. The philosophy of empathy is divided into two broad categories of study: cognitive empathy and affective empathy. Within cognitive empathy there are two main ideas about how humans experience empathy: Theory Theory (TT) and Simulation Theory (ST). In TT humans use a series of logical processes that rely on information from the situation to understand what emotion needs to be mirrored. In ST a person determines which emotion to mirror by considering what she would be feeling if she were in the other person's place. Past experiences help the person utilizing ST to deduce what to feel. Theorists have argued that nobody uses one theory exclusively. Often people will use both theories during the same experience.

Affective empathy is the category of empathy that most people associate with the idea of empathy. The field of affective empathy studies how people are affected by the emotion of the other and how that emotional state is shared.

Empathy is important because of its prosocial characteristics. Without empathy the social contract would not be possible because every person would operate in his own best interest and not care about the experience or needs of others. It is imperative that parents raise their children to be empathetically aware because of this prosocial characteristic.

Within scripture, Old Testament commands to consider the plight of the sojourner because of Israel's history as sojourners is an instruction in empathy. The New Testament command to love one's neighbor as oneself builds off the Old Testament ethic and extends concern beyond one's clan to include fellow sojourners. Jesus extends this idea once more by making the test of neighborliness empathic action rather than static religious, cultural, or familial categories. The incarnation itself is a form of empathetic action on the part of the Godhead. Jesus' experience as a human is the act of God sharing in the human experience in order to provide a way for God and humans to once again dwell in community.

Over the past forty years, white evangelicalism has suffered from a distinct lack of empathy for those who are different or who do not share the evangelical worldview. In order to increase white evangelicals' participation in hospitality ministries, evangelical leaders must undertake the remedial work of restoring empathetic concern. Understanding privilege and its invisibility, embracing the intersectionality of life, and learning conditional trust and vulnerability are all steps to restoring a sense of empathy within people. For evangelicals to embrace empathy, and in turn hospitality, they will need to take these steps both personally and corporately.

In the American context, hospitality is most clearly seen in volunteerism. Since its earliest days, the United States has been a philanthropic nation. The French scholar Alexis De Tocqueville noted that in the U.S., people take time out of their lives to become part of "associations" – non-governmental organizations – that contribute to the development of society. This desire to work together to solve problems that neither government nor business are tackling is a distinctive of the United States.

Religious organizations provide most of the volunteer opportunities in the United States. As the concept of separating church and state developed, churches became dependent on volunteers because they could not rely on monetary support from the government. Churches and other religious organizations developed ministries that encourage parishioners to stay engaged with the congregation and contribute to it. Churches have a distinct advantage over other volunteer organizations in that they have a built-in audience for their service projects. Additionally, the shared belief system within a congregation encourages members to help with ministries promoted by the church. Congregants of similar age and stage will often form friendships that lend to the social nature of shared work in these ministries. All these factors combined contribute to the sense of accomplishment congregants feel when they volunteer their time to a service project or ministry.

The most daunting task that administrators of non-profit organizations face is fundraising. The majority of their volunteer hours are spent raising money to keep the organization running. Often volunteers do the fundraising so that the skilled workers within the organization can continue to do its work. Venture philanthropy, where a person or group donates to non-profit services that are making a difference in the world, is a growing trend in the non-profit sector. As the cost of living increases for the average American and disposable income decreases, it will become more important that non-profit organizations find ways of connecting with these venture philanthropists in order for the organizations to reach their goals.

Embracing the Whole

Empathy is the gateway into hospitality. As mentioned in chapter 4, if evangelicals are going to reinstitute their calling to hospitality, it is imperative that they restore their sense of empathy. There is plenty of sympathy within evangelicalism, feeling bad *for* the poor, the addicted, or the orphan. But what is needed is to feel *with* the poor, the addicted, and the orphan. Without the ability to be *with* those in need emotionally, the effort to restore hospitality ministries will be at most marginally successful. Typically, a person does something *for* somebody else for a limited amount of time before they stop out of exhaustion or boredom. However, a person can work *with* someone on a shared goal for a substantially longer time.[3] Empathy is necessary because the ministers are not simply trying to resolve an issue that they feel bad about, they are working *with* people in need to help them solve the issue.

