

THE FIRST CHOICE IN MISSIONS:  
PHILOXENIA OR XENOPHOBIA?

by

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## SUMMARY

Hospitality is the forgotten factor in world mission. And yet it can be one of the most accessible and most effective means of communicating the Gospel to a needy neighbor and to a needy world.

God's people in the Old Testament lived in a world where the stranger was initially treated with fear and suspicion, and yet at the same time with curiosity and welcome. Israel was instructed to reflect God's love in her hospitality toward the stranger, whether such a stranger was a foreigner, or a sojourner in her midst. Experiencing a welcome among God's people was for such a stranger a maximum, opportunity to meet Israel's God.

God's Son came to earth as a Guest, depending on the hospitality of others from Bethlehem onwards, and yet was also a Divine Host, breaking bread for His disciples at His last meal with them. And He sent out His followers as dependent on the open hearts and homes of others. Since they learned to be good guests, they could also be good hosts, building a communication network that significantly helped the spread of the Gospel in the first few centuries.

The hospitality pattern has continued in fits and starts throughout church history, and successes and failures often existed side by side: an insular Catholic Church, for example, spawned the gracious openness of the monastery chain.

Hospitality beckons today as a winsome practice which can help accomplish God's mission. We must first learn to accept it from the Father, and then to practice it in specific, practical ways in widening circles of contact. We need to start with hospitable attitudes to our marriage partner and children, then as a family to our Christian and non-Christian friends in the community, and then as a church to our God-given "parish".

And hospitality doesn't stop there. As Christian citizens of a nation, we are to reach out and make a home for the willing immigrants and unwilling refugees whom God has placed in our midst. The welcome sign on our door is ultimately addressed to the entire world.

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## INTRODUCTION

One of the many facets of mission, of getting God's work in history done, is hospitality. There is a very close connection between a hospitable heart and a hospitable home on the one hand, and reaching out to all the world with the Gospel on the other hand. There is a relationship between the number of bedrooms in our home, the number of faces around our dinner table; and our commitment to world mission. There is a tie-in between whom we choose to greet after a worship service and our awareness of God's worldwide plan. A Scriptural understanding of hospitality forcefully brings home the truth that the crucial distance in mission is not 12,000 miles but twelve inches!

The connection between hospitality and mission comes as a surprise to many. As Canon Trevor Verry, staff member at UNISA, said to me a few weeks before his death, 'There is little doubt that hospitality is the forgotten factor in world mission'. One major reason is that the delightful Greek word for hospitality has been captured by alien forces and made to do service in cramped and stuffy spaces where it was never intended to operate. The word needs breathing space. Cosy afternoons with our closest Christian friends may be enjoyable, and a chicken barbeque with all the trimmings for some thirty odd relatives (as well as the more normal ones...) may serve a real purpose, but neither is an example of hospitality in the Biblical sense.

Entertainment perhaps, but philoxenia, no.

The pregnant Greek word literally means 'love for the stranger'. Hospitality must involve the stretching and widening of our attitudes and resources beyond the comfortable and the familiar, and into the realm of the unknown and the stranger. When this step is taken, mentally and practically, we have taken the first step of involvement in world mission. And this explains the rather straightforward title of this dissertation: 'The first choice in mission: philoxenia (love for the stranger) or xenophobia (fear of the stranger)'. Love stretches and widens our horizons so that embracing a single stranger can be a significant step toward our embracing the same world God so loved in John 3.16. And conversely, fear causes our vision to narrow and shrink, and we withdraw behind carefully constructed walls of stereotypes and suspicion, and yes, hostility. (As we shall see later on, there is a fascinating etomological connection between hospitality and hostility.) A guiding text for our study, and eventual obedience, is certainly John 4.18: 'There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear'.

So let me sketch out briefly the three main sections of this dissertation. The first is Scriptural, the second historical, and the third practical.

The Scriptural part will attempt to show that the principles

of hospitality are deeply rooted in the world of the Bible: the ideal world of Genesis 1-2, the fallen world of Genesis 3-11, and the focused (although still fallen) world of Abraham and his descendants in Genesis 12 and beyond. And that world of Israel eventually narrows to one Man. The principles of hospitality are once again deeply woven into the world in which He lived (the Gospels) and the world into which He sent His followers (Acts and the Correspondence). We should not be fooled by the fact that the Old Testament has no word for hospitality, and that its practice is only occasionally commended or commanded in the New.

I am eager to establish that the attitudes and actions of hospitality are woven into the fabric of Scripture. The foundation and motives for its contemporary practice are here. We dare not equate its comparative absence of specific words with an absence of its practice, or consign it to cultures foreign to our own.

The second part will be the historical, providing a bridge between the Biblical world and our own. We will spend far more time on the terra firma on either side of the bridge, the authoritative terra firma of the Scriptural 'then', and the contemporary terra firma of the challenging 'now', than on the bridge itself. The bridge is two thousand years long, but on specific details it is rather short. I have been rather surprised at the paucity of evidence for an understanding and practice of hospitality during this long

stretch of God's acting in and through His Church. Stranger still, we best view this long covered bridge not from our twentieth century opening, but from the first century one. The light becomes dimmer and the outlines of the walls hazier as we approach our own setting. This is obviously a section of the paper where much work remains to be done by others.

The third and final section is the practical one.

Having built the Scriptural and historical foundations, I hope that we shall have a higher vantage point from which to view our contemporary world. I think we shall see on our every horizon a world still riddled with fear and hostility, and as greatly in need of hospitality as ever. If Henri Nouwen's definition of hospitality is correct, that it 'means primarily the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy,' (Nouwen 1966:51) then we have to begin with a space as small as our hearts and end with one as large as our planet. Does our heart have space for the Stranger, a place where He can feel at home and become a friend? This question sets the stage for hospitality as a family, as a Church, and as nations (as the latter consider strangers in their midst, either the willing immigrants or the unwilling refugees.)

In that third section we will start to explore some ways in which hospitality can be liberated from bland tea parties and set on its feet as the first decisive and creative step

toward involvement in world mission. My hope is that Malcom Muggeridge's voice will be only one among millions as he describes his conversion: 'I had a sense of homecoming, of picking up the threads of a lost life, of responding to a bell that has long been ringing, of finding a place at a table that has long been left vacant...' (Muggeridge 1982:).

## SECTION ONE: OLD TESTAMENT

### CHAPTER ONE: GENESIS 1-11

The seeds and beginnings of almost every significant Scriptural teaching can be found in the magnificent early chapters of Genesis. The seeds of hospitality are there in chapters 1-2, and of hostility in chapters 3-11. The positive and negative sides of this theme are played out in the rest of history.

In the first two chapters the eternal and creative God constructs for Himself a home. In 1.1-2.4 the immense sweep of the universe slowly narrows and focuses on one man and his partner, in 2.4-25 that man slowly stretches and widens his awareness of the world around him. Now no-one constructs a home without intentions of living in it, and God intends to live and to feel at home in both: in His infinite creation and in His finite creature.

In the portrait of paradise painted for us in Genesis 1-2, I certainly get the impression of an Adam who reflected His Maker's hospitality. In special but often overlooked verses, God carefully prepares for Adam a home: 'And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there He put the man whom He had formed....The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it' (Gen 2.18, 15). The six verses in between describe this place to which God gave Adam a 'lease'.

This was the first home on earth, where the first philoxenia was put into practice. I like to think that God was Adam's first Guest. The divine Stranger quickly became a Friend, and the Guest-Host distinctions blurred as their intimacy grew in morning and evening walks together 'in the cool of the day'. Adam welcomed the 'Stranger', and was open to receive both His generosity ('...you may freely eat....') as well as the fact that this could be experienced only within limitations and boundaries ('...in the day you eat of it, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, you will surely die' Gen 2.16-17). As the first man was open toward the Creator, so he was open toward the creation, and welcomed the task of naming the animals. The strange new environment of animals and things was perceived with an attitude of friendship and hospitality.

The closing story of the second chapter, and of Paradise, wonderfully illustrates how a guest often can see needs in the home where he is staying and proceed to meet them in ingenious ways. Adam's divine Guest sensed loneliness in the garden, and in a very special way provided a 'very same and yet very different' partner for him. Perhaps the first poem in Scripture (Gen 2.23) is hospitality wrapped up in just a few words, 'I do not fear you as competition, but I welcome you as a companion (bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh). I see your differences not as a threat but as a happy challenge (she shall be called ishshah, not just a duplicate ish)'.

So philoexenia was the atmosphere in that first home: openness to the Owner-Guest, to His creation, and to fellow 'tenants'. And they were 'naked and not ashamed'. There was nothing to hide. But in the next verse a snake slithers into this happy home, and paradise starts to unravel. Fear like a silent cancer starts eating away at the fabric of love, and history is radically changed.

That 'talking snake' in a specific garden is simply acting out on the state of history a decision that had been made on a cosmic heavenly stage some time before. Scripture is rather sketchy on the details, but Lucifer the angel of light had decided to refuse and abuse the hospitality of God, and had taken perhaps a third of the angels with him in his rebellion. Since he himself had become dissatisfied with his dependent state, tired of accepting the generosity of Another and living within His limitations, he tries the same strategy with Eve and her husband. 'So you only have a lease to the garden? Shouldn't you at least be managing partners? What is the owner hiding from you?'

Adam failed that first crucial question of trust, and discovered that Satan always promises more than he delivers. Instead of becoming more than man, he became less, and fear and insecurity crept into all his relationships. A fearful Adam slipped away from his Friend and, instead of experiencing their comfortable conversation, found himself evasive as the Lord gently attempted to

uncover his guilt by a series of questions. Fear and suspicion also invaded the closest human relationship as Adam shifted blame onto his wife. Even creation, lovingly tended the day before, now provided the leaves needed to symbolize the distance present in the new reality of guarded relationships.

The God-man relationship, broken early in the third chapter, now affects marriage, family and society in a widening ripple effect which doesn't stop until the end of the fourth chapter. Cain's cry in Genesis 4.13-14 is a heart-rending one, and captures very well a world without hospitality: '...from Thy face I shall be hidden....I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth...who-ever finds me will slay me. My punishment is greater than I can bear....' It is all there: the fear, the suspicion, the distance, the homelessness. Cain's cry has echoed down the centuries, and illustrates that a decision against God is also a decision against home, and a decision against ourselves.

And so in bold strokes the story of these early chapters continues. Cain finds safety and protection behind the walls of a city. Hostile attitudes within the family, epitomized in Lamech's speech, spill naturally onto a larger stage as the generations of Noah and Babel lived in defiance of God and in hostility and confusion with one another. God acts in judgement in a garden, in a flood, and in an

ambitious building project and then switches His strategy with Abraham in His relentless quest to offer hospitality to all men.

If the door of hospitality opens in chapters 1 and 2, it also shuts in chapters 3 to 11. The main principle in the first two chapters was that philoxenia was an attitude of openness, of welcome, of making space for the stranger (whether divine, human, or animal:). But the house of hospitality in Paradise has doors and windows. And the important companion truth of the succeeding chapters is that when certain strangers are spotted through the windows, they must be refused entrance at the doors. Other strangers must be shown the other side of the door when they have abused hospitality of those inside the house.

And so Satan was expelled from his heavenly home when he challenged the authority of the Host. Likewise his first human victims were expelled from their garden home when they tried to rewrite, or at least reinterpret, their lease. And the door of the ark shuts and consigns a whole generation to a watery grave.

This principle of Genesis continues, and we'll need to pay much attention to it: the same Israelites who were asked to treat the strangers in their midst with compassion, were asked to utterly exterminate other strangers. The same

early Christians who were asked to 'practice hospitality without grumbling' by one of Jesus' intimate disciples (1 Pet 4.9) were commanded 'not to receive (others) into the house, or give them any greeting' by another disciple (2 Jn 10). And we who so desperately need to cultivate an attitude of open hearts and homes, are called to firmly shut the door and convey 'hostility' on some occasions. This is only a glimpse at a major concern in the understanding and practice of hospitality, but its seeds are on the first pages of Scripture.

## CHAPTER TWO: ABRAHAM TO JESUS

At this point in history God switches strategy in accomplishing His great mission purpose of building a relationship with all people. Genesis 12.1-3 opens a new chapter. God will now reach the many through the one, Abraham: all families of the earth through this one and his descendants Isaac and Jacob, and all nations through His chosen people Israel.

I want in a small way to follow suit and change strategy as well. Rather than proceeding with the Scriptural evidence book by book I want to take several steps back and survey the Old Testament for fairly obvious evidence of hospitality. The hospitality practiced in Israel was similar to that practiced in other Semitic cultures of the ancient Near East. And so the question would face us: was Israel really special and unique?

A second main area we will then explore relates to the matter of geography. If Israel is not simply another ancient Semitic culture, how are we helped to understand this by her constant movement to, and back to, the narrow strip of land called Palestine? We will look at God's concern about the location of His people, and will also consider at some length the three main Hebrew words for stranger, since they have much to do with geography.

Thirdly, under this Old Testament heading, we will see the

motivation of Israel's hospitality: she had experienced and was now called to express the compassion of God Himself in this specific and practical way.

We might summarize the entire story from Abraham to Jesus in this sentence: God growing for Himself a special people, in a special place, and for a special purpose. Each phrase takes us deeper. On the surface we see a special people, living among all other peoples. Underneath that we see a new dimension: that people is called to a special place (a land, a city, and even a specific building). And supporting it all is the special purpose for the whole appearance of this people in history.

An overview of the next several pages might look something like this:

Ch. 3 The Surface of Hospitality in all Semitic cultures, including Israel.

Ch. 4 The Deeper Layer of Israel's Soil in the Promised Land, (and the various "foreigners" in that land).

Ch. 5 The Bedrock of Israel's Hospitality: Her Calling of reflecting the Hospitality of Yahweh.

### CHAPTER THREE: THE SURFACE OF O.T. HOSPITALITY

(‘Turn aside, I pray you, to your servant’s house, and spend the night...’ Gen 19.2).

Before moving on, it’s good to remind ourselves where we’ve been. The first eleven chapters of Genesis paint for us in broad and sweeping strokes the story of a God who has a whole world on His heart. He is a worldly God. And He longs for every part of that world to become a friendly and hospitable place and so to reflect His own character. This is His desire for the responsive world of Genesis 1-2, but also for the runaway world of Genesis 3-11. God has taken the incredible risk of giving this world enough space to say ‘no’, and Adam and Eve were only the first of many to reject the Divine hospitality.

That rejection comes to a head in that eleventh chapter as the Babel generation rejects both the essence of Who God is (‘Come, let us make a name for ourselves ...’) and the essence of what God wants to do (‘...lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth...’). Both God’s character and His mission (‘...be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth’) are rejected by the audacious tower builders, and God Himself intervenes in judgement to bring about His purpose, the scattering of the people far and wide. But the scattering was involuntary and the resulting groups, listed for us in chapter 11, are divided by language, and, in time, by much more. The Satanic

fingerprints of fear which we saw earlier on in the words of Cain and Lamech no doubt characterise this world as well.

Generally, the stranger was regarded and treated as an enemy, except in a limited class of cases where he was welcomed and protected because the host community sensed him to be of benefit or use to them.

In an interesting and recent article, Amal Vinogradov suggests that self-interest still underlies the well-known hospitality of the contemporary Arab cultures of the Middle East. He says that the exchange of goods and services can lead to bonds of friendship and trust, but can also lead to the establishment of superior status. To maintain equality of status, gifts and favours must be repaid in full, adhering to the rules of reciprocity. Says he, 'Failure to reciprocate adequately or at all, entails loss of credit and decline in prestige and status. Furnishing benefits to others may lead to the development of bonds of fellowship with them or to a position of superiority over them' (Vinogradov 1974:3). And he quotes Levi-Strauss with approval, 'an important function of reciprocity is to surpass a rival in generosity, to crush him if possible under future obligations which it is hoped he cannot meet, thus taking from him privileges, titles, rank, authority, and prestige' (Vinogradov 1974:8).

That last judgement may be a bit severe, but it is a

sobering reminder that even when windows of hospitality are chiselled into walls of hostility, the motivation of the person looking out may often still be darkened by thoughts of selfishness and gain.

But Vinogradov also speaks of 'bonds of fellowship', and no doubt this was often the result when, long ago, ancestors of the Arabs which he studied opened their tent doors to the passing stranger. A remarkable etiquette was already in operation in the Middle East of Abraham's time.

I want to comment at some length on three Scriptural passages which illumine the practice of hospitality, two from Abraham's time and one from the later days of the judges. And then I will make some observations about various facets of treating the stranger which were in vogue for most Semitic cultures during most of the years covered by the Biblical writings (including the Palestine in which Jesus and the apostles lived).

### 3.1. Scriptural hospitality: specific passages

3.1.1. Genesis 18.1-16: In the heat of the day, Abraham sees three strangers as he sits in his tent door. He runs to meet them, bows in their presence, and introduces himself as their servant. He orders water to be laid on for the washing of their feet, and encourages them to rest in the shade while he will prepare the food. And with remarkable

haste for one of such wealth and influence, Abraham 'hastened into the tent' to ask Sarah to make some cakes out of fine meal, then 'ran to the herd' to choose a tender and good calf for the meat and urged the servant to hasten in preparing it. Adding curds and milk to the fare, he then stood in their presence as they ate.

In the conversation which follows, Sarah is in the back portion of the tent away from the dining and guest area, and her laughter there will eventually give her son his name. Abraham then 'went with them to set them on their way', and the Lord Himself takes the opportunity to open His heart to His friend about the coming judgement of the cities of the plain.

This lovely story has become justly celebrated as a model of hospitality. It is not really a surprise that the Lord's open heart should be a response to Abraham's open home.

3.1.2. Genesis 19.1-11: In this chapter the hospitality of the city complements the hospitality of the tent in the preceding chapter. Abraham's cousin Lot sits in Sodom's gate with the city elders and sees two strangers approaching. He rises to meet them and bows his face to the earth. He too introduces himself as their servant, encourages footwashing and after some urging persuades them to stay for a feast and the night. When the city's evil inhabitants try to harm his guests, Lot is willing even to

offer them his daughters to insure the safety of his guests, '...do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof'. Once again the guests have a tremendous gift for their host: the preservation of his life and that of his family as Sodom goes up in flames behind him. (This is similar to what Rahab and her family will experience later, in Joshua 2, as a reward for their hospitality).

3.1.3. Judges 19-20: Instances of hospitality and hostility are interwoven in this fascinating, long, and little known story. It is a very instructive tale.

A Levite from Ephraim's hill country has an argument with his concubine, and she leaves for her father's home in Bethlehem. The Levite pursues, and experiences an excellent reception from his father-in-law, who persuades him to stay another day and part of still another. Because of the late start, he and his wife (temporarily reconciled?) must find lodging on the way. They deliberately bypass the city of the Jebusites and go to Gibeah, an Israelite town. They are ignored in the open square of the city while awaiting an invitation until finally an old sojourner takes them in. The descriptions of his hospitality, as was that of the father-in-law the night before, are emphatic and excessive, and serve to boldly contrast what happens next.

The men of Gibeah surround the house, intent on homosexual

rape. They are content to molest and abuse the concubine instead, leaving her for dead on the host's doorstep the following morning. In a rage the Levite cuts her into twelve pieces and calls all of Israel to the task of revenge. The story concludes with the widening ripples of social disintegration.

Behind the many little touches of hospitality, these chapters convey the larger truth that hospitality can be the glue holding a society together, whereas its absence leads to disintegration: beginning with one couple and spreading to an entire nation. The author appears to suggest that God Himself is behind a justified holy war and will guarantee its eventual success, when He sees His people acting in hostility, rather than hospitality, toward one another. '...(A)mong Israelites proper behavior is to reflect care, hospitality, protection and loyalty. This applies to the family as well as to larger social units: for indeed marital or sexual irregularity becomes a step en route to societal and political disintegration....Holy war for the sake of the community's good is fully sanctioned' (Niditch 1982:374).

We sketch out now more details of hospitality practiced by Israel at various stages of her history, details which surface in the New Testament as well. It is not surprising to find that 'as far as the externals of hospitality are concerned, the Biblical data fit in well with the record

from other sources' (Cruickahank 1913:817).

### 3.2 Scriptural hospitality: in general culture

During their rather infrequent long journeys, travellers could stay at a malon, which was a simple type of inn, probably little more than a place of shelter. The LXX (Septuagint) translation of malon into katalyma conveys the idea of unharnessing beasts, and beyond shelter and water there was probably little available. Joseph's brothers stopped at one on their way home from Egypt, Genesis 42.27, 43.21 and Moses and his family did the same on their way back to Egypt (Ex 9.24). See also Jeremiah 9.2: 'Oh that I had in the desert a wayfarers' lodging place, that I might leave my people and go away from them'.

If a traveller would stop at a private dwelling, hospitality would be expected. Think of the surprise of Reuel or Jethro when his daughters met a stranger at the well and did not invite him to a meal (Ex 2.20). He orders them to 'Call him, that he may eat bread'. The word used here for call, qara, is used elsewhere for a guest or one who is summoned by another to partake of food (1 Kings 1.41; Prov 9.18; Zeph 1.7). Think also of the condemnation the Ammonites and Moabites received who failed to meet the children of Israel with bread and water (Deut 23.3-4), and the punishment Nabal (and Abigail) experienced for his failure to extend hospitality to David and his men in 1 Samuel 25. The use of pesa in verse 28 of this chapter indicates the importance

attached to such obligations, since this term is the one employed for the transgression of covenants. Hospitality is more than a custom: it is a demonstration of faithfulness to God (Job 31.30-32; Is 58.7).

In the Middle East a friend is always welcome. There is early evidence of a fascinating custom in which two friends would take a piece of stone or wood and split it in two, each keeping one half. Each would write his name on his half and exchange it with his friend. This token of hospitality was often handed down from father to son, and was known as the sumbolon among the Greeks and as the hospitalis tessera among the Romans. To produce the counterpart of one of these pieces would guarantee the very best in hospitality. Such reception of guests was also extended to strangers, supported by the Oriental proverb, 'Every stranger is an invited guest', and even on occasion to enemies. Certain tent-dwelling tribes have the rule that an enemy is completely safe once he has dismounted and touched the rope of a single tent. Perhaps this was the hope entertained by Sisera when he sought asylum in the tent of the Kenite woman, Jael. When she pounded a tent stake through the temples of the sleeping enemy, she violated the rules of hospitality, but affirmed her loyalty to Israel's God.

The reception of a guest would be accompanied by the bowing of heads and bodies (depending on the status of the guest:)

and the exchange of greeting and kisses. Also soon after arrival, shoes would be removed, the feet washed by a servant, and the head anointed with oil.

Water would be offered as a sign of peaceful welcome. Eliezer, Abraham's servant, knew he was welcome at Bethuel's home when his daughter Rebekah said at the well, 'Drink, my Lord,' (Gen 24.17-18), and similar overtones are there when Jesus speaks of a cup of water in Mark 9.41.

And then on to the meal. It is hard to overemphasize that the sharing of food means far more in the East than it does in the West. We can only touch on some points here. In Arabic, the words 'to entertain' and 'to give food' are synonyms and come from the same root, with the expression 'bread and salt' being sacred.

In the Scriptural world we may think of similar situations: Abraham's servant, refusing to eat at Laban's table until he had made known his mission of seeking a wife for Isaac (Gen 24.33), and of Abimelech wishing to confirm his covenant with Isaac when the latter 'made them a feast, and they did eat and drink' (Gen 26.30). When the Gideonites in the early days of the Conquest sought a covenant with Israel, it was said that '...the men partook of their provisions, and did not ask direction from the Lord' (Josh 9.14). Once having entered the covenant, Israel was bound to keep it. We just note in passing the much greater

significance of the last supper Jesus enjoyed with His men, and of His familiar word from heaven to the Church at Laodicea, '...if anyone hear my voice....I will eat with him, and he with Me' (Rev 3.20).

A broken covenant can also be restored by once again eating together, as Jacob and Laban experienced in Genesis 31.53-54, and as Jesus underlined to His fearful and disloyal followers by eating with them on at least three occasions after His resurrection (Lk 24.30, 24.41-43; Jn 21.12-13).

In a tent situation, a stranger would spend the night sleeping, fully clothed, in the first section of the tent. This served as dining area and sleeping quarters for all the men.

Lodging would be arranged differently if he had come to a more built-up area such as a village or a city. He would come to the gate or gate area where the elders would be sitting, making decisions and plans, settling disputes, checking the general comings and goings and chatting about several less weighty matters. I say in passing that this has given me a new understanding of Jesus' familiar word about the gates in Matthew 16.18, 'I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.' Absolutely nothing schemed, plotted, or decided in the 'gates of Hell' will be able to frustrate the relentless forward march of Jesus' church. That's encouraging.

A stranger could spend the night in this gate area, but generally a community guest room was available, cared for by a servant, and served food-wise by the families in the village. This often became the social gathering place in the area, especially when the town had been graced by a guest. Since this room was for men only, a family would have to wait in the gate until someone would come forward with an offer of a home.

Such a home would usually have one all-purpose room, but often would have one raised area set aside for guests and the social side of family life. In larger houses, a room near the front door (so as not to disturb the family) was provided, or a large upper room was set aside for a distinguished guest. Both Elijah and Elisha found lodging in this way with non-Israelite families (1 Kings 17.17ff, 2 Kings 4.8-10): and in the New Testament such a room, belonging to Mary the mother of John Mark, was of great service to the early church, (Mk 14.12-16; Acts 1.13; Acts 12.12). In warmer weather, families would often sleep on the flat rooftops and this place was often given to a guest for the night, as in the case of Saul in 1 Samuel 9.25-26 '...a bed was spread for Saul upon the roof...' or longer, as in the case of Peter who stayed with Simon the tanner (Acts 10.9, 32).

When a host accepts a man to be his guest he thereby agrees at whatever the cost to defend his guest from all possible

enemies during the length of his stay.

In the East it is considered a terrible sin indeed for anybody who has accepted hospitality from a host to then turn against him in any way. Obadiah refers to this in verse seven of his prophecy, 'The men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee...they that eat thy bread have laid a wound under thee....' And David speaks of a similar tragedy in Psalm 41.9, 'Even my bosom friend in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted his head against me....' Jesus of course will later on apply that very passage to His betrayer Judas (Jn 13.18).

A host would accompany a guest to the edge of his property, or to the city gates, or in special cases as far away as the safety of the next stop on the guest's journey (Wright 1953:69-79).

#### CHAPTER FOUR: THE DEEPER LEVEL OF O.T. HOSPITALITY

(‘Go...to the land that I will show you’ Gen 12.1).

We have spent several pages becoming familiar with the ‘terrain’ of hospitality. In a world composed of scattered and isolated communities, travel was limited and often dangerous, and contact therefore comparatively rare. The stranger was often viewed initially with suspicion if not downright hostility. Only in time would this attitude in each community become more ambivalent: when he was still seen as a threat, but also perceived with curiosity as someone who could possibly benefit and improve their world.

Especially in the Semitic cultures of the Middle East a code of etiquette, a way of meeting and treating the stranger, emerged already at an early stage. Very likely for reasons of self-interest the stranger was treated with courtesy and respect, and similar treatment was expected in return. A stranger experiencing openness and friendship in foreign territory would be the best advertisement for further and wider travel (for whatever reasons), and the need for and practice of hospitality would accelerate. What one author asserts for medieval Europe can probably be applied on a much larger scale: ‘...the practice of hospitality...was of immense significance for the development of intercourse and, in particular, of commerce’ (Schrader 1913:819).

The Israelites, a nation descended from Abraham, was one

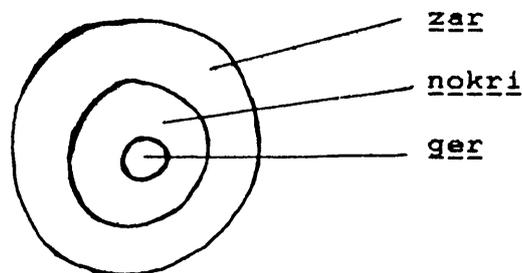
Semitic culture among others, and its life over 1500 years reflected Semitic hospitality patterns very faithfully. But a special people? And was a meal with an Israelite family supposed to be different from a meal with an Egyptian or Assyrian one? And would memories of a stay in an Israelite tent or town be so different from a stay in a Sumerian tent or Philistine town?

Well, that was God's intention. And to see how the hospitality of His people was supposed to be special, was supposed to be their first step to world mission, we need to go beneath the surface. On the surface there was much similarity and overlap between the various cultures, but when we see the 'soil' underneath the surface we will be better able to see why God intended different 'plants' to grow in Palestine.

There are two separate and complementary ways of viewing Scripture: seeing the more specific details, and stepping back to view the large sweeping panorama. I want to approach our next section in this way, by briefly identifying the specific non-Israelites which Israel would meet within her own borders, and then by sketching the larger world in which she continually found herself, and her relation to it. The first part then will call for a beginning word study of the three main Hebrew words used for stranger.

The main Hebrew words for the stranger in Israel's midst are three, and the authors of various dictionaries and encyclopedias are quite agreed that the Authorized, and other, versions have generally made a hash of translation by calling all three 'stranger'. There is considerable overlap, but I do feel that, with careful awareness of the context, we can suggest clear enough differences to distinguish the three. I would prefer alien (or stranger, outsider) as a translation for zar; foreigner (someone born and resident in another country) for nokri, and sojourner (among a number of other possibilities) for ger.

I find it helpful to visualize the meaning of these three in concentric circles, each smaller circle indicating a more limited scope and meaning, and also a shorter distance away from Israel (and her God). Zar is anything strange, nokri that which is strange essentially from a source outside Israel's borders, and ger the stranger 'within her gates'. So let's look at each in more detail.



#### 4.1. zur/zar

'This is the more general term, including both foreigner and stranger' (Cheyne 1907:4814). The word occurs 70 times, 56 as a noun and 14 as an adjective, and means essentially 'to turn aside, deviate, go away.' It is sometimes used

literally, as in the 'retreating waters' which deceive a thirsty traveller when he chances on a dry wadi, but is far more often used in a metaphorical sense of someone who 'distances or removes himself'. L.A. Snijders, who wrote a long article on this word ('The meaning of zar in the OT,' Old Testament Studies, 10 (1954), pp1-154) says it this way,

...the word...suggests (spiritual or intellectual) alienation from one's own milieu, a distancing from a familiar reality (e.g. a religious tradition or a generally recognized mode of life and thought). The wicked forsake the community of their own people, the apostate break with tradition. They have become aliens, and are looked upon by the devout as untrustworthy and dangerous...the general concept takes on the coloration of each specific situation when it is used. The confrontation between what is native and what is alien can lead to conflict... (Snijders 1980:52).

I see the term used mainly in three areas, and will make use of many of Snijders' insights along the way.

#### 4.1.1 In the political field

4.1.1.1 Foreign nations: 'In the words addressed to Yahweh, to their own people, or to other nations, the prophets often use the term zar to designate the enemy, the aggressor, or the occupying power...' (Snijders 1980:53). Such are people of a different nature, who act on entirely different principles and set out to destroy. This meaning of zar is very similar to the Hebrew words for 'usurpers, tyrants', 'violent nations', and 'foreigners in a national sense' -

nokrim. They can even be domestic enemies such as in Hosea 5.7, '...apostacy from Yahweh and the practice of pagan fertility cults have created a new race that imperils the continued existence of Israel. This new race, like a zar, turns against its own people' (Snijders 1980:53).

4.1.1.2. Foreign gods: Since there is a close association of a nation with its gods, it is not surprising that the term zar is used not only for dangerous, hostile nations, but also for the gods who threaten to undermine Israel's faith and life. The Psalms (44.21, 81.10)) speak of an 'outside' god, belonging to an alien nation.

#### 4.1.2 In the religious field

4.1.2.1 Things which do not belong: Here we find zar mainly in the language of the cult, and mainly in the context of warnings against the entry of alien practices into the ritual of worship. Any change or tampering with the ceremony, especially the morning and evening incense-offerings, is seen as zar: deviant and out of place. It carries dangers, as the death of Nadab and Abihu shows (Lev 10.1-2; Num 3.4, 26.61).

4.1.2.2 People who do not belong: 'Zar denotes a person outside the sacred group, for whom a specific area is forbidden territory, or who is not allowed to perform certain precisely defined acts' (Snijders 1980:55). Such a

one is a non-priest, a 'layman' who must not cross the boundaries of the sacred precincts, or perform certain functions. He would constitute a danger to the community if he were, as an outsider, to violate his proper 'distance'.

#### 4.1.3 In the wisdom literature

4.1.3.1 The 'loose' or unchaste woman: She is a common subject in Proverbs (2.16-20, 5.1-23, 22.14, among others) and is usually coupled with the 'foreign' (nokri) woman. It may well be that mainly alien, foreign women are in view who serve as prostitutes, but zar could also include any wife of another man. In any case, it is a woman who has deserted her place in society and constitutes a threat. In the circle of the wise and their disciples, men are warned against associating with such women (CP Prov 23.27).

4.1.3.2 A man who becomes surety for a zar: Proverbs repeatedly cautions against this, since a stranger is clearly someone who does not belong to the family (and family members regulate their affairs privately, without official transactions, Prov 11.15).

In other passages use of the word zar is fluid and needs to be decided by a careful study of the immediate context. And so zar has an amazing range of meanings, from a single 'outsider' to a hostile enemy. But factors invariably present are the ideas of strangeness, distance and menace.

And their source is something or someone who doesn't belong, someone who has stepped out of the norm and now constitutes a threat. In the circle of the wise and their disciples, men are warned against associating with such women (CP Prov 23.27).

#### 4.2 nokri (or ben nekar):

This word occurs 45 times in the OT and is more easy to define, meaning simply 'foreigner'. But considerable difficulties in understanding still remain.

Although zar has a sweeping and comprehensive sense which can apply to Israelite and non-Israelite alike, nokri is more specific. It is quite certain that the term is not applied in the Old Testament to an Israelite, so it is foreign in a higher degree than the zar. Michael Guttman gives us a helpful definition, in the process also distinguishing the nokri from the ger.

The nokri...is only temporarily in the country...(he) maintains the connection with his native country or with the country which he has left. In this he differs from the ger who in reality had also come from afar, but has severed the connection with his former country. While the ger thus seeks to become a member of the new community, the nokri persists in keeping, politically and socially, his former status...If I say: Foreigner, then I have completely defined the stranger in a political and social sense. The ger however is not yet completely defined if I know only that he is a stranger who has joined a new community, for the allegiance may be of different degrees, and so may the rights and duties that result from his new allegiance. (Guttman 1968:1-2).

Since nokri can refer simply to one of another country or race, but also one who represents a nation or people which was often hostile to Israel and given to idolatry and immorality, there runs through-out the OT an attitude of ambivalence or tension towards him.

On the one hand is hostility. This is seen especially in the political context and most so when this context is the scene of warfare. Invariably the word 'nation' in the singular is applied to Israel (although a much more common companion word for Israel is am, 'people'), and the plural 'nations' to the surrounding peoples. The latter usually is used with critical and negative overtones. A contrast between them is a regular feature, especially when Israel is aware that her God also has absolute and exclusive claims on all the nations. This note is strongly sounded in the Psalms and Prophets, but certainly is not absent elsewhere. (Notice an interesting Scripture from Obadiah which shows the use of both zar and nokri: 'In the day that foreigners (nokri) carried away his substance, and strangers (zar) entered into his gates and cast lots upon Jerusalem,' verse 11. (A good study of all Israel's enemies, from the Philistines to the Babylonians, is given in part two of J.E. Payne's The Kingdom of the Lord).

Israel's sense of calling, of uniqueness in the midst of the nations, often led to hostile attitudes toward and warfare with those nations. The song of Deborah (Judg 5) the story

of Samuel and Agag (1 Sam 15.32ff), the cruelties of David to his prisoners (2 Sam 8.2, 12.31), among other stories, illustrate a fairly common attitude; and often behaviour toward enemies goes uncriticized which would come in for heavy censure if on display toward fellow Israelites.

And yet on the other hand, the same pages which are filled with hostility and warfare are also filled with hospitality and open-ness. It seems that great concern for the foreigner existed (or at least was commanded) under the canopy of conflict, and that, if one hand held the sword, the other held items of welcome. That welcome was extended in various ways to foreign slaves (obtained in warfare or by purchase), foreign wives, and especially in the area of commerce. Each of these areas will be expanded on at a later stage.

The nokri or foreigner was not a legal citizen, and therefore did not enjoy the privileges of the law nor its protection. And yet the legal literature of the OT recognized his presence and urged concern for his welfare. This is shown in the four laws in which he is mentioned, laws which are all too often taken to be negative in tone.

4.2.1 The king-law (or 'ruler', as the LXX has it) says that he may not be elected as King, (Deut 17.15). This is sensible since his loyalty would be elsewhere.

4.2.2 The Shemitta-law or the prohibition of demanding of debts, every seventh year. This, the so-called release year, has no bearing on the debts of foreigners (Deut 15.3).

4.2.3 The law of usury or interest says that Israelites and foreigners may mutually loan money to one another on interest. Among Israelites themselves this is forbidden (Deut 23.20-24).

4.2.4 In a ritual precept, meat that is ritually unfit for eating may be sold to the foreigner (Deut 14.21).

Guttmann makes an apt comment on the middle two of these four laws:

The Shemitta and interest laws directly affect the commercial life. From the angle of internal life these two laws appear as unfair exceptions: for the foreign trade, however, they were but the normal basis for a reciprocity through which both parties could secure the safeguarding of their individual interests. The foreigner could not very well be expected, in a year which the Israelites celebrated as a release year, to remit the debt of his Israelitish debtor. Nor could he be expected to loan money to his Israelitish customer without taking interest. If an equal basis for trading...was to be established it could be attained only in this way: that the restrictions of the release year and the law of interest would not be binding on the stranger or the foreigner (Guttman 1968:7). (It is of interest to know that Alexander the Great did not tax the Jews during the release year, knowing their economic burdens during this year were already considerable).

One more comment needs to be made on the identity and status of the nokri. Since he was transient and outside Israel's

legal jurisdiction, what about his safety during his travel or stay? Two answers can be given here. Israel was probably unique in her world in seeing murder (as in the sixth commandment) not only as a sin against the family, but also as a sin against God. Secondly, in a world where the blood-feud and the right of revenge was common (remember Cain and Lamech), later Mosaic legislation annulled this and changed it into a court procedure which left the avenger little to do. So in addition to the unwritten laws of hospitality, already observed above, the foreigner's safety and welfare were guarded in a number of ways.

#### 4.3 gur/ger

We come now to the resident of the smallest, inner circle. He has been the subject of unusual interest, and an unusual number of articles. The article I found most helpful was by Dr. L. Muntingh (Muntingh 1962:534-58) and I'm quite indebted to him in the material which follows.

The word ger occurs in the OT 92 times, the majority of which are in the Pentateuch (21 in Leviticus and 22 in Deuteronomy). There are of course also compound and verbal forms of the same word. The meaning of the basic root is 'to tarry as a sojourner' but there are also a couple of fascinating secondary meanings:

...the important question is whether ger II - subordinate form of grh, 'to attack, strive' and ger III-subordinate form of ygr, 'to be afraid', are independent homonymous roots, or whether possibly an original connection can be established

between these roots, so that the various meanings represent special meanings of the same root (Kellerman 1975:439).

I find it most interesting that there might be an original linguistic connection between the sojourner, someone living in a country not of his birth, and the ideas of hostility and fear. The ger describes one who is not a native citizen of a community and various authors define him with such terms as sojourner, resident alien, immigrant, protected citizen, or naturalized foreigner. W. Robertson Smith's definition of a century ago is still helpful, '...a man of another tribe or district, who, coming to sojourn in a place where he was not strengthened by the presence of his own kind, put himself under the protection of a clan or of a powerful chief' (Smith 1894:75-79).

It is perhaps good to note as well the relativity of the term. It is not ethnic or racial in nature, since it can apply to Israelites as well as non-Israelites, and to Semites as well as non-Semites. Among Egyptians in Egypt would be ger among the same Israelities in Canaan.

The term is applied only in one isolated instance to God Himself. After Jeremiah's grief at his people's idolatry and disobedience, he says, 'Oh that I had in the desert a wayfarer's lodging place (malon) that I might leave my people and go away from them' (Jer 9.2). But his involvement with his people is too strong, and in the face

of drought and foreign threats, he emotionally wonders about God's involvement: 'Oh thou hope of Israel, its saviour in time of trouble, why shouldst thou be like a stranger (ger) in the land, like a wayfarer who turns aside to tarry for a night?' Jeremiah is disturbed by the seeming detachment of God, as if His interests and 'roots' are elsewhere, and pleads for the Lord's full identification and involvement with His people.

Ger is also applied to Israel. Abraham was a ger in the land of Egypt not only, but also in Canaan among the Hittites (Gen 12.10, 23.4). As a sojourner he had no right to own land, but asked for this right so that he might bury Sarah. Isaac was a ger in the land of Abimelech and received his protection (26.1-11). Jacob sojourned with Laban (32.4) and Jacob and Esau sojourned in the land of Canaan (36.6-8). The covenant promise to Abraham (17.7-8) and reiterated in Isaac's blessing upon Jacob (28.1-4) and in God's disclosure to Moses (Ex 6.14) was that He would give to Abraham's descendants 'the Land of Canaan, the land in which they dwelt as ger.'

Another common use of ger applied not only to the patriarchs in Canaan, but also to their descendants' lengthy sojourn of slavery in Egypt. This is foretold in prophecy to Abraham (Gen 15.13) symbolized by Moses' own stay in Midian away from his people, and the consequent naming of his son Gershom (Ex 2.22) and used later in a forceful way by the

Lord to motivate Israel's kindness to the sojourners in her midst (Ex 23.9; Lev 19.34; Duet 10.17-19). Levites, the landless tribe, might settle as ger wherever they found a place or group of people where they could perform their function. This basic meaning of the sojourner applied to Israel persisted in later stages of history and literature, although at times it acquires spiritual overtones (Ps 39.12, 119.19; 1 Chron 29.15). Once again in exile the Israelites are gerim (Ezr 1.2-4), and in Isaiah's vision of the future the wolf becomes the protected citizen of the lamb: (Is 11.6).

But in the great majority of cases the term applies to non-Israelites.

A sojourner is a person who occupies a position between that of the native-born and the foreigner. He has come among a people distinct from him and thus lacks the protection and benefits ordinarily provided by kin and birthplace. His status and privileges derive from the bond of hospitality, in which the guest is inviolable. The ger is everyone who comes travelling and, settling in a strange place for a shorter or longer period, has claims to protection and full sustenance (Mauch 1962:397) (underlining mine).

Following James Barr's suggestion (The Semantics of Biblical Language 1961) that we should recognize the importance of Scriptural statements rather than rely overmuch on isolated Biblical words, I would like to look at the ger in his various relationships and try to identify him by the company he keeps.

4.3.1 His relationship with all Israel (described in a variety of ways). The 'children of the land': When the ger is found in company with someone else, it is not always clear whether similarity or contrast is intended (compare two major types of parallelism in the Psalms). But in this case it is clear. The expression always indicates someone native, born in the land, in contrast to the non-native and non-indigenous ger. The term ezech, 'born in the land' may well have reference to the possession of the soil, since it is borrowed from the image of a tree not transplanted, and so occupying its native soil. In contrast ger is not a land-owner, but is homeless in every way.

And yet, despite contrasting origins, the positions of the ger and the 'children of the land' or natives are remarkably similar. When he and the males in his family are circumcised, they are fully allowed to celebrate the Passover, whereas a foreigner, hired servant, or toshabh could not (Ex 12.43-49, also Num 9.14). Like the children of the land, the ger could offer his fire offerings (Num 15.14-16), was enjoined to fast for the Day of Atonement (Lev 16.29) and would die for the sin of blasphemy (Lev 24.16; Num 15.29-30). When Joshua copied the law of Moses (Josh 8.32-33), both children of the land and ger stood together, an indication to John Bright of the future (Ezek 47.22) when the ger will be as the native born, and will share in the inheritance of Israel. No land distinctions then. He will be 'home'.

A strong emphasis throughout in this pairing is the Lord's protecting hand on the ger: 'You shall have one law for the ger and for the native, for I am the Lord your God.' (Ex 12.49; Lev 24.22 and Num 15.15-16, 29-30). They experienced the same punishment for violations of the law and the same access in worship. But did the law really offer the ger the same positive protection and civil rights?

To this we will need to return at a later point.

4.3.1.2 The 'house (or children) of Israel': The expression 'house of ...' whether attached to Israel, Judah or Ephraim, denotes in the OT entire people as a unity, or as members (children) of one people. Once again the ger is frequently found in their company. We can include in this section the frequent occurrences when the house of Israel is addressed as 'you', in the second person.

The ger is grouped with the house of Israel in a variety of interesting ways. He is, like the Israelites, to bring a burnt-offering or sacrifice only to the door of the tent of meeting (Lev 17.8-10), and is not to bring a blemished animal, drain an animal's blood, or eat it (Lev 17.12-13, 22.18-19). Secondly, he will be stoned, with the children of Israel, if they offer their children to Moloch (Lev 20.2) or hide idols in their heart. (Ezek 14.7-8. If such a person 'comes to a prophet to inquire....I the Lord will answer him myself'). Thirdly, the cities of refuge are

provided also as an escape for the ger in case of unpremeditated murder (Num 35.15).

