

The Knowledge of Hospitality in the Redemption of Christ

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Abstract:

Christology testifies notions in several Christian dogmatic. The ethics of the crucifixion of Christ, however, receive less attention. Consequently, the intention to share the knowledge of Christ in the cross being limited as it occupies theological reflection intensively. This article attempts to delve into the unseen ethics nature of the event of redemption, hospitality. Its characters are portrayed in several events in the scripture but rarely evaluated from the eye of Christology, especially speaking, the redemption of Christ in the cross. The intention of this treatise is; to explore the nature of hospitality in the display of cross that could be offered a new perspective to the theological environment and help the reader to see unseen knowledge.

Keywords: Christology; ethics; hospitality; systematic theology

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The drama of redemption expresses a large portion of theological reflection, encompasses the large field of discussions such as soteriology and eschatology nature. Besides, it contains the knowledge of ethics, for instance, the heart of hospitality is served by the display of Christ's crucifixion. However, hospitality in the New Testament term is defined as the participation of sharing love toward the stranger, in Greek is *philoxenia*. Systematic, New Testament, or Old Testament approach to crucifixion are prepared by scholars, where the ethic of the cross is less of conversation. Therefore, occupying the redemption of Christ as central attention to delve the nature of hospitality is interesting to be explored. A new perspective could be grounded to see unseen notions concerning hospitality in the subject of the cross.

Furthermore, biblical communication, in some cases, requires high expectations and articulation in which the ethical approach prepares practical benefits together with deep academic quality. However, several events in the scripture serve potential knowledge of hospitality such as the story of Abraham and his guests and the parable of good Samaritan, indeed, the cross plays the core of divine attention, where its roles significantly influence surround topics. Therefore, the research question that leads this essay is; what can be learned from the redemption of Christ concerning hospitality? This treatise is an ethical-systematic approach, investigate knowledge from Christian scholars and connect to dogmatic foundation concerning redemption work of Christ.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

This is qualitative research, evaluating the biblical ethics of hospitality from several sources and Christian ethic works, further, describing various thoughts on the tension. Afterward, re-structure ideas to give critics and gains contributive donations from the sources. In the next stage, this essay tries to construct conversation hospitality and Christology to display the possibilities and positive contributions to the tension. Lastly, the conclusion will be grounded based on the analysis of various thoughts.

The Biblical Ethics of Hospitality

Hospitality is employed in the Gospel, equipped in the New Testament and the heart of the bible.¹ Participation in showing hospitality to God is inescapably social and public, God is not distinct from the performance of showing kindness, goodness, and love to the neighbor.² A discussion of God and the creature's relationship cannot be separated from the activities and connections between the human being itself. The scripture serves knowledge in which equalize the cluster of divine and human being. As a consequence, attitude toward man has a direct impact on God as well. For instance, Matthew 25:40 highlights a dramatic picture of interlinear relation, specifically saying, treatment to the weaker is similar to Jesus, even more, it demonstrates that the needy is God in human appearance. Therefore, in the Christian tradition, showing respect, love, and hospitality are grounded in Christian life and considered as a divine order, relates to faith and doctrine.

The legacy of this tradition is possible to be traced in the Old Testament. A command to love God, a single God, and against polytheism (Deut. 6:4-5), and extended, cited in Mark 12:28-31 with additional order, love the neighbor, furthermore, the neighbor should be considered not only merely as God in human flesh, but ourselves. The verse forces the hosts to acknowledge that people who are in tribulation and weakness are not strangers, but themselves in essence. This heritage nurtured by early Christian and bequeathed hereditary, and regarded as a common-sense for Christians. However, the motivation of being hospitable is encouraged by the love of God (I John 4:19), and lack of reward expectation. In other words, it is a response as the human being has been receiving the love of God in the earlier, the consequence is, ordered to extend and pass God's love to others.

Hospitality has been predominantly ideal in the Christian circle, at the beginning of Jesus' ministries and practices of earliest Christian churches and contemporary ministry of social justice, the tradition has been nurtured.³ But claiming that hospitality is the expression of Christian beliefs in the biblical period emergences debates due it could be said as the reflection of cultural form. In both the ancient and modern Near East, hospitality is considered as a social virtue, an identification that distinguishes

¹Pierre Francois de Bethune, *Interreligious Hospitality: The Fulfilment of Dialogue* (Paris: Albin Michel S.A, 2007), kindle edition.