Restoring empathy includes understanding the intersectionality of life and taking the opportunity to commune with people whose lives are different. Intersectionality, in its broadest sense, calls attention to the shared experiences of individuals and the truth that we need each other to get through life, but the American ideal of rugged individualism has veiled that reality. Humans live in a symbiotic relationship with each other; there is no way to have a life that does not depend on the existence of other humans. From our very beginnings, we are reliant upon our parents to feed and protect us so that we can grow and form other lasting relationships. We have always been guests to others and, as we grow, we take on the status of being hosts.

> This is why some scientists now argue that the idea of an individual organism needs to be replaced with the idea of a holobiont (from the Greek for whole unit of life). This uncommon locution has been developed to emphasize the symbiotic character of life, and to reinforce the idea that no organism is ever self-enclosed. Symbiosis is the idea that organisms live by their intimate contact with others. Without this contact, living beings cease to be. Even more importantly, without this contact they could not even come to be in the first place. A host does not come first, pre-made, so to speak, and then relate to others, because for a host to exist is already for it to be in symbiotic relationship. Symbiosis constitutes the host, which is to say, somewhat paradoxically, that a host has always already been hosted and nurtured by others.[4]

Symbiosis requires benefit for both parties. Working with those in need provides a grounding in the functional aspects of the gospel for those in service, while also

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[3] Andrew J. Elliot, *Advances in Motivation Science*. Volume Three, (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2016), 62.

[4] Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 6-8.

benefiting the ones in need. Until evangelicals understand that they need to work *with* those in need and not simply *for* them, they will continue to see greater decline and radicalization.

Communities are whole units of life. Much like the Apostle Paul's argument that in Christ we are all one body or unit of life, communities are the same. "The Pauline move is not from the particularity of the body to the universality of the spirit, but from separated bodies to the community of interrelated bodies – the one body in the Spirit with many discrete members."[5] Without empathy or hospitality, a community misses the hurt within itself and does not seek to heal it. Empathy makes people sensitive to the needs of their community, while hospitality is a means of attending to those needs. When empathy is restored in a community like evangelicalism, health is restored as well.

Welcome, Gather, and Embrace

The practice of hospitality has three phases: welcome, gather, and embrace. Each phase causes a shift in the hospitality relationship. While there is a beginning phase – welcome – there is no ending because hospitality is cyclical in nature. Each revolution through the cycle brings a deeper intimacy to the relationship. In the welcome phase, the host makes and offers space to the guest. The welcome phase is an open door where the guest can find rest. The gather phase provides an opportunity for the host and guest to engage, to get to know each other and work through the needs of the guest. Gathering around the table for a meal illustrates the gather phase. Lastly, the embrace phase is

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[5] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1996), 49.

where this revolution of the hospitality cycle is completed. The need for space has been fulfilled, host and guest are now very familiar with each other, and they part with the embrace of friends until the next time one needs the space that hospitality provides, and the cycle begins again.

"Hospitality … emerges from a willingness to create time and space for people."[6] In the parable of the prodigal son, or as Amy Oden likes to call it, the parable of the two welcomes,[7] we hear the story of two sons who misunderstand their place in their family. One son, the younger, demands his inheritance and squanders it. The other son spends his life working diligently for his father hoping for a reward. When the first son comes to his senses and returns home, his father welcomes him with open arms and spares no expense to show his joy at his son's return. The other son is bitter about the welcome his brother received. The father provides the older son a new perspective on what he has received by saying, "all that I have is yours." The father is welcoming this older son into the fullness of the family, to no longer struggle to be accepted.

Families in crisis are much like the sons from this parable. Some are like the younger son: they have made choices that have not worked out well for the family. Perhaps the choice that put them in their current situation was mom taking drugs or dad quitting his job at an inopportune time. Other families are like the older son: their current situation is the result of things out of their control, but they are unable to recognize the help available to them. Perhaps structural racism, generational poverty, or an injury has put one of the breadwinners out of work. In both cases, the call to welcome is the

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[6] Pohl, 179.

[7] Amy G. Oden, *God's Welcome* (Clevland: Pilgrim Press, 2008), 53.

doorway to hospitality. Welcoming in these families is a way of pointing to a better future. Creating a space where the circumstances that brought them into crisis are not a hindrance to their future development encourages them to pursue a better future.