According to Deuteronomy 26.11 '...you shall rejoice in all the good which the Lord your God has given to you and to your house; you and the Levite, and the ger who is among you.' This happy passage has its flipside warning a bit later: 'And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail...if you obey His commandments...' but, 'the ger who is among you shall mount above you higher and higher, and you shall come down lower and lower' (Deut 28.13,43). It is not clear whether the latter verse indicates economic advancement, or whether the ger is the 'tail' of verse 13 which God uses to punish the head because it has been lifted up in pride, listening only to itself.

4.3.1.3 The gathering of all Israel: The two Hebrew words which help to focus this area are am and qahal. The first means primarily a people (das Volk), with strong overtones of kinship and tribal ties that are the source of cohesiveness and unity. There is an unusual sense of oneness between the individual and the whole of which he is a part, and this whole stretches out to include the past: the ancestors, and the future: the descendants. (Pedersen 1926:46-60. Remarkable then that when Numbers 15.25-26 speaks in this vein, the ger is once again included.

The second word gahal usually refers to such people gathered for a specific purpose, often cultic, but it is also used for the permanent community to which one belongs. An excellent example is 2 Chronicles 30 (especially vs. 25) when Hezekiah, after the fall of the northern kingdom, invited Judah and Israel to come to the Passover, and it is expressly stated that gerim from both places came.

In Isaiah 14.1; Zechariah 8.20-22, etc., we find perhaps the bridge to the later understanding of ger, where it is virtually equivalent to convert or proselyte. Already in the exile, but also after the return, gerim see God's hand in Israel's history and approach Israel, seeking to know and serve her God. They take the initiative in wanting to identify with the 'am, and join in all aspects of the gahal. We can close this section on the ger's relationship to all Israel by noting the comprehensive and all-inclusive references occasionally present. In the fourth commandment everyone and everything is encouraged to rest, and the list is spelled out. And in Moab God renews His covenant with his people, Israel. Standing before the Lord are also the gerim, and numerous friends (Deut 29.10-12), and Deuteronomy 31.12 has the same thrust when the Levites are asked every seventh year to read the entire law to the entire people. The ger is always included.

#### 4.3.2 His relationship with a variety of groups within Israel

4.3.2.1. The Levites: In many respects the distinctions between the ger and the Levite are not very great. Unusual emphasis is laid on the fact that the Levite has 'no portion or inheritance with you', i.e. the other tribes (Num 18.20-24; Deut 14.27-29). He does a lot of travelling and is highly dependent on people (cf Judg 17.7-12). They are asked to respond of course with hospitality but also by a tithe of their produce at the end of every third year (Deut 14.28-29, 26.11-12). This tithe extends to the ger, widow and orphan as well. The Levite is found in company with the ger in other passages and is distinct from him in that Israel is commanded to give the Levites some cities to live in, with surrounding pasture lands (Num 35.1-3).

4.3.2.2 The Laborer: In the Old Testament this can include the manservant, maidservant, hired servant, settler (or squatter: toshab), the hewer of wood and drawer of water. The first two are essentially slaves ('ebed - male, ama - female) which belong to someone else and have no personal freedom. The word is also often used by anyone who sees himself in a lower social position than another. The hewer of wood and drawer of water are in this general class, and are perhaps at the bottom of the social scale. This was Joshua's response to the deception of the Gibeonites in Joshua 9: to spare their lives but put them firmly on the lowest rung of the ladder.

A hired servant (sakir) is personally free, although his lot

is not often better than that of a slave (Job 7.1-2, 14.6). He can come from both the gerim or from the poor section of Israelite society, and could be hired year by year or for three years, according to the only available evidence (Lev 25.53; Is 16.14). The length of his stay was probably a matter of his decision, as was not true for the slave. An Israelite selling himself into slavery would retain his status as ger, and would not become ebed, i.e. he would be dependent upon someone without becoming his property (Lev 25.39-42).

On the role of the toshab in Israel's society there seems to be complete uncertainty and confusion. In Leviticus 25.35 the same Israelite can be both a ger and a toshab ('If your brother becomes poor, and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall maintain him; as a ger and a toshab shall he live with you'). Roland DeVaux and many others feel that his status generally appears less equal, less secure in the land, and less independent than the ger. After all, in Exodus 12.43-49, the foreigner, hired servant (of foreign origin, no doubt) and toshab cannot participate in the Passover whereas the circumcised ger and slave (purchased with money and now a member of the family) can. (Perhaps the word is a later scribal addition to take the place of ger, after the latter had become virtually a proselyte. Or it could refer to his economic status, and the ger more to the legal aspect).

The ger is grouped with all of these and is close in meaning, but yet there are distinguishing features despite these areas of overlap. The gerim are generally included in the covenant promise, and are also the focus of strong warnings by the Lord not to oppress them. Deuteronomy 24.14-15 is a representative passage:

You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brethren or one of the sojourners who are in your land within your towns; you shall give him his hire on the day he earns it, before the sun goes down (for he is poor, and sets his heart upon it): lest he cry against you to the Lord, and it be sin in you (CF. also Lev 19.13).

4.3.2.3 The Needy: Finally, the ger is often grouped in the Old Testament with the widow and the orphan, or with the poor generally. The ger is grouped with the others probably because he is often poor. He has come from another kinship and tribal area, forsaking his own people and property (making himself homeless) and placing himself under Israel's protection voluntarily; or perhaps involuntarily in the case of the Canaanite conquest and occupation. Some cities were destroyed, but many remained, having their land taken away from them. So a new class arose in Canaan which had much in common with the Israelite poor. When these are mentioned together it is hard to know if we are to read contrast or similarity. I would opt for the latter: that Israel was to

show specific kindness to both Israelite and gerim widows and orphans and poor in her midst.

Sulzberger (The Status of Labor in Ancient Israel, 1923) and Robert North (Sociology of the Biblical Jubilee, 1954) suggest a threefold strata in Israelite society: those with land and possessions, those without possessions but still able to support themselves in some way, and those without visible means of support at all. The second group would include the ger, the widow, and the orphan (the latter two also often coming under the protection of a family head), and the third group would include such as the lepers, the maimed, the crippled. We might add the voluntarily poor class of the Levites. The above-named authors contend that beggars were absent in Israel.

The Israelite was commanded to leave something of his harvest, his olives, his vineyard for the needy (Lev 19.10, 23.22; Deut 14.28-29, 26.12-13, and especially 24.19-22), and such commands are repeatedly accompanied by the Lord's concern for justice. Deuteronomy 10.17-19 is typical: 'For the Lord your God...executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the ger, giving him food and clothing...' (also 24.17 and 27.19). The same note is sounded in the Psalms - where the wicked slay the widow, sojourner and father-less, but the Lord protects them (Ps 94.6-7, 146.9) - and comes up over and over again as a major theme in the prophets. The Lord states his own commitment

to the needy, promises blessings to those who reflect his attitudes in their actions, and conveys strong warnings to those failing to do so. Each of these passages is a worthwhile study: Jeremiah 5.5-7, 22.3; Ezekiel 22.7,29; Zechariah 7.10; and Malachi 3.5. There are many others (Sider 1976:all). Oppressors must remember that the Lord is the go'el, the protector, defender, and liberator of the poor, including the widow, the father-less, and the ger.

Before we bring this section to a close, it is well to look at two and possibly three instances where the ger appears to suffer from discrimination, and how Muntingh in his article attempts to answer these.

In Deuteronomy 14.21 he is allowed to eat meat which has died of itself, whereas an Israelite may not. In Leviticus 25.45-48, an Israelite may not remain a slave, whereas a ger could, and would not be set free in the year of Jubilee. In both cases it appears the issue is not social but religious. Israel is a holy, called-apart people belonging to the Lord, says Muntingh, so they cannot be sold into slavery, and must not eat unclean meat; whereas the ger as one who is not native-born is not in the same position. The third instance is David's (1 Chron 22.2) and Solomon's (1 Kings 5.13-14, 9.20-22) use of gerim in the huge labour force needed for building the temple. It does seem that the ger was singled out for this work, but Israelites were also called up (see 1 Sam 8.10-18,; 1 Kings 5.14, and the force of Elisha's

question in 2 Kings 4.13).

It is interesting that this appearance of discrimination is counter-balanced by the ger's envisaged ability to purchase an Israelite slave in Leviticus 25.47, and his 'mounting above you' i.e. the Israelite, in Deuteronomy 28.43. There is a vision here of the whole social order being turned upside down. Eventually his status of proselyte virtually absorbs him into the people of Israel.

So we can now summarize. The occupants of our three concentric circles have been the zar, the nokri and the ger. The middle occupant has been fairly easy to identify although we have noted the tension of seeing such a person as both an enemy (in a situation of war) or a guest (in a situation of trade, for instance). The occupants of the largest and smallest circles have been more elusive, the zar because of his scope, and the ger because of his 'timing'.

The zar's position is slippery because this someone or something strange can refer to so very little or so very much. The zar is 'strange' fire offered on the altar of sacrifice, and it is also a strange or hostile confederation of nations.

The ger's difficulty is in what I call his 'timing', and perhaps this is the reason so many articles are confusing and contradictory about him. There is little agreement

about the presence or absence of his legal, political, and religious status.

Perhaps the reason is that the ger's status is fluid and changing across the canvas of Israel's history. He begins as an outsider, a transplanted one (in contrast to ezech) who lives for voluntary or involuntary reasons among a people where he would not expect the protection and privileges which are associated with blood relationship and place of birth. 'His status and privileges are dependent on the hospitality that has played an important role in the Ancient Near East ever since ancient time' (Kellerman 1975:443).

But Israel's hospitality in the Pentateuch is supposed to give the ger's 'status and privileges' remarkable shape. He is perceived as a member of a social class, similar to the Levites, the widows and the orphans (and not as a 'caste' with its own laws) who is very poor and very dependent, and needs the full protection and privileges of the law. The main reason for his dependence is that he is without property, having come under the protection of an Israel to whom God had already apportioned all the land. The Mosaic legislation repeatedly ensures this protection.

He also has access to Israel's feasts, and must keep its regulations. The only clear barrier erected in the area of worship is that circumcision is necessary for the ger's

participation in the Passover, Israel's focal point of celebrating her deliverance by blood and water from Egypt, and her identity as a set-apart, a holy people. It is probable that the other areas of apparent discrimination are related to this distinction, but the Pentateuch is simply not clear on the place of circumcision in a ger's life and how this affects his status and privileges. Most likely, having come under a family's protection, he would experience in solidarity with them the covenant sign of initiation (but he could also refuse this). But surely the point of the social legislation is to love the ger - toward circumcision and full religious participation, regardless of the haziness of the journey in between. (Another reason for the confusion is that, although I believe the Pentateuch may have been substantially completed before or soon after the conquest, it is very likely that scribes prior to and during the exile made revisions to account for a more contemporary situation. This may explain the instances where material in the Mosaic legislation appears to contradict itself).

We will let Muntingh have the last word: He mentions and illustrates the discrimination present in the Code of Hammurabi (about 17th Century B.C.) and says,

This class difference emphatically did not exist in Israel as it relates to the ger; not as it concerned religious privileges nor the area of civil laws. Pedersen has a good grasp of the truth of the situation: Israel did not make special laws for the ger. To the contrary, both should be judged according to the same principles (Deut 1.16). The Israelite must not oppress the ger because he himself was a ger in Egypt (Ex 23.9).

These repeated warnings serve as evidence that the original differences between Israel and the gerim were more and more removed... (Muntingh 1962:552).

#### 4.4 The Old Testament 'stage'.

Having identified the main non-Israelite pieces on the OT 'chessboard', we can now go on to see the 'flow of the game'.

We start once again in a garden. Already in the first verse of the Bible the God of the heavens made an irreversible commitment to the earth. And although His concern was to create (and all too soon, to re-create) the whole earth, He focused that concern on one specific couple in one specific piece of property. As generous Host and Owner, He leased the garden to Adam and his partner, and told them to reflect His hospitality to their world in ever-widening circles: 'Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it....'

The Satanic intruder helped that first couple to rewrite the lease, tempting them to seek ownership ('you shall be like God, knowing everything...') instead of tenancy, and it all went wrong. But God's purpose remained firm: that men and women and families would respect His ownership willingly, and feel 'at home' with Him. When humankind refused the open hospitality offered by one specific ark, and again asserted their own ownership and hostility at one specific tower, God changed His strategy.

And yet the overall design was the same: that the hospitality of God should be experienced and expressed in one part of the earth, in order that the whole earth might see. The small showcase of the garden in Genesis 1 now becomes the whole land of Palestine of the Genesis 12 promise, and when Jesus finally comes as Abraham's great Seed, He lays claim through his Church, His followers, to the entire earth. Christians do not so much look forward to leaving the earth, as to the prospect of a new heaven and a new earth, where they will enjoy God's hospitality to the full. God's purposes in history deepen, but they also widen as He relentlessly recaptures the world which He once made. The fact of His ownership, as it was in the garden, is now also emphatically applied to the land promised to Abraham and his descendants. God takes great pains to underscore that the land is His, that Israel will care for it and live in it as grateful and dependent hereditary tenants, and that in a real sense she is always in the position of ger. Her calling is always to live as a dependent and needy people, whether unwillingly under a despotic Pharaoh, or willingly under a beneficent Lord.

Notice the clear command of God in Leviticus 25.23: 'The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine; for you are strangers and sojourners with Me,' and the land would need to rest every seventh year. Most often this realization surfaces in the Psalms, when Israel in worship draws very close to the heart of her God: 'Oh Lord, who

shall sojourn in Thy tent? Who shall dwell on Thy holy hill? ...I am but a sojourner (ger) like all my fathers...for Thou alone O Lord, makest me dwell in safety' (Ps 15.1, 119.19, 39.12, 4.8).

And yet God also delights in giving them a place. And the question arises: Why couldn't God, with the entire sweep of the Ancient Near East available to Him, have cultivated for Himself a people on Crete or Cyprus, or in a remote corner of the Arabian peninsula? Why not the Philistines on Crete, or the Nubians along the Nile, or the Sumerians in Ur? And yes, the answer is hospitality.

If Israel is to be the object of and the showcase of His love, she needs to be in a central place where she (and her God) can experience maximum exposure to the nations and also give maximum opportunity to say welcome to those nations. In order that those nations might meet, not Israel's God, but God. It was entirely possible that God placed His people in a geographical position where windows would be easy and walls would be hard.

For most of her history, Israel was in one of the centres of world affairs. The centres of world power, and the struggle for world power, occurred mainly to her northeast and her southwest. And contact between these two centres was invariably through her borders, since the alternatives of sea or desert were difficult if not often impossible. This

contact was mostly of the commerce variety, since Israel was dependent on alien traders.

These foreigners travelled about the country in caravans, and the traffic was very extensive in Palestine. It was a country which 'provided not only an opportunity for traders, but also made possible an easy access to other countries. Palestine was traversed by the most important highways. Characteristic is the expression, "the gates of the people" (Ezek 26.2). Between the caravans and the inhabitants of the country a friendly relation prevailed. Good transit was provided for: cisterns were installed on the highways. Every city provided a large space, usually before the city gates, where the trading took place' (Guttman 1968:5). Bertholet also described the trade routes and the large traffic between Israel and foreign countries, and says, 'Rather must the notion be entirely discarded that the old Israelitish nation had from the beginning been entirely for itself, separated from all nations, and had not contact with strangers' (Bertholet 1896:2-3).

A second main area of contact, and a far less attractive one, was that of warfare. Israel was the unending scene of political alliances and treaties between east and west, and was occasionally a spectator but more usually a participant in conflicts between them. The valley of Megiddo (Armageddon) was the scene of an extraordinary number of crucial battles in ancient history, and said to be 'drenched

with blood'. But we need to see that prior to warfare many foreigners found their way through Israel's borders, and afterwards many stayed in the identity of slaves or prisoners of war.

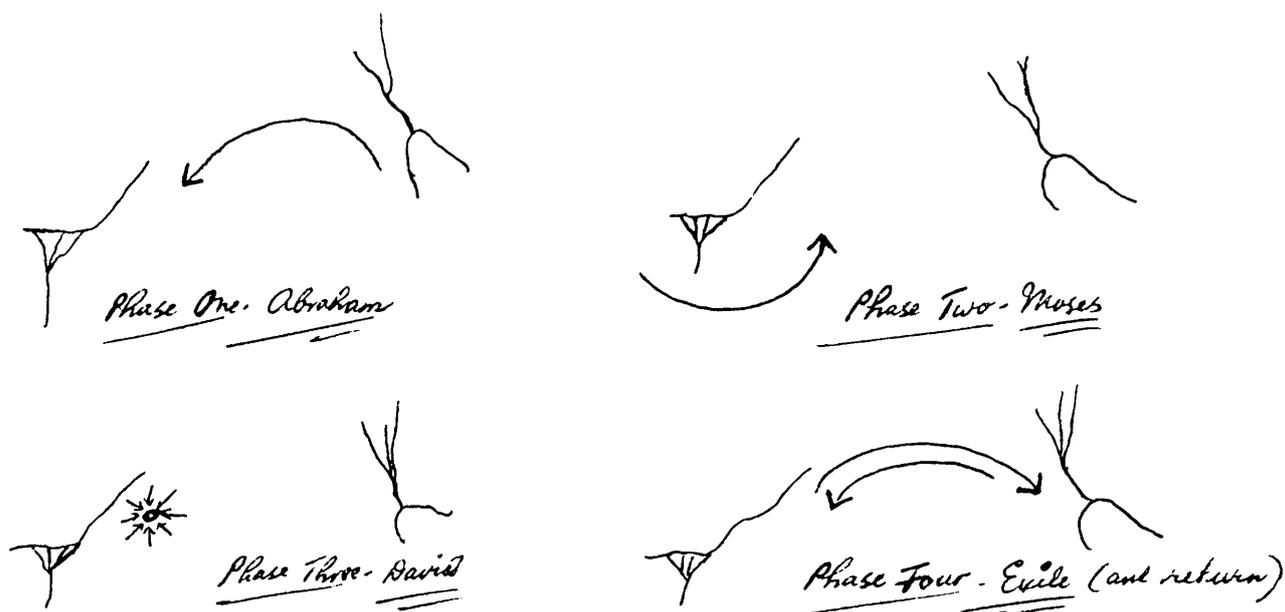
Other reasons also contributed to the presence of foreigners in Israel's midst, the most common one being famine. Of course, this could work two ways, when the famine occurred in Israel, and we think of both Abraham and his descendants' sojourn in Egypt (Gen 12.10, 47.4), as well as Elimelech and his family's journey to Moab, and Elijah's to Zarephath. An Israelite could acquire a foreign wife or a slave, or because of its location and easy access, a foreigner suffering personal distress such as being the victim of bloodguilt, could find his way to the land of God's people.

In any case, the picture of Palestine throughout its history is an incredibly exciting and cosmopolitan one. An amazing mix of people lived in a country only 45 miles from sea to Jordan, and 150 miles from Dan to Beersheba. Palestine was one of the heartbeats of the Ancient Near East, and through the residents there all nations were intended to detect and respond to the heartbeat of God.

In an excellent article on 'homes', the authors say that a galaxy of brilliant archaeologists have piled up information about homes in Palestine since before the dawn of recorded history. One author in the article has called this 'the

most complete and continuous picture of human history available,' and then the authors say, 'Man appeared in Asia before he reached Africa and Europe. The same river valleys, the Tigris-Euphrates and the Nile, which are associated with man's early gropings after God, have also given us records of his earliest homes' (Smith & Miller 1957: 233).

God repeatedly reminded His people of this special purpose, and the place Palestine occupied in that purpose. The following sketch, illustrating Old Testament history in four phases, may help:



4.4.1 Abraham: Considering all that we have said earlier about the stranger, about the security and protection he would experience among his own people and the uncertainty and likely danger he could face should he have to travel, it was an unprecedented step for Abram to voluntarily become one.

He and his family had already left a remarkable advanced civilization (the Sumerian?) and its two story houses in Ur when God's call came. And the call was to leave from somewhere, but not first of all to go somewhere else. Canaan is not mentioned in Genesis 12.1-3. Abram is first called to a relationship, to Someone, and not to somewhere. And he obeys and follows, to a land which 'I will show you'.

The decision he made in Haran was a decision to become a sojourner, a ger, a decision to grow his roots upwards in a familiar relationship, rather than downwards into familiar soil. So God was glad to call him His friend, and all his descendants were glad to call him their father. For 'by faith Abraham was a ger in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise' (Heb 11.9).

In a good recent work on the Old Testament (Clines 1978:29), Dr. J.A. Clines sees the promise to Abraham, a threefold one of posterity, divine-human relationship, and land, as worked out in the rest of the Pentateuch, and achieving partial fulfillment. Posterity is more to the fore-front in Genesis 12-50, the divine-human relationship in Exodus-Leviticus, and the land in Deuteronomy. It struck me as another way of saying: a special people, for a special purpose, in a special place.

In that special place, Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were all

known as gerim, and lived in tents, and in a real sense set a model for all generations to follow. They were utterly dependent on God, but also to a great degree on the people of the land which would one day be 'their own'. Abraham had to buy from the native Hittites a sepulchre to bury Sarah, his wife (Gen 23.1-16).

It is noteworthy that the God Who reveals Himself later on to Moses, the God of the crucial Exodus event, reveals Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So the exodus doesn't begin Israel's story, it is a continuation of the story that got underway with the patriarchs and God's faithfulness to them. Identifying Himself in this way (Ex 3.6,15) seems to carry a warning: 'Moses and all Israel, I will bring you out from here and to the promised land, but watch out where you grow your roots. I am the God of the gerim.'

It is probably here that we should mention the Rechabites (Jer 35), the descendants of Jehonadab, son of Rechab, who allied himself with Jehu against Ahab and Jezebel. These people strongly opposed Canaanite civilization, and tried in the midst of Israel to recover the nomadic ideal by living in tents. Even though the shape of their commitment may be questioned, their faithfulness to their founder and his ideals is highly commended by Jeremiah's God. And although they are not a survival movement, but a reactionary one, Abraham probably would have understood.

4.4.2 Moses: But history goes on. Due to famine, Abraham's descendents find themselves in Egypt and, due to disobedience, they stay there. The initial affluence in Goshen gives way to 430 years of slavery, years in which their identity as a special people slowly erodes. The initiation rite of circumcision and the celebration of the Sabbath fade into disuse, and the Egyptian gods become all too familiar and attractive. But God wants to get His people back to His place, and once again his method is a man, His programme is a person. Moses steps into world history.

The story of his own training, his own sojourn in Midian, his conflict with Pharaoh, and consequent leadership in the magnificent story of liberation is well known. Of special interest for our purpose is Exodus 12.38, which says that a 'mixed multitude also went up with them....' (It is a curiosity that the same Joseph who was so eager to have his bones buried in the land of his fathers, had an Egyptian wife. And so two of the 'respectable' tribes that travelled to the promised land, Ephraim and Manasseh, were actually of mixed blood...). And the summary verses 48-49 spell out who may and who may not participate in the Passover. This is the focal feast of Liberation, and the mixed multitude then, and all non-Israelites after the conquest, were to be loved into all spheres of Israel's social and religious life until they reached in the Passover a 'stop sign'. To fully experience God's acceptance and to worship Him in an

acceptable way, such an 'outsider' would have to experience the cost and the pain of the relationship. Liberation from Egypt had cost death in every single home, albeit in Goshen a substitute death. A non-Israelite would need the bloody and painful reminder in his own flesh that the spilling of blood was necessary to fully belong to God and to His people. (The same 'stop sign' hangs on every true communion table: these elements are only for those who know something about death, both Jesus' death and their own).

So the journey proceeds. At Sinai God in a majestic way gives His people a guideline of how they ought to respond to His liberation. The law is not so much a grim test, given in Goshen as a condition for deliverance, but as a framework for response since it is wrapped in the experience of God's grace. Moses spends six weeks on top of Sinai with the lord and out of this ('the oracles of God' to Moses might be better than 'law') comes much of the material in the Pentateuch. Slowly in the Sinai peninsula God is taking a dispirited collection of individuals, their 'spirits broken by the cruel bondage' (Ex 6.9) and forging a people, a nation that will be ready for the conquest. He is preparing them to make the great change from being involuntary gerim in Egypt to being voluntary gerim in Canaan. The switch from Pharaoh to Yahweh is great, since service to the latter sets people free. But that freedom can be experienced and maintained only within a certain framework, and in the Pentateuch legislation we find just such a framework,

preparing a people for nationhood.

This material speaks of the transient foreigner with whom Israel would be in contact, and encourages concern for him in a small number of sensitive laws. But far more laws deal with those with whom Israel would have far more contact: the foreigners who had severed ties with their past and had become, or would become, sojourners in Israel's midst. The ger's position in Israel 'is absolutely unparalleled in early legal systems, which are usually far from favourable to strangers' (Wiener 1939:2865). Israel is prepared by this generous legislation to hang a welcome sign on every border post, as well as on every city gate.

And yet, sentiments such as these must have sounded rather strange in Canaanite ears: Listen to some of Deuteronomy 7.1-5:

When the Lord your God brings you into the land... and clears away many nations before you, seven nations greater and mightier than yourself...you must utterly destroy them...make no covenant ...show no mercy...and make (no) marriages (And the reason is given:) For they would turn away your sons from following Me, to serve other gods ...So you shall break down their altars, dash in pieces their pillars, hew down their Asherim, and burn their graven images with fire.

This command of course was only partially obeyed.

It simply is not easy to reconcile such material, which occurs frequently in Deuteronomy, with the compassion urged

for the gerim which we find side by side with such passages. Perhaps we can only say that in a national sense, the cup of idolatry and immorality within Canaan was full, and God used the liberation of Israel also in its timing to be an instrument of punishment on these heathen peoples. But for those whose hearts were still not hardened and who had a spark of curiosity about Israel's God, kindness was in order. Rahab and her solitary piece of Jericho wall are a classic case in point.

Before we see in our next phase how this legislation appeared in action after the conquest, we should notice the same tension in Moses himself. The same man whose arms are lifted heavenward until the Amalekites are completely routed (Ex 17.8-13) and who passed on the order that no Ammonite or Moabite (descendants of Lot) should ever enter the assembly of the Lord because they failed to show Israel hospitality (Deut 23.3-4) that same man openly and obviously marries a Cushite, possibly a black woman from the Sudan. He had already a Midianite wife Zipporah, which might have been over-looked as a regrettable mistake, but this marriage is strongly protested by Aaron and Miriam. God casts His vote by striking Miriam, not Moses, with leprosy (Num 12). One author comments on this incident:

Moses' marriage is a dramatic break with Israelite pride and exclusive claims to salvation. It is a symbolic gesture in which God justifies a place for the 'refuse' of society, and recognises them as belonging to His people and therefore as having a claim to Canaan (DeKlerk 1981:11).

And so Israel is asked on the eve of the crossing of the Jordan River to say the 'shema': "The Lord our God is one Lord" (of Deut 6.4) loud and clear, but do so not with Miriam's exclusive attitudes but with her brother's deliberately open ones.

4.4.3 David: R.K. Harrison can help us get underway in this section,

...the Pentateuch is actually a part of a highly organized group of literary material that extends from Genesis to 2 Kings. In this scheme the Torah exercises a fundamentally important role as the epic of nationhood, whose two constituent parts were the patriarchal and exodus sequences. In the former the land of Canaan was promised to the forefathers of Israel and was actually acquired by them to some limited extent. In the latter, the way was opened for their descendants, the true inheritors of the Promised Land, to return and take formal possession of it (Harrison 1969:25).

That is what we have tried to describe so far. And now a special people, tracing their ancestry back to Abraham, and motivated by a special purpose, to move forward as a set-apart, holy people (following the ideal of the 'Law of Holiness', Lev 17-26), is ready to live it out in a special place. That very place, Canaan, suggests that God never meant separation from the world to be confused with isolation from it. His choice of that specific land is of the same spirit with his Son's strong assertion much later that God's people are to be fully in the world, although not its captives or imitators in any sense (Jn 17).

The picture of a united army of thousands over-running Palestine with bugles blaring and swords flashing is hardly an accurate one. Historically, after the dramatic conquest of Jericho, the warfare was a more sporadic and patchwork enterprise. Canaan at the time was made up of many scattered city-states, inhabited by a great variety of peoples who carried on extensive trade with one another. Joshua won some significant victories and exterminated the city 'populaces with the sword, but it seems that this activity was not extensive and hardly thorough. Joshua and Judges speak of further conquest, but each time the local population was made to do forced labour. The Gibeonites spared their lives by deception, but many others were spared quite voluntarily, their property confiscated, and their bodies put to work. The city of Shechem is still in Canaanite hands in Judges 9 and Jebus in Jebusite hands by 2 Samuel 5, when David's general Joab climbed up a water shaft and won for his commander-in-chief a capital city. When a census is taken by Solomon in 2 Chronicles 2.17, the number of all these residents is given. The descendants of the 'mixed multitude' of Exodus 12.38, the Canaanite remnant, the fugitives, and the resident merchants total 153,600 males, about a tenth of the total population.

This is the only stable period in Isarel's history, the only one without a pilgrimage from one end of the near eastern map or the other. For virtually the only time in her history Israel acted and spoke from a position of strength.

They were 'on top'. Such stability has its good points and dangerous points.

On the good side, the stability, peace, prosperity that began to come in David's time was a real source of national consciousness and unity,

When Israel gradually increased by the absorption of other racial elements, and the country upon the whole became Israelitic, the peculiar stamp of the individual tribes would be in part obliterated, and the community within them in any case grow less intensive. Monarchy strengthened the national unity, and the tribal feeling was swallowed up by national consciousness (Pedersen 1926:33).

And since Israel was one, and was strong militarily and politically, contacts with other nations flourished. We find constant reference in the Biblical literature of the period to such people as Doeg the Edomite, Uriah the Hittite, Araunah the Jebusite (after the capture of Jerusalem), and Rahab's descendants dwell in Israel 'to this day' (Josh 6.25). All are gerim in Israel (1 Sam 21.7; 2 Sam 11.6, 24.18). David himself had a bodyguard of foreigners, the Chirethites and Pelethites (2 Sam 15.18). The kings sought to strengthen their position by foreign marriages, and by foreign alliances (Solomon and Hiram, king of Tyre, were 'brothers' 1 Kings 9.13). Those who had fought shoulder to shoulder against a common foe would not be strangers in each other's country.

Commerce also increased and strengthened the exposure to and

inter-action with non-Israelites. Merchants set up resident quarters in a section of Samaria (1 Kings 20.34), and Israelites were allowed the same privilege in such a place as Damascus. Her own trading enterprises carried many of her citizens far beyond her borders: to Damascus, Tyre, Ophir and elsewhere. These experiences taught the Israelites to sympathize with the feelings of a stranger who came to sojourn in their land. So peace and power in the days of the monarchy had a good impact in broadening the Israelite perspective of her world. She could afford to be generous and open to the stranger, an unusual experience for a nation so used to being strangers themselves....

At its very best, the possible grandeur of the monarchy can be seen in the prayers of David and Solomon. In David's farewell prayer, addressed to God after an offering for the temple had been taken, he expressed in a deeply moving way his utter dependence on God,

...all things come from Thee, and of Thy own have we given Thee, and sojourners, as all our fathers were: our days on the earth are like a shadow and there is no abiding...(1 Chron 29.14-15).

And Solomon prays about that temple upon its completion,

Likewise when a foreigner, who is not of Thy people Israel, comes from a far country for the sake of Thy great Name...when he comes and prays toward this house, hear Thou from heaven Thy dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to Thee; in order that all the peoples of the earth may know Thy Name and fear Thee, as do Thy people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by Thy Name (1 Chron 6.32-33).

Is there a better way to express our need, and our gratitude for God's hospitality than in the words of David's prayer? And is there a better way of expressing its purposes for others than in the words of Solomon?

Yet on the whole I would judge that the dangers in this period outweighed the virtues, as subsequent history would show. I cannot shake the sense that God may have viewed this whole period of stability with divine suspicion.

His desire and intention had been that He should grow in this strategic strip of land a showcase people, an unusual people. Unusual in that, in the midst of the nations, all with their national earth-bound gods and their selfish exclusive interests, they, Israel, should throw her roots upwards and outwards. They should receive hospitality from the God of heaven and earth, the God of all nations, and show it to her neighbours in an attitude of service.

The land was a risky gift, and all too soon Israel grew her roots in both directions wrongly. Instead of continuing to look outward, and seeing the land as a means to an end, a showcase of hospitality where surrounding peoples could be introduced to the Host, Israel more and more saw the land as an end in itself. And the holiness which was to be her badge of a distinctive lifestyle, with the land as its setting or medium, spills over to a holy land and within it a holy city and within that a holy building, the temple.

Holiness is becoming detached from people and attached to things, and that with an increasing sense of limitations. And at the centre of it all ruled the king.

It is of considerable interest that the ideas for the king and the temple were not originally divine ideas but seemed to function by divine concession. They constituted 'plan B' which God was still happy to use. But in 1 Samuel 8 the people clamoured for a king, not their God. He was perhaps aware of the dangerously small distance between human royalty, and a consequent attitude of self-sufficiency and pride, and would have preferred to rule some other way. The focus in David's reign was on his outstanding character as the 'man after God's own heart, (and he had certainly grown as such during the many years of fearful sojourning he experienced during the reign of Saul) and yet the census showed how difficult it was for him too to escape the temptations of the office.

The temple too was originally a human and not divine idea, in startling contrast to the divine instructions and detailed oversight which had accompanied the construction of the tabernacle. Howard Snyder in The Problem of Wineskins: Church Structure in a Technological Age (Downers Grove: IVP, 1975) makes a strong case for the fact that God preferred to symbolize His presence in a 'home on wheels', rather than one which conveyed permanence, but also inflexibility.

Another author, T.C. Vriezen, forcefully makes the same point (Vriezen 1967:87-88). (see 2 Samuel 7.6., Cf also Rechabites)

A characteristic feature of Yahweh's essential being found expression in this symbol - something that would be lost, were it to be housed in a building of stone. It is best summed up, probably, in the anti thesis between the static and the dynamic. A temple house would tie Yahweh to the spot, whereas the tabernacle made it possible for him to move about wherever he wished.

Just as the Rechabites refused to live in houses in order not to lose hold of the customs of the patriarchs and so become assimilated to the Canaanites, this protest against building a temple and this insistence on the tabernacle as Yahweh's dwelling-place were plainly a tilt at Canaan....This protest against 'nailing down' the person of Yahweh and turning him into a static entity is one of the most important characteristics of Yahwism, and reflects the vital, self-subsistent, almighty, absolute nature of its God" (Vriezen, 1967:87-88).

So in the centre of Jerusalem were symbols of a heavenly relationship, a temple; and an earthly one, a king, which were both of human origin. The religious and political symbols were second best. And much later, the great Son of David will foretell the utter and complete destruction of the temple one generation after His own 'destruction' and resurrection, and He will make short work of the disciples' question (Acts 1.6) whether David's kingdom was now being restored.

Worse, those same kings used the power of their office to change and worsen the relationship to their own people, but also to the numerous gerim in their midst. Many scattered

Canaanite cities were now captured and the population put into service. Many Israelites lost their inheritance and became poor, so the class of hired servants in Israel increased greatly.

And what were they to do? Well, a powerful nation needs defence, and we may compare the number of armed men mentioned in Deborah's Song in Judges 5.8 (40,000) with that mentioned in David's census in 2 Samuel 24.9 (1,300,000). A second project that consumed huge amounts of manpower was, and here they are together again, the building of the temple commissioned by Kings David and Solomon. Samuel had already warned the people of such servitude in 1 Samuel 8.10-18 and now Saul's successors put it into practice. The main ones called to service were the so-journers in Israel's midst, although Israel also felt the burden (1 Chron 22.2; 1 Kings 9.15-22). And this abuse of power on Solomon's part was the occasion for his downfall: '...all the assembly of Israel came and said to Rehoboam,' "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father"' (1 Kings 12.3-4).

That was the occasion, but the disintegration had set in long before. When Solomon forgot about hospitality, he also forgot about the Host. This is not to suggest a chronology, but to underscore that these two do invariably go together. It is difficult to look outwards if one had forgotten how to look upwards. As is so often said of African heads of

state, 'There's only one thing more difficult than getting into power, and that's staying there', so was it probably true in Solomon's case. Foreign alliances and intermarriages and construction of altars led eventually to a syncretism where God was lost in the shuffle.

He was one option among many. And in his self-preoccupation, Solomon set in motion the crumbling of a united monarchy that was not to stop until the exile.

It is vital to observe that the prophets who begin entering the stage of Israel's history at this time have a tireless two-fold message: look upwards, and look outwards. Look up at the one only God who cannot and will not tolerate rivals, and look out, especially at all the defenceless and needy ones whom he is seeking to help. The two things in the Old Testament that anger God the most are idolatry and social injustice: the failures to get the basic relationships with Him and with others right.

Let's close this phase by citing the forerunner prophets, Elijah and Elisha, as cases in point. Elijah's spectacular struggle on Carmel ('How long do you go limping between two sides? Choose you this day....') is well known, but this same Elijah bypassed all of Israel's widows to stay with one in Zarephath, in the shadow of Jezebel's home town. And Elisha, his successor, ignored all of Israel's lepers to heal Naaman of Syria. Jesus very pointedly uses both

incidents in his first sermon at Nazareth: The Spirit of God is upon Me, and this is the range of my mission. His upward and outward look are exactly in line with these early prophets.

4.4.4 The Exile and Return: It is interesting to observe the contrast between phases one and three, and the similarity between phases two and four. Abraham sojourning in his tents in an agrarian society, and David sitting in his palace in a far more urbanised one, make quite a contrast. But phases two and four, the exodus and the exile, have some fascinating similarities. (And of course, some striking differences, too, as we shall see).

In Genesis a famine was the occasion for seventy-two persons travelling to Egypt. They should have returned to Palestine sooner and eventually God Himself was the engineer of a miraculous return when thousands of men, plus women and children, were set free to return home. In the exile, disobedience was the occasion for two waves of conquest and deportation, Assyria's taking the northern kingdom in 722 B.C. and Babylon taking the southern kingdom in 586 B.C. Again it was God, faithful to His promise, who brought them home in two waves, the 515 return and the 445 return. In the Exodus He used a mighty Egyptian Pharaoh, in the Exile a mighty Persian Cyrus. In both cases a Joshua led them back into the land. Both experiences were intensely spiritual (as liberation theologians do not always fully appreciate

when they focus on the Exodus and ignore the Exile).

But of greatest interest to me is that the same tension which was there preparatory to the first return, is also there in intensified form in anticipation of the second.

The documents begun in the wilderness, such as Leviticus and Deuteronomy, spell out in great detail and side by side the necessity for a distinct and separate and holy people, and the necessity for a selfless and practical kindness to be shown to all non-Israelites. Surrounding peoples need to have something to see in Israel, but they need to be close enough to see.

One possible approach is to see this as a tension of having both a tough mind, knowing how to say no; and of having a tender heart, knowing how to say yes. And at the same time. It is the tension of particularism and universalism. And late in Israel's history we see a tendency in the priests of emphasizing the particular and of the prophets in accenting the universal. It might even be detected in the leanings of the divided kingdom, with northern Israel enamored more by foreign contact and subject to foreign influence (maybe because they were further removed from the 'action' in Jerusalem?) and southern Judah more concerned about the separation that led to isolation. As Martin Luther King observed, why are tough-minded people so often tough-hearted too, and the tender-hearted so often also the tender-minded?

Moses combined both in a healthy way, and the same tension is there if we look at the entire prophetic message. We are speaking essentially of the tension inherent in hospitality.

We shall first look at the emphasis on particularism. A rather lengthy quote by Pedersen can help us see what's involved here,

The Israelites have a specific term, herem, for the sphere which is utterly incompatible with what is sacred, for that which is hostile and alien, and, because incapable of assimilation, must be destroyed....The fact that the greatest contrast to what is holy is the utterly alien, that which is incapable of absorption in the whole, implies that holiness is, to a certain extent, determined by Israel's relation to foreign people...in earlier times, aliens had generally the qualifications for associating themselves with, and being admitted to, the sphere of holiness...and the Israelites had no hesitation in allowing strangers to serve in the royal temple. But when the alien element was utterly hostile, and especially when it clothed itself in its own holiness, as opposed to that of Israel, then a union was impossible, it was herem. It was always a gross defilement of the sanctuary if hostile strangers invaded it....The fierce contest waged in the time of the monarchy between the Israelitish and the alien element in Canaan taught Israel...how difficult it was for them to assimilate the alien element and yet keep it under control and preserve their own selves. This created a tendency to withdraw and surround their own inner life with a shell so as to defend themselves against the alien element. All that was alien now became hostile....This tendency prevailed during and after the exile, when events had established the weakness of Israel in relation to strangers (Pedersen 1937:272-73).

Remembering the clutter of foreign altars all over the country in Solomon's time, the prophets ceaselessly call the people back to one and one only God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and their Redeemer (Is 40-48). They remind the

people that such a holy God insists on a holy people. This is a common theme once again in Isaiah, but also and especially in the 'charter' which Ezekiel prepares for their return (Ezek 40-48, not unlike Leviticus before an earlier 'return' to the same promised land). In Ezekiel the uncircumcised foreigners who kept guard in the temple (2 Kings 11.4ff), and probably performed other services, are from now on to be strictly excluded and replaced by Levites (Ezek 44.6-10, 22). Isaiah stressed the universal aspect more, and Ezekiel the particular, and the messages of these two major prophets differed, but complimented one another.

Walter Zimmerli comments on Ezekiel in this way:

In all this (i.e. the message of Ezekiel) there is the background for the rejection of all that is foreign, which is so clearly discernable in Ezra. ...in the verall description of the 'foreigner' as 'uncircumcised in body and in heart' there is again reflected the beginnings of the exclusive attitude towards all foreigners. In ch. 3.6 Ezekiel himself had spoken very differently of the people of his heathen surroundings (Zimmerli 1979:453-54).

Foreign alliances and foreign women were a snare to Solomon, and these are counselled against. In fact, the inter-marriage which has been generally prohibited in Exodus, but allowed in some circumstances (Deut 21.10-14) and practiced by many, is now radically outlawed in the restored community, Ezra 9-10; Nehemiah 13.23.31. It is interesting too that in the two returning waves, the first should rebuild the temple, in the days of Haggai and Zechariah, and only seventy years later should later exiles rebuild the

wall, in the days of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Malachi. It seems not a sensible, practical order, but a deeply religious one.

The strain of particularism runs very deep and is there in most of the prophets. Israel is suspicious of the unfamiliar and therefore wants to lengthen the distance between itself and the nokri so that the latter becomes the heathen (and they had strong memories of their Assyrian and Babylonian experiences). At the same time, they also shorten the distance between themselves and the already near and familiar gerim who become proselytes, and are absorbed into their society. The Greek translation of the Hebrew sacred writings, the Septuagint, which was completed over a number of years in the third century B.C. tells this same story. The word ger when referring to Israel is usually translated as paroikos, sojourner, whereas it is usually translated as proselutos, proselyte, when referring to a non-Israelite. The words zar and nokri receive translations more often of xenos and alotrios, another, and less often as allogenes, another race, or alophulos another tribe (a favourite use for the Philistines).

But side by side in the exilic writings (including the ones shortly preceding and the ones following the exile) with the particular strain is the universal one. There is no apology in their writings for insisting that one exclusive God can have one inclusive plan. In fact, one God and one world go together.

In this emphasis they recapture the note we already observed in the prayers of David and Solomon, and which comes to the fore very often in the psalms. When we draw close to the heart of God, we find that God has the whole world on His heart (Ps 22.27-28, 67.1-7, 138.4-6, and many others).

The same note again is there in all the prophets, especially Isaiah. They enjoy taking themes such as a special, holy people, a special land, city, temple, king, and giving them a universal and worldwide significance. Yes, Israel is special, as a missionary nation, and someday 'Kings shall see and arise; princes and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the Lord....' This one will say, 'I am the Lord's', another will call himself by the name of Jacob and another will write on his hand, 'The Lord's '...and to Me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear' (Is 49.7, 44.5, 45.23). Yes, the temple is special, but someday it will be a 'house of prayer for all the nations' (Is 56.7). And yes, Someone will sit on David's throne forever.

Other passages highlight in various ways the mighty sweep of Yahweh's reign (Is 2.1-4, 19.18.25; Jer 16.19-21; Mic 4.1-4; Zech 8.20-23 and many others). The Zechariah passage speaks of ten men, out of all languages of the nations, who take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying 'Let us go with you'. And the attraction is not so much Israel as God's faithfulness to Israel. But perhaps the forgotten passage is the first half of the book of Daniel. In a perceptive article on

universalism in Israel's late history, Herbert May says this,

Besides emphasizing the world-wide recognition of the Hebrew God (on the part of Nebuchadnezzar and Darius) the stories in Daniel are veritable tales of the conversion of Gentile kings to the recognition of the uniqueness of God, His universal rule, and the authority of His kingdom (May 1948:104).

How the Lord would bring this about became a matter of considerable debate within later Judaism. Some argued for the human agency of proselytizing, whether by persuasion or by force, which would steadily add to the ranks of God's people. Others argued for a more sudden fulfillment of all these prophecies, whether by God's own intervention or by human force. (In the first we may recognize the seeds of the Pharisee approach of Jesus' day, Mt 23.15; and in the second the non violent approach of the Essenes or the violent one of the Zealots).

Meanwhile, back on the exile and postexile stage of Israel's history....