²Thomas E. Reynolds, *Toward a Wider Hospitality: Rethinking Love of Neighbour in Religions of the Book* (Irish Theological Quarterly 75(2) 175-187), 177.

³Jessica Wroblewski, *The Limits of Hospitality*, 14.

cultured people and barbarians, an important morality pillar of the universe.⁴ It could be said that hospitality exists within the felling of fully human in which indicates a good and healthy person.⁵ Although tradition, cultural, ancient norms and virtues demonstrate hospitality in which Christian faith was not only, nor the best, practitioners of hospitality, but the life of Jesus bears a strong particular example were difficult to be argued, it is the heart core of Christian mission and identity⁶

Hospitality in Greek words, specifically speaking, in the New Testament is philoxenia, literally meaning, love for strangers.⁷ It seems this definition implies a limitless cluster, no class of people not included within the scope of hospitality.⁸ Therefore, it flies through the border and limits which is shaped by a certain group because it indicates that hospitality is not simply an attitude or participation of transforming love and generosity to relatives or friends but rather extended to unknown people, whether prospective friends or enemies. Even more, within the Christian biblical and historical tradition, the focus is receiving alien by extending the resources of the host, a response to the physical, social, and spiritual needs.⁹ However, besides the New Testament, the Old Testament serves the practice of hospitality as an important moral duty where this heritage shapes the thought and practice of Jesus, Paul, and early Christian circles.¹⁰ The existence of hospitality in the New Testament has a strong connection in the Old Testament where its legacy adopted and practiced until today. Even more, the distinction with surrounding ancient culture is, participation in hospitality, welcoming those who are powerless and undesirable, is considered as an activity in which God is involved.¹¹ New Testaments serve a lot of historical evidence where some figures demonstrated a hospitable attitude (Matt. 19:13-15, Mark 5:1-20, John 9:1-12, Luke 17:11-19, Luke 7:36-50, John 4:1-29).

In his work, Jessica Wroblewski argues that serving hospitality is the metaphor of proclaiming God's kingdom. Jesus acts as the host by declaring the redemption work to sinful man, and go through without identification as it was offered to all nations and groups of people.¹² The plan of redemption was arranged by God to save the world, in this sense, it is a universal approach and lack of dividing groups. With this in mind, participation in hospitality displays a similar scene where the host or Christian extends the love and kindness toward others either neighbor or unknown person. Here we see that the core of hospitality relates to soteriology, specifically speaking, exists within the heart of the Christian religion perspective. Furthermore, based on Matthew 25:34-40

⁴John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Promise and Mission* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 2.

⁵Raimon Panikkar, foreword to Pierre-Francois de Bethune, *Interreligious Hospitality: The Fulfilment of Dialogue* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2010), xi.

⁶Wroblewski, *The Limits of Hospitality*, 15.

⁷*Ibid.*

⁸Amy G. Oden, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 20.

⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁰Wroblewski, *The Limits of Hospitality*, 15.

¹¹*Ibid.*

¹²*Ibid.*, 17.

and 10:40-42, offering bits of help and companionships toward strangers who are in need is considered as treated to Jesus Christ.¹³ The stranger itself consists of double implication, firstly, the host himself, and secondly, the Giver, almighty God, the role model of hospitality. Tracing back to the earlier discussion, as the temporary conclusion, the term neighbor is classified as a very unlimited project and applied to the whole human being.

However, a significant assessment needs to be placed due to Christian hospitality and the culture around have a feeble distinction. Its nature in which grounded in true worship and partnership with God is the main attribute of Christian hospitality that may draw a clear distinction to ancient or modern culture and virtue. In Christian tradition, the motivation of hospitality rooted in the experience of God's hospitality, God already perform hospitality, God is ultimately host, guest, and home, then a man needs to reflect it toward others.¹⁴ Therefore, God is the benchmark, ground, and motivation. It is not a selfish work, and lack of drama as it is an order that exists in the Christian tradition. Even more, it regarded as part of participation in worshipping God. However, hospitality is not part of Christian doctrine, but its attribute occupied in New Testament and performed by Jesus in his ministries. It is considered as socio-religion order due the command does not mention clearly in the bible but exists within the activities of the Christian life.