For a church to provide a welcome to these families depends upon the needs of the families and the abilities of the congregation to provide for those needs. In some situations, a congregation will not be able to offer the professional assistance required. In those circumstances, it makes sense for the congregation to investigate helping with collateral services. For example, for parents that need to attend Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings, the church could provide childcare during the NA meetings. In a similar vein, a group could invite professionals to provide help during their regular service time. The Urban Grace Sunday breakfast, mentioned in Chapter 5, welcomes members of the University of Washington MedEx Physician Assistant program to offer a footcare clinic for the breakfast attendees.[8] This type of service welcomes people in, showing care for their needs, which in turn shows care for them as humans.

When people welcome others, they condense some of themselves in order to make space for the other to exist – this is the process of *tsimtsum* mentioned earlier. Creating space for another by subverting one's own needs is a sacramental action.

> The will to give ourselves to others and "welcome" them, to readjust our identities to make space for them, is prior to any judgement about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity. The will to [welcome] 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."[9]

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[8] Dennis Raymond, "Building Trust Between The Homeless & The Medical Community", *MedEx Magazine*, Accessed 12/1/2020, https://depts.washington.edu/medex/magazine/building-trust-between-the-homeless-the-medical-community/

[9] Volf, 29.

Once the process of fulfilling needs begins, the transition into the gather phase has begun. For families in crisis, this could be helping them feed their family or providing resources for Alcoholics Anonymous meetings in the area. The gather phase is where resources are provided, but it also creates a space to discover the humanity of the guest. "The German word of hospitality is *Gastfreundschaft* which means, friendship for the guest."[10] It provides a place for the hosts to get to know the needs of the guests and help them find the resources to resolve their own crisies. Focusing entirely on the families involved validates their humanity. "To give someone else our full attention means that we view the person as a human being rather than as an embodied need or interruption. When guests were asked what they most appreciated in someone's welcome to them, they frequently described it as feeling that "they weren't an interruption or an imposition.""[11] It is in this process that relationships are formed and grow.

It is also during the gather phase that understanding the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) becomes important. The majority of families that find themselves in a state of crisis include parents who are enduring the effects of their own ACEs while also being the cause of ACEs for their children. The ACEs study found that the way to alleviate the effects of ACEs in children is to provide them with a stable adult, a safe space where they can let their guard down. While the study's scope restricted the solution to stability in childhood, it seems reasonable to assume that providing that same stability for parents would be helpful as well. Part of hospitality is providing a space that is peaceful, where guests can let their guard down and rest. Hospitality can be a quiet cup

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[10] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), 71.

[11] Pohl, 178.

of coffee with another person where the guest does not need to defend herself and can rest in the knowledge that her host is always there for her. “Hospitality … means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy.”[12] Ministries that come alongside families in crisis and provide stability and rest offer a foothold for families to step out of crisis.

The work of the gather phase leads to fruit in the embrace phase. Providing a safe and productive space will create a relationship of trust. The embrace phase is more than the end of the process, it is also the confirmation that the hospitality cycle will continue. With families in crisis, this transition could be from a state of struggling to make ends meet to stable employment for a parent, or it could mean that a parent with a substance abuse problem has achieved a level of sobriety that allows him to successfully parent again. Either way, the relationship does not end. The sober parent will need to continue his NA or AA meetings and there will be other things the family needs. The embrace phase acknowledges achievement while also looking to the future of continued relationship together.

An important aspect of the embrace phase is the transition of guest to host. In their lived experience as guests seeking healing, these new hosts can identify a tangible connection from where they started to where they are now. This connection is invaluable for new guests being welcomed into hospitality relationships; it reduces the intimidation of entering a relationship with new people. The empathy of the new host, who has a shared experience, provides just enough relief to overcome the new guest’s reluctance to

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[12] Nouwen, 71.

join. The transition from guest to host also helps to solidify the work done for the new host during the gather phase.

There is the danger that this type of ministry may be offered for selfish gain. Just as empathy is to feel with and not for the other, hospitality needs to be performed for the good of the guest and not for the good of the host. Certainly the host will experience benefits, but to offer hospitality for the purpose of self-gain is opposed to the spirit of hospitality.

> To view hospitality as a means to an end, to use it instrumentally, is antithetical to seeing it as a way of life, as a tangible expression of love. There is probably no better context for sharing the gospel than in a setting of warm welcome, and people will come in increasing numbers to a church that takes hospitality seriously. But when we use occasional hospitality as a tool, we distort it, and the people we "welcome" know quickly that they are being used.[13]

In creating hospitality ministries, churches need to maintain a spirit of welcome to the least of these and hope for their good future. Churches should not seek to be praised for or benefit from the ministries, aside from the new relationships of love and care that will develop through them.