It must be admitted that the absorption of gerim by Israel, even if done often for safety's sake, was an unusual step and had glimmerings of universalism shining through. The same Nehemiah who so firmly opposed intermarriage also regularly hosted 150 at his table, Jewish officials and 'those from the nations' (even the menu is spelled out, Neh 5.17-19), and the genealogy in chapter seven contains many

non-Israelites in origin. So the quotes that follow, apparently contradictory, all capture an aspect of the truth of this stage in Israel's history,

The principles of Jewish proselytism which admitted a stranger to the covenant, were all revolutionary innovations in the ancient world, where the foreigners had no access to the worship, and no part in the national law (May 1948:100).

and:

The progressive assimilation of the gerim by Israel contributed very much to breaking through the racial circle in which it spontaneously tended to exclude itself, and thus prepares the way for Christian universalism (Leon-Dufour 1973:584),

but also, the emphasis by Ezra on national purity was perverted in later Judaism into the hard exclusiveness which in the Judaizing movement in the early church proved such a hindrance to the free access of Gentile converts (Carson 1980:520).

New Testament issues, and conflicts, are not far away.

Before leaving this section, the deeper level of the special land, we need to make one more geographical observation which again has two sides. Although the coming and going in the Exodus event had been a single story in both directions, both the journey into exile and back to Palestine occurred in two stages. What is more important in preparing God's people for the coming of Abraham's and David's great Son is that the exiles had far less of a 'home' to come home to, and also that a very great number did not go home but made their home elsewhere.

First of all, while they were away in distant Babylon for

seventy years, many original inhabitants stayed in the land of Palestine. They were for various reasons not taken captive. The Assyrian king had planted colonists (2 Kings 17.24ff), and Edomites and others had taken possession of unoccupied settlements. The half breed Samaritans date from this period. And when the exiles return, the general mood is just not the same as it was after the return from Egypt. The conquest of Palestine under the first Joshua led to the united monarchy of David and Solomon, whereas the conquest of his later namesake led to successive waves of foreign intervention and domination relieved only by the reign of the Maccabees. And

Palestine is being settled by an ever growing mass of pagan elements. Important non-Jewish communities arise that govern themselves. Add to that moreover the influence of Roman sovereignty that penetrated into the details of everyday life. The principles regulating the legal relations between Jew and non-Jew were almost entirely brought in from the outside....Instead of the foreigner the stranger, pure and simple, steps into the foreground. His peculiarity is not to be found in the politically or ethnically strange, but in the difference of ethics and creed (Guttmann 1968:19).

Jesus came to His own people, yes, kept alive through Esther and Nehemiah and finally Joseph of Nazareth, but not to His own land. That was firmly in the grip of Roman rule, a rule Jesus did not challenge or threaten by joining the ranks of the Zeolots. He would challenge it in other ways.

The flip side is also true, and a real contrast to the Exodus. After the exile many Jews did not go home. Already

during the monarchy, David and Solomon had sent people into varied parts of Asia and Africa, both as government colonists and administrators, and as private tradesmen (2 Sam 8; 1 Kings 4), but this presence of Israelites did not really gain momentum until the more involuntary situation of the exile. This widespread settlement of Israelites, or Jews, outside Palestine is known as the diaspora or the dispersion.

Although far away from the temple, the exiles probably followed Jeremiah's advice to pray in captivity (Jer 29.7) and constructed meeting places for prayer and study which became the synagogues. Their aversion to idolatry and immorality, their commitment to one God and a high standard of ethics, and their strong family orientation all won them admiration and adherents.

In the days of Jesus, there were perhaps 2 1/2 million Jews in Palestine, 1 million each in the regions of the Euphrates and Nile rivers, and in Asia Minor, and 100,000 in both areas further west: Cyrenaica and Rome. There are records of the diaspora in 150 places outside Palestine (Sanders 1962:854-55). The Hebrew Scriptures were translated in Alexandria into Greek, the lingua franca of the day, and J.A. Sanders is to a considerable extent correct when says,

The dispersion was indeed the vehicle for God's light to the nations (Is 49.6). The early rapid spread of Christianity must ultimately be explained

by the remarkable historical faith of Judaism,  
which knew not time or space (Sanders 1962:856).

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE BEDROCK OF O.T. HOSPITALITY

(‘I love the ger’ Deut 10, 18).

We come at last to the last section of the Old Testament foundations of our study. It will be the shortest, but also perhaps the most important. A solid foundation is absolutely essential, if we are to build a lasting home.

And what is the key to Israel’s hospitality? We’ve seen that she was a people among other peoples in the ancient Near East. That she was given a piece of land between a river and a sea, although encouraged to keep her roots shallow and suitcases packed. We’ve seen the who and the where. But the why of hospitality is what makes this people and this place so special.

The idea of hospitality transcends both words and time, since it finds its source in the heart of God. Heaven itself is described in Scripture as the Father’s house with many abiding places; and the purpose of God has ever been to make the world a place of hospitality and friendliness (Olford 1968:10).

That captures it well. The bedrock, the sure foundation of Israel’s hospitality must lie in the character and intentions of her God. And as a special people in a special land, she must both experience God’s hospitality to her, and then express it to all that intersect her path. Or to put it another way, her assignment is one of reflection: to reflect on God the Host, and then to reflect in practical ways what she learns. We need to look at these two factors

in turn.

### 5.1 Reflecting on God's Character as Host

Strangely enough, a proper understanding of God's hospitality begins with fear, fear in the profound Scriptural sense of deep respect: respect for the absolute and unchallenged and unrivalled creator and sustainer and host of the universe. Pedersen once again expresses this very well,

The divine awfulness pervades the whole of the Old Testament...It is a miracle that His people have heard His voice and yet preserved their lives.... Everything which is associated with what is divine makes the Israelite tremble....The spontaneous awe of God's might goes through man's marrow and bones, and bends his will. And this unreserved submission to Yahweh's will must create blessedness....Yahweh can claim to be feared, because it is a recognition of His greatness....What makes fear a good thing is the consciousness of the Israelite that it is his own God of the Covenant who instills it into him. And if all pride is obliterated in Yahweh's presence, then everything in life is received as a gift from Him; He returns what a man has relinquished....And so the fear of Yahweh leads to the disappearance of all other fear (Pedersen 1926:625-26).

The first thing to get settled is that God is God. He is strong, sovereign, utterly secure. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof (Ps 24.1). He still owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Ps 50.10) and He sits in the heavens and laughs at the intrigues of men and nations and imposter gods. When He decides the time is right, He 'blows upon them, and they wither' (all of Is 40).

This picture of God is a necessary backdrop for an incredible surprise. The same God Who created the heavens and the earth with words, also smiled and pronounced His delight and satisfaction with a seven-fold 'good' and finally 'very good' (Gen 1.31). That God gave Adam and Eve a lease on the garden. He is for us. Instead of becoming an arbitrary tyrant, the God of Scripture reveals Himself not only as Someone with strong hands, but as Someone with a soft heart. His sovereignty is coupled with sensitivity, His greatness with generosity, and His utter security with His ability to identify with and care about such a fallen, stubborn, wandering people as Israel (and ourselves...).

And this 'soft side' of God, this compassion of His as the heavenly Host, serves us in two ways. Because He has chosen to set His love on us, He gives us things with His right hand, and takes things away with His left hand. The God of Scripture has two hands.

And so already Abraham was asked to sacrifice His son, his only son, whom He loved (Gen 22) and Moses prayed, 'Is it not in Thy going with us that we are distinct, I and Thy people' (Ex 53.16), and David too said '...we are strangers before Thee, and sojourners, as all our fathers were...' (1Chron 29.15).

These three had all learned, in their own painful way, the difference between gifts and possessions. They had all

learned what A.W. Tozer in the second chapter of his Pursuit of God calls the 'blessedness of possessing nothing.'

God loves empty-handed people, because those hands He can then fill, and illustrate his reputation as a gracious and generous Host. He is suspicious of those who have received His invitation and then ask if they can bring something. Or worse, if the something they bring has been pinched from His 'house' anyway. Or worse yet, if their fear, their respect for the Host has deteriorated into a fear that He will take away what were, and still are, His possessions. And so God loves empty-handed people.

Pedersen describes this well,

It is implied in the whole relation between God and man in Israel that Yahweh prefers to care for the miserable....Just because He avenges gerim, orphans and widows, a worshipper beseeches him with the words that he is a ger and a toshabh before Yahweh, a wretch with no resort....This is a feature found throughout the Old Testament....Most of all, Yahweh loves nothing that is strong, nothing is so hateful to Him as arrogance....When Yahweh lays low those that exalt themselves and lifts up the weak that take refuge with Him, then His honour swells and He secures kabodh (glory) for Himself (Pedersen 1926:627-29).

Both facets of God's character, His sovereignty and His sensitivity, come together beautifully in a passage in Deuteronomy 10. I will quote the relevant part of that passage, and follow it with observations from a commentary by S.A. Driver.

Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the

heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it; yet the Lord set His heart in love upon your fathers, and chose their descendants after them, you above all other peoples; as at this day....For the Lord your God is God of Gods and Lord of Lords, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing (Deut 10.14-18).

Driver says that the initial words about God are a 'typically Israelite expression about the sole Lordship of Yahweh. He alone is worthy of worship and devotion.' The words are cited for the purpose of 'instilling the elements of awe and wonder in worship'. The phrase 'who is not partial' is

literally 'he does not lift up faces,' a Hebrew idiom for giving special respect to a person....God cannot be corrupted...he is completely impartial and before his court every person has an equal standing...verse 18 turns to the positive aspect of His righteousness. He provides justice for the weak and the defenceless of the community, who too often are deprived of human succor (Driver 1953:401).

So on the bedrock level of Israel's and our understanding and practice of hospitality must be a commitment to magnify God, to get a bigger view of him. He is the Host of the universe, and we must experience His hosting.

## 5.2 Reflecting God's Character as Host

Israel in her history, and especially in the Promised Land, was called upon not only to be on the receiving end of God's hospitality, but also to express it and pass it on. The

whole relationship with her God was intensely personal. This is true even in her laws, as Gerhard Von Rad makes very clear (Von Rad 1953:21).

...in Deuteronomy it is no longer a matter of a 'law', a legal definition. The very composition as personal address gives the whole thing a completely different stamp. 'Remember that then too wast a slave in the land of Egypt...', '...thou shalt not think it hard when thou sendest him away from thee free, '...' and Yahweh thy God will bless thee in all that thou doest'. What place is there for language like that in a law? This is the style used in addressing a 'then' who is present and listening' (Von Rad 1953:21).

Her motivation lies primarily in the calling, the joyful obedience of reflecting God's own character as we have seen. The Deuteronomy passage quoted above says in the next verse, 'Love the sojourner therefore: (for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt)' (Deut 10.19).

Already in this text, but also in a number of others, we see additional motivation to love the sojourner. It is found not only in the character of a strong God Who loves weak people; but also in specific acts in history which God had done to them and for them.

What God had done to them was an experience of absolute desperation and need, allowing more than four centuries of back-breaking and spirit-breaking slavery in Egypt. God 'saw the people of Israel, and God knew their condition' (Ex 2.25). After the Exodus God could say, 'You shall not oppress a sojourner; you know the heart of a sojourner, a ger, for you were gerim in the land of Egypt' (Ex 23.9).

You know the heart....Yea they did! They had lived among strange people, serving a fickle and wicked Pharoah. They knew hard work, the pursuit of security, the fear of arbitrariness, and the pain under oppression. They knew the involuntary life of a ger as Abraham had earlier known the voluntary one. And now in freedom the temptation might be there to be suspicious and fearful of strangers, or oppress them, given the opportunity. But God calls on them to use their experience to inspire love and not revenge. (Similar sentiments are expressed in Lev 25.35-55 and Deut 24.19-22).

But a stronger motivating theme is what God has done for them. Notice two major passages: 'You shall not wrong a ger or oppress him, for you were gerim in the land of Egypt' (Ex 22.21, my underlining). Since the preceding and the following verses are addressed in the singular and this verse in the plural, it seems to suggest that everyone who sees another person opposing the weak and does not help them, thereby is himself reckoned as an oppressor (cf also Lev 19.33-34).

When a ger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. (He) shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt; I am the Lord your God.

When Israel hears this command to 'love the sojourner', she is already a redeemed people - Egypt behind her, and the land flowing with milk and honey in front of her. The Lord, faithful to His promise and oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, had taken His people from bondage. Now they are instructed to entertain strangers in a way fitting those so graciously cared for by their God....They (and we) are guests of the Creator, and as

sojourners within his realm we must be hospitable to fellow travellers (Engelhard 1982:9).

But why such hospitality, such love and openness and acceptance of the ger? Well, solidarity and loyalty among fellow-Israelites was more or less assumed, so the ger was the specific point where the zar, the strange and unfamiliar and threatening, entered into Israel's experience. And whereas her contact with the nokri would be fleeting and transient (and often hostile), her relationship with the non-Israelite ger would be close and constant. The ger was her bridge to the world.

And that relationship, like God's own relationship with her, was not based on self-interest or a calculation of worth, whether of status or possessions, but was based on need. Her attitude and action toward the sojourner needed constant reminding and refreshing by what God had done for her in Egypt. Driver comments very helpfully on Deuteronomy 24.14.

...the Israelites' understanding of God's righteousness governed the laws for the treatment of others. The God Who had saved Israel from slavery, it is inferred, was one Who was the special protector of the poor and the weak in society who lacked the means or the ability to care for themselves. The whole economy existed not for the special benefit of the strong, but for the purpose of supplying need, which meant that special attention must be given to the welfare of the weak. Hence the focus of attention in the law is not on the rights of the strong, but on those of the weak, which the strong are inclined to neglect or deny to their own profit (Driver 1953:476).

And the ger as we have noticed, is a social class within

Israel repeatedly associated with the weak. In the Israelite social structure, the focus was on the father, then in outward moving and somewhat overlapping circles, the father's house, the extended family, and the 'am': the people. The Israelites were one house, one family, one people descended from a common ancestor. The city's main significance was that it gave shelter and a means of social interaction to the family. The fathers or family heads or elders would be the protectors of their respective family interests, and the decision-makers in the city gate. Pedersen asserts that even the monarch always remained an alien institution in the social body of Israel.

And just therein lay the plight of the ger and those with whom he is so often grouped, the widows and the orphans. They had no-one to plead their cause in the city gates, and needed special care and compassion. They were also more helpless than the Israelite gakhir, the hired servants, and less able to plead for favourable terms. This is why the legislation insisted on equality (Deut 1.16 and many others) and warned sternly against injustice (Deut 27.19). By itself the law could be fair, but cold and unfeeling, and that's why the Scriptures alluded to earlier urge that it be wrapped in the warmth of hospitality. 'Thou shalt love the neighbour as thyself.' Or Leviticus 19.17-18, which suggests that the larger covenant community must be inspired by some of the instinctive feeling which connects the family.

So all that is strange or zar to Israel as a people: the nokri to a lesser extent and the ger to a much greater extent, is a test of her faithfulness in mission. As is well known, God's people in the days before Jesus understood mission more in terms of 'coming' than 'going'. One author puts it this way,

Israel's primary mission (or rather her primary assignment in God's mission) was to be the people of God. As long as Israel remained true to her covenant relationship with the Lord, obeying His voice and keeping His commandments, she would be blessed by the Lord and, like a magnet, draw all peoples to Him. This is what is meant by saying that the Old Testament vision of Mission is primarily centripetal (Scott 1980:55).

And this is what we tried to sketch out on preceding pages about the deeper level of Israel's calling to Palestine.

And the nokri and especially the ger became the supreme test: Would Israel shrink back within exclusive and holy walls and suffer from xenophobia, or would she remember her ancestor Abraham, her stay in Egypt, and God's faithfulness to her in her dependence and need, and then embrace the stranger in practical ways, extending healthy philoxenia?

It is perhaps appropriate that our concluding comments on the Genesis-Malachi section should come from a Jewish journal. The author says that, 'Thirty-six times does Scripture warn us to treat the ger, the stranger, in kindly, generous and loving fashion...an unusually high degree of repetition.' He wonders why, and mentions the solution of a

certain Bertinore, that it must refer to the stranger's bad smell, for when you oppress him the odour of oppression will give him away and will make your ill-treatment of him only too obvious. The author reacts to this in this way: 'All of which is likely to leave the reader puzzled and unconvinced.'

The solution follows shortly.

The key lies in Leviticus 19.34. Just as the difficult command to love one's neighbours is rendered comprehensible only by the climatic ending, "as yourself", so the command to love a stranger is climaxed by the reminder, 'For I am God.' Without this, the command has no foundation; the fact that God is God is the final reason for human love. And conversely, the esteem for and love of the stranger is the true touchstone of your fear and love of God....For in the alien the Jew was first and foremost bidden to discover the presence of the redeeming God, and thereby he was to reinforce his bonds with all men (Plaut 1970:215-19).

We need to move on, and meet the Alien in whom we are all 'bidden first and foremost to discover the presence of the redeeming God'.

## SECTION TWO: THE NEW TESTAMENT

## CHAPTER SIX: A GUIDE IS INTRODUCED (THE GOSPELS)

6.1 The Need for a Guide

The living and prophetic voice of God had long since died away. It had been many years since Malachi had spoken of the promise of restored relationships ('...He will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers...') and their urgency ('...lest I come and smite the land with a curse' (Mal 4.6). But early on in Roman rule, more than half the Jews were living outside Palestine in places as far away as China and India, and the population inside had experienced one dominating foreign presence after another. A variety of solutions to Israel's future was on offer, most of these existing in suspicion and tension with each other. Essentially, Israel had forgotten, or in many cases subverted, God's intention that she be a special people in a special place for a special purpose.

6.1.1 Firstly, she had forgotten her own pagan origins (Josh 24.2 'Your fathers...served other gods') and that her status as people derived only from the fact that God had chosen to set His love upon her. Two passages which bring this out beautifully and forcefully are Deuteronomy 4.32-35 and Ezekiel 16.1-14. Both stress God's spontaneous mercy, and clearly lead to the awareness that God had chosen and elected Israel not because of real or potential worth in

Israel, but that she might be a vehicle of God's love to the nations: '...and your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the splendour which I had bestowed upon you, says the Lord God' (Ezek 16.14).

But throughout her history the Tempter was nearby, whispering as he had in the garden: 'Has God really said...surely you can be as wise as he: you have a contribution to make! What is He withholding from you...?' And Israel succumbed, especially in the days of her apparent greatest success and the many years following. And a prophet such as Amos had to come along and say, 'Are you not like the Ethiopians to Me, O people of Israel, says the Lord. Did I not bring up Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir...? You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities' (Amos 9.7, 3.2).

Another way of looking at the same problem is this. A people secure and confident in the fact that her God is special and she is radically dependent on Him, can then be free in hospitality to ask others to meet such a God, and to be captured by Him in order to become like Him and serve him. But if fearful pride comes in, this freeing awareness of God's sovereign choice is deprived of all its force. Israel could not handle the tension of hospitality:

saying no to foreignness, but saying yes to foreigners.

Notice the pride in late Judaism:

The story of the Sinai covenant was revised. God had offered His torah in all (that is, seventy) languages to the peoples of the earth. Only Israel, the most insignificant nation....the very last to whom God had come with His offer...accepted the torah and thus saved God from embarrassment....The torah bestowed upon Israel a particular character which made her practically independent of God. Yahweh, after all, needed Israel....Since the Sinai covenant He is therefore not called "the God of all nations" anymore but only 'God of Israel...' (Bosch 1980:51).

And the fear: although Mosaic legislation had opened the doors firmly and wide to the non-Israelite sojourner or ger, Israel more and more withdrew into herself and said to the ger, 'Become like us' rather than 'Become like our God'. This is also reflected in the LXX translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek in the third century.

It is of great significance for subsequent ages that the LXX never (apart from Job 31.32) translated the Hebrew ger by the corresponding Greek word xenos, but almost always by proselutos (proselyte, convert)....This may be an indication of a change that had already taken place. But it also led to the OT regulations and commandments concerning strangers being applied only to full proselytes in rabbinic Judaism (Bietenhard 1980:689).

And so, frequently people were made proselytes by coercive methods. They were circumcised and enrolled in the Jewish way of life. They frequently adopted Jewish names as additions to or substitutes for their own, and were finally buried with Jews, a privilege denied to the God-fearers who

were buried with the Gentiles. God-fearers, in contrast to proselytes, were not circumcised. Specialness had become an inherent quality, rather than a gift. Jesus' attitude to this is well reflected in Matthew 23.15, '...you make a proselyte twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.'

6.1.2 Secondly, in increasing ways the Israelites had forgotten that, like their ancestor Abraham, they were themselves gerim in the land, and had instead assumed the posture of owners. Even their great hero David had spoken of himself as a sojourner. In a land that was intended to be a special showcase for the nations, Israel more and more 'drew the curtains' and erected 'no trespassing' signs. Instead of pointing up to her sufficient God and extending an open hand to her neighbours, she more and more closed her fist in an attitude of defensiveness and exclusiveness. And that attitude found concrete expression in at least five ways: her land and her city and her temple (with foreigners limited to the outer court), all with her King giving it authority and her laws giving it legitimacy. The attitude of detachment from these gifts of her God had been swallowed up by an attitude of attachment to her possessions.

In face of the impending overthrow of Jerusalem the prophets hammer home the fact that one can appeal neither to the land, the temple, nor Yahweh Himself as a possession. The sovereignty of God's grace is displayed in the fact that Yahweh would not let Himself be tied to 'His' land....This awareness (of God's sovereignty) which will not be bound by blood, soil or tradition, is maintained in the post-exile community, which in addition to the traditional Abraham typology, is mindful also of the recent exile as both judgment and grace

(Schmidt & Schmidt 1967:841).

6.1.3 Thirdly, Israel increasingly failed to understand and therefore to experience and express, the bedrock of God's compassion. She didn't understand the intimate connection between the table of the nations and Abraham's genealogy following one another in Genesis (Gen 11.10-30), and therefore didn't see God's heart for the world.

Well did Ezekiel (as well as a later Son of Man) characterize them as having hard hearts, failing to acknowledge her own beggar status and therefore not seeing the need of sharing the bread with others in the 'neighbourhood'. Her expectation of the Liberator assumed only the dimension of a political saviour who would set her free, and take vengeance upon all her enemies.

All the first century evidence indicates that God's people were not all that special. They were proud of having defined God in a manageable way, deeply fearful underneath that this definition just might be wrong. They lived in a land overrun by Romans north and south, and occupied by half-breed Samaritans in the middle. And they lived with a purpose of a restored past or anticipated future to redress the wrongs of the present. Palestine in 7-6 B.C. was not a hospitable but a hostile place.

## 6.2 The 'Solution' comes on the Scene

Silently and unobtrusively God Himself entered history to reverse the trends, and begin the story of re-creation and restoration. He who had made the universe with majestic words now assumes all the limitations of one specific Jew. That Jew wraps up all God's character, and all of God's intentions, into Himself.

As Mark says in the first verse of his gospel, that's good news. And Matthew and Luke, who borrow from this initial gospel, spell it out. Jesus is both the second man, the second Adam, and also the true Son of Abraham. As Adam's Son He too is given a lease on his Father's world, but in a second garden chooses voluntarily to honour the lease and to do His Father's will. Adam, who had failed in one garden, and Jesus, who succeeded in another, are at the beginning and end of Luke's genealogy in chapter three. And Matthew, writing mainly to a Jewish audience, traces Jesus' ancestry back to Abraham in his genealogy in chapter one. Abraham was a true ger, a true sojourner, so that his descendants might be a true host in the land promised to them (Gen 15.13).

This is the approach I wish to take with Jesus and the Gospels: to see Him as both history's most needed (and its most unwelcome:) Guest, and at the same time as its most gracious Host. And I want to explore these two complementary sides of Jesus' character and mission in the

same order as our studies of Adam, Abraham and their descendants. If we saw God's people from a cultural, then underneath to a 'geographical', and then at bottom to a deeply spiritual level, I want to study God's Person in the same way.

We'll look at His entry into first century culture as a Guest. His radically new perception of 'geography' as a Host, and then the driving motivation underneath it all. His journey and Israel's journey are similar in many ways, since God's one covenant story continues. But they are also very different since Jesus came to set a new covenant phase in motion. As we will see, Israel needed to build a house of hospitality down to solid foundations, but now in the new covenant we need to build a similar house up, because our mission is the whole earth.

6.2.1 Jesus as Guest: After many years without direct revelation, years of 'empty places at the dinner table', it is noteworthy that Zechariah should start his prophecy after John's birth (and after his own symbolic dumbness and silence?) with these words, 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people...' (Lk 1.68). Jesus had, according to the great kenosis passage in Philippians 2.5-11, emptied Himself of all divine claims and rights, and come in the flesh, in the form of a servant.

He had come to identify, and to do so as fully as possible.

And this meant that He should experience our status of stranger in the earth, with all the dependency and uncertainty involved in that choice.

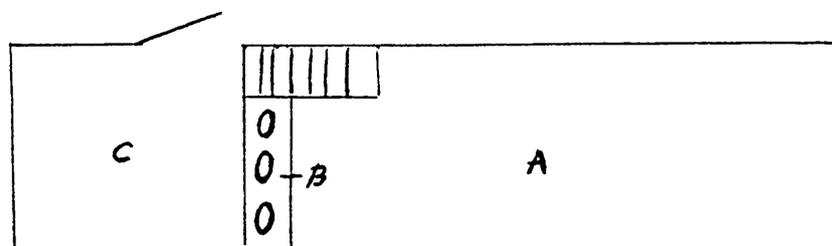
6.2.1.1 He was born in someone else's lodgings. Already there at the very start, God's decision for smallness and weakness was underlined by sending His Son to start life not as a fullgrown adult, but as a single cell. The surroundings of the birth, after His parents spent close to nine months under the cloud of illegitimacy, was also inauspicious. Kenneth Bailey has suggested a very persuasive new scenario for Jesus' birth, based on the culture within which the birth took place (Bailey 1979:201-17).

Bailey says that Jesus was born in a private home, that the 'inn' refers to the guest room of the house, that the 'stable' was the part of the house where animals were brought in at night. He draws these views from a thorough understanding of Palestinian culture. He notes at least five details in Luke 2.1-7 (Mary and Joseph 'going up' to Bethlehem, the 'house' of David, the custom of swaddling infants etc.) which show Luke's familiarity with that culture, and suggests that a long time may have transpired between the young couple's arrival and the birth.

Joseph shouldn't have had a hard time finding a place to stay. (An Arab friend of Bailey was so surprised at this

that it triggered the latter's new look at the whole narrative). Joseph was in his home-town and would have received hospitality from relatives, or at the least, on the strength of his Davidic connection: The word translated 'inn' must mean 'guestroom', Bailey suggests, because the same word kataluma means exactly that in Luke 22.11 and Mark 14.4 and when Luke wants to use 'inn' he has the word pandoxeion available in Luke 10.34. A man would have insulted his family by going to such an inn, and besides, since Bethlehem was not in or near a major highway, it is unlikely that this small village had such a place available.

Peasant houses were at that time usually one-room structures (Mt 5.15, where one lamp gives light 'to all who are in the house'), with a small area at one end about four feet lower. This is where the family cow or donkey spent the night (see the point of the story in Lk 13.15). Mangers were troughs built into the floor of the upper level near the animal area.



- A. Living area for the family (the Arabic 'mastaby')
- B. Mangers built into the floor for feeding the animals (mostly at night)

C. Small area reserved for animals, four feet or so lower than A  
Bailey cites numerous photographs and scale drawings by Gustaf Dalmann (whom he cites as one of the two leading twentieth century authorities on Palestinian life and the NT, along with E.F. Bishop) - drawings of Palestinian houses which confirm this arrangement. Also uncovered are many homes with an adjoining guestroom, and when the size of the guestroom is not infrequently half of the entire house, we have a strong statement about hospitality. Yet Dalmann himself opts for the traditional understanding of the birth since, he says, the lack of privacy would have been 'unspeakably painful'. But the pain was more likely that of a German scholar and not that of a Palestinian peasant family of Jesus' day or ours.

Bailey reconstructs a cultural understanding as follows:

'And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger.'

The original reader instinctively thinks,

'Manger...oh...they are in the family room. Why not the guest room?'

The author instinctively replies,

'Because there was no place for them in the guest room' (someone was already staying there).

And the reader concludes,

'Oh, yes...well, the family room is more

appropriate anyway' (Bailey 1979-213).

I find this approach outlining Jesus' very first experience as a Guest, and that in a peasant home and not even in the guest room, a very persuasive and satisfying one.

Soon after His birth, Jesus' family is warned about a mad king, and the baby and his parents experience refugee status in faraway Egypt. And the story of Israel is replayed: "Out of Egypt have I called my Son (Mt 2.15).

6.2.1.2 Jesus' alien status, His dependency and need as a Guest, continued in His adult career. After His identifying baptism in the Jordan (by a startled John who thought the roles should have been reversed), He hears the affirming words of His Father, quoting from Isaiah 42.1 and Psalm 2. He needs to experience Servant status before ascending to King status. He needs to experience the uncertainty and likely rejection of a Guest before assuming the all-embracing mantle of Host. But He is sent into the wilderness. There He battles the Enemy not with divine resources available to Him alone, but with human resources available to all of us. Man shall not live by bread alone, He says, but He lives and survives on Bread only available at the Father's table. It is as a guest at that heavenly table, dining on Moses, David and the prophets, that one finds strength for warfare.

When Jesus launches out into His public ministry, He

experiences over and over the poignant words of John, '...the world knew him not. He came to His own home, and His own people received Him not' (Jn 1.10-11). It seems to me that this text refers mainly, if not only, to the historical lack of hospitality which Jesus experienced and not to a later 'receiving Him by faith' as common in contemporary evangelistic usage. The New Testament does not speak of "receiving Jesus", but only of believing in Him, and then receiving His Spirit.

In His first sermon of Nazareth, He experienced quite a response, although it was a decidedly negative one (Lk 4.16-30) and He would experience here in His home rejection in all three circles of His own house, His own kin or extended family, and His own country (Mk 6.4). As an itinerant preacher and miracle worker He was constantly dependent on the hospitality of others, and could offer potential disciples very little in the way of lodging: 'Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head' (Lk 9.58). Even as He had started His life in a 'borrowed' manger, so He would end it in a borrowed grave (Is 53.9; Lk 23.50-53).

So far the Guest picture we have drawn is a somewhat dark and negative one. There is also another side. He needed hospitality, but also was often offered it and enjoyed it. The first wedding at Cana was surely not His last, and there was substance to the report that, 'The Son of Man has come

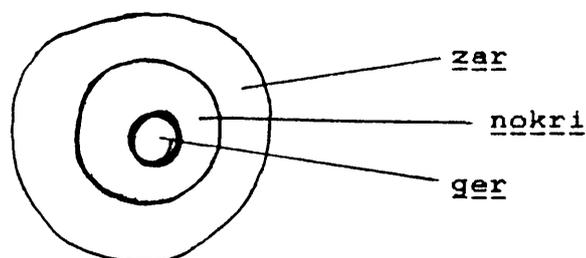
eating and drinking; and you say, "Behold, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners"' (Lk 7.34). Jesus enjoyed the Bethany retreat with Lazarus and his sisters, and meals with Levi and his friends (Mk 2.15), Simon the leper (Mk 14.3), Zaccheus (Lk 19.1-10), and Simon the Pharisee (Lk 7.36-50), even though the latter failed to extend the typical courtesies of providing a kiss of welcome, water for the feet, or oil for the head (verses 44-46).

And in that story lies a clue. A woman from the outside, not normally invited to Simon's parties, provided exactly what Simon as host had failed to provide. Since Jesus had deliberately deprived Himself of self-sufficiency and independence, and thrown himself totally on the Father's resources, others in a similar position could identify with him and were attracted to Him. 'The common people heard Him gladly.' As sojourners in so many ways on the earth, they could and often would more readily look to God for protection and provision. And Jesus was one of them.

Luke especially, the only Gentile and only medical author in Scripture, is very sensitive to the wholeness of people whether spiritual, social or physical, and to the factors that retard or deprive people from becoming whole. He seems to suggest that status and power in first century Palestine would belong most of all to an adult male Jew in good health and good social standing. With these five characteristics

one could be part of the 'in-crowd', make and enforce the rules and effectively play host. As the true Host, God would be offended by such pride and pretension and look for dependent and helpless guests. And so Luke focuses his gospel on children, on women, on Gentiles, on those who are sick and those who are social outsiders. It is a Gospel for those outside the door, knocking anxiously and waiting to get in. (A similar section in Mark picks up the same theme: 4.35-6.6 with its Gentile demoniac, hemophiliac and aged woman, and Jairus' little daughter).

And so, despite Zechariah's welcoming prophecy, the weight of His descent from Israel's greatest king, and the enthusiastic commitment of some, Jesus spent most of His life as a guest and an outsider among His own people. He absorbed in Himself every phase of that circle which the 'true Israelite', the one in position and influence, would use to put distance between himself and all others:



Jesus was zar, an alien and therefore strange and threatening. He had 'come from God and was going back to God' (Jn 17.3) and no-one ever fully understood. As often as not as a guest He was watched and analyzed rather than enjoyed.

He was also the nokri, the temporary stranger whose presence fascinated some but angered others because He upset the written and unwritten 'rules of the house'. Finally, He was declared an enemy and His elimination planned because His nokri visit threatened the peace and security of the house. He appeared to have a stronger loyalty to 'another country.' But He was also the ger, the sojourner who professed His deep love for God's people, said 'Salvation is from the Jews' (Jn 4.22), and attached Himself to their history. He spoke of God as His Father, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as His ancestors and authority. Yet in their attempt to assimilate and absorb this Sojourner, to make of Him too a convert and a proselutos, to enlist Him in their cause, they failed completely. He fulfilled their expectations in some ways, but disappointed them in so many others....

And when they, the Jewish leaders, decided they must get rid of this troublesome Guest (in a religious and political alliance: '...The Pharisees went out, and immediately held counsel with the Herodians against him, how to destroy Him' Mk 3.6). He became rather rude as a Guest and started some incredibly abrasive talk about 'plundering the house': 'But no-one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man; then indeed he may plunder his house' (Mk 3.27). Now that's a rather rude way for a guest to talk, and behave. But Jesus was also the Host. Let's look at this facet of Jesus' character and mission, also as it deeply involves a new perspective on

'geography'.

6.2.2 Jesus as Host: God's people before Jesus' coming had already been very concerned about the divine 'guest list'. 'Oh Lord, who shall sojourn in Thy tent? Who shall dwell in Thy holy hill?' and 'Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in His holy place' (Ps 15.1, 24.3)?

At the top of the guest list had been Abraham, and God had also chosen to set His love on his descendants. An awesome privilege and experience, to have the living God prepare a table before them in the presence of their enemies, their heads anointed with oil, their cups running over...(Ps 23.5). But also an awesome challenge to be given a home in the midst of the nations, and to always be on the lookout for others to join the banquet celebration and to meet the Host.

Israel had failed. She had withdrawn the welcome mat and barricaded herself behind a national door and many shuttered windows of ethnic distinctiveness and superiority.

6.2.2.1 Notice first the judgment on inhospitality. As divine host come into Israel's midst, Jesus audaciously loosened the boards, removed the nails, and opened the windows of the stuffy house in which the Jews had barricaded themselves. He loosened their five-fold 'grip' so that He the Jew could once again extend an open hand to the nations:

1) their special land, 'therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and given to a nation producing the fruits of it' (Mt 21.43). 2) their special city, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you. How often would I have gathered your children together...and you would not. Behold, your house is forsaken...' (Lk 13.34-35). 3) their special temple, 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up....He spoke of the temple of His Body' (Jn 2.19-21, also Mk 13.2). We anticipate our next chapter by quoting E.G. Selwyn on the profound change that happened here,

Jesus, by a deliberate and public act, had condemned the profanation of the Jewish temple and asserted its true purpose to be a centre of worship for all peoples; He had, in language of high paradox, claimed authority to supercede the visible temple built of stone by a different embodiment of God's presence, namely his body, which was to be offered as a sacrifice for the world's purification and the feeding of His disciples, who would thus come themselves to constitute His body in another sense...the transfer of the term 'house of God' from a building to a community of people was the work of Jesus Himself, and the meaning of these utterances only gradually dawned in the mind of the church (Selwyn 1947:286-87).

We'll try to bring this excellent and pregnant quote to birth in the next chapter. 4) Their special king: 'Are you the King of the Jews?', asked Pilate, and Jesus said to Him, 'You have said so' (Mt 27.11); and so Jesus saw Himself as the fulfilment of all Davidic hopes and aspirations, and 5) their torah, their law: 'Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets, I have come not to abolish

them but to fulfil them....You shall love the Lord your God...and your neighbours....There is no other commandment greater than these' (Mt 5.17; Mk 12.28-31). The king takes the people's charter and gives it the freeing character of one great commandment with two sides: love for one God and love for all neighbours, instead of the Pharisaic law expanded with its 623 limitations, designed to limit and control God's people.

6.2.2.2 Notice too His gracious hospitality. a) So often the banquet and judgment pictures go together; When a man attending a dinner party with Jesus exclaimed, 'Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God:' Jesus responded in typical parable form with the story of the wide-open invitation, the variety of excuses, the resort to the highways and byways in order that 'my house may be filled', and the stinging conclusion, 'For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet' (Lk 14.15-24). A similar thought is contained in Matthew 8.11-12, 'I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness....'

But more surprising than the absence on the guest list are the 'presences'. Jesus delighted in telling banquet parables where He is alongside the Father or in his place as host, and where the name-cards are a total surprise.

Matthew 22.1-14; Luke 12.35-37 and 14.7-11, 12-14 tell such stories. The invitations are not confined or restricted, but are almost recklessly open. They are open to those who have little to bring in the way of status, influence and connections. Those who have little to bring in fact except themselves, and a deep appreciation of the Host.

This all takes place in a society where the banquet was a rare and very special occasion because of the generally sparse diet and the widespread poverty. Hospitality was limited to fellow Jews, with the guest's prestige carefully acknowledged in the seating arrangement, and the meal not started until all were present. And what if a stranger should 'crash the party' or sneak in the back door? One author describes the results.

Houses were made unclean if strangers entered them and poked about, strangers who were suspect of not observing impurity taboos...probably no visitor was offended when he observed his host and his family turning out the house and washing all the vessels susceptible to 'uncleanness', or sending some to be immersed in an immersion pool the moment a guest's back was turned and before he had reached the corner of the street. Nothing personal, you understand...(Derrett 1973:129).

b) Jesus portrays Himself as Host not only in the parables, but also in dramatic miracles. He does this in the noisy drama of a supper for 5000 (Jn 6.1-15), as well as in the quiet drama of a breakfast for seven by a lakeside (Jn 21.9-14); both in the daytime countryside (Mk 6.8), and in a night-time village of Emmaus (Lk 24.29-32). The feeding of

the five thousand is the only miracle selected for inclusion by all four Gospel authors. I'm especially struck with Mark's account of the two feedings, in 6.30-44 and 8.1-10.

The two feedings are similar in many ways: the great and basic need, the response of Jesus (and His disciples), and the overflow satisfaction on the part of the guests. But the differences are more striking. In the first feeding, Jesus sees the crowd as sheep without a shepherd, seats them on green grass in neat companies, and feeds them so that twelve baskets remain. In the second, the sheep reference is missing, and the crowd is in a desert place without green grass or neat companies. This time seven baskets remain. In a later conversation (Mk 8.14-21), Jesus asks the disciples specifically about the number of baskets of broken pieces which were taken up after each feeding, and when they respond with 'twelve' and 'seven', He says, 'Do you not yet understand?' One possible conclusion is that they were supposed to understand Jesus' complete ability and intention to meet all Jewish (first feeding) and all Gentile (second feeding) needs. Even the word for baskets in the second feeding refers to a container which a good Jew would not use. Jesus is desirous of being host to the needs of the entire world - and what follows in Mark is the critical Caesaria Philippi conversation about His identity, and with it the firm resolve to take the pathway of suffering to Jerusalem.

c) It is there in Jerusalem that the greatest gift of a Host takes place. The banquet stories and the feeding events merely foreshadow this. Once again Mark tells the story with austere beauty.

In Mark 14.3-9 Jesus is guest at Simon the leper's house, and a woman (the Mary of John 12?) takes an alabaster jar with ointment worth a year's wages, breaks the jar's narrow neck and pours the contents over Jesus' head. A little later in the same week Jesus attends another supper, in celebration of the Passover feast, but this time as Host. He breaks bread and pours wine (the same words for break and pour are used as in the woman's act of love at Simon's house) and refers these symbols of death to Himself. Jesus,

as oriental hospitality requires in extreme cases, crowns His service by redeeming His guests with His own life (Mk 10.45) giving Himself to His guests as offering in a way which surpasses all human comprehension. What hospitality can be and can achieve is thus fulfilled in all its greatness, and its true meaning is brought to light (Stahlin 1967:25).

In Mark's coupling of these two suppers, I believe we are to see parallels. Judas' reaction to the broken alabaster jar is, 'Why this waste?', whereas Jesus sees it as something of beauty. And so with the later broken bread and poured out wine: to Judas the death of Jesus will be a political waste, but only to the true, the invited guests, will it be something of great wonder and beauty. Only they will understand the adjective in Good Friday.

6.2.3 The Bedrock of Jesus' Hospitality. We have seen in brief overview, how Jesus spoke and acted with the humility and dependence and helplessness of a Guest, living in first century Palestine from borrowed guest room to borrowed gravesite with the house of friends (and often the open sky) in between. He was a zar, nokri and ger wrapped up in one; come 'from a far country'.

And yet at the same time that 'far country' (and its perspective not horizontal and outward but vertical and downward) was a colonial power with Palestine, and Rome too, as its colonies. Jesus also spoke and acted as Ambassador and Host, in His parables and His deeds and finally at an empty cross and empty tomb. He was citizen of another realm, and laws of sin and death held no jurisdiction. I would summarize the bedrock, the deepest layer of Jesus' hospitality, in this way. He wrapped up the roles of Guest and Host into one, into Himself. Since during His sojourn on earth he was the perfect Guest of heaven, He could be perfect Host on earth. Since He lived in a relationship of fear (an awesome and respectful intimacy with His Father), He did not need to fear anyone on earth. Since God gave Him all He needed, there was nothing earth could take away. His attachment to His Father led to a detachment from all the supposedly permanent institutions of earth, including all religious ones. God opened the heavens twice to confirm His love, although His 'layman' Son never saw the inside of the Holy of Holies. And since Jesus resolved to do nothing

without God, He could do everything for God.

Since He insisted in more than thirty years of choices, on living in the centre of One Father's hospitality, He was utterly secure enough to extend hospitality to all people.

I want to document that a bit more in two areas: Jesus' philoxenia to His countrymen generally, and to His disciples specifically.

6.2.3.1 Shown to the many. The word philoxenia means love for the stranger, so what Jesus had to share as an earthly Guest, and to give as a heavenly Host, could be experienced only by those who saw themselves as strangers. 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners,' 'For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost' (Mk 2.17; Lk 19, 10).

Now it is well known that drunkards are not ultimately helped by either their fellow drunkards or by brief visits accompanied by brief handouts coming from the outside. They need someone close enough to have compassion, to suffer with them (not sympathy, which is rather a helpless pity, even though it is a similar word in the Greek as compassion is in the Latin), and yet someone removed enough to really help them. They need someone with compassion and authority: the ability to do something.

Jesus was a marvelous mixture of both. And he extended this to all who were in need, not only to the marginal and oppressed. It is interesting that Luke couples His ministry to the 'down and out' with that to the 'up and out' (Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus in Lk 18.35-19, 10), and John does the same with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman. In these John stories we see how Jesus at bedrock level combined all roles into His own Person.

In the third chapter of John's Gospel, Nicodemus had several questions ready for the troublesome guest from lowly Nazareth. But before He could find his stride, it was the guest who was asking authoritative questions and putting Jerusalem on the defensive. And yet compassion and gentleness characterize the whole talk. Nicodemus responds to the man even though he finds the message difficult. He will later defend Jesus before the Sanhedrin, and assist in his burial.

The next story illustrates the same truths. In the first part Jesus starts by saying 'I am a Guest. I need you. Please give me a drink' (Jn 4.7-15), proceeds to the next stage by calmly asserting, 'I am Heaven's representative, your Host. You need me. Go, call your husband, and come here' (vs 16-25) and moves to a conclusion filled with authority and compassion, 'I who speak to you am He. There's only one way to the Father. And your whole family and city need to know' (vs 26-42).

His message was narrow in truth and wide in compassion, and this 'wideness' took in far more people than the first century was prepared to include. Jesus' inclusive circle was far larger than the circles drawn by diligent countrymen, especially those who were in the position to draw circles.

At His inaugural sermon in hometown Nazareth, where He was a guest preacher, He read from Isaiah 61.1-2 and not only applied it to Himself, but deliberately stopped short of the favourite Jewish text, '...and to proclaim the day of vengeance of our God.' As Jeremias has argued, this reaction of supposed 'surprise' is much better translated as 'shock' or 'great upset', since the word has flexible meanings. They were shocked that He spoke of grace only, omitting any mention of vengeance, and then had the audacity to back it up with Israel's prophets Elijah and Elisha singling out pagan widows and lepers for favourable treatment.

Jesus followed in the steps of these two prophets by His hospitality to those who were so often kept well away from the door of status and privilege. He had a heart for hoi ptochoi whether the poor in spirit of Matthew or the more inclusive poor of Luke. The word is found only on His lips in the Gospels. Poverty before God and before men are often related. As Jeremias says, 'Clearly then the term hoi ptochoi refers to those who cannot defend themselves, the

desperate, the hopeless, and those who are oppressed'  
(Jeremias 1973:?).