Furthermore, the story of feeding five thousand is amply evidenced by how hospitality exists within the early Christian society.¹⁵ However, it did not mention about hospitality, but the attitude of sharing foods is regarded as a real contribution to hospitality. This event offers another evidence on how hospitality has been nurtured in the New Testament, furthermore, the legacy is extended to modern Christian and considered as a moral order together with spiritual responsibility. With this in mind, hospitality employs two objects of attention; physical and spiritual needs.¹⁶ The New Testament serves spiritual intention, as it was presented by Jesus, when he shared physical needs, it always together with divine bread of life, the living water. Therefore, hospitality has a strong connection to spiritual expectation, even more, relates to the salvation of sinful man.

The Stranger

In the Christian tradition, John Calvin suggests to make any person as a neighbor, therefore, in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 29–37), Jesus redefines neighbor and love for neighbor, and broadens out our moral obligations to one another.¹⁷ Hospitality leads the host and guest to shift into a strange level of relationship. They become aware of the structural inequalities that exist around them. Conse-

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid, 18.

¹⁵Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Mona Siddique, *Hospitality and Islam: Welcoming in God's Name* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2015), 41.

quently, guiding them to repentance that grouping and clustering need to be against.¹⁸ It opens a new perspective of public life on how the host or guest relates and build a connection to the unknown people, who potentially could be a prospective friend or enemy. Therefore, it is considered as a sign of God's presence and biblical ethic.¹⁹ However, the bible does not strictly and mention the term hospitality, but its attribute consistently exists in several events, including how it defines the term guest. The sick, travelers, pilgrims, widows, orphans, slaves, prisoners, and even strangers, in many stories, are regarded as the guest in which need to be transformed hospitality.

In Matthew 10:40, a discussion of Jesus and his disciples, mentions that those who receive them receive Jesus. However, it contains dual notion, because the stranger could be God's special envoys to bless or challenge²⁰, means that identification should not take place but rather the host required to share hospitality without any filter. The potentiality of blessings or threats will always follow, therefore, the stranger, with no previous introduction must receive the resources of the host. John Koenig demonstrates in his work that hospitality, however, is a chance to show love for God.²¹ In other word, participation in hospitality is an opportunity of divine and human beings. The display is not an activity among sinful man, but rather, involves the Creator. The expectation of this attitude is directed to the mighty God. By saying this, God equips hospitality events as a way of building interaction with his people. However, as discussed before, all estuary end to spiritual intention, religious purpose, and superpower being. It is not a human drama, rather, a tool of God to awake his people that God is omnipresent.

Furthermore, Parker Palmer in his work shares a strict idea by occupies stranger as a '*spiritual guide*', an opportunity to confuse man that may guide to God, a tool to acknowledge God with the puzzle of searching the Creator.²² It is a positive attitude toward strangers due to some reason the stranger would be a potential burden. A deeper spiritual life could be gained by the guest and enable the host to seek God in human appearance. Hospitality can enlarge private space and offer different ankle of view.²³ Therefore, the beneficial contribution is provided, instead of discerning hospitality as a social ethic and responsibility, it could be considered as a chance to develop a relationship with God and the capacity of tolerance with strangers.

The term of a stranger should be discerned as a partnership mutual relationship.²⁴ Everyone is involved as a stranger, here the equal and mutual of sharing and transforming resources are expected, both participation of the host and guest, entering the next level of welcoming unknown person. Either the host and stranger have the same responsibility to reflect their private space to new people, further, as it is

¹⁸Oden, *And You Welcomed Me*.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 3.

²¹Ibid, 4.

²²Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 65.

²³Ibid, 69.

²⁴Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality*, 9.

considered as mutual-equal relationship, both of them hold the same responsibility, and more precise to be marked as a partnership. By saying this, the stranger is expected to show hospitality as presumed to the guest. Koenig observes that partnership had to do with an equal mutual giving and receiving.²⁵ This idea, however, leads to the decreasing of stranger's right and increasing its responsibility since it is required that a stranger should perform or present his sources to the host. But the sense of resource does not limit the nature of wealth, treasure, or property belonging, yet extend to a spiritual and positive attitude.