Decentralized Networks of Care

In late 1969 the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) brought ARPANET online.[14] For the first time in history, computers from different parts of the world could communicate with each other on an ad hoc basis. It was not until 1983, when

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[13] Pohl, 144-145.

[14] Johnny Ryan, *A History of the Internet and the Digital Future* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), 30.

the Domain Name System (DNS) was introduced, that these ad hoc networks became useful to the public.[15] ARPANET and its contemporaries relied on a user knowing the internet protocol (IP) address of the computer they wanted to connect to. Unsurprisingly, memorizing IP addresses was tedious and a better system was needed. DNS solved this problem by setting up hubs that acted as directories associating alphanumeric names with IP addresses. The thing that made DNS successful was its decentralized nature. A DNS server could talk to other DNS servers until it found the name it was looking for. It was not necessary for a single server to know all the available IP addresses; it could rely on other DNS servers to return the correct address.

The inclination of Americans to form social service organizations has made it so that within most communities there is some form of service for those in need. The number of organizations in an area is often dependent upon the population size. This means that there will be fewer organizations in rural communities than in urban areas. It also means that often in urban areas there will be a wider variety of services, some of which will be redundant. This imbalance of service availability brings up a couple questions. First, is there a way that the abundance of services in urban areas can be shared with rural areas? And second, is there a way to be more efficient with the distribution of services in urban areas to prevent unnecessary redundancy?

Creating service networks is not a new idea, there are many large organizations that provide services throughout multiple areas. These organizations form their own networks of services that can be shared or associated with each other. In some cases, they even work with other organizations to provide a greater number of services. Most

[15] Ibid., 101.

churches do not have access to the kind of resources these larger organizations have. Having fewer resources means offering fewer services, so it is important that churches focus their efforts on specific areas. Being purposeful in how they create ministries will allow churches to have the greatest impact on their communities. Churches should evaluate the skills at their disposal as well as the needs in their communities. Finding an intersection between what can and needs to be done can lead to a ministry that is both well done and effective. All too often churches reach for the tried-and-true ministries because they have not done the hard work of discovering what they would be good at and what the community needs. “When we don’t examine the deeper assumptions behind why we gather, we end up skipping too quickly to replicating old, staid formats of gathering. And we forgo the possibility of creating something memorable, even transformative.”[16] By purposefully considering which ministry to undertake, churches will help reduce redundancy and increase the variety of services available in a community. The uniqueness of each church becomes a greater benefit to the community than if they were to all offer a soup kitchen. In such a community, the creation of a loose network of these churches enables each ministry to direct those in need toward the churches (and temples and mosques) that are providing appropriate services. Interconnected houses of worship become a safety net for those in need when the government is not there or unable to help them. For families in crisis, who are typically facing more than one issue at a time, this sort of network is especially significant. If one church offers afterschool care, another provides job training, and a third hosts a regular

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[16] Priya Parker, *The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why It Matters* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2018), 3.

NA or AA meeting, all three could work together to support a single family. Because of network connections, volunteers at any of these churches could direct the family to the services they need. This is both more efficient and more effective use of skills found in houses of worship than overlapping services that miss areas of need in the community.

Churches could improve their services even further by creating a directory service. A directory service would guide people in need to services, organize the efforts of participating organizations, and manage unified fundraising goals. "There is evidence that partnerships with central mechanisms of control are more effective in meeting service delivery goals."[17] This type of service could be as simple as a couple of volunteers putting together schedules and writing the occasional grant or it could be as complex as a separate organization with its own board and employees. The complexity of the service is dependent upon the needs of the community and the ability of the participating organizations to keep it running.

Ideally, the directory service would have a governing board composed of members from each participating organization. This board would be responsible for organizing outreach efforts within the community and distributing funds raised to the participating organizations.

In addition to the board, this service would include an administrative staff to produce materials for the network and include a grant writer. As mentioned in chapter 5, there is a lot of money invested in venture philanthropy. Grants enable organizations to access that money, and the way to win grants is to have a skilled grant writer. Venture

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[17] Bin Chen and Elizabeth A. Graddy, "The Effectiveness of Nonprofit Lead-Organization Networks for Social Service Delivery," *Nonprofit Management & Leadership* 20, no. 4 (Summer 2010): 412.

philanthropists are generally looking for the biggest impact their money can provide. An individual church will be able to make an impact in their community, but the combined effect of many houses of worship working together in a community will make a significantly greater impact. Awarding a grant to this network of churches, mosques, and temples makes fiduciary sense for venture philanthropists because they get to make a broad-based impact on an entire community.