Jesus is found often in the company of such social outcasts as lepers, and in association with 'sinners'. The word would be defined by the religious status quo as, more broadly, all those who neglected the study and strict observance of the law (Jn 7.49): and more narrowly as all those who because of their way of life were shunned by ordinary respectable people. The classic and favourite examples were the harlots and the tax collectors.

But at least many of these were Jews...and Jesus' circle stretched still wider to include even enemies. Samaritans were favourite subjects of parables and healing (think of the grateful leper in Lk 17.18 who was 'allogenes', of another nation or people') and Greeks and Romans interacted with Him freely (Jn 12.20-21; Mt 8.5-13 'I am not worthy to have You come under my roof', etc).

Two authors summarize. 'Adulterers, brothel-keepers, tax collectors, flatterers, informers. These people were the poor ones who needed pity, mercy, sympathy. They were the ones who labour and are heavy laden, the sick who needed a physician. These were the targets of the good news of Jesus' (Jeremias 1973:?).

And,

Jesus destroyed all human definitions of community and solidarity. In doing so, He included at least three groups of people who were normally excluded. First, the useless ones: the blind, the lame, and especially the lepers....Secondly the traitors of the nation and the exploiters, the universally hated tax collectors. Thirdly He included the 'enemies', especially Samaritans and Romans. This cost Him rejection....He was betrayed and crucified because He refused to fulfil sectional and ideological aspirations. He was undermining all the values upon which religion, economics, politics and society were based (Bosch ca 1978:19-20).

Anticipating such a reaction from His countrymen, Jesus showed special philoxenia to twelve strangers who were to become twelve friends - friends who would carry on His message after His death and resurrection.

6.2.3.2 Shown to the Few. After spending a night in prayer (Lk 6.12) Jesus selected twelve men (no doubt as the new Israel) in order that they might be with him, and that He might send them out to preach and to cast out demons. This threefold purpose in Mark 3.13-14 is a happy summary of much of the Gospels and the book of Acts.

Intensive and constant exposure to the detachment of Jesus taught the disciples much about His, and consequently their own, guest status. Further, it was accented and underscored when He sent them out on a preview or foretaste mission. 'He charged them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts...' (Mk 6.7-13, compare also Mt 9.35-10.42 and Lk 10.1-20).

Although virtually no commentators mention this, it seems to me that Jesus is asking of them what the Father asked of Him: to become strangers, and to experience all the helplessness and homelessness, the undermining of pride and self-sufficiency accompanying such status. They would have a glimpse at the life of a ger from the perspective of their own footsteps and would know only the sure companionship of God and each other.

But they also had the awesome privilege of acting and speaking on behalf of the Host. 'If anyplace will not receive you and they refuse to hear you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet for a testimony against them' (Mk 6.11). Receiving a messenger is tantamount to receiving his message, and when feet are not washed the reverse is true: both the messengers, their message, and the one they represent are rejected. But such refusal of hospitality results in judgment on the house. Jesus' loyalty to His disciples is under-scored in such passages as Matthew 10.40-42, Mark 9.37,41, Luke 10.16 and John 13.20. (This was an important truth to all four authors when they wrote in Jesus' physical absence!) So these twelve return as apostles (the only time Mark uses the word, 6.30), rejoicing that demons had been subject to them in Jesus' name. It is striking that the feeding stories in Mark both emphasize Jesus' command to the disciples to feed the multitudes and that they eventually do so.

I'd like to close this section by spending a bit more time on two passages which highlight the transition from Jesus' hospitality in Palestine to His followers' hospitality in and to the world. The first is from the Gospel addressed mainly although not only to God's covenant people the Jews, and the second from the Gospel designed with no boundaries in mine.

a) Matthew 25.31-49. This 'parable' of the sheep and the goats is as difficult as it is familiar. 'It is a combination of parabolic, apocalyptic, and ethical teaching which is yet woven almost without seam into an incomparable literary whole' (Robinson 1955-56:226). And tradition-history had proved remarkably narrow, and hardly extends beyond the unanimous opinion that Matthew 25.31-46 is not, strictly speaking, a parable (Catchpole 1979:355). That lack of agreement was certainly evident in the dozen or so articles I read.

The interpretation which I believe does the most justice to the context, and it is not the one offered in most devotionals and from most pulpits, is substantially put forward by Duane Thebeau,

What, then is the Son of Man on His judgment seat saying in Matthew's picture of the last judgment? He is saying that the Gentile nations, to whom he sent forth His disciples, are to be judged on the basis of how they received those whom he sent. If they received His messengers with open arms and tender solicitude, it is the same as if they had received Jesus Himself that way. Implied also is a favourable response to the message His apostles had

brought to them, for the message and the messengers are inseparable (Thebeau 1972:1041).

I would broaden Thebeau's understanding of nations, and that of Joel 3.11-12, and argue that all nations are in view here, including Israel. The scene is viewed not from Jerusalem outwards beyond the borders, but from the 'glorious throne' downwards, viewing all nations from above. Israel as a nation is alluded to in Matthew 21.43, and is undoubtedly included in 24.14: 'And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations....'

Jesus is often presented as Judge in Matthew. And what is the criteria for judgment of all the nations gathered before Him? The criteria will be their treatment of the messengers Jesus will soon send into the world (and of all Christians sent into the world since then). The key statement is in verse 40, 'And the king will answer them, "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to Me".' And one author comments,

Ye did it unto one of these my brethren, implies a distinction which is made explicit by the fact that the merciful are not called "my brethren" but only "Blessed of my Father." ...the parable tells us only of the judgment of those who are not the brethren of the judge, and who are judged by their conduct toward the needy amongst His brethren (Cadoux 1929-30:560).

(And, we should emphasize that their conduct toward the messenger involves, according to the first century

Shaliah principle, an acceptance or rejection of the message. And that message certainly pointed to the Bridegroom and the Master of Mt 25.1-30).

This limited use of 'brethren' is supported elsewhere in Matthew; 10.42, 12.40-50, 23.8 and 28.10. These all clearly support an understanding of 'brethren' as Jesus' disciples, His followers only. The other Gospels' evidence is consistent with this.

Also, Jesus' disciples have already experienced, or will quite soon experience, the six kinds of hardship and deprivation mentioned in 25.35-39, 42-44. The New Testament spells it out as the likely lot of Christians, especially the ones travelling on the Christian mission in faithfulness to their Lord (Mt 10.5ff; Lk 10.1-12; Acts 16.30-34; 1 Cor 4; 2 Cor 6 and 11; and 3 Jn 5-8. See also the Old Testament glimpses of these six acts of kindness in Job 31.16-40; Is 2, 58.6-12 and Ezek 18.7,16).

Finally, it fits in well with the overall message of Matthew, addressed as it likely is to a multi-ethnic community (but with strong Jewish roots) such as Antioch in the second half of the first century. The community is undergoing great pressure and persecution, and is in clear need of both instruction and protection.

Matthew's emphasis on discipleship, on following Jesus, is

strong. One of the keynotes of the Gospel is in 4.19 'And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men"'. The Sermon on the Mount, mainly although not only addressed to them, might be understood as a fishing manual, a specific guide on ethical evangelism. They are to live as salt and light (5.13-16) in the midst of a difficult situation, and are to demonstrate a passion for God's kingdom and for just relationships (6.33). As they experience this message, and express it, the Great Messenger will protect them. Only Matthew has Jesus' strong words about the church, '...I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it' (16.18). This same Jesus who promises the spread of His good news to all the nations in 24.14 promises His complete identification with, and care for, the messengers in 25.31-49. They are then commissioned in 28.16-20.

So as Jesus had begun His life with His disciples with clear instruction, He now ends that time with clear protection (as he speaks to them in the chapters preceding His death, see 24.3). The Great Host, the glorious Son of Man sits in judgment, is secure enough to become a xenos, a stranger Who completely identifies with the 'least of these His brethren'. The Judge and the 'least of these' are one: They who know the love of the Bridegroom and the joyful service of the Master (in the earlier parables of Mt 25.1-30) can now know the strengthening companionship of a fellow Stranger. Knowing the hospitality of heaven, they can face

the hostility of earth.

b) John 13-17, especially the first two chapters. Jesus has already seen His last human sunset and He begins this, His last evening on earth, with a meal: a Passover meal. But this rather 'ordinary' meal begins in an extraordinary way, '...Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father....He had come from God, and was going to God...' (Jn 13.1,3).

Once again, as in Matthew 25, Jesus absorbs both roles into Himself. The visitor from Outside, the Host at the Passover meal, was also to be the Passover Lamb (1 Cor 5.7). And the Lord of heaven and earth assumes a servant's towel in preparation for the supreme service of laying down His life.

But the towel also said something else. He had left Home some thirty years before, and come to alien territory alone. But He wasn't returning Home alone. Even as Moses had left Egypt for the Promised Land with a multitude of company, so this greater than Moses would take many friends with Him for an introduction to the Father. In fact, that is what the three of them Moses, Elijah, and Jesus, had talked about on the heights of Mt. Tabor, '...they spoke of His exodus, which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem' (Lk 9.30-31).

And the first symbol of that, the first stage of enjoying the heavenly banquet, was the earthly towel.

In washing the disciples' feet, Jesus does an act of hospitality, receiving the disciples into the place to which He is going, the very house of His Father (14.2). Jesus is the Servant of a rich and generous Host, the Father in heaven, who welcomes the disciples into the Father's house to rest and stay, although they will not understand this until after Jesus is glorified (13.7; Cf. Lk 12.37 which speaks of the coming of the kurios to his servants at the end-time: "He will gird Himself and have them sit at table, and He will come and serve them"). Because He and the Father are one, the Son is able to offer such hospitality on behalf of the Father, and to share His own destiny of going to the Father with those whom He washes (13.8b) (Hultgren 1982:542).

And so Jesus is going Home. This is underlined by His refusal to drink the traditional fourth cup of wine at the conclusion of the Passover Meal. No, He says, 'I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God' (Mk 14.25). And the fourth cup remains alone, as a reminder of a future banquet. But the disciples are lonely, and puzzled and saddened too. And this is where John 14 comes in. Let not your hearts be troubled, says Jesus, I'm coming back, and not only once but twice: John Stott explains these two comings of Jesus in an excellent address to the triennial missionary convention at Urbana 1970 (Stott 1971:28-48).

Jesus' final coming in glory is spoken of in the first fourteen verses. 'I will come again, and will take you to Myself....', He firmly promised in verse three. And until then He is preparing monai, 'dwelling places' for us. The word hardly means 'many mansions' since they could be

difficult to fit into one 'house'. (The Latin word mansiones, meaning 'dwelling places', was transliterated into English. The Scottish word 'manse' still survives). The Greek word probably refers to a temporary resting place, a shelter on a journey, but Jesus' focus is not on its temporary nature but on the refreshment and security to be found there.

God's purpose is to prepare room for humankind, to give people again a place to dwell, a place to enjoy....He prepares for us a place where overpopulation is simply impossible....No one must think that the preparation of the great city is an easy work for Him....But in His death and resurrection Jesus lays the foundation for the coming glory. Now His work in heaven and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit can become components in His work for us (Kuntz 1982:17).

And that brings us to the second, the intermediate coming of Jesus, in John 14.15-26. In verse 18 He says, 'I will not leave you desolate'. The word means literally 'orphans' or 'alone in the world' (J.B. Phillips). The Lord's answer for this time between His ascension and His return is the coming of the parakletos, the One who will walk beside them and live inside them. And that anticipates our next chapter. John Stott summarizes this one with characteristic succinctness,

At each coming there will be a reception, Christ says. But who receives whom will be different. According to verse 3, when Christ comes, He will receive them into heaven to dwell with Him. According to verses 17-18. when Christ comes, they will do what the world cannot do, namely, receive Him into their hearts so that He may dwell with them.

Further, the Greek word for 'mansions' or 'resting

places' is used of both, and occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. When we go to dwell with Christ we find a resting place (v.3), and when He comes to dwell with us He finds a resting place (v.23).

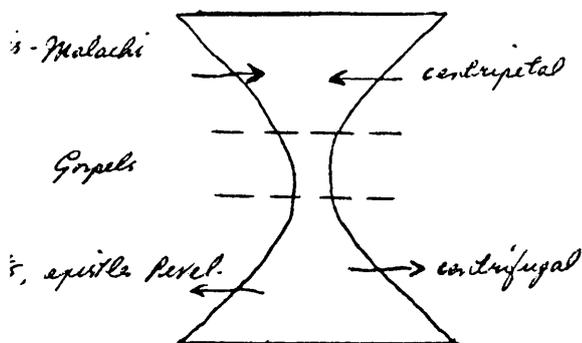
It is only when we believe these promises of Jesus Christ - that He has not left us forever, but that He has come back in the Spirit, and that He will come back in power and great glory - that we shall be cured of spiritual heart trouble and enjoy peace (Stott 1971:31).

In John 14.23 Jesus says about Himself and the Father.... 'We will come to him, and make our home with him'. It is the Spirit who then hangs a welcome sign on the door of our hearts. What this looks like in action, and in the church's reflection, we will need to see next as we turn to the Acts and the Correspondence.

CHAPTER SEVEN: DIRECTIONS FROM WITHIN  
(ACTS AND THE CORRESPONDENCE)

In his gospel, Luke had told Theophilus what Jesus had done on earth; in his sequel he tells the great story of what Jesus continued to do from heaven (Acts 1.11). And His plan was that, through His Spirit and His church, God's mission should continue to the end of the earth - so that every place at the heavenly table might be filled and the heavenly banquet get underway.

Since Johannes Blauw wrote The Missionary Nature of the Church it has been quite common to see mission as a major theme of all of Scripture, with Genesis to Malachi having a centripetal (drawing inward) orientation, and the New Testament a more centrifugal (sending outward) one. I still believe this distinction is essentially valid, especially when using an hourglass, or egg-timer illustration which combines both foci in Jesus:



It is true that the Old Testament seemed to draw a series of concentric circles, drawing the zar, nokri, and ger into close contact with the land, city and temple where God could be known,

Jerusalem was the centre of the world. The attraction was

the distinctiveness and holiness of God's people. And so, the O.T. has this essential reminder for all of us; our conduct and lifestyle are indispensable components in God's mission. As David Bosch has said in Pretoria pulpits, we often emphasize the three parts of mission as 'getuienis, gawe, en gebed' (our witness, our gifts, our prayers) and forget about or downplay the fourth: our 'gedrag; (our conduct). Here the O.T. helps us.

But in that first Testament there are centrifugal elements too. Israel spent long periods in Egypt and the Exile, sent by God. Jerusalem's 'light to the nations' was supposed to penetrate, and Jonah was far more than an interesting allegory: he was a message and a symbol to an entire nation.

Jesus, in that narrow part of the hourglass, combined in Himself the coming and the going. All Gospels portray His relentless march on Jerusalem: 'I must go on my way today and tomorrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish away from Jerusalem' (Lk 13.33). Wise men from the East came to Him at the beginning of His life, and Greeks from the West came to Him at the end. And in between was His persistent offer, 'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy-laden...' (Mt 11.28). But He also sent out the twelve and the seventy, and the words in Matthew 28.18-20 and Acts 1.8 are His.

So the going, the centrifugal element is clearly there from Jesus' ascension onwards. But it seems to me that it has often been misunderstood. The tendency has all too often been on the sheer going, the movement, the covering of physical distance, and consequently missions is thought to begin with the Great Commission since only after this do we have the crossing of boundaries and the clear evidence of man's activity.

Now without disparaging for a moment the 2.7 billion who have not yet heard and the many 'hidden peoples', I do not believe this geographical factor is the main thrust either of Jesus' Commission, or of the book of Acts.

Jesus strongly infers in His closing summary, His final decree in Matthew 28, that His authority will affect our feet. The sense is 'all authority has been given....now then, as you're going...'. The thrust, as others have pointed out, is on the task which is undertaken. The only imperative verb, the controlling one of the four, is matheteusate, 'make disciples'. As we are going, making contact with all unbelievers around us (those twelve inches and not necessarily 12,000 miles away), we are to make disciples, asking them to cross the 'threshold' in baptism, and to remain in the 'house' long enough to listen to 'all that He has commanded you', interact on this with others in the 'house' and then go out and 'observe' it together.

That is the sense in Acts as well. If the concern had been primarily on the movement, the apostles could have gone to Jewish communities only. But the concern of their sending Lord was not so much on their physical suitcases as their mental ones. They needed to clear these suitcases of national and ethnic stereotypes and learn to make room for people in Samaria and the ends of the earth, Gentiles most of them, Acts 1.8. The emphasis was both on growing and on going.

And that was a tall order for the disciples in Acts 1! Jesus' final promise (for that is the verb sense in 1.8, and not the imperative command) made nonsense of their carefully structured, safe and familiar world. They were still to such a large extent Palestinian Jews, who saw circumcision as an entry rite to the great world of Jewish traditions associated with land, city and temple. They felt akin to Palestinian Jews in the dispersion who shared this loyalty to Jerusalem, and felt superior to Hellenistic Jews who were influenced by Greek culture, spoke the Greek language and attended synagogues, which became centres for evangelism. Here Gentiles would undergo instruction, circumcision and baptism and become full proselytes. Or they would refrain from circumcision (or after circumcising only their sons), and remain in the fringe category of 'God-fearers'. Thom Hopler says it this way,

To summarize this pecking order, Palestinian Jews were on top, followed by the Diaspora Jews (principally Hellenists), with proselytes and God-

fearers next and Samaritans (whom Jews regarded as heretics) and Gentiles at the bottom. Of course this order held true only for those who believed Judaism had some value. A pagan Roman soldier would not have cared a mite that he was at the bottom of the local religious system. He was on top of the international political system. But within Judaism, and in the context of Acts, this social order was very important (Hopler 1981:81).

Into this world Jesus sends them. And in the power of His Spirit He fully believed they could, and would make a lasting impact. I want to explore the role hospitality played in this outward journey. Lets start with an overview of the cultural terrain, then looking deeper at the impact of the new geographical perspective which Jesus introduced, and finally at the bedrock motivation. Why did the good news which Abraham already believed finally reach the far corners of the known world? That subject will bring the New Testament era to a close.

"He uttered a triumphant cry: It is accomplished! And it was as though He had said: Everything has just begun." (Nikos Kazantzakis in The Last Temptation).

## 7.1 'So send I you...' (the people in N.T. Mission).

7.1.1 The experience of the early church. In the upper room, very likely in the home of Mary, mother of John Mark (see Acts 12.12), the one hundred twenty met to pray, listen to Scripture, and select a twelfth man to fill Judas' empty place. They saw themselves as the new Israel. And

fittingly it seemed, God brought to them from the surrounding nations both Jews and proselytes to witness the outpouring of God's Spirit, and to hear the interpretation from Joel. These Jews still paid their half-shekel temple tax and came from afar to the great Jewish festivals. This time they would return to their homes with the electrifying news that the Messiah had come, and had poured out His presence and His power on ordinary folk just like themselves (Acts 2.9-11). Across the world wide system of roads where the Roman soldiers could move swiftly, the good news travelled even more swiftly about what had happened in Jerusalem.

But the leadership in the city was not quick to see or grasp the opportunity. They still continued to live on 'borrowed' things: the Old Testament Scriptures and songs, and the meetings in Temple and synagogue. But the new wineskins were in preparation to contain this potent new wine. The main structure to contain it, for enjoyment and for distribution, was the house church. 'And day by day attending the temple together, and breaking bread in their homes...' (Acts 2.46). More on this in the next section.

The more serious breakaway from unbelieving Judaism occurred in Stephen's speech in Acts 7 which attacked the permanent validity of its charter and its building. This courageous message underscored the ger, the sojourner character of God's people from Abraham and Moses onwards,

and suggested that God much preferred a movable tent to a permanent temple as a symbolic dwelling place (Acts 7.44-50). This attack on law and temple cost Stephen his life, but through it a pilgrim God moved His people on.

In the eighth chapter Philip breaks through into Samaritan territory and in chapter nine God captures the man who will be sent to the Gentiles. But the first main section of the book, Chapters 1-12, is not complete until its main character and leading spokesman for the Jerusalem church experiences the full circle of 1.8 himself. The conversion of God-fearer Cornelius is repeated at length in chapters 10 and 11 for dramatic emphasis, since it also concerns the 'conversion' of Peter. A unique vision prepared Peter to receive three Gentile visitors at his lodging place at Simon the tanner's house in Joppa, so that he could travel the 35 miles north to Caesarea to preach and to eat and stay for some days with Cornelius and his Gentile family. 'It is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation...but God shows no partiality' (Acts 10.28, 34-35). The mutual hospitality in these chapters has profound implications not only for the host, but also, and perhaps especially, for the guest:

And for the first time in Acts, genuine voluntary sending can get underway in Acts 13.1-3 from the multi-ethnic church in Antioch. Barnabas and Saul sail for Cyprus. And in his three journeys through Asia Minor and Greece, Paul and his travelling partners will be extraordinarily dependent on

hospitality along the way, both for their lodging: in the Antioch church (Acts 11.25-26) with Lydia and with the jailor in Philippi (16.15, 34) with Jason in Thessalonica (17.5-9) with Aquila and Priscilla and with Titius Justus in Corinth (18.1-3, 7) with Philip the evangelist and with Mnason of Cyprus in and near Caesarea (21.8, 16) with Publius the chief in Malta for three days (28.7) and in hired lodging in Rome while under guard (28.16, 23 and 30); and also for their meeting places: the lecture hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus (19.9), perhaps Titius Justus' house in Corinth (18.7) and the upper room in Troas (20.8). We may also note Paul's request to Philemon to '...prepare a guest room (xenia) for me...' Philemon 22, and his request to the Colossian church to receive Mark when he comes (Col 4.10).

This availability of hospitality, and the widespread communication network that grew with it, was an incredible aid to the spread of the gospel. Since open hearts and open homes were available throughout the Empire, the Gospel retained its living voice.

Travel was fairly common in the first century with the quality of Roman roads, the protection of Roman peace, and the convenience of one Greek language. And yet Paul's approach of travelling with genuine co-workers was not that common. These men were frequently sent on specific missions: Tychichus to Colossae, Timothy to Philippi and

Thessalonica, and Titus to Corinth. Pharisees would traverse land and sea to make one proselyte (Mt 23.15) and Jewish exorcists would do a 'synagogue tour' (Acts 19.13-15), but this seems to have been limited. Some ancient philosophers travelled alone, others with a single partner, and others with disciples, a scribe, and a secretary. They usually demanded payment for their services, which Paul consistently declined to tender. He calls his co-workers partners, and saw himself as part of a team (e.g. 2 Cor 2.12-13, 8.23), a team including women (Euodia and Syntyche in Phil 4.2-3). These colleagues of Paul later pastored churches in Ephesus and Crete, and the communication network was widened and strengthened.

Robert Banks says,

Paul's enlistment of full and part-time helpers on his later missionary journeys, at times swelling to a quite substantial company of co-workers, has no parallel in the field of contemporary religious propagation. This could also be said of his mission's continuing close involvement - through messengers, letters and prayers - in the communities founded by it, and their participation through visits, letters, gifts and prayers - in its ongoing work. The new dynamic in the Christian message, and the new quality of life created by it apparently could not be contained within conventional itinerant activities....(Banks 1980: 169).

And he might have added, hospitality was the main factor that allowed the new dynamic a wide audience, both among friends and potential friends.

Not only was itinerant evangelism quite common among the apostles (besides Paul, strong tradition supports both Thomas' journey to India and Peter and John's deaths in places as far away from Jerusalem as Rome and Ephesus) but other Christians also took to the highways. Sometimes this was voluntary and sometimes not, due to persecution by a hostile family, religious group, or nation. A general pattern is captured in Acts 8.4, 'Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word,' (or 'gossiping the gospel') and the pattern is repeated in Acts 11.19-21 when scattered, travelling Hellenistic Jews share the news first with Jews, then with Greeks also in this cultural hinge of Luke's story.

Christians in their travels, would seek out Christian brethren, partly for protection but mainly to share fellowship and worship. Churches shared their gospel tradition, the collection...their homes...and provided labour for those desiring to settle in their midst. On hearing of poverty, they contributed to the necessity of the saints. Hospitality was the chief bond which brought the churches a sense of unity. The Roman church, as the church of the imperial capital, came to supremacy partly through its constant concern for Christians everywhere (Kooy 1962:654).

That was the experience of the early church. Before we move to encouragement they received in writing, it might be worthwhile to look at that Roman church alluded to above. It may be argued that Paul's letter to this church is not only in intention a grand theological treatise, but also a missionary document occasioned by the need for hospitality.

Paul's passion was to reach the Empire's farthest outpost, Spain, with the gospel. And now he says to Roman Christians whom he has never met, 'I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be sped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a little' (Rom 15.24). Closely following is Paul's magnificent postscript in 16.1-23, almost a hymn to hospitality. The list begins with Phoebe, the deaconess and likely postmistress of Paul's letter from Corinth to Rome, and ends with Gaius, 'host to me and to the whole church.'

7.1.2 The Encouragement to the early Church. And finally, in the last stages of God's written revelation there are exhortations for God's people to be a hospitable people. Until now it was not spelled out, for the practice of hospitality was woven into their culture, and its expectations were woven into God's law for His people. And even in the Epistles there is no allusion to a specific Old Testament incident which would illustrate the presence or absence of hospitality. One author remarks on Romans 12.13 and the command to 'pursue hospitality' in this way,

Paul did not need to support his command with new motivation because the Old Testament practice and foundation was carried over into the New Testament church. The Christian attitude and action of hospitality is rooted in who God is and in what He has done for us by freeing us from bondage to the prince of darkness (Engelhard 1982:9).

And why the specific exhortation now, by Paul, Peter and the author of Hebrews? Perhaps it was associated with the

special need of Christians far away from home, whether the many voluntary travelling evangelists, or the involuntary ones scattered by persecution. The latter would often experience real material need, would be hesitant to go to pagan hosts, and would avoid the inns of the time since they were of generally low standard and reputation. (Rahab's inn undoubtedly had successors...).

Although the experience of Christians seemed to focus mainly on their hospitality to one another, the instructions in the correspondence clearly draw a wider circle, too. And in any case, opening one's home to a strange Christian would be a helpful step on the way to opening it to other strangers. The normal and familiar circle of family and friends is stretched, and the discovery is made: our circle will stretch wider still! 'So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of faith' (Gal 6.10). That describes the approach and priorities well.

Hospitality to one another as Christians is underscored in 1 Peter 4.9, where it flows out of unending love, and is seen as a gift of God's grace: 'Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another. As each has received a gift (charisma), employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace (charis)'. And Selwyn comments,

...every word in the sentence is full of force. Each hath received a gift. None can plead his lack of faculty; none can claim exemption from the duty

of ministering; none is so poor but he has something that he can lay out for the brethren. All have time; all have kind words; the least can give what is the best of gifts, a good example. But what we have is not our own, it is received. And humility would teach us to believe that God has bestowed on us the power which we are best fitted, by place and opportunities, to use in His service (Selwyn 1956:715)

As the churches grew in size and reputation, hospitality was seen as a necessary quality of leadership in those called to serve God's people. 'Now a bishop must be....dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher...' and 'not greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of goodness, master of himself...' (1 Tim 3.1; Tit 1.8). That this hospitality should be shown to 'outsiders' as well seems indicated in Timothy when Paul adds a few verses later, '... he (the bishop) must be well thought of by outsiders...' (vs 7). His reputation would be most on the line when such outsiders would come under his roof. (Why is a church usually more concerned about an elder's presence at a bar or disco on Saturday night, and less about the absence of strangers and guests at his Sunday dinner table?) Paul adds in the same letter to Timothy a similar word about the widows, 'Let a widow be enrolled if...she has shown hospitality, washed the feet of the saints...' (1 Tim 5.10).

The two passages that obviously have a larger circle in view are Romans 12.13 and Hebrews 13.2. In Romans Paul spells out the specific results of having realized God's mercies and of desiring in response to present our bodies a living

sacrifice. Early in the chapter Paul speaks of the church, the one body with many members, and at the end he speaks of enemies. And in between, sandwiched nicely between the duties to the hagioi and to the diakontes: 'Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality, bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them' (Rom 12.13-14). And the word for practice is really the much stronger 'pursue' or 'chase after', coming from the same dioko or 'persecute' in the following verse. Paul says, 'You pursue hospitality with the same zeal that you see in those who are pursuing (persecuting) you!' So the picture of the normal New Testament Christian is of one who is always ready (Hebrews) to pursue hospitality, and to do so with enthusiasm (Romans) and cheerfulness (1 Peter). Hospitality is not a cosy practice of the gifted some, but a delightful privilege for the indebted all.

The Hebrews passage is similar in force: 'Let brotherly love continue (13.1). Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares (13.2).' The philadelphia of verse one is inseparable from the philoxenia of verse two. Very likely remembering the Abraham and Lot incidents in Genesis 18-19 the author couples brotherly love with love for the stranger, with the sobering motivation that in the guise of the stranger we may be welcoming a divine messenger and perhaps the Lord Himself. Paul and Barnabas experienced the other side of this in Lystra, Acts 14.8-15, when they were

treated as gods after the healing of the lame man.

But there is always a dark side to encouragement, and that is warning. If hospitality is abused and misused, the host can and often must show its dark side of hostility. When the open hearts and open homes of the early church were often abused, safeguards were erected and letters of commendation urged for travelling Christians, endorsed by their home church (2 Cor 3.1 and very possibly the short letters of 2 and 3 Jn - fall in this category).

3 John speaks of the positive side of hospitality, where a certain Gaius, a convert of the apostles, is highly commended, 'Beloved, it is a loyal thing when you render any service to the brethren, especially to strangers...you will do well to send them on their journey...' (vv 5-8).

A recent author on the social aspects of early Christianity suggests in fact that hospitality is the main theme in this short letter. Abraham Malherbe argues that 'we must understand Diotrephes in the light of the main subject of 3 John, which is the extension of hospitality to fellow Christians. That is the point at issue...' (Malherbe 1983:94). It is instructive to know that the chapter on 'Hospitality and Inhospitality in the Church' is an addition to the author's original book, present only in the second edition. It indicates to me a growing interest in the subject of hospitality.

Malherbe proposes 3 John as a letter commending Gaius for his earlier hospitality as well as a present recommendation, in familiar first century style, for Demetrius (vs 11-12). He suggests Gaius and Diotrephes as leaders of separate Christian groups in the same geographic area, and sees John as reproaching Diotrephes for refusing to extend hospitality to visiting strangers by refusing the Elder's letter of recommendation. So Malherbe sees the issue not as a doctrinal or governmental one, but as a personal power play.

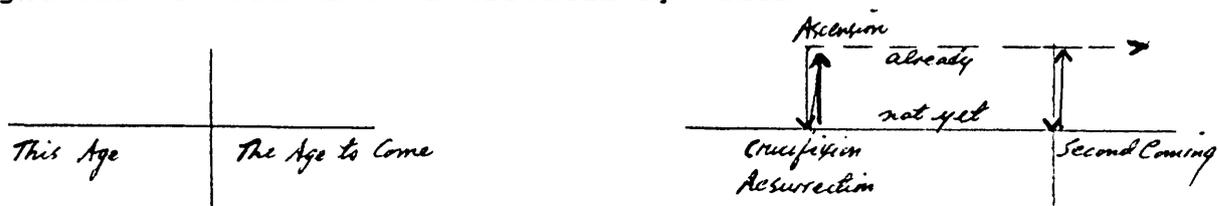
Gaius is a positive model of hospitality, and Diotrephes a negative one. Gaius comes off well as a host in both letters. But the negative focus in the third letter is on Diotrephes as a would-be host, whereas the focus in the second letter is on would-be visitors.

II John puts it this way, 'If any one comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into the house or give him any greeting, for he who greets him shares his wicked work' (II Jn 2:10). John Stott helpfully explains that the likely intention of John is that the church ought not to extend an official welcome to a false teacher who denies such a key doctrine as the incarnation (Stott 1981:88). The door might be open for an individual household to show hospitality to such a one, and 'straighten him out' after a delicious and filling meal.

That is our overview of the world into which Jesus sent His

men, as sheep among wolves, asking them to be wise as serpents and gentle as doves (Mt 10.16). They did amazingly well, and within a few generations many thousands of 'wolves' had joined the fold. We now want to probe a bit deeper and find out the role which the new geographical perspective played in their mission.

7.2 'You have here no abiding city....' (the place of N.T. Mission): Oscar Cullmann in his Christ and Time has helped us to grasp the dramatic new understanding of time in the New Testament. He draws two graphs, the one on the left the fairly simple Jewish understanding of time, reflected especially in apocalyptic literature, and the one on the right the new dimension introduced by Jesus.



In Jesus the future had invaded the present, and the kingdom has clearly begun. The Jews failed to see the real character of their king, and of the kingdom. They looked for a political Messiah who would inaugurate a future kingdom, but failed to interpret the full weight of Old Testament prophecy that the road to glory was paved with suffering (Lk 24.25-27; 1 Pet 1.10-11) and that the kingdom would begin not in palaces but in hearts, working outward with the relentless power of a bit of leaven or a grain of mustard seed.

And all the voices of the New Testament affirm that if the spirit makes Jesus words come alive (Jn 16.12-13) and we recognize Him as our king, we too are citizens of a new kingdom (although we retain our residency in the Old). We live in Cullmann's 'already-not yet' tension, already seated in the heavenlies with Christ, our status and our growth secure because we have the Spirit as arrabon (downpayment or foretaste) living in our hearts, and yet not yet enjoying the full consummation of face to face companionship. Our foundation is in heaven, but the house is not yet complete.

And so Christ has already won the decisive victory over enemy powers (Col 2.15) and yet the mopping up operations continue until 1 Corinthians 15.24-28 becomes a reality. We have already been saved, and are being saved, because we are not yet saved. The New Testament word is used in all three tenses. 'But God, who is rich in mercy...made us alive together with Christ, and raised us up with Him, and made us sit with Him in the heavenly places....' 'The death He died He died to sin, once for all, but the life He lives He lives to God. So you also consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus' (Eph 2.4-6; Col 3.3-5; Rom 6.10-11).

In the New Testament the terms "foreigner" and "stranger" no longer apply to non-Jews because of the disappearance of the Jewish national and political base for the life of God's people: all Christians are aliens on this earth (and must live as pilgrims)...all strangers, foreigners, and sojourners can become, through Christ, full members of the household of God since the separating wall between Jew and Gentile has been broken down,

Ephesians 2.11-21 (Zondervan 1975:469).

The two central characters of Luke's sequel, Peter and Paul, say it this way, 'But our commonwealth (or citizenship) is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ' (Phil 3.20). 'Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul. Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation' (1 Pet 2.11-12). This gives us a new perspective on God and on ourselves, but also of ongoing history. The reason for the rather difficult and somewhat awkward new understanding of history is that we have a hospitable God, a God Who is 'not willing that any should perish', but that all should be there when the feasting gets started. It is the desire of God's heart that countless days of visits (where better can Gentiles 'see our good deeds' than at home?) can precede the day of Visitation.

This new perspective also involves a new understanding of terms, and we will want to look in this section at a cluster of terms describing strangeness and strangers from the new perspective, and then also at a cluster of words which capture the reality of home in a new way.

7.2.1 The terms speaking of outside strangeness. Seen from the heights of Mount Zion, it was not difficult to look

outward and define the non-Israelite in ever-widening circles. The noun forms of ger, nokri and zar alone are used well over 200 times in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the number of terms for strangeness and strangers increases, but their frequency sharply decreases. There are at least eight terms, but as a collection they (except for ethne) are used only about fifty times. We can divide them into two categories:

7.2.1.1 The terms with an Israel orientation. Most N.T. authors were Jews, lived within the context of Judaism, and made heavy use of the story of God's Old Testament people. The words paroikos and parepidemos both came from the early stages of Israel's history, and mean respectively 'beside or outside the house', and 'beside or outside the people'. The words diaspora and proselutos come from the late stages of Israel's history, and are the dispersion and the proselyte.

a) I would translate paroikos as sojourner and parepidemos as exile, although translations vary, and these two are very close in meaning. The exile's stay is shorter and more transient, whereas the sojourner is more the resident alien, but both have their roots and their citizenship elsewhere. Each passage in the N.T., and there are eight, where we find the word paroikos or a derivative used, contains a quotation or a reference to the history of Israel. Usually in view is the ger, the sojourner status of Abraham, and of Israel in Egypt, and this status is applied to God's people in the new covenant. They are part of an ongoing history. Because

they are citizens of a heavenly realm, they are resident aliens and strangers on the earth on which they still wander; and to the flesh, in which they still live.

This pilgrim status comes to the fore in Acts (especially Stephen's sermon), Ephesians 2, the first letter of Peter, and is in some ways the heartbeat of the Letter to the Hebrews.

The Son of God Himself becomes a stranger on this earth, suffers all its sorrows, assaults, and temptations as we do (Heb 2.17-18, 4.15) strides unknown, from the unknown to the unknown like Melchizedec....If the pilgrim piety of the Christian community refers back to the experience of the O.T. people of God, it finds a new fulfilment in the pilgrim destiny of Jesus Himself (Schmidt & Schmidt 1967:852).

Early churches commonly became known as paroikiai, and the word still survives in our uses of 'parochial' and 'parish' in their various contexts. (An Anglican or Catholic parish is a Christian society of sojourners whose true citizenship is in heaven).

b) The word for "exile" or parepidemos occurs only in Hebrews 11.13, where Abraham describes his status in the land at Sarah's burial in a Hittite cave, and in 1 Peter 1.1 and 2.11, and occurs in company with paroikos. Exilius vita est, was the inscription carved above the doorway in Victor Hugo's room at Hauteville, Guernsey.

c) The word diaspora or dispersion is a loan word from the

Jews' experience in the Exile and is used quite literally in John 7.35. Its only other two uses in the N.T. are very interesting since they are used in the address of their letters by James and Peter (Jas 1.1; 1 Pet 1.1). Apparently controversy rages whether these two letters are addressed to Jewish or Gentile Christians, but I don't see why the intended audience cannot be an inclusive one. Both men had deep Jewish roots, but Peter had the Acts 10 experience with Cornelius, and James the Acts 15 experience of being the moderator of the Jerusalem conference where the implications of Peter's visit were sorted out. God had given both men a deep tradition and a wide vision. It is of interest too that Peter, who certainly once entertained political Messianic hopes, never mentions David or the monarchy in his letter, but does focus on the exile. (The verbal forms refer to the scattering of the church in Acts 8.1,4 and 11.19).

d) As we have seen on earlier occasions, the proselutos was the non-Jew who had been absorbed into Judaism by circumcision. Although paroikos and proselutos are very close, and both are used as translations for the Hebrew ger, the former tends to focus on Israel's status before God, and the latter on the non-Israelite's status within Israel. All four N.T. usages confirm the historical reality: Matthew 23.15; Acts 2.11, 6.5 (where non-native born Nicolaus from Antioch was chosen as a deacon) and 13.43 (where the precise definition is unique). Paul always went to the synagogues

first, but his greatest response was not from the circumcised proselytes, but from the uncircumcised God-fearers, Gentiles who attached themselves to the synagogues because of their attraction to the God and way of life on display there.

The Schmidts close this part on the Israel-orientated terms with a rather deep, but very relevant observation:

The N.T. Church is ekklesia and paroikia or, more accurately, as ekklesia, it is also paroikia. The Church applies to itself two antithetical terms from political law, the one with references to God, the other to the world; the one with reference to the "now already" (and consequently the "no longer"), the other to the "still". The character of the Church as paroikia comes out particularly clearly in Hebrews 13.14, which says, "For we have here no continuing city, but we seek one to come". In this respect the fact of the dispersion of Israel takes on particular significance (1 Pet 1.1; Jas 1.1). Special importance is attached to the integration of Christians into two political or civil spheres. The Church as diaspora has a specific affiliation, promise and task, wherewith it is given its eschatological definition and destiny. To be a stranger and sojourner...is something provisional...1 Peter, which admonishes Christians strongly to remember their paroikia in their conduct (2.11-12), lays upon them with this burden the most impressive titles in the O.T. (2.5-10) (Schmidt & Schmidt 1967:852).

All of which is to say that these words from Israel's past can help us understand something about the Christian reality of 'home'. If we really know where 'Home' is (the ekklesia on the 'upper level'), then we can invite people into our homes (paroikia on the 'lower level'), in order to tell them and show them something of "Home". We can journey with them the journey of the wayward son in Jesus' story of Luke

15.11-24: sick of home (11-12) to sick (13-16) to homesick (which he sensed when he 'came to himself', and is still our paroikia 17-19), to home (ekklesia in 20-24).

7.2.1.2 The terms with a wider orientation. Once again we will look at four. All four words in our last section would probably feel more comfortable in the company of ger, whereas our first two here would prefer the companionship of nokri.

a) The word Ethne for nation is used numerous times in the N.T. referring sometimes to all the nations including Israel, but more often to the nations in distinction from Israel (as the goyim, or Gentiles). Context has the last word in these cases.

b) In contrast, the word barbaros is used only four times, indicating the non-Greek (or non-civilised) recipients of the gospel. We may see an interesting combination of all these terms in Romans 1.15 and 16: 'I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians...for the gospel...is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.' Generally, Paul sees the Roman Empire as co-extensive with Greek society both in language and culture. In vs 14 he speaks of his calling to the nations, the entire non-Jewish world of Greeks and barbarians, whereas a couple verses later he speaks from a Jewish viewpoint, dividing the world into Jew and Greek

(synonymous for him with Gentiles). This three-pronged approach of Jew, Greek, barbarian is also hinted at in Colossians 3.11.

c) The last two words would probably prefer to associate with the Hebrew zar. The word allogrios is used fourteen times in the N.T. and means 'what belongs to another' and therefore is strange or hostile. It is always in contrast to ta idia, 'one's own', and I prefer the translation of 'alien'. A couple of fascinating occurrences of the word are in Hebrews 9.25, where the high priest entered the Holy place with en haimati allotrio, 'with alien blood', in contrast to Jesus who brought His own; and in John 10.5, where the shepherd warns against aliens, and confidently asserts that His sheep 'will by no means follow an alien voice.' The words allogenes and alloghulos occur only once each. The first, a favourite way of translating zar in the LXX, was used of the grateful Samaritan leper, he who was 'of another nation', 'outside the genealogy', in Luke 17.18, and the second was used of Jewish attitudes to Gentiles as 'another tribe' in Acts 10.28.

d) The last word is xenos or stranger, and this brings us close to home since one of its derivatives is philoxenia. There are also xenidzo, 'to receive as a guest' (Heb 13.2.etc), xenodoxeo, 'to show hospitality' (1 Tim 5.10) and xenia 'guest room' (Acts 28.23; Philem 22). All these words belong to the domain of hospitality in the N.T. although

xenidzo can also mean 'to surprise or, be strange to'. But xenos itself is invariably used in the sense of 'strange or stranger', is not the chief equivalent for any of the Hebrew terms, and is never applied in the N.T. to Christians.

The meaning of the word is ambivalent and carries in itself to a surprising extent the attitudes to the stranger which were sketched out several pages ago. The word can mean 'foreign or alien' with overtones of fear, as well as 'guest', with overtones of friendship. Stählin suggests that the history of the word demonstrates the journey from hostility to hospitality, and still carries the weight of both sides of the relationship. (The Sanskrit 'ari' can mean both friend and foe, and the Aryans were proud of their hospitality: ari 'stranger' -- arya -- 'hospitable' -- aryaman -- 'a guest or friend').

Stählin expresses the tension well,

In all peoples the stranger is originally an enemy: this is why many nations have only a single word for both....In the first instance the xenos is the stranger. Between the stranger and those around him there is reciprocal tension. He is a man from without, strange, hard to fathom, surprising, unsettling, sinister. But to the stranger his odd and different environment is also disturbing and threatening. There thus arises mutual fear....This is the first and basic mood associated with xenos. On the other hand the xenos is the "friend" who is associated with the other in the beautiful reciprocity of hospitality. This overcomes the distance of strangeness and the tension of being a foreigner. What the xenos enjoys as a guest, "mansio et focus, panis et aqua", and often more, he is obviously ready to repay just as generously as host. The whole relation rests on mutual trust instead of fear. This strange contradiction in the

concept of xenos resolves itself into a historical cultural sequence (Stählin 1967:2-3).

It may be of more than passing interest to note some facets of the development of this concept among the Greeks and Romans, both of whom were contemporary with N.T. society and influenced it.

Homer already had said that, 'Fear of God, hospitality, and civilization are co-extensive' (The Odyssey 6, 119ff; 9, 175ff). A code of conduct toward the xenos developed, and the latter rendered military service for pay. A foreign legion came into existence in Athens, and all mercenaries were then called xenoi. Since this word was applied to a man selling himself, a xene was the word for a woman selling herself, i.e. a harlot. There are many foreign prostitutes in antiquity, and we are reminded of the interplay of zar, strange woman, and harlot in the book of Proverbs (and raised to a different level when the prophets speak of Israel's adulterous relationship with foreign gods). The same meaning of xene was also reached by a different route, via the dubious development of inns where the "hostess" of a xenia often served more than food and drinks. Anyway, in Greece, officials were appointed to exercise jurisdiction over aliens, and in Acts 17.21 there seems to be a cordial mood, since both spent all their time telling or listening to xenidzonta, something strange and new.