The nature of partnership sense is accommodated well in the New Testament. Indeed, Paul extends in some event and passage. The stimulation appears in the majority passage where the word *koinonia* appears, related to the human participation in sharing and transforming blessings in which directed to God, even further, it is considered as a divine project.²⁶ For instance, in Philippians 1:5, Paul builds partnership with Philippians, includes of sharing financial support for his ministry, furthermore, it implies the atmosphere of worship as performed by the member of the young church in Jerusalem in Acts 2:42. Therefore, it should be considered, that the coming of the stranger, is God's providence that offers his follower to participate on a partnership relationship by showing hospitality. In the other side, as a stranger, it is the same occasional that may be equipped to perform the task of the divine project. In sum, Christian hospitality has more divine exercise than social participation where the core intention is to let human beings participate in heaven activity, therefore, hospitality is considered a theological account instead of socio-anthropological knowledge.

DISCUSSION

Christology and Hospitality

Christology, the cross, and the atonement theology serve the heart of hospitality. God's work through the incarnation of Christ demonstrates how eternal fellowship could be maintained with him, furthermore, has looked like the divine project of hospitality. In short, the display of hospitality in Christology is presented by the sending of Christ in flesh attribute to redeem the sin of human beings in the cross.²⁷ Hospitality is possible to be investigated through a systematic-theological approach due redemption event offers its knowledge. However, it is not a theological order, or regarded as Christian doctrine in which follow by biblical responsibility. Further, the presence of Christ in the world serves a complete example that may be learned and followed by modern Christians. Indeed, Herman Bavinck in his work, expresses that the incarnation of Christ applies and valid not only to certain groups or races but go to all nations.²⁸ The mediatorship of Christ gives a theological example to the host on how receiving his

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Hans Boersema, *Violence, Hospitality and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2004), 15-16.

²⁸Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Volume 3: Sin and Salvation in Christ*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2006), 240.

guest without any identification or assessment since God offers his love and kindness to all human beings, a hospitality should be spanned with no clustering, grouping, and discrimination.

However, divine hospitality is realistic, stands both death and resurrection, and considered as the very center and fundamental gravity. Therefore, the practice of human hospitality should be reflected by God's hospitality, his sharing love, and atonement.²⁹ In the historical approach, Christian tradition, the legacy of the cross constitutes the ultimate expression of God's hospitality, functions as the icon, and best example to be duplicated or applied afterward.³⁰ The parable of the prodigal son, however, has no connection to Christology, but in reality presents the crucified of the Lord, welcoming sinners into his eternal home. Throughout history, the prodigal son has always functioned as a narrative story and captured as a moral lesson and the grace of forgiveness.³¹ But the kind and love of the father in which transformed to the lost son, by granting him authority, giving freedom, and offering the best service, however, presents a hospitality event, the hospitable father.³² Therefore, this parable is the miniature of Christology where the Father offering hospitality to all human beings by sending his Son in the cross, it is an invitation and opportunity for sinful man to receive special place and treatment from God.

The love and hospitality of Christ do not nullify human freedom, even though it is offered freely, but it does not force the man to receive its grace, it depends on human decision to accept or reject the hospitality of God through salvation by his Son.³³ In other word, it could be defined as volunteer participation,³⁴ both the host and guest have no compulsion to enter the arena of hospitality. It is fully a reflection of Christology as well where the Son has no responsibility to submit his Father, therefore, the initiative of love is addressed to the Father while the sacrifice and willingness to be crucified are directed to Christ. It is not a must for the Son to follow his Father's instruction because the Father has another way to save human beings. Readiness and willingness of the Son, together with the initiative of the father, is the role model on how a guest offers hospitality to the stranger without any requirement and applicable to all nations. On the other side, the sinful man has no responsibility to respond or accept the warm welcome of Christ. However, the scene of the hospitality of Christ in the cross already presented

²⁹Reinhard Hutter, *Hospitality and Truth: The Disclosure of Practices in Worship and Doctrine, in Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 219.

³⁰Boersema, *Violence, Hospitality and the Cross*, 26.

³¹Cf. Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant; and, Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to Parables of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 181.

³²Boersema, *Violence, Hospitality and the Cross*, 26.

³³Henri J. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming* (New York: Image-Double-day, 1992), 95.

³⁴Boersema, *Violence, Hospitality and the Cross*, 26.

in the Old Testament, the hospitality of Israel is functioned as the reflection of the hospitable heart of Yahweh.³⁵

Some theologians argue that the virtue of hospitality is a venerable tradition, both in the biblical witness and Christian tradition.³⁶ The root of expression of this virtue came from the display of Christology, which relates strongly to the atonement and salvation. However, the redemption event has happened in the past and function in the past, before the coming of Christ, the present time in the bible period, and the future, until today and the next generation. By saying that hospitality is an ancient value, then the atonement only applicable to a certain period in the past. The essence of hospitality, as it is portrayed of the cross, however, contains of the same and similar values but expressed in various ways based on the setting of time, culture, and expectation.