While congregations financially support churches through tithes and offerings, most of this money is used to keep the churches running. Funding community services could put the vital ministries of the church at risk. Spiritually there is a value in having faith that the finances needed to run ministries will be provided but being a good steward of tithes and offerings also requires discernment about which ministries are of the most value to the community and the church. Additional fundraising provided by an outside organization, like this directory service, would keep hospitality ministries running without having to ask the congregation to sacrifice more financially.

Another potential source of funding is through a public-private partnership between local government and social services. This sort of partnership would be advantageous to foster children and families in crisis because it would encourage greater interaction between the public services that are most often needed. Public-private partnerships often come with funding from the public sector, along with compliance requirements. Some requirements might be unacceptable to some congregations because of theological belief systems. For all of these reasons, the directory services network will need to employ staff who are able to explain the ins and outs of a potential partnership in order to help churches determine if it is the right partnership for them. Discerning the fit of the public-private partnership at the beginning will help to increase the odds of a successful relationship in the long run.[18]

To return to our example from the field of technology, the reason DNS has been so successful is that it allowed private networks to be able to interact with each other without the users knowing what was happening. Creating a DNS-type system for community service networks would increase the effectiveness of individual communities by expanding the impact of the services. A network of networks could be formed that would essentially create a mesh (or web, to use internet parlance) of services for people who otherwise would not have access to them. People in rural areas, where fewer services are available, would be able to connect with the larger service network in their county or state. The creation of this network of networks could provide services to rural communities if those communities are close enough to where the services are located. However, much of rural America is a significant distance from urban centers. The network of networks does not solve the problem of underservice for these communities unless those in need are willing and able to drive hours to get services, which seems unlikely. For rural communities, the network of networks does not work unless the closest hubs are listening to the needs of rural communities. Hopefully, the closest networks can work together to overlap and help nearby rural communities.

While it may seem inefficient to create additional organizations to support existing churches, service networks would offset many of the built-in redundancies of multiple churches doing the same work individually.[19] If our goal is to help families in

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[18] Stijn Van Puyvelde and Peter Raeymaeckers, “The Governance of Public–Nonprofit Service Networks: Four Propositions,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 49, no. 5 (2020): 938.

[19] Chin and Graddy, 410.

crisis, making it easier to access services should be a high priority. By helping houses of worship work together to provide hospitality to those in need, service networks would make supporting families in crisis more manageable.

Conclusion

The concepts described in this paper are not new, nor are they necessarily revolutionary. Rather, the significance of these concepts is found in how they are applied. The early church held onto hospitality as a practice because of their faith in Christ. “Alien status for the early Christians suggested a basis for a different way of life and loyalties to a different order, which in turn challenged conventional boundaries and relationships. In emphasizing that both provision and welcome came as grace, the early Christians shared their lives and possessions with one another and transcended significant social and ethnic differences.”[20] As Christians ceased to see themselves as other in Roman society, their concern for the poor, the widow, and the orphan diminished. The decline in empathy within the evangelical movement, along with their fealty to a major political party, has mirrored the movement of the early church. Returning to the mindset that hospitality is a primary virtue would not be a new thing for the church, but it would be revolutionary.

Hope for a better future for all people should lead us to desire deeper relationships and be willing to open ourselves to support each other's needs. Idealism is often discouraged as impractical because we live in the “real” world. But as the “substance of things once hoped for” faith asks that we lean into our ideals and hopes for a more just and equitable world. Being hospitable to those in need is an endless process; there will

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[20] Pohl, 105.

always be people in need. Faith in Christ presents us with the opportunity to continue the work of welcoming the needy. Similarly, on this earth there will never be a point when there are no children in the foster system, nor will there be a time where all families exist in perfect harmony. Our faith calls out to us to care for these children and families. This is not a new calling but heeding it would revolutionize the church in the United States. It would move us closer to the ideal set out for us in the scriptures while providing hope for those in need. Following the suggestion of Derrida, let us deconstruct the conditions that prevent us from fulfilling our call to hospitality and instead enter that calling to the glory of God.

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