In Rome, the story was similar. Hostis originally meant a stranger, who was therefore an enemy. Later the same word

could be used of both sides of the guest-host relationship, and the latter was applied to Gaius in Romans 16.23. But earlier on the hostis had to find a "host in order to secure lodging (for inns were primarily for nationals, not aliens), and a patronus in order to enjoy legal protection. From 247 B.C. onwards officials were appointed, the praetor peregrinus, who protected the strangers.

I cite the lengthy paragraphs above to illustrate again the tension inherent in hospitality: the tension between fear and friendship, and the tension of longing to say no to foreignness, but yes to foreigners, and to do so at the same time.

In the New Testament: xenoi occurs in reference to the patriarchs, in company with the word for exiles, in Hebrews 11.13, and to Gentiles before their conversion, in company with the word for sojourners, in Ephesians 2.19. The xenos in Matthew 25 is asked to be welcomed, and treated like Jesus himself, but xenoi teachings, referred to in Hebrews 13.9 are to be rejected. In Matthew 27.7 the burial place for xenoi bought with Judas' blood money is most likely intended for Gentiles, so that the Jews could be undisturbed even after death.

7.2.2 The terms speaking of inside familiarity. We now switch to a series of words and expressions which are, quite literally, much closer to home. And if Christians see

foreigners in a different way than the Jews, they also see the reality of 'home' in a different way. It is good to be reminded about this cluster of words in the preceding section, that 'Before God's claim the more or less important distinctions of human law between xenos, parepidemos, paroikos, and proselutos lose their force' (Schmidt & Schmidt 1967:848). And when we see things from God's viewpoint, while seated in the heavenlies, our perspective changes.

But we are still citizens of earth too, even though we are foreign to the world system in which we live. And what is our comfort and security while still on earth? At least the Jew had a visible temple and city and land to help him define the concepts of inside and outside. For the Jew completed now in Jesus and for Gentile Christians, their inside and outside, their home away from Home, is now defined by family, house or temple, and housechurch. That is the area of security, and also the place where the task begins.

7.2.2.1 The family. Christians can call the living God, Creator of heaven and earth, their Abba, their 'Daddy' (Rom 8.15), and experience mutual agape and commitment with all the brothers and sisters which he gives them. This is the source of security which is free of the limitations of city walls and national boundaries. We may define this term, and the related "household", as all those bound together by

sharing the same dwelling place (whether on earth or in heaven:))

Hospitality became a distinctive and essential mark of this community. God had welcomed them all without making distinctions aiming them (Rom 14.3). So too, Christ had welcomed them all, to the glory of God. Those who had received such hospitality were therefore under an absolute obligation to welcome one another and to serve one another, each accepting as his own the failings and the needs of his neighbor (Rom 14.1,15.1,7). Such hospitality was for more than a private virtue; it was an essential ingredient in communal life....

Mutuality of welcome within this society was thus a meeting point for the accent of many images. Here exiles accepted one another as fellow citizens. Here the scattered were gathered. Here the prisoners became ambassadors and ambassadors were received by the poor. Here all were impoverished and all were enriched. Those sent were received by others who were also sent. Hospitality was the sign of the existence of a new kind of community where every image was destined for incarnation (Minear 1960:64-65).

A second author, Robert Banks, focuses only on the Pauline pictures, but with equal thoroughness. He cites agricultural metaphors such as field, vine, grafting, also building metaphors and pictures drawn from the domestic world such as dough, or the world of medicine such as the body (a Pauline favourite). But because of a variety of related expressions which are numerous and frequent in appearance, he concludes,

the comparison of the Christian community with the "family" must be regarded as the most significant metaphorical usage of all. For that reason it has pride of place...(Banks 1980:53-54).

Far more than in other groups of the first century, Paul

uses terms drawn from family life. He speaks of himself as a father, a mother, a nurse. He addresses colleagues as 'beloved brother' and in a novel way also speaks of 'our sister' and 'my mother' (Phoebe and the mother of Rufus, Rom 16.1,13). He addresses whole churches with unusual affection, and the closing verses of most letters are quite a study in mutual caring family relationships. What confirms the importance of this is a further set of words drawn from the household or the home. Words like stewardship and edification do not initially strike us that way, but these words also are drawn from the sphere of family life and relationships.

7.2.2.2 The house or temple. We have already seen in Selwyn's quote above (p. 98. See also Mt 23.38), how Jesus initiated the dramatic switch from the Old Testament temple to His own body to the body of those believing in His Name. That is the thrust of the stories in John 2.13-17 and 18.22, and very likely in Mark 14.58 as well. Why shouldn't the phrase '...and in three days I will build another (temple), not made with hands' refer to the same church as in Matthew 16.18, the one which was set in motion by the resurrection and subsequent events?

And so the church is not an introspective family, aimlessly wandering about as a mutual admiration society. No, it is animated by a divine goal and purpose: to construct a living house (oikos) or temple (naos) with living stones,

having Jesus as the chief cornerstone (over which all those who refuse to use the Door will stumble), and the apostles and prophets as foundation (1 Pet 2.4-8, Eph 2.20). God's people are not only now His guests, but members of His household, not returning to a home they had left but on the way to a Home newly given them by God. And so the living earthly home ought to be a reflection of the permanent heavenly one: a place of beauty and safety for all those who need a 'place to stay'. It ought to be a place where authoritative directions are available to help the traveller to his real destiny, for '...the household of God, which is the Church of the living God, is the pillar and support of the truth' (1 Tim 3.15).

This strain of thinking is common in the pilgrimage letters of Hebrews (especially 3.1-6) and 1 Peter, but comes especially to the fore in the letters to Corinth and Ephesus. Perhaps that is because these two cities were filled with earthly shrines and temples and needed a living temple in their midst. Corinth was a double seaport, and its large foreign population led to a large number of foreign sanctuaries, and in Ephesus the temple of Diana had a remarkable spinoff for the local business community (Demetrius the silversmith was hardly alone).

So to Corinth Paul speaks of the church as a corporate temple.

Do you not know that you are God's temple, and that

God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and that temple you are... (1 Cor 3.16-17).

and

What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God: as God said, "I will live in them....Therefore come out, be separate...then I will welcome you, and I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters," says the Lord God Almighty (2 Cor 6.16-18).

And further, Paul also speaks of an individual Christian as a temple in 1 Corinthians 6.19. He says 'Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you...?' although this passage also has clear communal overtones. The use of house language in 2 Corinthians 5.1-10 appears to be an exception, although here also is the thought that the destruction of the old temple (or body) will be the Lord's signal for building the new. There is a striking parallel between this passage and Mark 14.58.

In the magnificent passage which speaks of the 'breaking down of the dividing wall of hostility' between Jew and Gentile (Eph 2.11-22) Paul reaches a climax in the last four verses by using six words, six derivatives of oikos, but not oikos itself, associated with this heavenly construction which is underway on earth,

So then you are no longer strangers (paroikos) and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and members of the household (oiketos) of God, built upon (epoikodomeo) the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure

(oikodoma) is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it (sunooikodomeo) for a dwelling place (katoiketerion) of God in the Spirit.

But oikos is an amazingly rich word, and Paul uses such concepts as oikonomia to describe the stewardship of our abilities, gifts and possessions (the 'managing of a household') and oikodomeo to describe both his own apostolic activity in 1 Corinthians 3.5-17, where the planting and building images are mixed, as well as the church's growth in 1 Corinthians 12-14. God's grace and gifts are intended for our use in building up, edifying and strengthening one another. In its positive sense this word always refers to the believing community.

As this happens and the church grows into him, a firm, strong 'house' and a festive, sensitive 'temple', others will want to come for a visit, or a longer stay. And the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah will be fulfilled.

And the foreigners...those will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer...for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered (Is 56.1-8),

and

...all evil neighbours: if they will diligently learn the ways of my people, to swear by My Name...then they shall be built up in the midst of My people: (Jer 12.14-17).

7.2.2.3 The House church: This family, which is growing

into a living house or temple, is part of a heavenly fellowship which is permanently in session, so Christians share a common relationship with Christ and with one another wherever they are and whatever they do. But this heavenly fellowship also needs an earthly vehicle for its expression. And here the focus of the first century church's life was the house-church: '...given the family character of the Christian community, the homes of its members provided the most conducive atmosphere in which they could give expression to the bond they had in common' (Banks 1980:61). Family and household language, and the household context for meeting, were natural partners.

Already in Acts 2, after Peter's sermon, it seems that the believers met regularly for instruction, fellowship, for the Lord's Supper (the breaking of bread), and for prayer: and they met daily for services in the Temple and fellowship meals at home (Acts 2.42-47). The same combination of temple and home is mentioned again in 5.42 and, away from Jerusalem and after the destruction of the temple and the closure of synagogues to Christians, the same public-private pattern seems to have continued, '...and teaching you (i.e. the church at Ephesus) in public and from house to house' (Acts 20.20).

Since temples had negative associations, market places and other public areas had limited use, and assembly halls such as the hall of Tyrannus in Ephesus (Acts 19.9) were quite

rare, the focus of Christian gathering and outreach took place in the homes and believers.

In Acts alone we hear of homes being used for prayer meetings, evenings of Christian fellowship, Holy Communion services, a whole night of prayer, worship and instruction, impromptu evangelistic gatherings, planned meetings in order to hear the Christian gospel, for following up seekers, and for organized instruction (Acts 12.12, 21.7, 2.46, 20.7, 16.32, 10.22, 18.26, 5.42). Paul also made great use of his 'hired house' in Rome to offer hospitality to local Jewish leaders, and to expose them to the good news of the Messiah who had already come.

We hear specifically of the upper room of Mary's house, mother of John Mark (Acts 12.12, also Acts 1.13 and the Lord's Supper venue?). It seems that this meeting place was one of many in Jerusalem (12.17). We hear of households which became centres of outreach in Philippi, in the homes of Lydia and the jailer (16.15.34). In Corinth Paul stayed with Titius Justus in a house next door to the synagogue, which was quite provocative since he had just broken with the Jews. But immediately following this, Crispus, ruler of the synagogue, believed in the lord: (Acts 18.6-8). In the same city we are told of Stephanas' household (which 'devoted themselves to the service of the saints,' 1 Cor 1.16, 16.15) and of Gaius (Rom 16.23). In Colossae Philemon had a church in his home (Phil 2) and Nympha had one in hers

(Col 4.15). The household of Onesiphorus is mentioned in 2 Timothy 1.16, 4.9. It is mentioned that Priscilla and Aquila used their home in this way both in Ephesus and in Rome (1 Cor 16.19; Rom 16.5), and in the latter city, heart of the Empire, the gospel had invaded Caesar's household. The Aristobulus of 16.10 was a great friend of Emperor Claudius, and the Narcissus of 16.11 was the Emperor's private secretary, and as such had considerable influence. Both these men led Christian households. It seems possible, finally, that the letter to the Hebrews was addressed to a house church (10.25, 13.24). It is important to emphasize in this early stage of the church's growth that a man's conversion would involve that of his whole family: wife, children, servants, and often the relatives living in the house. If someone else than the husband first experienced conversion, it could cause considerable hardship (as Jesus had foretold), but despite this, the wives and the slaves and the freedmen who became Christians in a pagan home often had great impact for good.

Looking more specifically at the logistics: the entertaining or main room in a moderately well-to-do household could hold around thirty to forty people in reasonable comfort (although windowsills were available for such as Eutychus in Acts 20.90). And they could often be smaller, so the huge Christian centres in South Africa and independent churches in the U.S.A. did not have a first century counterpart. Not until the third century do we have

evidence of special buildings constructed for Christian gatherings, and even then they were modelled on the room into which guests were received in the typical Roman or Greek household. Archaeology seems to confirm this move from private residence to more space by the likely discovery of the house of Clement underneath the present day church of St. Clement in Rome: Archaeologists have also found at Dura-Europos a home slowly renovated, and converted eventually into sole use as a worship centre. Much of this of course, had to do with the fact that Christianity was a religio illicita, an unrecognized or frowned-upon religion. Only after Constantine do we have cathedrals, etc.

On the negative side, the prevalence of house churches goes far to explain the tendency toward party strife in the early church. A physically divided church in one city often became a mentally divided church. We are familiar with the four-sided division at Corinth, with party slogans and likely places of assembly, but Paul also had to insist that his letter be read to all the brothers in Thessalonica (1 Thess 5.27): one group must not monopolize it. These tensions are still with us in the contemporary house church or cell movement, and have received a partial answer in the three tier structure in some areas of the renewal: cells weekly (8-15), congregations weekly or at least monthly (150-200) and celebrations periodically.

On the positive side we can mention at least four

contributions:

a.) They enabled Christianity to achieve a mental separation from Judaism, by giving her a place and a time to emphasize her distinctives. In a perceptive article Floyd Filson says,

The creative and controlling aspects of their faith and life were precisely those which other Jews did not share. These aspects found unhindered expression not in the temple or synagogue worship, but in the house gatherings. It was the hospitality of these homes which made possible the Christian worship, common meals, and courage-sustaining fellowship of the group. The Christian movement really rooted in these homes (Filson 1939:109).

b.) The house church setting at least partly explains the special attention paid in Paul's letters and other early Christian writings to healthy family relationships. A Christian tree would be known by its fruits in home life, and particularly in the life of the home which house the church.

c.) Such a gathering also was the training ground for the Christian leaders who were to build the church after the loss of apostolic guidance. They were usually men of some education and administrative ability, and a strong person might assume leadership in a city or area. Very often such men came

who had shown independence enough to leave their ancestral or native faith and establish contact with the synagogues. They had thus shown themselves to be men of initiative and decision. In a mission movement which required resourcefulness and courage, they were likely

candidates for leadership (Filson 1939:112).

d.) All of these factors also exercised a powerful attraction on the non-Christians who were intrigued by that they saw and heard. They valued the freedom from Jewish legalism and Jewish suspicion of foreigners, appreciated the focus on family relationships in a house setting, and liked the possible exercise of their gifts of leadership. But it was something else that finally won them over, and permanently moved them over the threshold.

The formation of the house churches, which can be explained on the basis of the missionary situation, was of the greatest significance for the spreading of the gospel. With them the early church took over the natural order of life...(Goetzmann 1926:250).

We have seen the cultural world into which Jesus sent His followers and messengers. We have also looked at a new perspective on the church's identity: as strangers, but also how she perceived the stranger, the xenos; and what the xenos would find when coming in contact with the Christian family meeting in housechurches. What needed to happen when these two got together, and what often did happen, gets us down to bedrock level in this chapter on the Spirit.

### 7.3 'You shall love the stranger....' (The purpose of N.T. Mission)

The bedrock of hospitality, secure in the heavens because it is secure in the heart of God, is love. The purpose is to

experience and express it, which is as simple as it is profound, and as difficult as it is necessary. With love as its mother, philoxenia is possible, but without this mother it soon turns into the orphan of fear. And fear breeds hostility. Since perfect love casts out fear, let's look at the two sides of experiencing it and expressing it.

7.3.1 Experiencing God's love. When someone builds a house, he does so with the intention of living in it. So with God when He made the earth, man in the garden, and ourselves. But when he came to us, He found our hearts already occupied by alien forces. First, it is critical that we recognise our starting relationship with God as one of estrangement. We are strangers, in rebellion. Secondly, this state of rebellion puts us firmly in Satan's camp. He is spoken of in the New Testament as the supreme enemy (Mt 13.39; Lk 10.17-19), and among the many names the early church had for him was ho xenos. So behind a world estranged from God stands this power which sums up all that is alien to God.

The N.T. speaks of demons dwelling in a man,

When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he passes through waterless places seeking rest, but he finds none. Then he says, "I will return to my house from which I came." And when he comes he finds it empty, swept and put in order. Then he goes and brings...seven others...and they enter and dwell there....So it shall be also with this evil generation (Mt 12.43-45).

Babylonians and also later Jewish texts spoke of a sick man

as the 'house' of an evil spirit, and also in a Jewish text a demon of poverty is made to say, 'Woe is me, he has driven me out of my house.'

A third area is that we constantly affirm (as the unredeemed) our willing choice to live against God's intentions, and for selfish ends which dehumanize us, and therefore promote Satan's plans. So Paul speaks of sin as dwelling in us (Rom 7.17-20). It comes in as a guest and by its continuous presence becomes the master of the house.

Now the gospel, the good news, is that God's Son has gone, on our behalf, into the hostile territory alien to God. He has gone as a foreigner but lived there exposed to Satan's attacks and sin's temptations, and died there experiencing estrangement from His Father in the fourth word on the cross. But the sixth word followed, and it was said with a loud voice, tetelestai, 'It is finished!'

I believe that word was spoken in three directions: to God, saying that a Man had lived in full dependence on the Father's hospitality, and had experienced the punishment for man's flight from Home and consequent hostility; to Satan that his ownership was broken, and to man that sin no longer would have dominion, and that the way Home was wide open.

For those whom God arrests on their flight, there is a profound switch of ownership. No longer can Satan dwell,

and no longer does sin have access rights, but the Father and the Son come in and 'make our home with him' (Jn 15.23), 'Christ dwells in your hearts through faith' (Eph 3.17), 'God's Spirit dwells' in the new man (1Cor 3.16; Rom 8.9-11), and even the Word of Christ and faith dwell in us (Col 3.16; 2 Tim 1.5).

And all this 'while we were yet helpless, while we were yet sinners, while yet enemies': truly has 'God's love been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit' (Rom 5.1-11). And having been transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, we become alien to the world as God Himself is. But also free to love the world as God does.

7.3.2 Expressing God's Love, also in hospitality. Yes, God had wanted a home, but from Genesis to Malachi, He had lived mainly as Father above them (Immanuel - God with us), but now as Spirit He lives within them. From Acts 2 onwards, the Holy Spirit's abiding presence has made love a more genuine option in the world. It is worthy of note that in Hebrew a whole range of different words express the concept of hate, and virtually only one root form expresses feelings associated with love; whereas in the Greek the reverse is true.

The LXX has only one word μισος for hate, whereas the Greek has several roots and derived words to express the various nuances of love (Gunther 1926:547).

Our awareness of God's love for us, his hospitality to us as sinners, will reflect to a surprising extent in our loving openness to others:

...giving is possible only because we have already received gifts from God. The believer should be constantly aware of the fact that he is in debt to God for all that he has; and so the care of others is the discharge of a debt of gratitude (Carson 1962:542).

This gratitude we are asked to express, this love, is spoken of in the N.T. in terms of both agape and philia, and the uses of these two terms are fluid and often overlap (as in the conversation between Jesus and Peter on Galilee's lakeshore, in Jn 21.5).

Agape is the spontaneous, self-sacrificing love which Christians rescued from Greek oblivion, and philia is also love or friendship. A philos or friend is someone to whom one is under basic obligation, and for our purposes it is worthwhile to note that the word friend is used of Jesus for His relationship with tax collectors and sinners, and used by Him for His relationship with His disciples. The two words agape and philoxenia are closely related in any case, and in the epistles invariably the practice of hospitality arises out of an experience of and commitment to agape ('Let love be genuine...pursue hospitality', Rom 12.9,13 and 'Above all hold unfailing your love for one another...practice hospitality', 1 Pet 4.8-9, are but examples).

I'd like to focus now on that 'love commandment', and ask some specific questions about it. It comes originally from the Pentateuch.

Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart....

...and you shall love your neighbour as yourself:  
I am the Lord (Deut 6.4-5; Lev 19.18).

This love for one God and all neighbours is combined in Jesus' teaching as complementary sides of one commandment (Mt 22.37-39; Mk 12.30-31; and Lk 10.25-28). Before Jesus' incarnation this was still imposed as a duty from without, but now after His resurrection it is inspired as a delight from within. The pillar of cloud and fire above had come down as wind and fire at Pentecost, and taken up residence within.

And Jesus was the Hinge, the Transition from one age to the other. He announced God's kingdom or reign as the kingdom and reign of love, since the citizens of that kingdom are most characterized by the fact that they receive God's love as both a gift and a command or challenge. In Jesus' struggle with the Pharisees, chief spokesman of the old age, at issue is not his devotion to the law but his interpretation of it. In Matthew especially, addressed mainly to Jews, the love commandment occurs three times, and is seen as the hermeneutical key to all the rest of the law. 'On these two commandments depend all the law and the

prophets...’ (Mt 22.40), is not only a summary, but also a statement that all other laws and statutes are to be interpreted in its light.

The pervasiveness of this commandment in the earliest Christian literature and the persistent emphasis upon its importance suggest that it probably was a characteristic part of Jesus’ teaching....The commandment in the New Testament has been incorporated into several different kinds of contexts, and thus used in several different ways (Furnish 1982:328).

Besides the three references combining the Deuteronomy and Leviticus passages, there are five occasions when N.T. authors make use of Leviticus 19.18 and its word about love to neighbour; Matthew 5.43 and 19.19, Romans 13.9 and Galatians 5.14 and James 2.8 where it is generally agreed that the ‘royal law’ refers to the neighbour love mentioned in the same verse.

Now a few questions may be asked about this ‘pervasive and important’ commandment.

7.3.2.1 Whom are we supposed to love? (Who is our neighbour?) As we have already seen in the specific passages speaking of hospitality in the N.T. there are always two concentric circles in view, the smaller composed of all my spiritual family by virtue of redemption, and the larger composed of all my human family by virtue of creation: ‘...God Himself gives to all men life and breath and everything. And He made from one (man) every nation of

men to live on all the face of the earth...' (Acts 17.25-26). We are asked to do good to all men, but let's look first at the household of faith.

i) Being 'closer to home' does not necessarily make love easier. After his conversion C.S. Lewis relates (in Surprised by Joy) that he felt he should add churchgoing to his weekly routine. He was quite upset to find in church the very same people he had been avoiding all week!

And so when Paul speaks of neighbour he speaks of fellow Christians, of spiritual family. 'Love does no wrong to the neighbour...', concludes a short paragraph which begins with the exhortation to 'love one another' (Rom 13.8-10) and later in the same letter Paul concludes the long section on showing concrete love for the weaker members of the community (14.1-15.1) with '...let each of us please his neighbour for his good, to edify him' (15.2). The only other Pauline use of neighbour is in Ephesians 4.25, '...let everyone speak the truth with his neighbour, for we are members one of another.' A church in California has recently started a system of 'assigned hospitality', where once a month 'strangers' in the church are asked to host or guest someone else within, by assignment. This stretching of familiar circles and widening of secure horizons I believe will be a significant step to taking the surrounding community and its strangers more seriously.

ii) The question asked above of course echoes the Pharisees question in Luke 10, which triggered one of Jesus' most familiar parables (Lk 10.25-37).

In place of the imperfect and often distorted love for strangers in the contemporary N.T. world, Jesus shows that unrestricted and unconditional love for the xenos is a special instance of love for the neighbour (Stählin 1967:15).

Jesus draws the circle so wide that even enemies are included. A Bedouin will also show hospitality to a mortal foe should the latter flee into his tent. But there is a profound difference: the Bedouin will kill the same person should they meet again a certain distance from the tent, whereas philoxenia knows no such limitations!

Jesus' attitude affected His followers and the early church deeply, if slowly. His Spirit was the One reminding and teaching the Church (Jn 14.25-26, 16.12-13) of all that Jesus stood for in His earthly life and teaching.

...while the gospel with its total claim excludes everything foreign from its sphere, it does not exclude foreigners from the offer of salvation, in contrast to many other religions. Neither in Greece nor Rome was the alien admitted to religious fellowship...later Judaism was very exclusive in this respect as compared to Christianity ("disclosure of the secrets of God to foreigners is a prominent characteristic of early Christianity as compared with contemporary missionary rivals, whether the Jews on the one side or the mystery religions on the other (Stählin 1967:32).

It must be stressed that saying no to foreignness and saying yes to foreigners is not unlike walking between two walls of

eggs. The early Spirit-led Christians would feel the same tension as old Testament Jews, or we, would feel. We tend to overcome the foreignness of another in two opposing ways, either by complete exclusion or by full inclusion. Israel took the first approach more and more with the nokri and the second more and more with the ger. And we can either avoid or ignore the foreigner from our lives and churches, or ask him to become completely like us, instead of more like Jesus. Hospitality, in Nouwen's already alluded-to words, creates a space where the stranger can feel free. Just enough space so that he is free to 'come to himself' and find, with the prodigal son, his way to the Father's home.

We need to hear repeatedly with our Thessalonian brothers and sisters: '...may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men...' and "See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another, and to all" (1 Thess 3.12, 5.15, also Rom 12.13-21).

7.3.2.2 How are we supposed to love the neighbour? If the answer to the 'who' is the neighbour, everywhere, then the answer to the 'how' is action, always. Scriptural love, in neither Testament, requires affection or attraction for the neighbour, but rather an attitude that leads to action. It is an attitude of respect for the other person, and a consequent commitment of oneself to support and serve him in specific and practical ways.

Jesus commonly linked love and the commandments, and clearly implied that the commitment, the choice to love, would find happy shape and expression within the contours of God's law. The Spirit living inside us after all is not a fickle Spirit of convenience and mood, but the unchanging Spirit of truth.

All the N.T. authors write in this vein, but it comes out with particular clarity in a few.

Luke has Jesus respond to the lawyer who was on the receiving end of the Good Samaritan story, and who was no doubt prepared to make some fine distinctions, 'Go and do likewise' (Lk 10.28). Furnish comments,

For Luke the problem of "neighbour" is not one of definition but of performance, and where there is performance, where one's deeds are moved and shaped by love, there is neither time nor reason to ask, "Who is my neighbour?" (Furnish 1982:331).

The story in James 2.1-10 revolves around the showing of partiality to a rich man coming into the assembly. This partiality is a sin against the 'neighbour' who in this case is the poor man. It is instructive to see that the royal law in vs. 8 is sandwiched between warnings not to violate it by this kind of blatant inhospitality (vs. 1-7, 9-10). Whether Christian or non Christian visitors are in view here is unclear and probably immaterial. James would probably say, with some exasperation, 'But I thought my point was that love doesn't make distinctions...?' Edith Schaeffer comments helpfully on this general passage,

It is like a dash of ice water in our faces when we are tempted to push aside the help that would take more time or trouble, when someone comes to us in need, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" There are times when we need to buy or make clothing for people, or share our own, and times when we need to provide food for a day or a week or a month for those who are without, before talking to them about spiritual things. Or a glass of orange juice, or a hot-water bottle and a blanket may be needed before we pray with someone who is in need of comfort and counsel (Schaeffer 1976: ?).

Possibly the most awesome Scripture, with which we can close this question, is John 13.34-35, 'By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, by the love you have for one another.' Jesus gives the watching world a tool to test the credibility of His followers: do they know how to love (starting with one another) in visible and practical ways (Van Swigchem 1955:all)?

7.3.2.3 Why are we supposed to love the neighbour? And specifically that dimension of philia which expresses itself in philoxenia? We have indicated several reasons along the way, but may attempt a brief summary here.

a.) The understanding and practice of hospitality will be a window on our understanding of ourselves, and God. Are we deeply aware of our homeless and hopeless state without Him? Do we know ourselves as those who have been captured by divine loving pursuit or, to switch the illustration, as

those who stumbled with guilt and shame into the arms of a waiting Father? As we portray on hundreds of home-oriented canvases the giving of hospitality, we better understand the large canvas of John 3.16 of a God who gave the best in order to bring us into His family. (One wonders if those who show little or no hospitality are under the illusion that they themselves have never been away from 'Home'...?)

b.) Secondly, hospitality will give us a window on our understanding of Jesus' work. He died to transfer our citizenship from a kingdom of fear to a kingdom of love,

...bondage to our fears and suspicions is a delight to the evil one. Bondage to fear keeps us from welcoming strangers who worship with us and prevents us from inviting those we do not know from sharing a meal with us. Jesus' resurrection teaches us that the one who induces these fears has been overcome, and for us to give in to these fears is to place ourselves on the side of the vanquished and not in the hands of the Victor (Engelhard 1982:9).

Why love the neighbour? Because whether love or fear has the upper hand will tell us which side of the resurrection we are on.

c.) Thirdly, hospitality as a facet of that larger love will tell us whether the Spirit of love and power really dwells in us, or whether He is treated like an inauspicious or even awkward guest. The N.T. target of love, in its audacity and its sweep a source of decision or despair for non-Christians, is entirely practical and 'within reach' for

those who see themselves as part of a community called and empowered by God's Spirit. The commandment to love

both presupposes and in itself affirms that those to whom it is addressed have been graced by the creating, redeeming, renewing and empowering love of God (Furnish 1982:332)

and His Spirit. We are freed to see our lives as a good gift, to be given away or invested in the life of another.

d.) As we give ourselves, and often the freedom, security, and possessions of our home, a gracious and generous God uses our guests to bless us. This may seem a selfish reason for hospitality, but it is mentioned here only after we begin to see how a hospitable Trinity has begun to make us feel at Home.

As God the Guest in the Garden of Eden brought Adam a wife, so Abraham and Manoah were rewarded with divine visits and revelation. And the first century hosts scattered all over the Roman Empire must have received much from their guests. The travelling evangelists would paint visions of faraway joy, and persecuted Christians would tell tales of faraway need, and in each case the host would see his world, and his church, expanding right under his roof. And God is still waiting to shower his gifts through numerous 'angels unaware'.

e.) But perhaps the most compelling reason to love our

neighbour, to extend hospitality, is that we can give him something. Within the natural and comfortable confines of our home we can tell him about a better and more permanent place of security, and as host we can introduce him to a more gracious and personal Host. Paul Little, InterVarsity evangelism specialist, was always fond of saying that the greatest favour we can do for another person is to introduce <sup>or her</sup> him to the Lord. And what better place than in our homes? 'Only You, O lord, make me dwell in safety' (Ps 4.8). This is our evangelistic message: to be with God is to be at 'Home'.

And perhaps in some mysterious way the practice of hospitality as an avenue of evangelism ('inreach' rather than 'outreach'?) can hasten the return of Jesus, even as an ignoring or refusal of its practice can delay that return. Peter speaks of the End,

Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God...(2 Pet 3.11-12).

and William Manson observes,

The parousia (Jesus' coming) lay right over the path of the world mission, and its coming would be conditioned by the fulfilment of the missionary task (Manson 1953:225).

It will be a real joy to see many who have been across the threshold of our homes also cross the Threshold of God's 'Home' in baptism, and fill the empty places at the repeated agape love feasts until finally a Heavenly Voice says,

'Come, for all is ready...' (Lk 14.17).

It seems right that we should conclude the New Testament and Scriptural section of our study with a few comments about Revelation.

Early on in John's vision, the risen Christ is still at work in numerous places and ways in history, extending invitations,

Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with Me (Rev 3.20).

But at the conclusion of history all these separate homes and scattered places of table fellowship are gathered into one.

And all who have died and gone to be with Jesus and have become acquainted with their 'dwelling places', will join those who are still alive and will be citizens together of 'that holy city, the new Jerusalem, which will come down out of heaven from God' (Rev 21.2). Heaven is only a temporary solution. God had made us to live on earth (Ps 115.16; Mt 5.5). Via heaven we go back to earth again and that spacious city is the final goal of God's restoration. Jesus will enter this earthly city in triumph (Barker, Lane, & Michaels 1969:152), and 'righteousness will dwell there' (2 Pet 3.13).

And we mustn't think that it will be a cozy little place: In visionary language John tells us about the measurements of his city...(Rev 21.16). The NIV informs us that 12,000 stadia is 1400 miles: Imagine a cube 1400 miles long, wide and high. God wants to get across to us that the new city will have room for untold millions; it will be a house of true hospitality (Kuntz 1982:17).

### SECTION THREE : CHURCH HISTORY

How great is the power of hospitality! Receive Christ at your tables so that you can be received by Him in the banquet of the kingdom!

(Pope Gregory the Great, c.600 A.D.)

The story of church history is that the dwelling places have been reserved but empty, and the banquet prepared but waiting, while untold millions still remain untold. Before we look at the present challenge of being sunergoi, co-workers with God, of getting His work done and of the exciting role that hospitality can play in this, we need to take a brief look at the bridge of history that unites us to the Biblical world. Winston Churchill observed that, 'the further backward we look, the further forward we can see'. This holds especially true for the world of Abraham and his descendants, but also for the world of the apostles and their descendants.

And here we face a problem. The hospitality understood and practised by God's people in Old Testament Israel and in the New Testament Roman Empire is fairly well documented for us in Scripture. As soon as the living voices of the Scriptural world die away towards the close of the first century, it becomes harder and harder to discover and document how God's people understood philoxenia and how they used their open hearts and, often, their open homes as an expression of love and an avenue for the Gospel. The bridge is undoubtedly there, connecting the Biblical world with our own, but as we travel on it with the apostles and their

successors, we become more and more shrouded in fog. For a proper study which is honest to the specific focus of this paper on hospitality, we would have to depend on casual and incidental remarks scattered about in general works of church history and various other sources. I have not had access to such sources, or the time in any case to explore such references with a view to establishing trends or patterns. My suspicion is that in the ebb and flow of church history, its periods of remarkable growth and its times of appalling stagnation, the practice of hospitality would accurately reflect the church's awareness of her own mission, and her commitment to reach out to the lost inside and outside her boundaries. Such an exhaustive study I will need to leave to others.

I wish to limit our study to the first thousand years or so of church history. After this point, specific material on hospitality is difficult to find.

For our purposes of focusing on hospitality, three main areas in that 1000 year period will be examined.

In the first period the church is still remarkably united, strengthened by a common stance against heresies from within, and socio-political harassment and persecution from without. Tertullian could say, 'All churches are one, and the unity of the churches is shown by their peaceful intercommunication, the title of brethren, and the bond of

hospitality' (Harnack 1904:220) (underlining mine). After Constantine's victory over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in October of 312, the status of Christianity radically changed. Emperor Theodosius declared it the state religion in 380 A.D. and the first heretic lost his life for failing to appreciate the new order just five years later. In protest against the church's new association with power, and its superior stance and attitude, the scattered monasteries of the Middle Ages arose.

It is important to emphasize that, although the split of the 'one body' after Constantine into the 'skeleton' of the mainline Church and the 'circulatory and nervous system' of the monastic orders was a tragic one, it was not entirely one-sided. The early church already had some problems with static offices such as bishop, elder, deacon swallowing up the dynamic gifts of apostle and prophet, and these 'bones' stuck out more obviously after Constantine's Edict and its implications.

But bones are needed for order, stability, and visibility. And the charitable face of the mainline church associated with the office of bishop and the institution of hospitals come to expression mainly in this facet of the church. It was for the most part a positive development.

Running concurrent with this, on a less visible level, were the numerous and independent monasteries, the blood cells

and nerve endings of vibrant faith in a thousand scattered places. The 'office' of abbot and institution of the hospice (continuation of an earlier development) came to expression here. To switch from the body illustration, if the Church saw itself as the main edifice, caring for its own and compelling all others to come in (Lk 14.23), the monasteries were the somewhat rebellious son or daughter who had decided to live in a cottage at the edge of the property. The watchful eye of 'mother church' still provided support and protection, but occasionally turned to suspicion when she wondered who was being entertained in the cottage, and why. The seeds of monastic life grew sprouts in such movements as the Lollards and Waldenses, and such men as Wyclif and Hus, and culminated in a restless monk's nailing 95 objections to a Wittenberg church door in 1517.

Let's look at each of these: the early church, and the twofold split after Constantine, in turn.

## CHAPTER EIGHT : ACTS 29 AND BEYOND

We have seen that, 'In the Gospels the custom of hospitality plays an extraordinarily important role' (Stahlin 1967:20), and that, '...in early Christian hospitality one sees an ultimate medium of Christianity's growth' (Riddle 1938:154). And it will be good to see that, from now until the Constantinian change, the church

...saw herself as part of God's compassionate dealings with the world, conscious of the fact that God...has begun something new and has now involved His church in this. She knew that mission was no triumphal procession in a worldly sense, but would unfold itself according to Paul's confession: "When I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor 12.10) - a statement which Ernst Fuchs calls the most famous paradox in the New Testament. The Church also knew that she could not tackle this superhuman task in her own power; she was involved in it, indeed, with complete surrender, but she also knew that this was nothing but a normal outflow of the fact that she shared in the resurrection of Christ and had received the Holy Spirit. Mission was the activity of the indwelling Christ (Bosch 1980:86).

A fascinating part of the portrait of these first couple centuries is the role played by the dwelling in this 'indwelling'. Let's look at the home, then at its contacts with those near, both friend and foe, and finally at the contacts with those from afar!

### 8.1 Home: The Source of Hospitality.

Michael Green says it well,

The emphasis on the house as the fundamental unit of society had a long history both in Israelite and Roman culture....The family, understood as

consisting of blood relations, slaves, clients and friends, was one of the bastions of Graeco-Roman society. Christian missionaries made a deliberate point of gaining whatever households they could as lighthouses, so to speak, from which the gospel could illuminate the surrounding darkness.... Meetings in the house, in a family setting, had many advantages," ...the comparatively small numbers involved made real interchange of views and informed discussion among the participants possible; there was no artificial isolation of a preacher from his hearers, there was no temptation for either the speaker or the heckler to 'play to the gallery' as there was in a public place or open-air meeting. The sheer informality and relaxed atmosphere of the home, not to mention the hospitality which must often have gone with it, all helped to make this form of evangelism particularly successful...Celsus complained of it: it was in private houses that the wool-workers and the cobblers, the laundry workers and the yokels whom he so profoundly despised did their proselytizing. Even the children were taught that if they believed they would become happy, and make their home happy as well (Green 1970:250-53).

An interesting sidelight is the use of decorations in making the home not only a centre for Christian life, but also of outreach. Archaeology has uncovered numerous mosaics and paintings showing a variety of Christian symbols. What is of special interest is that these symbols are often hidden among more 'neutral' ones, and would be recognized by fellow Christians, but would be intended to arouse curiosity and questions from others. A picture of several oranti (a figure with arms outstretched in prayer) was found in Pompeii, with most figures keeping their upper arms by the side of their bodies (a posture confirmed by other oranti of pagan origin), whereas a few Christian figures stretch out their whole arms in praise or supplication. The difference was subtle, and no doubt intended as a conversation opener.

Other examples were the ichthus (Jesus Christ, of God The Son, Saviour ichthus) and the Rotas Sator square (Green 1970:398-400). This use of art and visual aids was most intriguing and in its subtlety far more winsome than our occasional seating of guest beneath the plaque 'Jesus is the Guest in this Home, silent listener to every conversation...', or the temptation to slip a tract into his sandwich....

But family convictions would be unheard, and mosaic messages unseen, if the early Christians did not have natural and frequent contact with non-Christians around them. And the evidence suggests that they experienced to an amazing degree a life of 'praising God, and having favour with all the people' (Acts 2.47).

8.2 Hospitality shown to those near....The story of the early Christians' philia and philoxenia is such a lovely one that we can perhaps capture it best by a series of quotes: quotes by them, and about them (the latter by friend and foe, both then and now. All underlinings are mine).

8.2.1 The church's focus was love. It seemed quite obvious that the early church lived in the echo of her Master's voice in John 13.34-35, 'By this shall all men know that you are my disciples...', for they truly loved one another. The new language on the lips and in the lives of Christians was the language of love.

It is our care for the helpless, our practice of loving kindness that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. "Only look" they say, "look how they love one another" (they themselves being given to mutual hatred). "Look how they are prepared to die for one another!" (they themselves being readier to kill one another) (Tertullian) (Harnack 1904:184).

And the same author comments about the visitation of the sick,

Who would be willing to let his wife go through street after street to other men's houses, and indeed to the poorer cottages, in order to visit the brethren (Tertullian) (Harnack 1904:199)?

And listen to the words of their enemies,

By secret signs and marks they manage to recognize one another, loving each other almost before they are acquainted. (the pagan Caecilius in Minucius V Felix LX.3)

And Lucian in his satire speaks of the treatment a Christian received after his arrest,

...the Christians, looking upon the things as a misfortune, left no stone unturned in their efforts to secure his release. Then when this proved to be impracticable, they all the time zealously rendered to him ministries of every sort....They were accustomed to bring in all sorts of food, and read their sacred scriptures. Moreover, certain of them came even from the cities of Asia, sent by Christians from the common charge, to help the man and advocate his cause and comfort him. They became incredibly alert when anything occurs which affects their common interests. And what is more...many contributions of money came to Peregrinus at that time, and he made no little income out of it. (Lucian, Of the Death of Peregrinus 11-13)

Green summarizes this unusual fellowship,

the early church had a remarkable fellowship. Master and slave ate together. Jew and Greek ate together: unparalleled in the ancient world.

Their fellowship was so vital that their leadership could be drawn from different races and cultures and colours and classes. Here was a fellowship in Christ which transcended all natural groupings and barriers. There was nothing like it anywhere - and there still isn't. (Michael Green, in an address to the 1974 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization).

8.2.2 The church's focus was outward love. It is possible, and has all too often happened, that such love turns inward and slowly drifts into a sacred ghetto or holy huddle that equates separation with isolation. But the early church remembered the purpose of salt and light.

From the very outset Christianity came forward with a spirit of universalism, by dint of which it laid hold of the entire life of man in all its functions, thoughts, and actions. This guaranteed its triumph....From the very first it embraced humanity and the world, despite the small number of elect whom it contemplated (Harnack 1904:145).

And Tertullian replies to a charge of Christians 'being quite useless in practical affairs':

How so? How can that be when such people dwell beside you, sharing your way of life, your dress, your habits, and the same needs of life. We are no Brahmins or Indian gymnosophists, dwelling in woods and exiled from life....We stay beside you in this world, making use of the forum, the provision market, the bath, the booth, the workshop, the inn, the weekly market, and all other places of commerce. We sail with you, fight at your side, till the soil with you, and traffic with you: we likewise join our technical skill to that of others, and make our works public property for your use (Tertullian in Apologies x/ii).

And we hear from Justin (Martyr) contrasting past and present ways of Christians,

We who valued above all things the acquisition of wealth and possessions, now bring what we have into a common stock, and share with everyone in need; we who hated and destroyed one another and because their manners were different would not live with men of a different tribe, now, since the coming of Christ, live familiarly with them, and pray for our enemies (Riddle 1938:142).

8.2.3 The church's focus was active love. And that contact with others, and love for others, took specific steps and form and action.

We hear from Justin again,

...and they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit, and what is collected is deposited with the leader, who aids widows and orphans and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want; and those who are under arrest, and the strangers stopping with us (Riddle 1938:143).

Aristides, defending Christians before Hadrian, agrees with this picture,

Christians...never fail to help widows and orphans. If a man has something, he gives it freely to the man who has nothing. If they see a stranger, Christians take him home and treat him like a real brother. If someone is poor and there isn't enough food to go around, they fast several days to give him the food he needs. This is really a new kind of person. There is something divine in them (Kirk).

In just a few lines the Didache resolves the tension between the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the Gospel,

Share everything with your brother. Do not say it is private property! If you share what is everlasting, you should be even more willing to share things which do not last (Didache).

Our compassion give away more money in the streets than yours does in the temples! (Tertullian, in Apologies x/ii).

Harnack lists ten groups who were on the receiving end of Christian compassion: those in need of alms, teachers and officials, widows and orphans, the sick, infirm, and disabled, prisoners and people languishing in mines, poor people needing burial and the dead in general, slaves, those suffering from a great calamity, those in need of work, and 'care of brethren on a journey, or of churches in poverty or any peril.'

In a situation such as the great plague in the days of Maximinus Daza,

Then did they show themselves to the heathen in the clearest light. For the Christians were the only people who amid such terrible ills showed their fellow-feeling and humanity by their actions. Day by day some would busy themselves with attending to the dead and burying them (for there were numbers to whom no-one else paid any heed): others gathered in one spot all who were afflicted with hunger throughout the whole city, and gave bread to them all. When this became known, people glorified the Christian's God and, convinced by the very facts, confessed the Christians alone were truly pious and religious (Harnack 1904:214-15).

8.2.4 The church's focus was hospitable love. And no wonder! 'By this shall all men know....' And as has already been hinted at so far, a vital and vibrant expression of this love was hospitality shown to Christians and non-Christians alike. Already in c. 96 A.D. Clement the bishop of Rome could write to the church in Corinth in this

way,

Who did not admire your sober and forbearing Christian piety? Who did not proclaim the splendid style of your hospitality? and writes further in this way,

For the sake of his faith and hospitality, Abraham had a son given him in his old age. For his hospitality and piety was Lot saved from Sodom. For the sake of her faith and hospitality was Rahab saved (I. Clement 1.11, X.7, XI.1, XII.1).

In the second century Melito, bishop of Sardis, wrote a book specifically on this topic which has unfortunately been lost. Many churches developed rules about the conduct of hospitality, and we also find them in the canons of the Synod of Elvita and the Synod of Arles. Monthly collections were taken to meet the needs of various parepidemoi and xenoi. (Much later Gregory would write Augustine in England, directing that offerings of the faithful should be subjected to a fourfold division, with the first portion going to the bishop and his household, on account of hospitality and entertainment).

That helps us focus on the central role of the bishop. Ever since Paul's directives to Timothy and Titus, the bishop's house had above all others been open to the traveller, who not only found food and shelter there but was provided with the means to continue his journey. In some cases the bishop was also a physician so that medical attention was available. The sick were also cared for in the valetudinaria of the wealthier Christians who in the spirit

of charity extended hospitality to those who could not be accommodated in the bishop's house. Late in this period preceding Constantine the separate quarters or hospice (Latin: hospitium, a guest house) came into its own, attached to or near to the bishop's quarters and providing shelter for the sick, the poor, the orphans, the old, the traveller, and the needy of every kind. Under supervision of the bishops, the latter would often assign priests to oversee the spiritual and temporal affairs of these places. Women and especially widows (1 Tim 5.10) were also heavily involved. The pandoxeion or inn of Jesus' parable in Luke 10 had quite a legacy!