Jacques Derrida, as an ethical philosopher, elaborates his thought in hospitality. He argues that attitude of utter openness should be grounded in hospitality, readiness to share all the belongings and resources to the guest who come knocking the door. It is self-sacrifice in which has no attention of selfish, rather, focus to transform love to others.³⁷ His reflection on hospitality bearers similar theological expression of Christology due to the willingness of the Son to sacrifice himself is recorded well in the scripture, furthermore, the invitation has been declared to all strangers and guests in the sinful world to receive the salvation, the very heart of hospitality. Christ offers his possession to all human beings who knock the door and ask for blessings.

Therefore, hospitality should be described as an absolute, pure, and unconditional attribute.³⁸ Concerning the unconditional nature of hospitality, the dialogue between Derrida and Immanuel Kant presents controversy. While Derrida insists that it has no limit, Kant performs the limit of hospitality, universal hospitality with a condition where the stranger must behave peaceably to the host or other new country.³⁹ Concerning the openness hospitality of Derrida, he links this attribute to the concept of Messianic, where actually, nobody is capable of being saved, because the expectation is perfectionist, but the fact is, no one able to present flawless life. Furthermore, the messianic future is entirely indeterminate, lack of previous identification, but openly receive all the unknown comers. With this in mind, specifically speaking, the notion of Derrida is rooted and linked to the theological reflection of Christology while Kant tends to be exclusive and determine the guest who will receive the hospitality of the host.

However, significant differences exist today about performing hospitality due to the political, cultural, and ethical development changes the application of some

³⁵Simon Marrison Steer, *Eating Bread in the Kingdom of God: The Foodways of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke* (Ph.D. diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, 2002), 40.

³⁶Boersema, *Violence, Hospitality and the Cross*, 29.

³⁷Jacques Derrida, *Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of Religion at the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Samuel Weber, ed. Jacques Derrida and Gianni Vattimo (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), 17.

³⁸Boersema, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 31.

³⁹Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*, ed. Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957), 20-21.

theological virtues in the sense of how it is applied. Justice and democracy are entirely different in the ancient period of the bible and what we know today. Therefore, applying the whole context of eschatology or messianic mission in the bible is insufficient and limited of time, condition, space, and its character. The consequence is, an overlapping on discerning the Christology and its connection or similarity to the modern world today.⁴⁰ Here a sensitive approach should be considered, the core of messianic virtue, redemption even, and incarnation of Christ present the very heart of hospitality, but its expression should follow the condition and requirement of certain time and place. The treatment is not flat to the whole ages, but need a contextualization. The nature of hospitality in the theological reflection must be maintained well and nourish with the context of the host and guest.

Furthermore, violence always follows hospitality, it is never purely altruistic, because the expectation of receiving feedback exist, and considered as economic exchange.⁴¹ The nature of Christology which is bequeathed from the scripture is not truly bear the origins of hospitality. The desire of accepting contribution from the guest is not accommodated in the theology of God's salvation where it is a gift. Human and divine hospitality, however, have differences, God's hospitality is not restricted by the narcissism, and never employed for a selfish reason.⁴² On the other side, modern hospitality is never truly applied without selfish motivation, because the expectation to receive reward or response from the guest. The display of human hospitality does not present the original hospitality which is performed by Christ in the cross, but still, the essence and core content of its virtue.

CONCLUSION

Theological reflection dominates discussion in the redemption of Christ, but on the flip side, it demonstrates the knowledge of ethics where hospitality is highlighted. The divine order to share hospitality is pictured clearly in the cross, where it should be transformed pass any human's reality border, it encompasses throughout nations and races. Redemption hospitality suggests no filter and identification toward the strangers, further, it testifies the urgency to donates physical and spiritual needs to those who are depressed and in a foreign land. And the final notion is; love is the foundation and motivation of participation in hospitality as it is expressed by Christ to save the sinful word. Therefore, hospitality activity relates not only among human beings, but it echoes a vertical relationship.

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⁴⁰ Boersema, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 32.

⁴¹ Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, ed. John D. Caputo (New York: Fordham University Press, 1997), 140.

⁴² Boersema, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross*, 37.

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