The Shepherd of Hermas accorda praise for

bishops and hospitable persons who at all times received God's slaves into their houses gladly and without hypocrisy, and the bishops always ceaselessly sheltered the destitute and the widows by their ministration... (Riddle 1978:142) (Hermas in Sim 9, 27, 2).

In the Didascalia Apostolorum (ii, 3-4), a work of the third century, much stress is laid upon generous and hospitable instincts as desirable qualities in a bishop-elect. Tertullian, a favourite of ours so far in this journey, warns his wife against marrying a heathen should he (Tertullian) die before her, on the grounds that a Christian brother would not get a spiritual reception in an alien household. Cyprian of Carthage also has a fascinating comment, writing to his clergy while he was in a hideaway

during persecution.

I beg you will attend carefully to the widows, and sick people, and all the poor. You may also pay the expenses of any strangers who may be in need, out of my own portion which I left with my fellow presbyter Rogatianus. In case it should be all used, I hereby forward by the hands of Naricus the acolyte another sum of money, so that the sufferers may be dealt with more promptly and liberally (Harnack 1904:221).

The council of Nicaea will later urge that 'Houses of hospitality must be built for the poor in every city and every diocese', and later still John Chrysostom strongly commends that each family become a microcosm of the hospitality of the church, 'Let every family have a room where Christ is welcomed in the person of the hungry and thirsty stranger.'

Where motivation was sought in Scripture for the practice of hospitality, that familiar passage from Matthew 25 was frequently used, as was Paul's strong appeal in Romans 12.13. For churches that saw themselves as paroikia: outposts of heaven on earth, the favourite Old Testament models were 'the patriarchs, whose status as political aliens was regarded as the outward form of a deeper homelessness. Israel in Egypt when it was a paroikos en ge allotria (a sojourner in a strange land) and in the Jewish Dispersion, whose characteristic terminology was richly used by the NT in its new sense - one aspect of the appropriation of Jewish prerogatives by the new Israel' (Stahlin 1967:31). (It quite excited me to find this after I had sketched out

my four 'pictures' of the Old Testament. The three of movement and pilgrimage are all here, but the static one of David's reign, and the disciples question in Acts 1.6, is missing. But wait, Constantine is just over the horizon....)

And so the early church was on a pilgrimage, and always seeking to invite more fellow travellers to join her. We might use St. Basil's question (If you live alone, whose feet will you wash?) in another context, 'If you travel alone, how will you find the way?' In a section full of guides, let's close with another one.

The spontaneous communication of the gospel by the members of the church appears to have increased rather than diminished in the early post-apostolic age. In fact, up to the issuance of the Edict of Milan in AD 312, the spontaneous transmission of the gospel by the life and witness of ordinary church members appears to have been one of the chief reasons for the rapid spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. The evidence for this fact is often indirect but it is, nevertheless, conclusive. Adolf Von Harnack, who stresses the missionary power of Christian conduct, has called attention to the fact that not only confessors and martyrs, but all who seriously professed Christianity served in propagating the faith. Informal missionaries, women as well as men, made a profound impression on their pagan neighbours by a moral life which stood in sharp contrast to paganism (Kromminga 1977:44).

### 8.3 Hospitality shown to those from afar.

Local missionaries had an amazing amount of contact with worldwide missionaries, a delightful aspect of the first few centuries. Local hospitality was focused on a wide and sweeping range of human need, both spiritual and physical.

This was extended, in home and hospice, to the needs of the family, those inside the household, as well as the needs of the stranger, those outside the household. In the latter sense, hospitality served wonderfully as a vehicle for the communication of the gospel. 'Hospitality doesn't replace evangelism, but is its indispensable preparation (onvoorwaardelijke vooronderstelling), and enhances it in every way....A real communication of the gospel, in a real contact, in a real encounter, is going to reveal footprints and traces of this hospitality...' (Wessels 1979:42). This undoubtedly describes the situation in countless first and second century homes.

But hospitality also served the gospel in another way, as wide travel became a common feature in Hellenistic life in a way that had not been true in classical times. This was encouraged by the greater safety and ease of travelling on Roman roads under Roman protection. Barnabas, Peter, Paul and his colleagues are probably not exceptions. Aquila and Priscilla moved from Rome to Corinth to Ephesus. Such travel and the consequent communication network was crucial in an age when the statement 'I believe in one holy, catholic church' was really little more than an article of faith.

It is important to remember that in the beginning it was people, not documents, that spread the good news about Jesus. It was the spoken word, the human voice, which

carried the message. And so Papias', the bishop of Hieropolis, experience was probably not unusual,

...he made a practice of asking minutely of all who could inform him what those who had been with Jesus used to say...it was in his capacity as host that he did this. He was carrying out the injunction expressed in the Pastorals that the bishop should practice hospitality. Thus while offering hospitality to travellers he enquired of them what Andrew, or Philip or Matthew or others who had been with Jesus, had said: he thought that he could learn more in this way than from books. He preferred the "living and the abiding voice" to written documents. He preferred the oral gospel to the written gospels. He received, no doubt, voluminous oral tradition from the travelling Christians whom he entertained. But this practice, and the results accruing from it, should be applied to others than noteworthy persons and officials. Humble people heard, and humble people told, the stories of Jesus..." (Riddle 1938:149-50).

This also helps to explain the interrelationship and the fast spread of the four Gospels (especially the Synoptics) which were originally intended very likely for a local community: Matthew for an Antioch church under pressure, Mark for Rome, and so on.

And of course, hospitality was not only a maximum way of spreading The News, but also of spreading the news, and in many rooms across the Empire shared meals and late night discussions would help Paul's word to the Corinth church to come alive. 'If one member suffers all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together.' And the concern for the distant guest would not vanish when he crossed the threshold of one's house and passed beyond the city gates. The local host and local church would continue

to pray, to send correspondence, and to meet specific needs when this was possible (such as the churches' collection for a famine-stricken 'mother church' in Jerusalem). I can personally well imagine the joyful experience of such a guest in being a vehicle for information and encouragement.

But someone is bound to come along and take advantage of such a worthwhile institution. And many documents reveal that the early church had to struggle with heretics and with loafers. The magnitude of the problem seems to indicate the magnitude of travel, and the number of people who were on the roads from one place to another.

Lk 10.7, '...do not go from house to house', already reflects this situation, and soon letters of episcopal recommendation are introduced in which a home church vouches for the character and intentions of the one needing hospitality (Rom 16.1; 2 Cor 3.1). Whereas the early church was often so sensitive to the stranger that they forgot to be sensible, our present day problem is probably the reverse; we are so often sensible and security conscious about who comes in the front door that sensitivity quietly leaves by the back door.

A quaint document from the early second century, the Didache, reflects this situation. It has remarkable similarities with 2 and 3 John. About wandering prophets and teachers it says,

Whosoever then comes and teaches you all these things aforesaid, receive him. If the teacher teaches another doctrine to destroy these things, do not listen to him, but if his teaching be for the increase of righteousness and knowledge of the Lord receive him as the Lord....An apostle who comes to you...is not to remain with you more than one day, or if need be a second as well, but if he stay three days he is a false prophet. And when an apostle goes forth let him accept nothing but bread till he reach his night's lodging; but if he ask for money he is a false prophet...not everyone who speaks in a spirit is a prophet, except he have the behaviour of the Lord. From his behaviour, then, the false prophet and the true prophet shall be known. And no prophet who orders a meal in a spirit shall eat of it: otherwise he is a false prophet...and whosoever shall say in a spirit, "Give me money, or something else", you shall not listen to him, but if he tell you to give on behalf of others in want, let none judge him (Lake, tr 1952:324-27).

And about general travellers the same author says,

Let every one who comes in the Name of the Lord be received; but when you have tested him you shall know him....If he who comes is a traveller, help him as much as you can, but he shall not remain with you more than two days, or, if need be, three. And if he wishes to settle among you and has a craft, let him work for his bread. But if he has no craft provide for him according to your understanding, so that no man shall live among you in idleness because he is a Christian. But if he will not do so, he is making traffic of Christ, beware of such (Lake, tr 1952:324-27).

So the word was to leave or labour, and the church provided work: (See also 2 Thess 3, 6-15).

Hermas, Ignatius and others urge the same discernment. Hermas describes a false prophet as one who exalts himself, talks too much, lives luxuriously, and demands a reward else

he will not prophesy. He also shuns the larger assembly and prophecies to small groups in a corner, deceiving them. And so the door of hospitality, which is wide open to so many, is also shut to some: the false prophets and heretics (3 Jn 10), the loafers (2 Thess 3) and excommunicated Christians, (1 Cor 5.11-12). Just to show that hospitality had this realistic side of caution and good sense, we have on record the caustic play on words by Origen: hospitem velut hostem vitatis, which I have had reliably translated as 'Avoid a guest as though he were an enemy!'

CHAPTER NINE : THE CHURCH AS 'TEMPLE' - 312 A.D. ff

The status of God's people shifted dramatically in the fourth century. Bosch puts his finger right on the implications of this shift.

One of the most important consequences of the "Constantinian turning-point" was that the Church lost her pilgrim character. In the light of the New Testament the Church-in-mission may never be completely at home in the world (cf Heb 13.13). She is, according to her very nature, a community on the move, a fragment of God's kingdom in the world, not identical to the kingdom and yet closely related to it. In the centuries before Constantine, in spite of many adaptations to the world and increasing haziness about her mission, she remained pilgrim. The hostile - or at best, tolerating attitude of the Roman authorities helped to remind the Church that she fitted nowhere but remained a stranger in this world. All this changed with Constantine...the Church made herself at home in the world as dispenser of salvation... (Bosch 1980:103).

Essentially it was a rejection of the patriarchal, Exodus and Exile models in favour of a Davidic Kingdom one.

Harnack already saw 'In this sign, conquer', as the sign indicating the battle at the end of the Roman Empire as to which God was the strongest; the Christian God or the pagan gods. And A. Wessels comments, 'The momentous turning from paganism to Christianity thus initially took place in the army. The public recognition of Christian worship actually got its start here....Christus Victor: The God of the Christians had revealed Himself as a warlike and triumphant God' (Wessels 1979:10)!

The same author also relates the story of Clovis' response to another victory in 496 by being baptized with 3000 of his men. Legend says that they were baptized with their right arms raised above their heads, indicating that the Christian God could have everything except their sword-arms. And he observes, 'In the light of the subsequent history of Europe and its thousand years and more of triumphalism, the legend is probably one of the most true stories' (Wessels 1979:14)!

Perhaps we should say more accurately that the Church completely misunderstood the timing of that Davidic Kingdom one. After all, Jesus accepted Bartimaeus' address of him as the 'Son of David' and Paul spoke of Jesus' Davidic roots to a church in the capital of a power-conscious Empire (Rom 1.3). Scripture affirms that 'The heavens are the Lord's heavens, but the earth He has given to the sons of men' and 'the meek shall inherit the earth' (Ps 115.16; Mt 5.5) but it will happen only when God Himself will inaugurate the new heavens and the new earth.

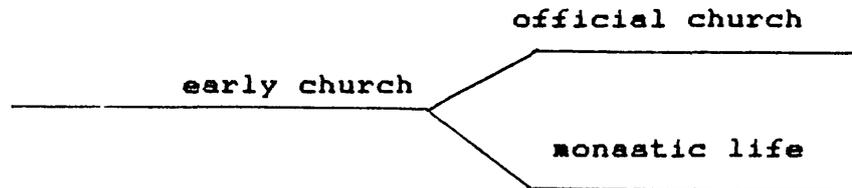
Perhaps the Church in the fourth Century stopped the journey, and unpacked her suitcases, much too soon. Detachment from the world gave way to attachment, and appreciation of the State's favour to an imitation of the State's attitude of viewing society from the top. An active leadership and a passive populace gave way to an assimilation of the State's power. Her hands free of 'suitcases', she was free to accommodate much more in the

way of wealth and privileges. A fusion (and confusion) was soon underway between 'das Volk' and 'das Volk Gottes', where membership of the one by birth and of the other by baptism were virtually synonymous. This deadly fusion still persists in much of northern European Lutheranism and southern European Catholicism, and as far away as DRC Afrikanerdom in South Africa.

In this setting it is virtually impossible to speak of hospitality as a means of outreach. We can speak of words of mercy and charity in which the Church cares for its own, and we should not minimize that the needy and the suffering perhaps often saw in this compassionate face of the Church the compassionate Person of the Church's Lord. We do see many practical ways in which the principle of hospitality was applied to invalids and weary travelers. So we will take a brief look at these developments from the Milvian Bridge onwards. Until the persecution was over modern hospitals were unthinkable. It is quite certain that after Constantine's conversion the Christians used their greater freedom to provide hospitals for the care of the sick.

In the course of time hospices of a general character ceased, and special establishments were erected for the particular needs of people. The term hospice began to be applied only to institutions in which travelers were harboured, and were generally on pilgrimage routes or less inhabited areas, and were in charge of monks. We'll see

more of this when we get to the 'lower level' of our diagram.



The first hospitals then evolved out of the hospices (xenodoxia, hospitia) since strangers and travellers who fell ill would call forth the greatest pity. H. Bolkestein asks the question why the xenodocheion had such a shift in meaning from a place harbouring pilgrims (common in antiquity at sacred Greek and Roman sites) to a place harbouring the sick and the poor as well, and answers his own question by suggesting the population increase of Christians after Constantine combined with the sharply worsening economic situation in Europe just a few decades after this Emperor's death. He also says that bishops often made use of ancient pilgrimage housing sites for new Christian purposes (Bolkestein 1937:3).

The story of the first hospital, opened in 370 A.D. in Edessa, Syria, is worth repeating,

The town of Edessa, being afflicted by famine, the hermit Ephraim came forth from his seclusion to upbraid the rich with their hardheartedness in allowing the poor to die instead of devoting a part of their superfluous wealth to their relief. "That wealth which you are so carefully amassing", he said to them, "will only serve to condemn you,

while you are losing your own souls, which are worth more than all the treasures on earth!" Persuaded by these words, the rich people of Edessa informed him of their inability to decide upon the person to be entrusted with the distribution of their wealth, as the people of their acquaintance were all covetous and might put it to wrong use. "And," Ephraim asked them, "what is your opinion of me?" "You are an honest man", they replied, "and we shall gladly give you charge of the distribution of our alms." He there upon received large sums of money from them, and immediately ordered about three hundred beds to be fitted up in the public porches, and there attention was devoted to all those suffering from the effects of the famine - strangers and inhabitants alike' (Bonet - Maury 1913:804).

Basil, bishop of Caesarea (in Cappadocia) also opened a hospital in 375 A.D., consisting of several houses, and in Constantinople in 400 A.D. we first find the 'special establishments' referred to earlier. John Chrysostom built these and placed each under the charge of two faithful priests, with physicians, cooks and workmen as assistants.

The buildings were:

- 1) Xenodochium or inn for stranger travellers
- 2) Hosocomium - home for the treatment of acute complaints
- 3) Lobotrophium - shelter for crippled and chronic invalids
- 4) Orphanotrophium - home for the reception of orphans
- 5) Gerontotrophium - home for old people
- 6) Ptochotrophium - home for the reception of the poor
- 7) Padochium - a refuge for all kinds of destitutes

In the West, the division was more simply between the

hospitals, a charge of bishops, and the hospices associated with monasteries. Jerome advises bishops to keep their houses open to strangers and sufferers in the cause of truth, and their tables at the service of the poor. Augustine started a hospital in his own house, and often sat down at the same table with his guests. The custom of seeing the bishop as the focus of hospitality continued to the eve of the Reformation, although more and more the sick and influential experienced it inside, and the poor outside (Heal 1982:544-63). Charlemagne ordered that a hospital should be attached to each cathedral and monastery. We could cite many other instances of this concern of the church for the sick and the suffering in her midst.

Situations of special need would call forth special effort, and this explains the many orders associated with the Crusades. They were autonomous and strictly military, such as the Templars; or medical, such as a special work among lepers. The best known order was probably the Hospitallery of St. John of Jerusalem, who continued a long tradition of hospitality for the well, and care for the sick pilgrims to the Holy Land. Founded probably around 1100 A.D. by Gerhard, the orders lived by the Augustinian rule and were initially a work of mercy, caring for the sick and wounded. But they also assumed a military character and were weakened by struggles with the Templars and the Fall of Jerusalem to Saladin the Turk in 1107 A.D. They were later known as the Knights of Rhodes and the Knights of Malta, and their story

is one that goes steadily downhill.

Rather than follow this trend let's focus instead on what happened on the fringes of Christendom. The 'lower level' of the monastic life had a great influence from about 500 A.D. onwards and continues to fascinate and attract even to the present day.

Let's close this chapter with a quote, fittingly enough, from the New Catholic Encyclopedia, 'The origin of the institutions of the early and late Middle Ages that we now call hospitals, was the hospice. The Christian virtue of hospitality had broad significance, its application extending to embrace various forms of assistance, both individual and collective, and to meet a diversity of needs...' (Nasalli-Rocca 1967:159).

CHAPTER TEN : CHURCH AS 'MONASTERY' - 312 A.D. FF

About a century or so after Constantine, Europe sank into chaos. The Roman Empire collapsed as it was battered by barbarian invasions from without, and political and moral decay from within. And the Church offered little hope as it was distant, formal and too often and too closely tied to failing political institutions. The most creative response during these long years was monasticism.

They, the residents of these hundreds of scattered and independent monasteries, assumed the mantle of the martyrs of an earlier age. They were men of deep piety, committed in a disciplined and sacrificial way to spiritual goals, in the midst of a world spinning in selfish confusion. D.D. Knowles captures this influence well.

For some five hundred years (c. 650-1150) in Italy and the countries of Europe north and west of Italy (with the important exception of the Celtic civilization), monastic life based on the Rule of St. Benedict was increasingly the norm and exercised from time to time a paramount influence on the spiritual, intellectual, liturgical and apostolical life of the Western Church. In other words, during these centuries, the only type of religious life available in the countries concerned was monastic, and the ruling monasteries code was the Rule of St. Benedict...monastic influence of one kind or another continued to be dominant in the Church until the emergence of the Universities in the second half of the 12th century, followed shortly afterwards by the foundation of the missionary order... (Knowles 1963:3).

But the history doesn't start with Benedict. Already in 270

AD a certain Antony had retired into the Egyptian desert. The Nitrian monks there built a xenodochion, a guest house, right next to their church, even in the far out desert. From Egypt the movement spread north and east and a certain John Cassian was to have the greatest influence on the later Benedict. The monasteries were not primarily missionary in purpose, but still had a great missionary impact by the quality of their life and the curiosity which such commitment aroused. Kenneth Scott Latourette says, 'What more natural than that some of them should be caught by that desire to propagate the faith which from the beginning has been so integral a part of the genius of Christianity? Many, moreover, in search of solitude, pressed out beyond the borders of society in which they had been reared, and built cells in neighbourhoods where the only other inhabitants were non-Christians. Numbers acquired reputations for sanctity which attracted visitors and these contacts led to conversions...' (Latourette 1938:17). Further, almost all the church fathers, except Ambrose, had spent some time in the monastic life.

But the experiment was still in its adolescence, with no standard expectations or practice, and extremely variable results. Benedict (480-537 A.D.) changed that when he wrote his Rule in the Monte Cassino Monastery overlooking the road from Rome to Naples. Pope Gregory the Great, who wrote Benedict's life a century later, would characterize him as a man possessed by the charismata of healing, prophecy and

discernment, among other things.

The Rule, which once again is attracting a lot of attention today (Leckey 1982, and Chittister 1982), shows the order and concern for justice characteristic of Rome, but also spelled out clearly the principles of survival needed in a Europe which was undergoing the pains of transition. "The Rule has remained one of the great formative influences in the life of the Church, outlining in majestic simplicity the broad principles of monastic life and government" (Knowles 1963:15).

For our purposes chapter 53, 'on the reception of guests', is of particular interest. I would like to quote several relevant sections, and add in brackets the comments by David Parry.

Let all guests that come be received like Christ Himself, for He will say "I was a stranger and you took Me in." And let fitting honour be shown to all, especially such as are of the household of the faith and to wayfarers (pilgrims). As soon as a guest is announced, he should be met by the superior or the brethren, with all due charity. Let them first pray together, and then greet one another with the kiss of peace. This (kiss of peace) should not be offered until after prayer has been said, since the devil sometimes plays tricks. When guests arrive or depart the greatest humility should be shown in addressing them: so let Christ Who is received in them be adored with bowed head or even prostrating on the ground (Parry 1980:140-143).

So when the guests have been welcomed they should be led to prayer, and then either the superior or another should sit

with them. The Divine Law should be read to them for their edification, and after this every kindness should be shown to them.

Let the abbot pour water on the hands of the guests, and himself as well as the whole community wash their feet. When they have done so they should recite the verse Isaiah 47.10.

Let special care be taken in the reception of the poor and of wayfarers (pilgrims) because in these Christ is more truly welcomed: for the awe felt for the wealthy imposes respect enough of itself.

(Comments by Parry: 'The tradition of receiving every Christian as a brother came from the earliest ages of the Church, when the door of every Christian was open to the traveller. It was an aspect of early church life kept alive by the monasteries'. The essential principle is that Christ is received in every guest, Parry 1980:140-143).

Not with condescension but with humility. And what about the strange person who disappears the moment the Gospel is read to him? The reference is to a possible visit from the devil himself. "...every kindness" is a golden sentence. For in this way the traveller recognizes most easily that he is among the disciples of Christ and, if he is burdened with spiritual troubles, will be encouraged to ask for help about

them.')

Hospitality was so important that it was always considered in the construction of a monastery. 'Let the kitchen for the abbot and guests be apart by itself so that strangers, who are never wanting in a monastery, may not disturb the brethren by coming at unlooked for hours.' The doorkeeper was a wise old man chosen for his maturity, with a young assistant in training. The abbot would eat with his guests, and other monks would need special permission to speak with them. 'Also, with regard to the guests' quarters, a brother should be put in charge whose soul is filled with the fear of God. A sufficient number of beds should be kept ready there. And let God's house be wisely cared for by wise men' (Parry 1980:140-143).

(Parry on 'guests are never wanting': 'Does not a whole legion of lost souls or badly worn ones await the attention of monasteries in which they can recognise a society not founded on go-getting? It is the kind of apostolate in which Benedictine traditions and modern needs seem to find a common focus').

This lovely openness to guests (even the critical ones, since 'The Lord may have sent him for this very purpose'), contrasts sharply with the testing reserve exercised with potential monks. Their programme of training lasted for one year, and novices were assigned to 'a senior monk who has

the gift of winning souls, who should pay them the closest attention' (Parry 1980:140-43).

Monasteries patterning themselves after Benedict's Rule were established from the west coast of Ireland to the Ukraine, and served body and soul for the next several hundred years. Anglo-Saxon monks were inspired by mission fervour, the Irish more by wanderlust, but both offered in their places of refuge which were founded, a temporary home for weary or unwell travellers. Monasteries were often located in pilgrimage places, along pilgrimage routes, or in out of the way locations. Perhaps the best known is the hospice of St. Bernard which still serves 20,000 - 25,000 visitors a year, even though the surrounding mountains now have small huts which are all connected by telephone or electric bells. The monks still go out with their famous dogs to search for travellers who are injured or lost.

The ministry to body is something which increased after Benedict's time, even though in the latter's monastery in Monte Cassino many medical manuscripts have been recovered from their libraries including translations by a Constantine the African from Arabic and Greek. By the twelfth century the monasteries had some of the finest hospitality in all of Europe providing 'regular care' to the sick, as well as 'irregular care' to victims of famine or other calamities. It was a natural spillover of their concern for the whole pilgrim, who often came to them not only weary in spirit, but also unwell in body. The ideas of hospice and hospital

could never be that easily separated and the distinctions often blurred and the functions overlapped. Also of interest is that the early places for the sick were often built in the shape of a church, with an aisle having beds on either side leading into a chapel facing east. These buildings were frequently decorated with a dove: The work inside being dedicated to and dependent on the Holy Spirit.

And spiritually too their contribution was immense. They provided in a thousand pieces of property all over Europe what God had intended to provide in His one piece of Palestine property through Israel - a living model of people who grew their roots upwards. A people who were happily restless because they were still on a journey 'home'.

Along with trusting God to bring them visitors (and hospitality and almsgiving were written into many foundation chapters as the raison d'être of a monastery's existence), their occasional initiative in outreach, the monks had a great ministry of intercession. And what better form of hospitality than to have some one say 'Let me speak to the Father about you'? It has been suggested that even the scattered locations on the edges of a desert or a wilderness were not always acts of escapism, but were a better place to pray against the demons and evil spirits thought to exist in these places. In any case, '...the monks were regarded as intercessors par excellence for the rest of the world, it was natural therefore that many lay

people should wish to share as intimately as possible in the benefits of their prayers for the living and the dead' (Knowles 1963:475). This led to the formation of confratres, people who shared in a special way in the prayers, and the longing to 'die in the habit' (ad succurrendum) to ensure a quicker and safer journey into the next world.

But the monasteries carried on outstanding service in this world until they were, to a large extent, succeeded by the Franciscan and Dominican orders, and when the growing wealth and changing social order in Europe made their services less necessary. But even the Rites of Durham during the Reformation period detail the splendour of the guest house and the quality of hospitality. And many quaint but special customs took hold and lasted: at some places a hundred poor were fed on the funeral day of a monk and were maintained in food and clothing for the next year. At other places as many were fed during Lent as there were monks in the house, and at St. Augustine's, Canterbury, thirty were fed on the commemoration day of benefactors and on the anniversaries of abbots.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN : BEYOND THE MIDDLE AGES

At this stage, at the dawn of the Reformation, I'm reminded of Hebrews 11.32, 'And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of ....'

What about the understanding and practice of hospitality in the Reformation period? How did Calvin, Luther and Anabaptist spokesmen see the stranger, and how did they and their followers open their hearts and their homes to him? Were Luther's table talks contagious as an avenue for outreach among his disciples? Did the Anabaptist self-definition as a pilgrim church, a missionary church, and a martyr's church affect their practice of hospitality? Was the commitment to outreach via the family and home livelier in all the 'second generation' reform movements that continued to spring up from the mainline churches? Was the quality of spiritual commitment in these small cells of disillusioned but dedicated people (the Moravians, the Wesleys and early Methodist etc.) reflected in the quality of this hospitable outreach? Was colonialism a help or hindrance in the long run? Was hospitality as an avenue of outreach more understood and acted upon as an evangelistic option in England, on the Continent or in the New World? And what implications must we see in the fact that the role of the West, and of the Western Church, as Host to the world is slowly but surely coming to an end? Can we learn to be

guests again, and if so, how? These questions and many others must await exploration in another paper.

That last concern, about the role of the West, brings us to another passage from Hebrews, and the closing comment in this history section, 'Therefore let us go forth to Him outside the camp, bearing abuse for Him. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come...' (Heb 13.13-14).

Latourette has seen in two thousand years of church history a remarkable ebb and flow period of retreat followed by periods of advance, and times of stagnation giving way to times of vitality. Perhaps that is reflected as well in the life of many local churches and many individual Christians....Ralph Winter of Pasadena, California has documented the same thing, and proposed that this history can be generally well understood when seen as a series of 400 year periods. Thom Hopler has refined it even more by suggesting a 'wave-theory' from the world of surfing: each period experiencing a time of opportunity (getting on the wave) expansion (riding it) and decline (getting off when the wave comes to shore) (Hopler 1981:121-25).

I question the theory at several points, but what intrigues me is this: The early church's commitment to hospitality was born early in the first period and came to expression 'outside the camp'. The monastic option with its great

blend of discipline for insiders and openness to outsiders was born early in the second period, also 'outside the camp'. It was outside the power structures, whether of political Rome until Constantine, or ecclesiastical Rome in succeeding centuries, that the church seemed most true to her calling as a 'fragment of another Kingdom', as an alternative society, an infiltrating people of compassion and truth. It seems that God is more able to offer hospitality to the world when His people have both hands available to reach out to the stranger, and not when one of those hands is clutching a sword.

There are valuable lessons there for us as we approach the year 2000. The wave of colonialism has come to shore, and we must ask ourselves if we are ready to get off our surfboards and get on a new wave. Are we going to capitalize on the retreat of the West, and be humble guests in a global village which will be more and more deeply affected by urbanization and the rise of complex technology; or are we going to retreat into the past while a sword grows rusty in our hands? In 1944 99.5% of the population of the non-Western world was under the domination of the West. Just twenty five years later only 0.5% was under Western control. This was counterbalanced by heightened economic imperialism by the West, but the control of the Third World over oil and other natural resources is reversing even this trend (Winter 1970:11-13). David Barrett in his monumental World Christian Encyclopedia documents that in 1981 the

majority of Christians were non-white for the first time in history.

Can the church capitalize and ride a new wave in faithfulness to her Lord? I would answer an unhesitating yes, and would suggest that in many ways hospitality might be a most significant tool of survival, and of advance!

In her work as international Bible Study Secretary for IFES, Ada Lum often asks students what skills or tools they should have, should the government of their country ban all church and other public Christian meetings. Her own answer is threefold: students should know how to study the Scriptures for themselves, know how to share them with fellow Christians for mutual encouragement and support, and know how to pass it on in a convincing way to interested seekers. All her suggestions carry a strong home orientation. When the Portuguese dictator Salazar, who was firmly opposed to both Protestantism and Communism, fell from power in 1977 and the colonies of Angola and Mocambique became independent, the Communists in Portugal were ready because they had been preparing to take power in home cells for many years. They had informally infiltrated every village, and were in power after only seventeen months of democratic government. Will the church be ready for the future?

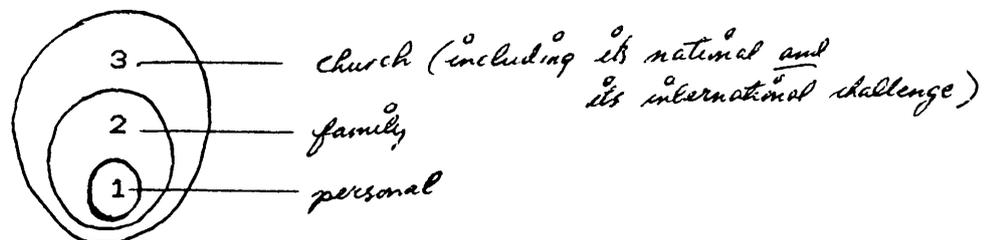
It is time to end our quick journey through history and step across the threshold into the practical area of our study.

#### SECTION FOUR : PRACTICAL FOR TODAY

'One of the first appearances of the Christ after His resurrection was as this stranger, walking with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Only when they gave hospitality to the Stranger, sharing a meal..., did they fully open their eyes and minds, and see that He was Jesus the Lord' (Kirk ca 1960:109).

We come now to the third and final section of our paper, the practical aspect of hospitality. We have looked at some length at Scriptural attitudes toward the stranger, and have also seen, although briefly, how the church since the first century has perceived and treated him.

Now we come to the vitally necessary area of application, and this area I will treat under three headings, once again using the visual aid of concentric circles:



The first and innermost circle is the personal one. Unless we learn something about being a guest, about the joy of relaxing at the Father's table and allowing, yes encouraging Him to be the host, we will find it difficult to be joyful

hosts ourselves.

The second circle is the family one, and we will look at various ways in which hospitality can, and ought to be, practiced within the four walls of our home.

The third circle will focus on the church family, and will describe at least some ways in which we can be more 'at home' with one another, and can then help visitors and other strangers feel at home as well.

The third circle will also address briefly a very large issue, the international family. How can the Christian citizens of a country such as the USA help the willing immigrants and unwilling refugees in its midst feel more welcome? This area has become an extremely practical one in recent years.

And so our target in this section is to mirror God's hospitable concern. He wants to make His home in one receptive human heart, and also longs to embrace the world so that, in the new age, every place at the heavenly banquet table might be filled (Lk 14:23).

## CHAPTER TWELVE : THE PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF GOD'S HOSPITALITY

An appreciation and practice of hospitality starts with the strong conviction that we are not naturally inclined to open doors and initiate contact with other people. We tend more readily to close those doors and avoid that contact, except with a small circle of those who have our confidence. Our journey, and all of life in the kingdom of God, begins with the realization of our own poverty.

The words of Job: ('Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return', Job 2:21) and Jesus: ('Blessed are the poor in spirit'...Matt 5:3) are echoed by Helmut Thielicke,

...one day every one of us will be left destitute the day will come when we shall stand naked before God, unable to "answer Him once in a thousand times"...We shall be stripped of all the things in which we put our confidence here below. We shall stand before the throne of God without title, without money, without a home, without reputation - in utter poverty (Thielicke 1959:102).

That 'one day' of which Thielicke speaks is not only a future certainty, but also a present experience for anyone who has come face to face with God. Behind the charismata, God's many and varied gifts, and behind the specific charisma of hospitality, is the charis, the grace and the generosity woven into His character. God has graciously pursued rebels who have run far from home, has arrested their flight, and has gently and firmly placed their steps

toward heaven. And further, has decided to make His home with them through the Spirit of His Son, until the journey reaches its destination. God loves us as we are, but loves us too much to leave us that way. C S Lewis continues the home analogy, using a story of George Mac Donald,

...the question is not what we intended ourselves to be, but what He intended us to be when He made us....Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof, and so on: you knew that those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised but presently He starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of - throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace. He intends to come and live in it Himself (Lewis 1960:174).

Until we discover more and more what it means to be a guest of God, and allow this heavenly Host to love us and spoil us and change us, it will be difficult for us to be the host. We need to soak up affection such as this,

But now, this is what the Lord says - he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; for flames will not set you ablaze.

For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead. Since you are precious and honored in my sight, and because I love you, I will give men in exchange for you, and

people in exchange for your life.

Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bring your children from the east and gather you from the west.

I will say to the north, "Give them up!" and to the south, "Do not hold them back." Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth - everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made (Is 43.1-7).

Experiencing such divine hospitality can set us more free to try on the role of host ourselves.

Don Myers, the Campus Crusade director in East Africa, quotes a very helpful distinction of Bruce Larson's,

There are only two kinds of people in the world: Hosts and Guests. Left to myself, I revert to my original nature: the obnoxious guest - demanding attention, making a mess, creating trouble, craving service. But in Christ I am slowly becoming like Him; the congenial host - comfortable, at home, serving the guests, creating joy, paying attention to earth because heaven is paying attention to me (Myers 1983:4).

Heaven 'pays attention to me' in speaking to me the gospel of acceptance, but also in showing me that gospel in visible ways through the sacraments of entry and of renewal. One author puts it this way,

The Gospel invitation is an invitation to come into Jesus' house and have supper with Him....To come into Jesus' house to eat His supper, a person has to cross the threshold of the house. That threshold crossing is the sacrament of Baptism. We do not invite men to be baptized; we invite them to come in and eat, but they must cross the threshold and be baptized before they can sit down (Jordan 1981:97).

These two sacraments give us great windows on hospitality. In baptism we are reminded of the great cost to God in saying welcome to us. He plunged His beloved Son into a lifelong baptism of suffering, and in the gruesome events on Calvary Jesus disappeared in the 'waters' of death. And so our baptism is also intended to be a costly experience, its waters loosening our grasp on all those things that might stand in the way of openness to God, and others.

But lest we fear the empty handedness, God in the reminding sacrament feeds and nourishes us. If in baptism we especially see the crucified Son, in the repeated supper we see the risen Son, constantly giving us the resources we need to welcome and feed our 'world'. And that supper is also an intriguing and inviting preview of the welcome which awaits us in heaven.

I stress this dimension of personally accepting and enjoying God's hospitality of being guests before we can be hosts, because we find, most of us, it is all too easy to walk in Adam's footsteps. It is all too easy to fill our hearts with things and keep God safely outside, rather than keep God inside with all His gifts outside (usually within arm's reach), as A. W. Tozer pointed out in a chapter entitled, 'The Blessedness of Possessing Nothing'. In the spiritual dimension we are too often like the hurried young mother who says to her husband, who has just brought home an overnight guest, 'But where are we going to put him?' Yes

indeed, when our hearts are cluttered with dreams of gathering: gathering reputations and possessions, and are filled with the consequent fear of losing them, where are we going to put Him? Henri Nouwen expresses this struggle wonderfully well,

Today I imagined my inner self as a place crowded with pins and needles. How could I receive anyone in my prayer when there is no real place for them to be free and relaxed? When I am still so full of preoccupations, jealousies, and angry feelings, anyone who enters will get hurt. I had a very weird realization that I must create some free space in my innermost self so that I may indeed invite others to enter and be healed. To pray for others means to offer others a hospitable place where I can really listen to their needs and pains. Compassion, therefore, calls for a self-scrutiny that can lead to inner gentleness.

If I could have a gentle "interiority" - a heart of flesh and not of stone, a room with some spots on which one might walk barefooted - then God and my fellow humans could meet each other there. Then the centre of my heart can become the place where God can hear the prayer for my neighbors, and embrace them with His love (Nouwen 1975:144-145).

A fascinating thought: creating enough space in my heart so that God and my neighbor can meet there comfortably! Another author, speaking of the salvation picture of Ezekiel 16 in which a young lady is transformed from the rubble to royalty,

There is God's evangelistic strategy (and hospitality strategy) in a nutshell: He desires to build into you and me the beauty of His own character, and then put us on display. God's chief means of communication is a man or woman whose life is open to the non-Christian community (Aldrich 1983:13).

Before leaving this first innermost circle, we need to see

who this man or woman of beauty is open to. Having experienced the freedom of being welcomed by a heavenly Father, how does he or she extend that welcome in specific earthly ways?

Our attitudes toward the stranger are probably typical of those throughout history. The word is ambivalence. We alternate between, and find within ourselves, mixtures of fascination and fear.

Two dictionaries of etymology which I consulted both indicated a close connection in origin between such words as hospitality, host, hospice, hospital on the one hand, and hostile and hostility on the other hand. A stranger could be a welcome guest or an unwelcome enemy, and his identity and intentions were not always that clear.

It is that same mystery and ambiguity that causes in us such a mixture of emotions. This mixture we will meet in each of the large circles of family, church, and national hospitality as well. That mixture, and some reasons for it, are captured nicely in this lengthy quote from a sociology journal. (I might say in passing that the author admits that 'anthropological literature is as sparse on the significance of the stranger as is the sociological'. Perhaps as sparse as Christian literature is on the significance of hospitality...).

The stranger, then, is crucial in introducing into our awareness the polarity of "inside" and "outside", for he is a representative of the "outside" to "insiders"; by his presence he is a challenger to insiders' social organization, to their way of life, to their assumptions about social reality.

The stranger is not a social nonentity; by bringing the unknown into our sphere of perception he receives a social identity of prime significance. As the embodiment of the foreign, the social perception of the stranger is characterized by ambiguity; the feelings he evokes, by a complex ambivalence. Let us elaborate on this formulation.

As a bearer of the strange, the foreign, the unknown, the stranger as the knower and participant in the unfamiliar has an immediate authority in comparison to "locals" ignorant of the outside. His familiarity with the unfamiliar gives him a certain power and authority. The strangers' social role in this context has a seductive quality that makes his person a source of attraction. What is strange is in and of itself novel, and the new is exciting precisely because it is the unexperienced. But at the same time, the not yet experienced is also threatening and unsettling. The stranger as the bearer of the strange is also the person who can unhinge the familiar, the person who has powers not available to "locals"; he is a potential disorganizer of the familiar, one who can turn the order of things "inside out". Hence the stranger is not only highly welcome; he is also highly unwelcome. He both relieves the monotony of the everyday social setting and places it in jeopardy by his presence. The "stranger at the gate" is in every case the one whose coming places in question the community's existence; his knock is that of an outside social reality which suddenly impinges on the group and places its existence (and survival) in question. In a sense we can say that the stranger presents a test of the community's self-confidence about its existence.

The responses to the stranger's knock are varied...  
(underlining mine, Tiryakian 1973:48).

The negative response is well documented in history. In ancient myths and legends, strangers usually symbolized the

danger of unwanted change. They often came in to kill the king and take over his throne. In fairy tales they often spoke with strange accents and had a generally suspicious air about them.

In more recent fiction J.R.R. Tolkien in The Lord of the Rings associates fear with unknown faces, Mark Twain in one of his last stories, 'The Mysterious Stranger', actually spoke about none other than Satan, and Albert Camus' central character in his novel The Stranger turns out to be a murderer.

The hints in legends and more recent literature are illustrated in most of our own experience. Newspapers routinely carry stories of family members who were incarcerated by a father or by parents, were fed and treated like animals, and all this sometimes for many years without arousing suspicion in the community. The story of Kitty Genovese, tortured for over thirty minutes and then killed in New York City in the full view of some and full hearing of most, is well-known.

The ultimate hostility against the stranger expresses itself, as it did in ancient closed tribal societies, in violence.

Psychologists tell us that babies are aware of only themselves. As they grow, their worlds grow larger to include mother, father, family, friends, others, God. The world in general has been regressing to that egocentric state.

Perhaps we should expect excessive violence in a "me-first" world. Perhaps the assassination attempts (in recent American history) are the dark side of those bookshelves crammed with self-improvement best-sellers. If everyone is "looking out for number one", numbers two through infinity are bound to be shoved aside (Peterson 1981:7).

And lest I become too comfortable in agreeing with sentiments such as this, I only need to think of my last several experiences on buses, in airplanes, on elevators: how I avoided eye contact, withdrew into my own space, wished others would leave my neighboring seat free so I could focus on reading rather than conversation....And what an irony that numerous visitors to our home, for meals or for overnight stays, have successfully delayed the completion of this paper....

But God has over the years given me the freedom and the space in which to face my own runaway tendencies as stranger to Him, and embrace His friendship. And my missionary challenge is just that: the creation of a free space where the stranger can enter and become a friend instead of an enemy. That recalls the words of Henri Nouwen from the Introduction.

And Nouwen further says,

...we do not practice hospitality in order to change people; our goal instead is to offer them space where change may take place.

The paradox of hospitality is that it wants to create emptiness, not a fearful emptiness but a friendly emptiness where strangers can enter and

discover themselves as created free; free to sing their own songs, speak their own languages, dance their own dances, free also to leave and follow their own vocations. Hospitality is not a subtle invitation to adopt the life-style of the host, but the gift of a chance for the guest to find his own (Nouwen, as quoted in Gible 1981:187-88).

I'd like to close this first part of the practical section with the true story of how one missionary countered violence with hospitality.

Sarah Corson relates in Sojourners Magazine how her home in a remote corner of a Latin American country was attacked at midnight by thirty soldiers who were on an anti-American rampage. She writes movingly of her own fear. 'God, if I have to die, take care of my family. And God, please take away my fear. I don't want to die afraid. Please help me to die trusting you.' She was able to ask the commander into the house and respond to his questions with a forthright presentation of the gospel. His last words to her were, 'I have fought many battles and killed many people. It was nothing to me. It was just my job to exterminate them. But I never knew them personally. This is the first time I ever knew them personally. This is the first time I ever knew my enemy face to face, and I believe that if we knew each other, our guns would not be necessary' (Corson 1983:31).

The first step in the mission of hospitality is an open heart: open to the Divine Host, open to strangers in our

midst, and even open to enemies. And then the second step  
is that such open hearts learn to live in open homes.

## CHAPTER 13 : THE FAMILY EXPRESSION OF GOD'S HOSPITALITY

'Hospitality consists of a little fire, a little food, and an immense quiet' - Ralph Waldo Emerson.

It was Karen Mains' immensely helpful book, Open Heart, Open Home that really triggered my interest in hospitality about five years ago. It was the first, and I was quite sure, the only book treatment of this vital issue. It has intrigued me that since the publication of her book, many others have followed her on the trail she blazed with numerous insightful books and articles. The field is no longer virtually barren.

I want to shift our attention now from the personal realm to the experience and expression of hospitality within the four walls of home. The comments will focus on families living within those walls, although it clearly is the hope and intention that principles will also apply to those living in a single situation (singles due to voluntary or involuntary bachelor resolve, the separated or divorced or widowed), and those in a communal situation. Since the numbers of those living outside a traditional family context has risen dramatically in the last ten or so years, so has Christian attention and address to their special needs. Our focus however in the next section will be on families not unlike my own : one wife, one son, and three daughters living in a comfortable north Tacoma neighborhood in the state of

Washington.

### 13.1 The Locked Door : Fear Wins a Victory

The basic and most pervasive tool of Satan is to keep us behind safely locked doors is fear. And in the 1900's in America, God's sworn enemy has some impressive weapons in his arsenal. Consider the following (rather lengthy) parody from a 1969 issue of Time magazine, probably more painfully true today.

#### A Long Day in the Frightful Life

It may be, through the process of adaptation to environment, that future city dwellers will be born with their heads turned sideways - the better to watch behind them. As residents and businessmen seek ways to protect their property and their lives, the soaring crime rate is perhaps matched only by the rising curve of paranoia. Already, the jungle that is the U.S. city is so crisscrossed with fear and alarm wires that the following account of a day in the life of a fictional citizen of a composite U.S. city, based on security measures that already exist, is entirely within the realm of possibility:

John Bryant fought through the fuzz of last night's sleeping pill as the 7 a.m. newsman, activated by the clock-radio, flicked through the details of yesterday's muggings, liquor-store holdups and sniper attacks. John groped for the light switch - and inadvertently brushed against the "panic button" on the \$700 Tel-Guard alarm console connected to his telephone. Obediently, the system silently dialed the operator and automatically began repeating a recorded message: "Emergency at 250 Lincoln Street. Emergency at 250 Lincoln Street."

Still groggy, John shaved, dressed and went to feed the attack-trained Doberman pinscher that he had leased for \$25 a week. Holding out the meat, he forgot and commanded, "Get It!"; the dog obediently bit his hand. He was still bandaging the wound when two policemen, answering the Tel-Guard summons, began pounding at his door. Fumbling frantically, John managed to undo the three locks

on the door, but in the process he dropped the 7-lb. vertical steel bar from the \$14.50 Police Fox lock on his foot. After apologizing profusely to the cops, he limped back inside to get his overcoat, checked to make sure that his can of Mace was in the pocket, relocked the door and headed for the bus stop.

**Ominous Click.** John was already on the step of the bus when he discovered that he had nothing smaller than a \$10 bill. "Off you go, Mac," ordered the driver; alarmed by a rash of bus robberies, the city had decreed that all riders must drop the exact fare into the locked fare box. Drivers were allowed to carry no cash on their person. In desperation, John stepped down and turned to a young woman on the curb to ask for change. "Miss," he began, "could you-" She let him have it with her G-G31 tear-gas device, a \$24.95 gun that enfolds its target in a 12-Ft. by 6-Ft. cloud of tear gas and dye. Blinded, reeling, John staggered off down the street and hailed a taxi.

Slumping into the rear seat, he was still wiping his eyes when he heard an ominous click: up front, behind his bulletproof plastic shield, the driver had flicked a switch that locked both rear doors electrically to prevent passengers from taking off before paying the fare. "Where to, fella?" asked a voice from a loudspeaker overhead. John told him. The trip to the office was uneventful, until John put his \$10 bill in a revolving tray in the partition and got back change for \$5. When he pounded on the plastic and protested, the amplified voice informed him that he had only passed through a fiver - and that the driver was an off-duty cop. John decided to write off the \$5.

**Picture Payments.** The rest of the morning passed peacefully enough - until shortly before noon, when John ducked out to shop for a present for his girl friend's birthday. He had spotted just the thing a few days earlier in a nearby department store: a \$1.49 Protectalarm - a battery-operated siren designed to be carried in a woman's purse.

As he walked through the store, John was followed every step of the way by closed-circuit TV cameras that transmitted his image to a monitoring room upstairs. He found the Protectalarm, pulled out his checkbook, and waited patiently while a new clerk figured out how to work the still camera that photographed every customer paying by check. In her confusion, the clerk wrapped the package without first removing the tags. One of them was a

wafer, specially radiated to set off a Knogo sonic alarm in the doorway of the store. John had barely reached the sidewalk when he was surrounded by detectives who accused him of shoplifting.

By the time the tearful clerk admitted her mistake and the stony looks turned to embarrassed smiles, John decided to call it a day. Exhausted, nerves frazzled, he walked home - carefully skirting shadows. He took a trifle longer than usual to open his triple-locked door. The delay proved unfortunate. Before John could slither inside his urban fortress, three thugs lurking in the vestibule relieved him of his wallet, his watch and his girl friend's Protectalarm. Then, for good measure, they gave him a whiff of his own Mace (Time 1969:26).

The major newsweeklies run periodic cover stories devoted to lack of security on our U.S. streets and in even the best of neighborhoods. The cover issue of Time March 23, 1981 is only one example among many: a garish face accompanied by the caption,

The Curse of Violent Crime. Four years ago, the author of the lead article said: "Day by day, America's all too familiar crime clock ticks faster and faster. Every 24 minutes, a murder is committed somewhere in the U.S.. Every ten seconds a house is burgled, every seven minutes a woman is raped....There is something new about the way that Americans are killing, robbing, raping, and assaulting one another....The crimes are becoming more brutal, more irrational, more random - and therefore all the more frightening" (Time 1981:16).

Notice the role of the stranger in this very loose paraphrase of the familiar Matthew 25 passage:

I was hungry and you were obese  
I was thirsty and you kept watering your lawn  
I was a stranger and you called the police  
I was naked and you went shopping for fall fashions  
I was sick and you asked if it was contagious  
I was in prison and you said that's where people like me belong...(underlining mine).

One sad way in which the circle of fear has widened is that only in recent years has the abducting and molesting of children become far more common. Sherryll Kerns Kraizer has written The Safe Child Book, analyzing the problem, and offering specific solutions which were summarized in our local Tacoma paper a few months ago.

Sherryll Kerns Kraizer, a nationally recognized authority on abduction and sexual abuse of children, offered these tips for parents to keep their children safe:

- . Make your child a check list that includes your telephone number and those for the police, fire department, doctor and neighbor.

- . Make a list of what the children can and cannot do and a list of their responsibilities.

- . Give them rules on how to answer the telephone: Never use their first or last name, tell the caller they'll take a message for Dad or Mom, who is taking a shower or is resting. Never let the caller know they're home alone.

- . Never open the door to a stranger.

- . Teach them how to use a pay phone, how to dial long distance and how to reach their parents at work.

- . If they have to call the police, teach them to speak loudly and clearly, to give their name and address, where they are, exactly what the problem is and the number of the telephone from which they are calling.

- . In case they get lost in a shopping mall or other crowded area, pre-arrange a meeting place where they can feel safe.

- . Avoid public restrooms unless accompanied by an adult or a few friends.

- . Follow safe routes. Avoid vacant lots, empty parking lots, alleys, deserted playgrounds.

- . Stick with the crowd. If they're allowed to use public transportation, teach them to wait at busy bus stops.

. Have a pre-arranged code word so that if a stranger attempts to pick them up from school, they'll know if he's legitimate. Change code words from time to time.

. Don't wear their housekey around their neck. It's a sure sign that they're going to be left alone (Tacoma News Tribune 1985:C8).

And prior to the trick-or-treating of October 31, 1985, Winchell's Donut Shops distributed orange leaflets which carried four warnings against strangers.

For our world the assumption is that strangers are potentially dangerous and that it is up to them to prove otherwise. When we travel, we keep a careful eye on our luggage. When we walk the streets, we are keenly aware of where we keep our money (witness all the American Express Card ads). The very first piece of advice given to a female visitor from the U.S.A. on arrival in Lusaka, Zambia in 1974 was to carry her handbag differently: not swinging by the hand but securely carried over the shoulder. We guard our homes with locks and watchdogs, our roads with anti-hitchhike signs, our carports with security personnel, our cities with armed police, and our country with missiles poised to launch atomic annihilation.

Most of us have grown up in such a world, and therefore our pilgrimage from hostility to hospitality is often slow. For our children it might be even slower since they are exposed to the world described by such authors as Kraizer. We see

pictures of abducted or missing children on billboards, on milk cartons, on shopping bags, and we communicate with greater insistence, 'Do not talk to strangers, do not accept their gifts, do not go to the bathroom alone at movies or reststops....'

Henri Nouwen comments helpfully and also shows us that fear is a barrier with those we know as well as with those we do not know.

Our heart might desire to help others: to feed the hungry, visit the prisoners and offer shelter to travelers; but meanwhile we have surrounded ourselves with a wall of fear and hostile feelings, instinctively avoiding people and places where we might be reminded of our good intentions....Fear and hostility are not limited to one encounters with burglars, drug addicts, or strangely behaving types. In a world so pervaded with competition, even those who are very close to each other, such as classmates, teammates, co-actors in a play, colleagues in work, can become infected by fear and hostility when they experience each other as a threat to their intellectual or professional safety. Many places that are created to bring people closer together and help them form a peaceful community have degenerated into mental battlefields (Nouwen 1975:49).

Sadly one such 'mental battlefield' is often the home where there is fear of hospitality because it is confused with entertaining. If unknown strangers cause us to fear for our safety, the known 'strangers' often cause us to fear for our reputation. Karen Maina comments,

Entertaining has little to do with real hospitality. Secular entertaining is a terrible bondage. Its source is human pride. Demanding perfection, fostering the urge to impress, it is a rigorous taskmaster which enslaves. In contrast, Scriptural hospitality is a freedom which

liberates. Entertaining says, "I want to impress you with my beautiful home, my clever decorating, my gourmet cooking! Hospitality, however, seeks to minister. It says, "This home is not mine. It is truly a gift from the Master. I am His servant, and I use it as He desires." Hospitality does not try to impress, but to serve (Mains 1976:25).

A number of authors pointed out this distinction between entertaining, which is essentially self-oriented, and hospitality, which is other-oriented. One author puts it particularly well.

I want my house to be clean and in good order. I want the food prepared right and for there to be plenty. I want my children to be well-behaved. I want enough time to get myself ready, to change my clothes, to put on fresh make-up and to comb my hair. Now there is nothing wrong with any of these things, or with wanting these things. But did you notice how many "I"s and "my"s exist in those few statements? The idea of a love for strangers or of anyone other than self hardly is evident.

And what about the concerns that are tucked away inside, but never stated in words? "I hope the guests notice how nice the house looks and how good the food tastes. I even hope they mention how well-behaved the children are. I hope they think that I am an organized, effective hostess, because if they think so, I might think so too." "I" is the key motivator behind all the hustle, tension, and disappointment (Kesler ca 1984:7).

And so the right urge to reach out, to be hospitable, is all too often wrapped in the cloak of entertainment and is turned inward. We become more preoccupied with things than with people. We delay or reject an open home approach because of fear or shame what others might see there. We play comparison games and feel we cannot measure up to someone else's gifts as a hostess, cook, or

conversationalist. Or we have trouble living up to our own growing reputation if these gifts have been entrusted to us. Or we demand reciprocal response from those we entertain and keep careful mental lists of favours expressed. Or working mothers, whose number has dramatically increased in recent years, may feel the need to spend their evenings and weekends catching up with their children. Or we hide behind walls of busyness, holding on to the safe and the familiar and the predictable. Busyness is all too often a fearful way of maintaining the status quo, of refusing to heed the call for change which Jesus may wish to say to us through the life of a stranger, the voice of a visitor. So the barriers to hospitality are many and varied, but the root cause is invariably fear. Vivian Anderson Hall sums up nicely,

Are we selfish...or lazy...? I do not believe either of these is the main reason many Christians are not keeping the hospitality commandment. They are neither selfish or lazy - they are afraid! Afraid that they cannot do it right. Afraid that they will offend because of the inadequacy of their homes. Afraid that they are imposing upon their potential guests. Afraid because they might not be able to do it as well as Mrs. Jones....

Do you not know that God does not give us a spirit of fear or inadequacy? God's Spirit in us produces love, joy, peace, and sound reasoning (2 Tim 1:7) (Hall 1979:22).

### 13.2 The Open Door : Love Wins a Victory

We go on now in our second circle, that of family hospitality, to examine some resources we will need to have a genuine open home policy.

1. The first resource is that a host (husband and wife in a family situation) be transformed by the love of God, and be fully persuaded of the truth of the word of God that 'Perfect love casts out fear' (1 Jn 4:18). It is interesting that in my devotions recently I have been reading and memorizing the early Psalms. Today's reading included Psalm 4:8: 'In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for thou alone, O Lord, makest me dwell in safety.' That scripture needs to be laid alongside the Time article on violent crime.

2. The love of God gives us the resources to do what He says. 'Christian hospitality is not a matter of choice; it is not a matter of money; it is not a matter of age, social standing, sex, or personality. Christian hospitality is a matter of obedience to God.' So says Hall on the back cover of her book Be My Guest.

3. Most of us have been given a remarkable tool through which we can express that love and obedience: our homes. But before we focus on the home we need to look at the house, because the size, kind, and location of our house is not a matter of personal choice, but of Christian stewardship. Our houses reflect our understanding of the incarnation.

An Eternity Magazine issue a few years ago focused on this matter. The cover, complete with contemporary castle, moat,

and drawbridge, asked, 'Do you use your castle for the King?'. The lead article also had a title and subtitle worth quoting,

This Home is not my World. I'm just passing through, but I could use in the meantime, a 2-story Cape Cod, 2 baths, beautifully landscaped halfacre, 2-car garage, fireplace, a-c/heat pump. At a reasonable price (Schultz 1982a:13).

The article forcefully reminds us that also, perhaps in a major way, the matter of choice of housing is a spiritual one. We are not owners but managers, and our choice should be dictated to a very large extent by our ministry and calling, and not concerns that will later experience the harsh glare of God's judgment. Articles such as 'How to buy a House - Five Basic Steps' in the October 1974 Reader's Digest, or 'Housing Yourself in the '80's' in the July 1981 Consumer Reports give us the basics, but we need to supply the ethics and spiritual values.

John Perkins of Mississippi's Voice of Calvary Ministries suggests relocation as the first of three R's of the church's spiritual revolution (the others are reconciliation and redistribution). He says, '...we must relocate the Body of Christ among the poor and in areas of need....I'm talking about some of us people voluntarily and decisively relocating ourselves and our families for worship and for living within the poor community itself' (Schultz 1982:14). A radical decision indeed but then, so was the incarnation. We should at least face it.

And face two lesser questions about stewardship as it affects buying or renting, proximity to church and school as it affects our ministry, and size of our house as it affects space for mealtime or overnight guests. Why not ask God for a place which has an 'Elisha's chamber' available for contemporary prophets and angels unaware?

The housing question is urgent because, as Tom Sine says in a companion Eternity article titled 'Does the American dream house crowd the Global Village?'

The single-family detached house is the one most important symbol of the American dream....If Christians join the frenzy of those trying to secure their piece of that dream, regardless of the costs, we are likely to be swallowed alive by the values of the secular society (Sine 1982:14).

4. Swimming upstream in this society means a decision for poverty. For some this may mean the choice to become voluntarily poor, but for all it must mean a poverty of mind and of heart. These too are resources through which we can open our doors to strangers among us.

Most of us have never had the experience of the disciples, sent out by Jesus without bread, bag, money, or two coats (Mk 6:8-9), but then we haven't had the gift that Jesus gave them either: feeling totally helpless and dependent on God and others, and being able later to personally understand and sympathize with the plight of the homeless ones.

What we can offer is poverty of mind and heart. Nouwen says,

It is indeed the paradox of hospitality that poverty makes a good host....We can only perceive the stranger as an enemy as long as we have something to defend....Someone who is filled with ideas, concepts, opinions, and convictions cannot be a good host. There is no inner space to listen, no openness to discover the gift of the other....A good host not only has to be poor in mind but also poor in heart. When our heart is filled with prejudices, worries, jealousies, there is little room for the stranger. In a fearful environment it is not easy to keep our hearts open to the wide range of human experiences. Real hospitality, however is not exclusive but inclusive, and creates space for a large variety of human experiences (Nouwen 1975:73-75).

5. That openness is a final resource, a readiness for God to use us in His plan of reaching out to the world. It is fascinating that in the definition of hospitable,

hos-pi-ta-ble, adj. 1. a: given to generous and cordial reception of guests b: promising or suggesting generous and cordial welcome c: offering a pleasant or sustaining environment 2. readily receptive, open (to new ideas),

a lot of these ideas come together. The word is found, interestingly enough, in the dictionary between hospice and hospital, the places offering shelter on the one hand and healing on the other!

We have the great opportunity of not only experiencing God's gifts in the person of strangers in our home, but of being a lasting decisive influence in the lives of some. As we resolve that a person who crosses our threshold is a

stranger only once, we can know a little of the truth that Bel Magalit, a former IFES Associate General Secretary stated recently, 'I feel the open home is the most important single institution for winning people to Christ' (quoted in a prayer letter February 1981 by John Ray, IFES leader in Central Asia).

We need to turn now, having seen some barriers and some resources, to specific ways we can practice hospitality in our homes.

### 13.3 The Welcome Mat is Out

#### 13.3.1 Welcoming those Inside the Home

Hospitality actually starts not within the concrete or wooden walls within which most of us live, but within the much more flexible walls of a mother's womb.

A renewal conference was held in southern California this past summer at which Father Francis and Judy MacNutt were principal speakers. They spent enormous time sharing with us recent research in the prenatal relationship between a baby and its mother. They indicated growing clinical evidence that from very early on (six weeks or so) a baby is 'aware' of its mother's acceptance and love and welcome, or absence of these attitudes. The MacNutts shared how God had used them increasingly, in the area of inner healing, in the healing of memories that traced back to early pregnancy.

It was for us a sobering and exciting new area, sobering because of the appalling figures on abortion which continue to increase each year. (In 1981, the latest year for which figures are available, one in four pregnancies in the U.S. ended by abortion. The largest proportion of women receiving abortions were in the 20-24 age bracket. Eighty-one percent of those who had abortions were unmarried. Thirty-five percent had had more than one abortion - Cited in the August 1985 issue of 'The Church around the World'). What a staggering number of men and women who survived their parents' contemplation of abortion must have as their first dim awareness: I wasn't really wanted....I wasn't welcome....It could get exciting too since God's Son started His sojourn among us as one cell inside Mary's womb. He as the present timeless One can heal us of experiences and memories that we had very soon after our lives began.

It is an intriguing thought for me that hospitality may actually begin with responsible choices we make in a sexual relationship with a married partner. It begins with chastity and purity prior to marriage, and with informed choices about various options of conception control after the wedding. The Billings method, strongly endorsed by Walter and now, since his death, by Ingrid Trobisch, or a responsible use of the pill in early marriage, or voluntary abstinence on occasion, are not only aspects of sexual ethics, but also affect the kind of welcome that our children will receive. There is a surprising connection

between the far reaches of the seventh commandment and hospitality!

After birth, hospitality ought to become more obvious. Children are our first guests, and the most important guests we will ever have, or as a poster had it some years ago: A child is someone who comes into your life for a brief time, and then disappears into an adult. Children are strangers whom we have to get to know. And it takes much time and patience to make the little stranger feel at home. 'The awareness that children are guests can be a liberating awareness because many parents suffer from deep guilt feelings toward their children, thinking that they are responsible for everything their sons or daughters do...but children are not properties we can control as a puppeteer controls his puppets, or train as a lion tamer trains his lions. They are guests we have to respond to, not possessions we are responsible for' (Nouwen 1975:56-57).

And so our call as parents is to provide an environment which is receptive, but also has safe boundaries so that our children can develop and discover that which is helpful and that which is harmful. First we set them physically free as they become gradually more independent (learning to feed themselves, go to the toilet without diapers or reminders etc), and then we can set them spiritually free and encourage them to take their hand out of the hand of one father and place it in the hand of another Father.

Education (ex-out, ducere - to lead, i.e. to stimulate or lead out of, not to cram into) and evangelism most naturally happen at home. Our definition of hospitality, the granting of space where a stranger can become a friend, ought to find its greatest showcase in our homes. This is the place where our sons and daughters ought to face, and respond to, the invitation to the greatest Friendship possible.

Such Friendship is immeasurably more likely if we practice hospitality first within the home. Vivian Anderson Hall describes her home: 'We are not the Statler-Hilton complete with room service. God did not ask us to be that. He just asked us to create a home where His little children could grow up assured of our love and acceptance. He gave us a place to renew our strength in quiet times, to stretch our abilities to create, and to enjoy His creation with each other' (Hall 1979:18).

Such hospitality begins with the common courtesies that are extended to any other guests which visit the home. Love is courteous, Paul reminds us in his well-known love chapter. Someone has defined good manners as the art of making others feel at ease. What a special attitude to cultivate at home, and how often rare....It might be observed in passing that even in a marriage many husbands and wives would be most grateful (and surprised) to be treated more like guests.

The practice of hospitality can take all kinds of shapes and

forms inside the home. What about the gift of listening to each child's highlights of the day around the dinner table for five uninterrupted minutes? What about Dad having breakfast with each child alone at least once a month? Or a hiking and camping weekend, again just the two of you, with that son or daughter entering the fascinating and frightening teenage years? What about a grand meal out as a family on Mother's Day?

And what about a serious attempt at faithful and creative family devotions, where our children can become guests of their heavenly Father? The story is told of Richard Baxter, who worked in a wealthy and sophisticated parish for three years with virtually no response. He threw himself on the study floor and asked the Lord why renewal was not coming to his church. The Lord's clear reply was He wished to see renewal of families and homes first. And so Baxter proceeded in the following months to set up a family altar in each home in a series of pastoral visits. And renewal came.

When our children meet a hospitable Father inside a hospitable family, they are ready to be caught up in the family's hospitality to others.

Probably the main deterrent to hospitality evangelism, and hospitality in general, is the fact that the Christian family sees itself as too disorderly and not a good witness. Bickering parents, undisciplined children, poor leadership by the father, are all too often found in Christian homes as well as pagan ones....The churches must

double their efforts to raise up orderly Christian homes, as a prelude to hospitality in general and hospitality evangelism in particular (Jordan 1981:108-9).

Children must be encircled in family hospitality from the beginning. This is Marlene Le Fever's contention in an article in the fall 1980 issue of Today's Christian Woman. She gives several practical ideas such as family games, cooking parties, treasure hunts, Bible stories acted out in living drama, and others. She also suggests an evening when each child can invite his or her favourite couple or individual from church to the evening meal or an after-the-service popcorn and hot chocolate, or to do the same for friends and neighbors in the community.

And of course they can invite their own friends. Parents can go a long way in being hospitable to their children's friends, and have a possible open door eventually to their parents, but can also train their children in how to treat their friends. I want to commend the unusual series, The Survival Series for Kids, in this connection and quote just a few suggestions from its issue 'What to do when your Mom or Dad says...Be Kind to Your Guest!'

Whenever you invite anyone to your home, you can be gracious by doing these things,

1. Before you invite anyone to your home, be sure the visit will not conflict with any of your family's plans.

2. Get permission from your parents to have the person come to your house. It's best if you do not ask them in front of the other person because it may be embarrassing for everyone if your parents have to say 'No'.

3. Make sure the other person gets permission from his or her parents to come. Again, it's best if you allow the person to talk with his or her parents privately (Berry 1982:10-12).

The book is happily illustrated as well. To quote John Ray once again in closing this section: 'For the open home to win people to Christ the whole family is inevitably involved either for good or, tragically, the opposite.' (From a personal letter sent to all IFES staff).

13.3.2 Welcoming Outsiders into the Home. Before deciding as a couple or family to dust off the welcome mat and open our home to friends and potential friends, it might be well to tour the premises God has entrusted to us and pray the following,

The house or apartment:  
Father-God, bless this home (apartment).  
May everyone here sense your presence.  
Let your peace rest upon those who live  
here, and those who visit.  
May all who enter here sense your love  
and feel your welcome.

The Living Room:  
Father-God,  
Touch this room with your love.  
Permeate it with your presence so that  
life can be shared at deeper levels -  
in laughter and in tears,  
in sickness and in health,  
in good times and bad.  
May people in this room listen to one  
another,  
share their plans and interests,  
ideals and emotions,

caring for one another in deep  
commitment.

The Kitchen:

Father-God,  
May the preparation of food,  
the kitchen clean up,  
the informal conversation,  
all the small acts of love done in this  
room,  
be a symbol always that we are your  
servants,  
And that you dwell with us.

The Bath:

Almighty God,  
Water is also your gift to us:  
a sign of cleansing,  
the feeling of warmth,  
the joy of being renewed.  
Cleanse us, warm us, renew us,  
that we may reach out to this world with  
love.

The Bedrooms:

Father-God, we recognize that "fatigue  
makes cowards of us all" and sleep is a  
source of strength in our lives.  
So, grant to us the ability to put aside  
problems, pressures, and discomfort.  
Give us all the deep peace with you that  
enables us to rest soundly,  
so that we may return to your world  
each day  
Awakened to your presence and alive to  
your call (Rowlison 1981:56-8).

Just as I was starting on this section, I read the following  
in a dentist office, and was reminded that more and more  
people might come to our homes and get quite lonely while  
standing on our welcome mats: 'What Americans want, more  
than anything, is to get out of the house for dinner.  
Nothing is more American today than avoiding a home-cooked  
meal. According to figures compiled by the National  
Restaurant Association, the average family spent 39.5% of

its food dollar on restaurants in 1983....The typical American now eats out 3.7 times a week...eating out is in' (Time 1985:60).

Maybe a revised edition of my paper will carry a section on restaurant hospitality and evangelism, but for now the focus is still on the home. And on the family or the host there, for Jesus sake. (Although this is shifting too. Pat Robertson mentioned on the 700 Club, September 23, 1985 that single and divorced persons now outnumber marrieds for the first time in US history).

Although some people may drift into hospitality, the welcoming of those beyond the circle of close friends and relatives, by natural gifts or inclination, for most of us this practice will come as a conscious choice. It is a choice that like all other choices, should flow from a thankful response to the gracious choice of God. It is a response to numerous Scriptures such as 1 Peter 4:9-10: 'Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering Gods grace in its various forms.'

We remember that in baptism God invited us over the threshold of His house, so that we can do likewise. We remember that in the repeated communion experiences, God invites us to His house for dinner, so that we can and

should imitate His pattern of hospitality. I spoke at a church in October 1985 where the pastor and friends had knocked on 1200 doors in the community, with one woman and her children responding by coming to church. How much better, I thought, if church families could have invited friends and neighbors ('to be nearby': those living nearby) into their homes! God has become our Companion (com: with, together, pan: bread, food) so we need to see the gospel spoken and the gospel visible in the sacraments as spurs to joyfully obey the hospitality commands.

The perfect context for evangelism is the Christian home, but it takes an open heart to set a policy of an open home. Don Bubna, pastor of a large church in Salem, Oregon, writes of experiences in his church with which most of us probably can identify. He preached a series of messages on hospitality, and found that his congregation readily approved of his ideas but displayed little inclination to put them into practice. Bubna found that 'the reluctance to practice hospitality was not just an attitude toward strangers, but also toward other Christians who were not of our immediate group or clique....A lack of hospitality probably contributed significantly to the absence of koinonia fellowship in the church. Little wonder that we found it hard to be hospitable to strangers - we had not yet learned the basics of practicing it among ourselves' (Bubna 1978:51-53).

This pastor's first step of action was to distribute an open survey after an evening service, and incorporate the results in the next Sunday morning message. Bubna's multiple choice questions were,

1. I entertain fellow Christians in our home (check the one that fits):
  - a) frequently (2 or 3 times a month)
  - b) regularly (about once a month)
  - c) occasionally (5-10 times a year)
  - d) rarely (4 or less times a year)
  - e) almost never
  
2. Of those I do entertain, what percent are other than my close friends? (circle one.)
  - a) 10%
  - b) 25%
  - c) 50%
  - d) 75%
  - e) ---
  
3. The reason I don't entertain more is (check all answers that apply):
  - a) we are busy
  - b) it costs a lot
  - c) our home furnishings are too modest or inadequate
  - d) having guests frightens me
  - e) I get too tense and exhausted getting the house cleaned and the food prepared, etc.

And the results? 'The majority of the congregation rarely entertained, and those who did seldom invited people who weren't close friends already....' The reasons most often checked for not entertaining were 'having guests frightens me,' and 'our home furnishings are too modest or inadequate.' With the facts out in the open, most people were surprised and relieved to discover that almost everybody felt the same way (Bubna 1978:53-4).

In 1983 I took a similar but more extended survey among ten

widely varying churches in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe. My initial impressions very much confirm Bubna's findings. Our first step is to stretch our horizon, and take a small step out of our 'comfort zone'.

My supporting church in southern California has done this the last two years by having its hospitality committee divide all willing persons in the church into an equal list of guests and hosts each month. Half the people, the hosts, were asked to provide a social occasion with a randomly selected guest sometime during the following month. The programme has worked well, and this church is waiting to see whether this wider Christian hospitality will translate into hospitality in the community as well.

The best and the ideal place where this seems to happen is the arm of the church meeting in homes. These home fellowships or house churches (or several dozen other names!) provide both the service of wider Christian fellowship, as well as a bridge where God's love can reach out to the unbeliever. We need to say a few words about these home fellowships.

The early church, as we have seen in our New Testament section, met almost entirely in fairly small home-based fellowships where they 'broke bread with glad and generous hearts' (Acts 2). It was only after Constantine that they could meet in imposing basilicas for their public

functions, with public approval. The church imitated the grand and large style of these buildings when they started constructing their own. And the small home-based fellowship drifted into neglect.

God has throughout history used not only men and women who saw the value of the home meeting (John Wesley, the Moravian meetings under Von Zinzendorf) but also involuntary circumstances. In Norway, home meetings of the Moral Rearmament outgrew their use, and Bible studies filled the vacuum, continuing the home setting. A thousand of these exist in Norway today, most with a real neighborhood concern. In Scotland the hospitable Iona Abbey community spurred the founding of the 'kitchen Kirk' with its elder leadership and greater lay involvement. In the London of World War 2 normal church services were disrupted and house meetings were started by default. Their value kept them in existence long after the need had passed.

More recently in England, Canon Southcott of Leeds has pioneered the house church as one answer to the appalling figures that 70% of all babies in England were baptized at the fonts of the Church of England, whereas only 1% attend its altars for holy communion. Instead of persuading the baptized to come to church for the second sacrament, he began to take the sacrament, and the gospel, into the homes. A lively house church network now exists in England, rather alongside or occasionally opposed to the organized churches

(in contrast to the US where this expression of the church is usually well woven into its larger ministry).

David Pawson, former pastor at Guildford Baptist Church south of London, has suggested the cell as one of the three basic units of church organization. Many churches, certainly in England and in southern Africa, have attempted to follow his model.

The smallest and perhaps most crucial unit is the cell, a group of perhaps 8-15 people who meet week to week around a focus of Bible study, prayer, and sharing of personal needs. The congregation, meeting weekly as well, has a range of ten families to about 150-175 people (the most any of us can remember by face and name). The hope is that all the spiritual gifts can come to expression for the purpose of mutual upbuilding and strengthening for ministry. The celebration is the third unit, and is a large monthly or so meeting where many Christians can experience the joy and visibility of worship.

The small unit of the cell is the key. Here people can come to lose their isolation without losing their identity. They can learn to be authentic without necessarily being articulate. The home setting is the maximum place to discover the truth of Archbishop William Temple's assertion that 'the kingdom of God is the sum of right relationships'. The home is the 'setting which is free of all ecclesiastical

trappings, personages and language that tends to obscure the real nature of the Gospel from the average person....A Christian home, by the quality of its welcome, exhibits the free accepting love of Christ' (Tanburn 1970:13).

Such a place is desirable for Christians, and perhaps the greatest effect of house churches is on those already in the church. We need stimuli and opportunities to open up to others, to know and to be known. (The very comment of one author that a British churchman goes to church as he goes to the bathroom, with a minimum of fuss and no explanation if he can help it, applies to many of us).

But the house church or fellowship's most desirable purpose is to have an impact on unbelievers who are friends or neighbors of those in the group. Joseph Aldrich, President of Multnomah School of the Bible in Portland, Oregon, has some very helpful suggestions on the befriending of such people.

Aldrich says, "...evangelism is a process, not a project. It begins with cultivation - an approach to the heart; then there is seed planting - an appeal to the mind; finally there is harvesting - an appeal to the wills" (Aldrich 1983:16).

He mentions a realty firm that divided their city into 'farms' of 500 families each. A realtor was responsible to make contact with each home in his 'farm' once a month by phone, letter, or visit. It took at least six contacts for a homeowner to remember the realtor, but if the agent

maintained that pattern for 18 months, he would receive 80% of the listings for that area.

Aldrich applies in the spiritual realm, and suggests we each define our 'farm' and take some concrete steps,

- a) Visualize the Spirit of God hovering over our neighborhood. As we drive, walk, or jog through, ask God to help us see not homes and lawns but people. Ask Him to prepare hearts for our contact and friendship.
- b) Extend our social relationships by opening our home and family to those in the neighborhood.

The couple we are renting our present home from (since three weeks ago) insisted as a condition for renting that we continue their ministry in the community. We've developed contacts already with two or three and found that one man had walked out on his wife a few days after we moved in, and another neighbor brought a beautiful handmade wooden puzzle as a welcome to our kids.

- c) Build friendships by inviting people for homemade ice cream, or your special barbeque sauce on hamburgers.
- d) Use common interests such as tennis, birdwatching (the feathered variety), stamp collecting, sewing, or reading followed by discussion.
- e) Capitalize on special events and holidays when some neighbors might be without family or friends.
- f) Be alert for appropriate harvest vehicles such as home Bible studies, businessmen's breakfasts, or local Christian concerts or evangelistic mass meetings.

Aldrich has a book, Lifestyle Evangelism: Crossing Traditional Boundaries to reach the Unbelieving World, which expands on these ideas.

One missionary family which made excellent use of their home was the Goforth family in China almost a century ago. This lengthy quote applies to each of us, called to be missionaries in our own unbelieving communities for Jesus' sake.

The Goforths' efforts to reach the Chinese were unconventional by most missionary standards, particularly their "open-house" evangelism. Their home, with its European interior design, and their furnishings (including a kitchen stove, a sewing machine, and an organ) were subjects of intense curiosity to the Chinese people, and the Goforths willingly relinquished their privacy and effectively used their house as a means to make friends and contacts among the people of the province. Visitors came from miles around, once more than two thousand in one day, to tour the house in small groups. Before each tour began, Goforth gave a gospel message, and sometimes visitors stayed on after the tour to hear more. He preached an average of eight hours a day, and during a five month period some twenty-five thousand people came to visit. Rosalind ministered to the women, sometimes speaking to as many as fifty at a time who were gathered in their yard.

It was this type of evangelism that paved the way for Goforth's future ministry of travelling from town to town conducting revivals, but not all of his colleagues approved: 'Some may think that receiving visitors is not real mission work, but I think it is. I put myself out to make friends with the people and I reap the results when I go to their villages to preach. Often the people of a village will gather around me and say, "We were at your place and you showed us through your house, treating us like friends!" Then they almost always bring me a chair to sit on, a table to lay my Bible on, and some tea' (Goforth 1888: ? quoted in a personal letter to me).

We have spoken so far of using the home to extend hospitality to fellow Christians, those whom we do not know so well, or care to know so well! Hospitality is always stretching. It is inclusive and not exclusive. We have also spoken of the unbeliever who lives in our natural situation in neighborhood or at work, and who needs to see Jesus in our homes and in our hearts.

The third wider circle of outsiders would include all special or unusual visitors which the Divine Host could send our way. This group includes a delightful variety of people.

Scripture in 3 John 5-8 calls us to be hospitable to believers who come to our local fellowship from other places. 'This Biblical admonition should encourage each of us to take the time in visiting with brethren from other places, thereby promoting fellowship and cross-pollination of ideas'. Can you imagine what would happen if Christians across the country would begin to open their homes in this way, organizing local hospitality networks in their town? Holiday Inn might have to declare bankruptcy...(Eaves ca 1984:13).

We have already seen how hospitality in the first century made an enormous contribution to church unity and the spread of the gospel. And numerous authors I have read traced their interest in the gospel, and their involvement in

ministry, to the presence of ministry or missionary guests in their home.

I myself served for ten years as Traveling Secretary among college and university students in southern Africa and have, in the process of traveling 20% of each year, stayed in or had a meal in more than 100 homes. What a special experience! My understanding and appreciation of other nations and cultures was stretched, and no doubt the budgets and patience of my hosts was stretched as well. When a visiting speaker, or singing or drama group, comes to our church, we should line up for the opportunity to host someone for a meal or overnight stay.

The 'target' for all the foregoing, and the following, suggestions is mainly a couple or family which has come to know something of Divine hospitality and wishes to respond. Adjustment will need to be made by those who are in single situations of various kinds (the unmarried, the divorced or separated, and the widowed). The commands and the joys of hospitality extend beyond the nuclear family but may have to find different appropriate expression.

One unusual model I want to touch on in passing is the student house, a living situation which is deliberately set up to experience and model the one-another love of John 13:34-35, and is intended also to serve the purpose of evangelism through hospitality.

In the 1982/1 issue of the IFES Review, two authors spend 15 pages discussing the strengths and pitfalls of just such a housing possibility. Gavin Brown describes an actual experiment in Montreal, Canada, and Pete Lowman gives an overall evaluation.

I have personally lived in such a house, modeled after a 'Nav house' used effectively by the Navigators, in 1965-1966. It was known as the 'Sanctuary of the Sacred Seven' (all seminarians), and we practiced hospitality on a twice-weekly basis. I am watching with great interest an experiment this year near to the University of Puget Sound campus, where four Christian leaders are attempting a hospitable community lifestyle in a place they've called the 'Servant's Quarters'.

There are other special visitors too, with somewhat different needs. Anita Palmer introduces them, 'Consider the international student, not only miles from home, but also in a nation of strange customs. The recently transferred professional not yet eligible for vacation hasn't had time to make friends. The son of missionaries, in the States for schooling, feels lost between two countries....Less-than-normal people easily fall through the cracks. They too suffer the absence of family and friends. The socially inept who can't initiate, the mentally disabled who can't understand, the physically handicapped who can't move around - their needs require more time and forethought

than most of us are willing to give' (Palmer 1982:25).

One group which certainly needs time and forethought, and which heads Palmer's list, is the international student. He is perhaps the closest opportunity we have of meeting, and treating with respect and love, the sojourner of the Old Testament.

The year 1982 saw 300,000 international students attending colleges and universities in our country. The projection is for one million by 1990. Almost without exception, they are among the brightest young men and woman in their native countries, and will return to have significant influence in numerous fields. Many are, and will continue to be, national and world leaders.

But during their sojourn in the US, they are without family, culture and friends. They often struggle with the language and customs of our permissive and pluralistic society. They are in desperate need of friendships. When I quizzed returning Africans who had studied in the U.S.A. about their greatest wish upon going, they invariably replied 'One deep and lasting friendship.' And when I queried their impressions upon returning, two things came up in almost every conversation, 'Americans are very friendly, and they are very superficial.' 'When you consider that seven out of ten internationals come to the U.S., study, and return home without ever entering an American's home outside the

university community, you begin to understand the extent of their loneliness and often embittered attitude toward uncaring Americans' (Eaves ca 1984:13).

Three resources that offer countless helps and suggestions on how to understand and meet this golden opportunity in our midst are Paul Little's A Guide to International Friendship, written in 1959 but still useful, and two more recent sources. The National Student Ministries has put out two excellent booklets designed especially for host families: 'Host Family Ministry' and 'Sharing Your Faith with Internationals.' The former has been in use at Washington State University in Pullman Washington, with evident results. The second recent source is Stacey Carpenter Bieler, who has written 'The Adventure of an International Friendship' and 'Developing an International Student Ministry'. These are addressed to Inter Varsity staff and students, and especially the latter is a gold mine of ideas, including in its 15-item resource list such things as music, poetry, movies, Bibles and books in foreign languages, and even role-plays. It is tempting but unwise to reproduce her paper in full. The specifics are available in the bibliography for those motivated to pursue.

Another area of hospitality to outsiders has been practiced for years and then expressed in print (the right order!) by David and Ruth Rupprecht. They have crystallized their Radical Hospitality into a page and a half in a 1983 issue

of The Bible Newsletter. They write,

We do not have to undertake a distant search for the modern alien and stranger. We are surrounded by individuals who are the real faces and voices behind the sociology statistics. These sit within the four walls of our churches, hide in the shadows outside, and flee to the farthest distance from its doors. The young or old person bruised by the world and unable to find employment, the family broken by divorce or rebellion, by a partner or teenager, and the child battered physically or emotionally are some of the modern aliens to which the church of Jesus Christ is called to minister....

Some have stayed only a few days, using us as a brief breathing station before resuming their trip toward destruction. Others have remained, finding a place of healing from which they can emerge to be reunited with their families or to establish a new independence....

Radical hospitality is simply, but not always easily, "loving the alien." It is...allowing such a one to experience firsthand the power of God to redeem, to change, and to heal. It is providing a place of refuge where someone will listen, love, and accept. It is bringing this modern alien into a place of challenge where God's law is the standard for behavior, where sinfulness is defined and where manipulation is thwarted. It is, in the words of the Psalmist, "God setting the solitary in families" (Ps 68.6) (Rupprecht 1983:6).

The authors agree that not everyone is called to this risky and costly hospitality, and suggest some wise cautions.

a) It must be a joint ministry of husband and wife. One person's will cannot be imposed on the other.

b) Parents must serve first the needs of their children: needs of affection and privacy which a newcomer might put under unusual strain.

c) The family must clearly count people of greater value than things.

d) The couple or family must be secure enough to withstand criticism and misunderstanding, which can come from the guest, or from church and community.

The church's support is vital, say the Rupprechts, and they long that every believing community might produce two or three families open to such an unusual call of hospitality.

But the church is our next major section in this practical part of the paper, and before arriving there we need to indicate several shortcuts or 'cans of oil' which will lubricate the rusty gift of hospitality and make it easier for us to say "yes," and we also need to see some clear circumstances in which we are called to say 'no.'

13.3.3 Some Hints on Keeping The Welcome Mat Out, and Keeping Guests in. 'Contrary to popular belief, hospitality is not sanitized homes, seven-course meals and two metric tons of leftovers. We have been taught well by our culture to turn our homes into three ring circuses where we perform for our guests all evening, only to collapse at the doorway when our audience departs, leaving piles of dirty dishes to confirm the sheer insanity of entertaining others. It's no wonder we don't do it more often with such heavy demands placed upon ourselves' (Eaves 1984:13).

The following suggestions or shortcuts are designed to make our family hospitality less a duty, and more a delight.

As an individual, couple, or family, set specific hospitality goals for yourself, and plan it into your budget. Do you want to have people over once a month, once a week? Which day of the week is most convenient? One family in our church has set a goal of having another church family over for lunch every Sunday for the next year. After-evening service desserts extremely useful in getting to know people in our new church home.

The goals should include which people you'd like to invite in the widening circles of less familiarity and more risk that we spoke of earlier. And what is your goal or purpose for each occasion? To plan the soil, to plant seeds, to cultivate, or to harvest, in the case of unbelieving friends.

The Community Services Division in any county can help in providing ideas for the purpose of an evening. If couples do not know one another well, they suggest games or planned activities, and also specifics on time use and menu planning which will limit or abolish the use of alcohol (i.e. no salty items since they increase thirst). I recall fondly in Africa playing board games or doing a puzzle with families we didn't know well.

If we are committed to developing godly patterns or habits of hospitality, the spontaneous and unexpected can be handled more easily. Surprising visitors are more welcome if we're used to planned visitors.

I distinctly remember one of the first warnings given to us when we came to Zambia in 1974. 'Don't be a typical American,' we were told, 'and greet us when we come to your door with 'Oh, hello, what do you want?' Remember, a visitor is never an interruption in our country, and you do well to invite us to sit with you.' A guest is always special, always a gift. It was a good reminder for us.

At departure, another African custom we enjoyed was the hosts seeing their guests off outside the house. The last memory in departure we usually had were our smiling, waving friends on doorstep or edge of property. We only slowly got used to seeing empty porches in the U.S. (in admittedly colder climate...).

The whole enterprise of hospitality would be greatly aided by a church which would voluntarily limit its calendar. All too often hospitality in the home is sacrificed on the altar of involvement in the church. I dream now and then of my ideal church calendar: a family time of joy and celebration on Saturday evenings; a time for corporate worship and instruction, and separate classes, on Sunday morning; a Monday evening seminar for all church leaders; and a

Wednesday evening programme of house churches strengthening the saved and reaching out to the lost. And four evenings left (five for most) to invest in our marriages, our families, and the widening circles of hospitality. That's still a dream, but I like to think the Lord says 'yes' very often to our dreams....

#### 13.4 WHEN THE WELCOME MAT IS WITHDRAWN

There are also times we must say 'no'. In fact, 'no' should be part of every host-guest encounter. Henri Nouwen, who defined hospitality as giving a stranger enough space in which to become a friend, and who stressed the importance of genuine openness and receptivity, also says the following,

Real receptivity asks for confrontation because space can only be welcoming space when there are clear boundaries....Confrontation results from the articulate presence, the presence within boundaries, of the host to the guest by which he offers himself as a point of orientation and a frame of reference. We are not hospitable when we leave our house to strangers and let them use it anyway they want. An empty house is not a hospitable house....

No real dialogue is possible between somebody and a nobody. We can enter into communication with the other only when our own life choices, attitudes, and viewpoints offer the boundaries that challenge strangers to become aware of their own position and to explore it critically....

Receptivity and confrontation are the two inseparable sides of Christian witness. They have to remain in careful balance. Receptivity without confrontation leads to a bland neutrality that serves nobody. Confrontation without receptivity leads to an oppressive aggression which hurts everybody (Nouwen 1975:69-70).

Just as space needs boundaries, hospitality needs to

function within walls. The physical walls of countless student rooms communicate messages to me about them, some positive and others less so. In the same way the spiritual and emotional and intellectual 'walls' of our lives are marked by many world and family and personal events, and of our responses to them. I am truly hospitable to a guest only when we inspect each other's 'walls' and enter into dialogue, affirming the space and interacting on the boundaries: learning to say both 'yes' and 'no'.

There are more obvious occasions when a negative response is the right one. Sometimes good things in our lives are the enemy of the better things. And when hospitality to friends and strangers starts gnawing away at the fabric of love and loyalty in the family, marriage, and God relationships, it is time to take stock of our priorities. As Edith Schaeffer reminds us in What is a Family?, every house must have a lock on its door as well as a hinge.

The surest warning sign of this is fatigue, physical and spiritual fatigue. We need to listen to our body's warning signs. And listen to Karen Mains,

I am learning not to chastise my body at times like this, but to speak words of peace to it. "Thank you middle-aged body for being my faithful companion and doing such a good job of carrying the innermost part of me on its journey through the world." I thank it for notifying me that I am pushing beyond my resources. I wish it a healing space. I whisper blessings to it....This may sound strange, but for much of my life the ministering I has been at enmity with the physical I. At middle age a reconciliation is taking place

(Mains 1985:63).

And how did this author of Open Heart, Open Home and great model of hospitality cope?

I made a drastic decision. I stayed home from a family vacation in the quiet, emptied house all by myself. I gave myself space to work out some of the grief from my mother's death. I slept, walked in the country, desired no other companionship, prayed without interruption, went to bed at sunset, listened to music, and quieted my malfunctioning soul (Mains 1985:62).

She also meditated on Isaiah 58 and found seventeen separate promises of God in that great hospitality chapter. She was ready to unlock that door again.

In some cases, our doors should remain locked, or opened only to have the wrong guest shut it from the other side. Eve should never have entertained her visitor in Genesis 3:1-6 who questioned her Maker's will. Once again we need to be clearly led by the Holy Spirit, lest the unholy spirit send some of his messengers our way.

The early church was aware of at least three of these, apparent from the New Testament letters and writings such as the Didache. 1 Corinthians 5:9-11 warns us against sustained fellowship with a fellow Christian who has chosen an idolatrous or immoral life style. When such a one refuses to repent, we can refuse table fellowship in an effort to persuade him of the seriousness of his ways, and

of our last-ditch longing that he experience a change of heart.

A second person who forfeits our hospitality, in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10, is the lazy person or freeloader. We are to be gentle as doves, but also wise as serpents, and not to be taken advantage of unnecessarily. This is sometimes an area of fine lines and fuzzy distinctions, where we need the counsel of trusted friends. It was very hard in an African setting where a young college graduate with a well paying job had at least one, and not infrequently several, relatives staying in his flat and eating his food. Not all of these relatives were always keen to find work, and make their contribution to this living arrangement.

This same Scripture might also be profitably used with children, to show them that there is a relationship between their faithfulness in doing chores, and their place at the dinner table. God honours initiative and obedience.

A final possible category is in 2 John 8-11, where we can withhold fellowship, certainly in a house church setting, from someone who comes with the intention of spreading false doctrine (specifically about Jesus' incarnation).

(An example of the sensible caution advocated in this section is present in the 'Host Family Ministry' booklet

referred to earlier. While strongly commending involvement with international students, the authors also advise that areas such as the following be referred to the foreign student adviser: problems with money and financial - all lending is discouraged, immigration details involving passports and visas, serious academic problems, serious problems relating to health or emotional adjustment, and home issues such as death in the family, change in marital status, or desire to import a wife. Christians occasionally drown their common sense in a sea of good intentions!)

But for most of us the problem is not so much in saying 'no' as it is in saying 'yes'. And the area where that 'yes' ought to be heard most clearly and most frequently is the church. And in this area of hospitality, both in teaching and in modeling, have the churches most of us know failed repeatedly. It is to that major circle, after the personal and family ones, that we next need to turn our attention.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN : THE CHURCH EXPRESSION OF GOD'S  
HOSPITALITY

I'd like to start this church section with a handful of stories and quotes,

During the first hymn a man wearing a brown hat walked into church. One of the ushers suggested he take off his hat. He refused. A second usher tried, with the same result. An elder was enlisted for the purpose, but the man said, 'I have a right to keep my hat on and I intend to do so.' The president of the women's Society was finally asked to help. But she too failed. After the service the minister said to him in a kind voice, "It's been nice to have you with us, and you are welcome to join our congregation and worship with us regularly, but it is the custom here for men to remove their hats and keep them off during the service." The man replied, "Thank you very much. It's nice of you to invite me to join the congregation. In fact, I've been coming here quite regularly for three years, but today is the first time that anyone paid attention to me. By simply keeping my hat on I've had the pleasure of talking with two ushers, one elder, the president of the ladies' society, and now I'm having a conversation with you. Till today you all appeared too busy to speak to me. I feel good about what my hat has done for me." (from 'Bethany In Action,' the monthly newsletter of the Bethany Christian Reformed Church in Bellflower, California).

I visited your worship service recently. I'd been invited by you to do so. I'm the wife of the seminarian who filled your pulpit that Sunday. I received two smiles of greeting as I went to sit down before church began. One woman greeted me as I walked out.

I stood at the back of church and watched as you caught up on your week's activities. I overheard one of you say to another, "Who is she?" "I don't know," was the audible reply. Yet a third said, "Must be the preacher's wife". And so, though you had satisfied your curiosity about me, I was no closer to knowing you than I was at the point when you realized I was a new face in your group. I was invited to worship that morning, yet your welcome was colder than if I'd come in "Moonies' garb."

I can only hope that an uninvited guest will be better welcomed. I certainly would not claim to be an angel unawares: but, were he to have visited you that same morning I had, he would not have found the face of our Lord at the door. If we are His body congregated there, as indeed we should be, let us take care to turn His face of welcome to those who come to find Him among us (Julie Veeneman letter to the editor in the August 29, 1983 issue of The Banner, page 4).

Research conducted by the Institute for American Church Growth, Pasadena, California, has demonstrated that most active church goers were drawn into the church through friendship evangelism.

Of 15,000 laypersons surveyed by the Institute, 70-90% said they trace their "spiritual roots" to a prior relationship with a member of their church. This is something to which the apostle Peter, Andrew's brother, could surely give a personal testimony (From the "Brief Case" section of the July - August 1982 issue of Eternity, page 10).

We must search the Word without being afraid of what we will find! If it is God's world, and we are God's children, there is nothing to fear....We need to be constant in witness, and in acceptance of those who are sent to us for the Lord's care. (From the "Pastor's Note" in the February 1983 issue of the Millbrook CRC monthly newsletter. Underlining mine).

...the giving or withholding of hospitality when we are in a position to offer it is a decisive indication of the presence or absence of real spiritual life (Milne 1978:86).

Milne's observation may appear rather overstated to some of us, but it gets to the heart of the matter. Hospitality or openness to others is a decisive indication that we have begun to understand and appreciate God's open heart toward us!

Probably most of us in our church experience have gone to a new or strange church (when on holiday, for instance) and felt the loneliness and awkward pain of standing alone outside a church service while a half dozen animated conversations were going on all around us. We've also perhaps experienced the joy of several coming up to greet us, inquire about specifics, and extend one or more invitations to coffee or lunch. The emotional difference in the two experiences is profound.

But think of the curious or seeking non-Christian who finds himself in a worship service, and is perhaps less inclined to be sympathetic to what he sees and hears. It is a sad fact that a carefully planned liturgy, uplifting music, and a forceful, lively sermon between 10:00 and 11:00 can be easily lost just outside the church building between 11:00 and 11:20.

So in this, the third and last of the practical circles, we will focus on the church: her practice of hospitality among those already committed, her welcome of 'strangers' coming into the Sunday services or other activities, and finally, her attitude to the alien and stranger coming into her nation. This last one is probably the longest and most complicated of the three, and I want to include it under the church's calling rather than making it a separate circle. The call of hospitality is addressed primarily to those with motivation to respond to it: it is addressed to the church

within each nation, and not first of all to the nation.

#### 14.1 Welcome inside the church family

Our first concern is what happens inside the four walls of a typical church building.

The average American supposedly says about 30,000 words in an average day, but very few of these words are spoken in church (to other Christians or, for that matter, to God). The first problem, I suspect, is church architecture, where several rows of pews all face the same way in a long rectangular room. A passive, listening posture is encouraged, and the words come from an authority figure at the front. It seems that the picture of church as army in such a setting (and it is still the most common one), all too easily swallows up the church as family picture.

The church is family, too, and family members do not sit in rows looking at father and waiting for him to distribute the food. With some guidance and direction from father (and mother), the family sits around a table and healthy discussion and interaction is encouraged.

It is most interesting that a renewed emphasis on the laity (triggered possibly some years ago by Hendrik Kraemer) and its wealth of contributions and active involvement, has gone hand-in-hand with new thinking about church architecture. Literally named Circle Church in Chicago (where Karen Mains'

husband David is the pastor) is the pioneer in a trend. Churches with wider or semi-circular seating are becoming more common so that God's people can see one another, and perhaps someday even talk to one another, in church.

It is of further interest that often churches committed to renewal have fostered this greater involvement in the worship service, this greater creativity, flexibility and variety which allows and encourages all of God's people to express themselves. It was not a surprise that in one of Tacoma's fastest growing churches we were all asked to share with and pray with a small cluster of 3-5 people at one point in the morning service. People more free to speak to saints are more equipped and prepared to speak to strangers.

How can a church foster the growth of this freedom among its members? It may be difficult to change the architecture (although a monthly or evening service in a fellowship area should be a possibility), and almost as difficult to change the liturgy, but there are other ways to promote conversational freedom which leads more comfortably to genuine hospitality.

A pastor's commitment to preach a short series on hospitality and in what soil it tends to grow would be a wonderful starter. A series of studies (whether in an Adult Education, home studies, or other format) on the 'one anothers' in Paul's writings would be another valuable step

forward. Specific suggested conversational openers, whether during or after a service, could also redirect talk among Christians from chit-chat to more substantial matters. One of my colleagues in the Inter Varsity staff team, after a few Sundays of mingling with people in our church's coffee hour between the two morning services, observed that new community Christians tended to talk about the Lord or about the morning message, whereas older Christians spoke of church or family concerns. Especially 'charter' Christians need help in keeping their conversation fresh, and use it as bridges to eventual conversation with uninformed visitors.

Getting back to the 'one-anothers' of Paul, here is a gold mine available for us to study and practice. In actually doing this some years ago, a student friend observed that the 'Greet one another with a holy kiss' (which I had usually tended to dismiss with a superior cultural snicker) said two things to him: stop long enough to notice me and then, when you do, show some kind of affection. A good insight!

At least two churches I know of, in Texas and in Oregon, took the 'encourage one another' as a stimulus to install cards in their pew racks, and to provide time after each service for people to write a line or two to one or more people God would place on their hearts. Volunteers on Monday would sort out the cards and deliver them to the intended parties. Although this use of encouragement cards

may seem like a gimmick to some, it didn't to the lady who received 183 cards after her son's operation. The pastor of one church observed, 'Learning to be an encourager is a long process. It means getting in the habit of thinking well of others and letting them know it. The cards are a tangible tool' (Bubna :79). Only a few weeks ago I spoke to a student who came from this home church and yes, she said, the system really works.

Feeling more comfortable and relaxed with one another, and learning to love and speak with one another, even in church, can help to pave the way for making church a place where strangers can become friends. That's our next concern.

#### 14.2 The church welcomes the stranger.

As a starter in this area, it might be useful to remember a disappointing or heartfelt experience we have had in a church service or on its outside steps, in the recent or more distant past. What could or should such a church have done differently? What would have made you feel welcome? What is the optimum experience of hospitality which such a church could have offered you? And what stands in the way of your present church offering such hospitality to strangers?

In an attempt to discover such patterns and such road blocks, I sent off a questionnaire in 1983 to about ten widely differing churches in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, and also used it in our own independent Christian Centre of some (at

the time) 450 members.

Some of the questions I used, borrowed to a small extent from a similar effort by Pastor Donald Bubna in Salem, Oregon:

1) At an average worship service, how many persons are:

- a. Strangers to the church, but friends or relatives of someone in the church  
 None  1-5  6-10  More than 10
- b. Strangers, or known only very casually, to everyone in the church

2) Does your church provide opportunity to meet strangers in the actual worship service  
 Never  Rarely  Frequently  Usually

3) When you see both a stranger and a friend standing outside after a service, do you (check all that apply):

- Find it easiest to speak to the friend
- Generally speak to the stranger first
- Try to introduce the new person to your friends

4) When you see someone strange (new) during or after a service, do you hesitate to speak because (check all that apply):

- I'm not always sure they are new
- I find it difficult to speak to strangers in any situation
- I just don't know what to say
- I'm quite afraid of the possible rejection or embarrassment I might experience
- I find it generally easy to speak to strangers, so the above does not apply

5) After this morning's service, how many people did you speak to (more than a greeting exchange) whom you did not know

- None  One or two  Quite a few  All that I saw

6) I try to invite strangers I've met in church to a coffee/tea or a meal:

- Almost weekly  Occasionally (about once a month)  Rarely (2-3 times a year)  Almost never

7) How often in the last twelve months was your hospitality a significant factor in someone's conversion?-----

A rather swift reading and evaluation of the forms returned to me shows a similar response as Pastor Bubna experienced in Oregon. More than 90% of the people found it hard to talk to strangers and the reasons were the same: fear of rejection or embarrassment, and fear of not knowing what to say.

We will try to be of some help in this section by focusing on making the stranger feel welcome before the service, during the service, and after the service. These are important for strangers who come to their first service after exposure to Christians at work or in their living situation, and their involvement consequently in a family oriented 'house church', which I believe is the more normal and desirable pattern, but even more important for strangers who do not have these preparatory experiences.

The comments on a church's welcome of strangers are also important for a very different set of people: the church's hospitality committee and its chairperson. It is a sad fact that that this committee's energies are all too often expended on the first circle of the church's concerns (discussed above), and not on this outward orientation of the second. If the committee's socials, potluck suppers, and annual special events do not include, or lead to an

involvement of, the stranger, such a committee ought to change or drop its name.

### 14.3 Before the church service

In order to find out why strangers so rarely darken her doors or fill her pews, perhaps the organized church ought to borrow a page or two from the MacDonald book. I trust this will not be a culinary detour, but I believe the phenomenally successful fast-food chain can suggest several ways in which churches might be more effective in attracting strangers to its services.

1) Macs ministers to a common and recurring physical need: physical hunger. Churches dot the landscape to meet one common need as well: spiritual hunger. We must remind ourselves of our purpose: to meet the needs of a starving world, not to perpetuate our own programme.

2) Macs offers one basic product to solve the hunger problem: the Big Mac, its famous hamburger. You can find a Big Mac from Tallahassee, Florida to Tacoma, Washington and every place in between. The churches offer (or should offer) as the answer to spiritual hunger a living relationship with God through His Son, the Jesus of Scripture.

3) Macs supplements its Big Mac with a dependable and limited menu which can be absorbed in one fairly thorough glance. A church ought to have a confession or creed, but

not so lengthy or obscure as to confuse the 'consumer'. And to insist that all items on an endless menu are necessary is to ask for spiritual indigestion.

4) Macs is not afraid to revise or experiment with its supplementary menu. Breakfast items were added a few years ago and now account for almost one-third annual earnings. A recent addition of lettuce and tomato to the hamburger (the Mac DLT) is doing well. Other new efforts have failed. The church would serve the world better if far more in its offering of truth and practice were considered negotiable, and open to experimentation and new forms.

5) Macs are found only in public places since it exists to serve the public. It is highly visible and its golden arches can be seen along most major highways of the USA. If the church exists to serve the world, why are so many meeting places so invisible? I remember preaching one Sunday as a seminarian at a church located in Wisconsin a few miles to the left of nowhere. The nearest cluster of homes was many miles away. At the council meeting before the services, three men were in favor of moving to a large city not very far away, and three were opposed (so I found out later). They sat at opposing ends of the table, and the atmosphere in the room was such that going to the pulpit was not unlike a visit to the dentist.

6) In tandem with its high visibility and common symbol of golden arches and adding 'Mac' to everything, is a versatility that adapts to local situations. Along freeways, Mac Donald's will usually have sturdy and colourful playgrounds where kids can release stored-up energy, whereas in the heart of major cities a store front will do to serve busy commuters. Only in New England is a coffee milkshake served. Can the church make its symbols of steeple, cross, fish and others more visible and accessible? (The early church met on Solomon's Porch, scene of most first century temple traffic).

7) As noted above, Macs is conscious of catering to kids. One of the very first things our two year old Cyara learned to recognize were golden arches. Not only playgrounds, but various ingenious specials and give aways and birthday parties keep the kids coming back. The lesson for the church is fairly obvious. Must children sit through a service which their parents don't always understand or appreciate?

8) Lastly, and this relates more to what happens during a service, high standards of excellence are maintained in the quality of food, efficiency of service, and cleanliness of premises. Ray Kroc, the founder, used to travel incognito to various franchises to inspect, listen, and eat. When a dead fly was discovered in the preparation area of one Macs in Canada, the franchise was revoked within 24 hours. The

church should never compromise on striving for excellence, always within a framework of grace and forgiveness.

So much for the Mac digression. One area to work for excellence, once the Spirit and numerous helpers have conspired to bring a stranger to a church door, is the greeting he or she will experience there.

It is hard to overestimate the importance of a warm and informed greeting, perhaps at the door but sometimes even outside, so that a warm smile and outstretched hand will be the visitor's first human impression of the church.

A church would do well to recruit and train a team of greeters, perhaps as couples, and perhaps to serve on a rotating monthly basis. It would be natural to select more friendly and extrovert folks for such ministry, but all can learn. Things to learn might include the following:

- 1) Introduce yourself (and your wife) clearly. You should have name tags and perhaps another mark of identification such as flower in lapel.

- 2) Ask the name of visitor(s) and ask for repetition of spelling if you're not sure. Some churches use a large table with name tags for everyone, and a different color code for visitors. Visitors receive a follow-up letter from the pastor, and other name tags which are not picked up for

a few weeks in a row become the subject of gentle inquiries.

3) If not sure someone is a visitor, ask such questions as 'Have we met before?' or, 'I believe I've seen you here before, but I don't remember your name' or, 'Have you ever signed our visitors' book?'

4) If possible, introduce the newcomer to a church member or couple standing nearby. Visitors should be given precedence over church members and a good way to avoid a lengthy conversation with either one is to introduce them to each other. Lengthy talks can also be steered to the time, or ideally the coffee hour, after the service.

5) A visitor should be directed to the location of bathrooms and, if necessary, to the location of childrens church or Sunday School if children are present. Ideally, someone will be available to take the children there.

6) A helpful bulletin might be expanded, as has successfully been done in many churches, to a welcome packet including a floor plan of the church and its facilities (including an awareness of the needs of the handicapped), a brief overview of the church's convictions and its programme, and a history which may be read at later leisure.

7) As a greeter points out the facets of such a welcome brochure, he singles out the bulletin, and makes sure that

someone will be around to help the visitor in explaining or minimizing surprises in the hour ahead. A word might be spoken to the couple or family who have brought the stranger, or another person or couple assigned to help the newcomer in surviving the rough spots. A visitor must be alerted if a time is allotted for recognition in the service and if he or she will be expected to say a word or two.

8) At this point, the hapless victim is steered to an usher and the actual worship service.

#### 14.4 During the church service

Most churches are so geared to providing services which maintain the comfort level of their faithful constituents, that they hardly can imagine what their services look like through the eyes of a stranger. And yet that might be a most healthy exercise. Here are some in-service hints:

1) A smiling usher can ask the stranger his or her preference of seating, and be alert to any hearing or seeing disability. He can also provide Bible and hymnbook if these are not available in the pew.

2) Brief explanations along the way as to why certain things are done, and how one item leads to the next, can be enormously helpful to a newcomer, and not invariably to lifelong saints as well. I took an informal poll as a seminarian, wondering if elders in churches where I tried

out my preaching skills knew what a votum was. No one ever did, although most had sat through hundreds of them!

4) A time in the service when visitors can be recognized, by the person(s) who brought them (as they stand together), or speaking for themselves. A person with an unusual gift or unusual need might be asked to say a further word. Brochures can be handed out at this time when visitors are standing.

5) Encouragement for visitors to stay long enough after the service, ideally at a coffee hour, to get to know one or two people in a more than casual way.

6) A church that has a strong awareness of and commitment to cross-cultural ministry must surface that concern in some way in every service. A report from a missionary, prayer for missionary(ies), or an offering or other notice can all be bridges to the awareness that opportunities are sitting right in our midst! A church can piggy-back its foreign concern into concern and outreach to its local stranger.

One church has successfully offered a Welcome Class to strangers of various kinds. It is a six-month introduction to the church and its message. All who are curious or interested are invited to come, and during this half hour period church attendance is optional, not expected. It is hoped that the more casual and relational class, offered

between the two morning services, will be a spring board to church attendance and involvement.

The class starts with each person giving name, occupation, and a one or two sentence answer to questions such as:

- 'One thing I like about myself is....'
- 'The best measure of personal success is....'
- 'I felt love when....'
- 'A genuine friend is someone who....'
- 'What I miss most is....'
- 'One of my pet peeves is....'
- 'Someday I would like to be....'
- 'I enjoy myself most when....'
- 'Someone who really helped me once was....'

The topic is usually related to the sermon topic of the day. A second optional question, same from week to week, is then put on the board. 'One thing I've been learning about the Christian walk this past week is....'

In various ways, these questions and conversation starters could be imported into occasional five-minute segments of a worship service, with people free to participate or refrain from doing so.

#### 14.5 After the church service

This is possibly the most critical part. It is in the twenty or so minutes after a worship service that Christians tend to gravitate to familiar cliques to catch up on the news (or gossip), and visitors tend to slip away. How can this be avoided?

1) A regular coffee time, with occasional donuts or goodies supplied by the young people for a voluntary price, is really a must. It is somehow easier to talk in a fellowship atmosphere, clutching a cup of coffee in one hand.

2) The pastor and leadership in the church should resolve in their Sunday morning prayers, and their verbal reminders to one another, that no stranger or visitor will leave without an invitation to someone's home during the following week.

It is best that such a worthy goal be organized. In one Muskegon church (CRC) the elders were responsible for being ready to offer such invitations each Sunday. (The 'bishops' of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus would have understood, and approved).

Another Christian Reformed Church in the nation's capital has adopted a friend-to-friend programme. One person or couple serves as coordinator, and makes it a point to meet visitors. If the visitor is from the general area, the coordinator assigns such a person or family to a volunteer from the church closest to them geographically. The volunteer is expected to invite the visitor into their home, introduce him or them to other church members, and to invite and accompany them to appropriate church activities. The coordinator checks periodically with the volunteer to see if the friendship is being pursued.

Bruce Milne tells of a church where on certain Sundays half the congregation prepared double lunches, and the other half were their guests. All visitors and strangers were included. And just to make it really impartial the names of the guests were drawn out of a hat. The author comments, 'To some this may seem a little artificial. Yet it will not surprise the reader to know that the church concerned was, and remains, renowned for the quality of its fellowship' (Milne 1978:87).

3) Examples can be multiplied, but where a local church has a will to create the space where strangers can become friends, a will to provide bridges from church to home and back again, many and varied ways can be found.

Several months ago a friend sent me an excerpt from Forbes' California (I've not been able to trace it farther than this) which detailed the life of the friars in the early history of California. They established 21 missions from the south to the north of the state, and portray a picture which I believe is a model of what present-day churches of all persuasions ought to be like.

The friars were forced, by the very facts of their situation, into the exercise of a constant and abounding hospitality, and this of itself inevitably brought about large departures from the ascetic regime of living originally preached and practiced. Most royally did they discharge the obligations of this hospitality. Traveler's rooms were kept always ready in every mission; and there were even set apart fruit orchards called "traveler's orchards". A man might ride from San Diego to Monterey by easy day's journeys, spending

each night as guest in a mission establishment. As soon as he rode up, an Indian page would appear to take his horse; another to show him to one of the traveler's rooms. He was served the best of food and wine, as long as he liked to stay; and when he left he might, if he wished, take from the mission herd a fresh horse to carry him on his journey. All the California voyagers and travelers of the time speak in glowing terms of this generous and cordial entertaining by the friars....Some of the highest tributes which have been paid to them have come from strangers who, thus sojourning under their roofs, had the best opportunity of knowing their lives. This testimony is of the more weight in that it comes from men not in sympathy with either the religious or secular system on which the friar's labors were based (Forbes :?).

What a testimony if we could substitute 'church' and 'Christians' in the appropriate places in that account!

And opportunity to earn such testimony occurs as never before.

#### 14.6 The Church welcomes the refugee

Bartholdi's Statue of Liberty in New York harbour has the familiar words,

Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses,  
yearning to breathe free....

Send these your homeless, tempest-tossed, to me.

America's lady is getting a grand face-lift, and perhaps that is what the church needs so that it will send out a clear and unambiguous message: send your homeless ones to me! We must hope that the Christian church, which only a few years ago in South Africa denied Mahatma Gandhi entrance

because of his colour, and so affected the possible destiny of India's millions, will now more and more see and grasp its great opportunity. The refugees are a great tragedy, but for the church also a matchless opportunity. As one author says, 'Personal hospitality, church hospitality and the hospitality of the society at large are all inseparable in the genuine evangelization of peoples coming to our doorstep' (Arias :74).

#### 14.6.1 The Situation

Elfan Rees said it in his We Strangers and We Afraid, '...we are living in the century of homeless man.' Scarcely any nation of the world's 223 remains unaffected by the presence of uprooted peoples, the presence of voluntary or involuntary migrants.

In fact, those who study migrations recognize four kinds: nomadism, or temporary incursions into alien human settlements; invasions, when conquerors cause displacement, resettlement, or assimilation of peoples (witness the differing policies of Assyria and Babylon with the twelve tribes); immigration, or the voluntary movement of peoples; and forced migration, where victims of conflict, racial or religious persecution produce large numbers of refugees. In both the last two a certain amount of pressure is involved, since even voluntary immigration is most often dictated by economic, political or other forms of stress. The main factor in my parents' decision to emigrate from the

Netherlands to the USA was my father's desire to move away from the proximity of Russian power, and to avoid a repeat (for his children especially) of the concentration camp experiences he had barely survived for six months in World War II.

That war in fact displaced some 40 million people in Europe alone, but most stayed within their national boundaries. What is new in our time is the extent of international displacement, and the complexity of factors that surround it.

The world is faced with a rising tide of suffering humanity, the debris of war, persecution, and natural disaster we know as refugees. Estimates of today's refugee population vary between 14 and 18 million people. No one predicts a significant reduction in that number, and as political climates continue to destabilize, it is easy to identify several troubled regions of the world capable of producing additional thousands. Unfortunately, only a small percentage, estimated to be less than five percent, are refugees as a result of natural disasters. The remaining 95 percent are the result of human greed, betrayal of the popular will, lust for power, ethnic hatred and economic strains. No nation is entirely immune to the effects of today's millions of displaced people (Singleton 1983:61-62).

The same author, writing in another publication, cites the growing complexity,

Although we once classified refugees simply as "strangers", the cause of their plight having little or nothing to do with their treatment, today we are faced with illegal aliens, applicants for asylum, economic refugees, political refugees, and many thousands who are hidden behind the clouds of political chicanery whose very existence is denied (Singleton 1984:10-11).

The four greatest concentrations of refugees are as follows,  
(with the refugees moving either within the area or to an  
outside country of asylum,

Southeast Asia, including Kampuchea, Vietnam, and  
Laos: approx. 1.9 million people

Middle East, including Lebanon, Israel, Jordan,  
Afghanistan, and Pakistan:  
approx. 4.6 million people

East Africa, including Ethiopia, Somalia, and  
Sudan: approx. 1.4 million people

Central American and Carribbean, including El  
Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Cuba:  
approx. 1.8 million people

And these are conservative estimates. Concerning one of  
these four areas, a recent Reader's Digest article comments,

...Africa has a new nation-with no name, no capital  
city, no leader. Half of its population of five  
million are children under 16. All of its  
territory belongs to other countries. Its economy  
is based on charity; its principal products are  
hunger and disease. Its only national goal: sheer  
survival....The situation is a continent-wide  
disaster that will be one of the potentially  
explosive realities of the next decade (Davidson  
:64).

The same author finishes his article with this poignant  
comment. 'We would do well to write on one of our four  
comfortable walls the words of Said Gase, former Deputy  
Commissioner of Somalia's National Refugee Commission,  
"Refugees have no home; they belong to everyone."' (Davidson  
:68).

Our neighbor to the north has the best record in the free

world in providing a home for the homeless. Canada, with a population of 24 million, has accepted 350,000 refugees and displaced persons, and ranks in per capita reception just ahead of the US and Australia.

The story of refugees in Canada provides a fascinating insight into recent history, and how conflict and persecution in scattered places around the world has changed the face of one nation.

1956 Soviet invasion of Hungary - 38,000 Hungarians accepted into Canada (from Austria)

1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia - 12,000 Czechs to Canada

1970 Chinese invasion of Tibet - 228 Tibetans accepted (having fled to India)

1972 Idi Amin ousts Asians from Uganda - Canada welcomes 6,300

1973 Coup in Chile - Canada accepts 7,000 Chilean refugees

1975 Civil war between Greek and Turkish Cypriots forced Greeks off Cyprus - 700 arrive in Toronto

1976 New Marxist regimes in Angola and Mozambique - 2,100 Portuguese speaking non-nationals come to Canada

1977 Civil strife in Lebanon - 11,321 Lebanese admitted into Canada

1970's Copts suffer religious persecution under Sadat in Egypt - a small group make their way to Canada

1980 The massive exodus of 'Boat people' from southeast Asia - by end of 1980 71,000 had found a home in Canada

1981-82 Military crackdown in Poland - Canada accepts 10,000 Poles (hundreds of Polish sailors have also jumped ship in British Columbia)

1982 During the past eleven years 6,365 Soviet Jews have settled in Canada with 6,000 in Metro-Toronto alone

1982 Due to the Israeli-PLO conflict, many Lebanese have been left homeless. About 15,000 are settling in Ottawa and Montreal.

March 1982, Canada receives 25 refugees from Afghanistan. Due to the fierce internal conflict and Soviet invasion, 1.4 million had fled to neighboring Pakistan by the beginning of 1981. (All data from The Changing Face of Canada - an update on recent arrivals - a Canadian Government publication).

Similar figures could no doubt be provided for our own country. The Indo-Chinese dominated the scene in the seventies, to be replaced in the early eighties by Cubans and Haitians and, more recently, by others from Central America. Alongside these numbers are staggering figures of illegal aliens (totaling in 1982 between 3.5 and 5 million). For instance, while in 1978 100,000 Mexicans fled their impoverished country for the US, ten times that many (1 million) found their way across the Rio Grande illegally.

Perhaps another 'class' of people to include in America's refugee population are those Americans forced to flee within their own country. They are homeless, and without an address a person is not counted (not to be counted is not to count...), so officially these people do not exist and no census figures are available. Estimates place them at between 250,000 and 500,000, although an article in the Bulawayo Chronicle put the figure at 2 million. (It was strange how the negative or bizarre about America seemed to

make the Zambia and Zimbabwe newspapers with remarkable frequency...).

Whatever the figure, it includes not only the traditional citizens of skid row: the alcoholics, derelicts and 'bag ladies', but also some newcomers: economic casualties who are unemployed for the first time and are homeless due to the tight housing market, black youths who've never had a job and likely never will, the elderly whose fixed income provides shelter only 2 or 3 weeks per month, the deinstitutionalized mentally ill, and veterans of our recent wars. About one-third of the 10,000 homeless living in San Francisco are Vietnam War veterans, for instance (Loring 1982:9).

Former transients are now staying in the same city for longer periods, and service centers such as the Salvation Army and rescue missions are pressed to the limit. Without a single person coming to our shores or airports (or walking or swimming across), America would still have a homeless refugee situation on its hands.

One thing that should be mentioned in passing, and it is a critical and fascinating subject in its own right, is the central place of cities in the refugee situation. Although we are familiar from our television screens with the endless camps of Somalia or Pakistan, the vast majority of refugees finds its way (or would wish to) into the cities of the

neighboring or adopted country. This is certainly true of the voluntary migrants. Cities spell jobs and opportunities (and perhaps anonymity), and that's where friends and relatives already are.

In 1900, with a world population of about 1.6 billion, one person in 100 lived in an urban environment. In the projected world population of 6.2 billion in the year 2000 (according to a 1980 United Nations report on population projections) more than half will be living in cities. About 500 cities will have a population of a million or more, led by Mexico City's 31 million (presently 240 cities have one million or more people).

And not only do sheer numbers exist, but they display an incredible and challenging diversity! In Los Angeles there are between 100 and 150 language groups, in New York City's Chinatown every province of mainland China is represented, in Sao Paulo Brazil there are a million Japanese, about 14% of Paris is Algerian, and so on....Inter Varsity is preparing to minister to its constituency of 12 million college and university students which will in 1990 be one-third non-white: Asian, Hispanic, black, and international. A most insightful interview about such issues may be found in the January - March 1984 issue of World Vision's Together magazine. Dr. Ray Bakke, Christian urban expert, gives there a persuasive rationale for focusing on what he calls 'world-class cities'. It spoke very forcefully to me,

having observed for ten years in Africa how our African friends traveled to the cities, and missionary friends traveled to the bush, passing one another like trains in the night.

Before going on to look at the response to the situation (in many ways it would be easy to choose the word 'problem'), let's look at the specifics of a refugee.

The United Nations defines him as 'any person who by reason of a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group of political opinion, finds himself outside the country of his nationality or habitual residence, and is unable or by reason of fear is unwilling to return to that country (New Direction, a publication of Immigration Canada, p.11).

How to minister to such people? Only a few weeks ago, a friend in South Africa sent me the title page and table of contents of a recent Dutch publication called Een Gastvrije Kerk (a hospitable church). The table of contents speaks about two Amsterdam churches and their experiences in welcoming refugees from Marocco and from Surinam. The chapter titles use such words as verwarring and weerstanding (confusion and opposition), and speak of a min of meer mislukt project (a more or less failed project). The issue appears to address the specifics of granting sanctuary or

asylum, only one of the many issues connected with God's gift to us of those enormous numbers and variety of willing and unwilling migrants in our midst.

#### 14.6.2 The church's response

And God's gift to us they are. Some figures: in the decade between 1970 and 1979, 'this country will have taken in almost 4.4 million immigrants and refugees...and the pressure to admit greater numbers grows daily' (A US News and World Report cover story, July 9, 1979). Another interesting fact: in the 25 years between 1951 and America's bicentennial in 1976, the number of emigrants from Latin America, Asia, and Africa increased from 11 to 89 percent, while the emigration from Europe and the rest of the world decreased from 79 to 21 percent. Interestingly, the surge in emigrants came from the same countries where the majority of the USA's 37,000 evangelical missionaries are based.

The Indochinese wave has given way to more recent emigrants from Cuba and Haiti, and most recently from the war-torn areas of Central America such as Guatamala and El Salvador. And the exodus from Mexico shows no signs of decline. The strongest magnets for both legal and illegal immigrants, for voluntary refugees, remain the longing for social and political freedom, and the search for economic prosperity.

We should see this massive influx not first of all as the

multi-faceted headache which it often is, or can become, but as a grand opportunity. It can give us a new understanding of God, of ourselves, and of our mission, and then of the challenge which he has placed in our midst.

The central and compelling fact in worldwide mission is, as David Bosch reminds us, that it is Missio Dei. God Himself is the great Actor and Mover and Energizer, and we are privileged to play a small and significant role in His plan. And the God of Scripture is a God of migrations, of pilgrim people. The Bible is full of migrations, whether of pagan peoples (Ex 34.11) or God's own people. The move to the south spared them in Joseph's time from starvation, and prepared them for Moses and liberation. The later migrations to the north in the exile made their faith more flexible and resilient (the origin of the synagogue and Scripture translations into other languages is here), and also prepared the city communication network which first-century Christianity would use to conquer its world!

One author plaintively asks, 'Can we see in the faces of contemporary Asians, Latin Americans, and Africans, pushed from their lands and attracted to our shores, the potential glow of the angel of the Lord - the Lord of migrants who transforms and moves history through migrant peoples, and raises His own people as a pilgrim church among many diverse peoples' (Arias 1982:77)?

It can also give us a new view, or at least a constantly needed reminder, that we too are strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Our 'citizenship is in heaven (Phil 3.20) and we are essentially aliens or refugees on the planet. A deeper awareness of the numerous Scriptures discussed in our OT and NT sections can help to whittle down feelings of superiority, and shorten the we - they bridges we so easily build.

Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Daniel, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus have all shared the refugee experience, and Jews and Christians have known times of corporate exile and refugee status throughout their history. The first 15 chapters of Exodus remain the magna charta of all Christians, and Scriptures such as the following apply to all of us. 'Do not abhor an Egyptian, because you lived as an alien in his country,' (Deut 23.7) and 'the alien living with you must be treated as one of your native born. Love him as yourself...' (Lev 19.34), and 'I will be quick to testify against...those who deprive aliens of justice' (Mal 3.5).

Further, this massive invasion of our shores should also prompt new thinking on missions strategy. The 'changing pattern of immigration is begging for a major overhaul of mission strategy' (Bjork 1985:20).

I would submit that this 'overhaul' is to a large extent focused on the way we view or understand missions, and will

then consequently carry out. 'Missions will no longer be viewed as something we simply do overseas, but something we do within groups of unreached peoples, whether those groups are in Singapore or Los Angeles, '(Winter in Christianity Today 1985:18). The shift is from a sending mentality exclusively to the geographically distant, to a sending mentality to the culturally distant which may be very near geographically. Missions is, after all, the reaching of unreached peoples, and God may well be sending all those people to within a twelve inch range of us since we have failed to reach them from 12,000 miles.

The new orientation which this brings to mission is the centripetal focus so common in the Old Testament. The 'come and see' approach which recurs in the early chapters of John's Gospel on the lips of Jesus, Philip, and the Samaritan woman (John 1.39,46, 4.29,42). This approach suggests that we not only ask selected missionaries to be good guests overseas, but that all of us learn to be better hosts at home. There is not only pressure on missionary speech away from US homes and churches, but also far greater and healthy pressure on Christian character in those home churches. What's happening to the ones we send is now accompanied by what's happening among those who are still in the sending centres?

What the above lines say of course in a delightfully resounding way is that all of us need to know more, much

more, about the indispensable role which hospitality can play in world mission!

Before we look at specific strategy, we need to say a word about our 'target group'. What is the refugee like that we are trying to reach?

The most obvious point of contact with refugee would seem to be the meeting of their fundamental needs, yet Christians should not suppose these needs - food, shelter, medicine, employment - are the deepest ones.

Persons who have lost their roots are not normal persons, particularly in the first generation of their forced exile. Insecurities, anxieties, frustrations, fears, and bitterness may be masked by the more obvious lacks of food and clothing. But these psychological needs cannot be long ignored without broad social consequences (Bakke 1984:5).

Burt Singleton, with much experience in this area, expands further and identifies three main characteristics present in almost every refugee. The sense of terrible loss and severe anxiety often produces the following:

1) Feelings of guilt for a variety of reasons; delay of flight, failure to protect loved ones, loss of loved ones.

2) A sense of invulnerability, of bravado, because the refugee has survived experiences most of us cannot comprehend.

3) Arising out of the first two, an aggressiveness which negatively can lead to placing guilt on others or a tendency toward violence (or even suicide), and positively can lead to real effort in trying to succeed.

Such ministry to refugees can take place in three areas: the country of origin, as the need to flee becomes increasingly apparent, in the country of asylum and, probably most effectively, in the country of resettlement. (The PLO are a sad case of the second instance, mired for years between countries of origin and resettlement, and floating homeless in scattered places of asylum).

Singleton also suggests the following timetable when differing patterns of behaviour may require flexibility in style of ministry:

- 1) the initial bewildering period of arrival, of about two or three months
- 2) the first year or two of adjustment
- 3) the period of stability, which is often achieved after about ten years

What can a specific church do in the face of such an awesome new missions challenge? Several things may be mentioned, and a specific group of Christians may see these as a cafeteria list from which they might choose what applies to their local situation.

1) The first word in missions is not 'wait' (for refugees to come to your church door) but 'go'. Go to surrounding churches in your area or to the nearest urban church(es) and find out what they are already doing. You can fit in, supplement, and avoid a duplication of effort and consequent waste of time and resources. Go also (secondly!) to the denominational office of your church and ask how you can support a ministry among refugees. Go (thirdly) to the experts such as World Relief Corporation (Box WRG in Wheaton, Ill 60187) or World Vision, Bread for the World, or the local Lutheran Social Service Agency.

There are any number of ways to start, and once started, it will be much harder to stop! A fascinating story of one church's involvement is told in the 1983 issue of the Unreached Peoples series edited by Edward R. Dayton and Samuel Wilson and put out by MARC (Missions Advanced Research and Communications Center, an arm of World Vision). It is called The Refugees among Us and the story of Laurel Bible Chapel in San Diego is on pp 141-150.

This church's incredible ministry among three differing national groups of refugees began in a Sunday School class in 1975 that was studying hindrances to prayer, and was looking one morning at Proverbs 21.13, '...whoever stops his ears at the cry of the poor, he shall cry himself, but shall not be heard.' This text triggered a visit to nearby Camp Pendleton, where they were put in contact with a Christian

but homeless Vietnamese family. The story was underway.

2) A coordinator and committee will probably need to be chosen to spearhead this aspect of a church's ministry. Such a person can build up a library of good literature, including books such as David Hesselgrave's Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally, and magazine or journal articles of contemporary stories of what other churches have done or are doing.

3) The mission agencies of a church denomination can be put to good use. Why shouldn't a 'foreign' board use its resources and training opportunities in cross-cultural work and in languages, among other things, for local churches that are facing 'foreign' missions in a dramatic new way?

4) In the case of some population groups, why not ask a missionary working in their country of origin to come home and work with them in their country of asylum or resettlement? Or further, if the national church is strong and sizable, why not ask one of its pastors to come and work among its USA population? Missions after all should be from all nations to all nations, as an Urbana Convention theme had it some years ago.

5) In the specific process of sponsoring, start with one population group and not the initial confusion of two or more with differing languages, customs, and so on. At the

same time, it is also unwise to sponsor one family. At least two or more families from the same population group will minimize isolation and loneliness, and help them to make a commitment for a longer stay.

6) It is possibly wise to begin the stay of the first several days or few weeks in an American home, so that there can be human contact, and answers to all kinds of cultural questions which may arise. The new family must be encouraged regularly to cook its own food as well so the cross-cultural sharing is not too onesided.

7) The initial meeting of needs will probably be fundamental and physical. As the pastor of one church said it: start where you are, use what you have, do what you can. A dormant deacons' fund, boxes of clothing, a garage sale, using real-estate contacts are all the stuff which God can use to get us started.

In these areas of basic needs, it is crucial early on to transfer not only goods, but also information and skills. Help them to help themselves or, the familiar saying: give someone a fish and he lives a day; but teach someone to fish and he lives a lifetime. Over-dependency is to be avoided.

8) As we've already indicated, the needs usually go well beyond the physical. We should have other social and psychological support systems available to help the

newcomers in interpreting their past, and coping with the disorientation of their present, and adjustment of their future.

9) It may be made clear that a church or Christian's effort is extended in the name and spirit of Jesus, as early as possible, but is then not pushed. Attendance at activities ought to be strictly voluntary, and love displayed with a no-strings-attached attitude. Patience is probably the most coveted gift of the Spirit in all these relationships. Space can probably be made available for services in their own language, and I have seen on the West Coast numerous strange lettering on church signs accompanied by afternoon meeting times. It is to be hoped that these are halfway houses and that the Ephesians 2 reality of no dividing walls will also be regularly practiced as people of differing cultures learn to worship and serve together.

10) Last, and in some ways most intriguing, is that we see not only a ministry to refugees, but a very significant ministry of or by refugees. Why has God brought this potpourri of multicoloured and multilinguistic peoples to our shores, and why is He moving people around all over the globe? We need to be very sensitive to His sovereign plan.

Not only can migrant or newcomer groups reach their own people in the US more effectively, they also have contacts back home that we will never have. This would be especially

valuable in the cases of countries we would consider closed. And we need to face at least some refugees seriously with the challenge of resettling in their own country and being God's spokespersons there. It is an exciting chapter indeed in the story of world missions.

Of course there are difficulties and complications, and great demands on our energy, time, and variety of resources, but Satan does not take defeat of his plans lightly. One issue I add as a footnote is the recent one of sanctuary which has arisen with illegal immigrants from El Salvador and Guatemala taking refuge in Christian churches.

Bill Kellerman addresses this problem well in an April 1983 article in Sojourners called 'The Hospitality of God'. He speaks of an increasingly organized underground railroad connecting various places of hospitality for those 'illegal aliens', and of emerging self-declared church sanctuaries which are being linked up with these. Kellerman argues, 'The church has merely recommended that sanctuaries be sanctuaries...such a place, in the interest of justice, provides a break in the cycle of violence...it is quite literally a sign and space of nonviolence: check your weapons at the door...it celebrates the sovereignty of God in history and in our lives, marking the limit of civil authority. The long arm of the law stops and knocks at the front door...' (Kellerman 1983:26-27).

The author explains that these refugees would almost certainly face torture, severe interrogation, and likely death, should they be forcibly returned to their home countries. He cites as precedent for his proposal (that sanctuaries be sanctuaries) the Levitical cities of refugee named in Deuteronomy 4.41-43 and 19.4-13, the 'mark of Cain' making him a walking sanctuary, and also offers interesting insights on Psalm 27 and the martyrs under the throne of Revelation 6. The latter cry about justice, 'O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before Thou wilt judge and vindicate our blood upon the earth' (Rev 6.10)?

## Conclusion

In closing this paper, I would ask the same question, in another context. How long, O Sovereign Lord, before You bring history to a close and inaugurate that heavenly banquet where You will serve as Host? Thank You Lord for your picture of hospitality in the Genesis garden, and for your continued graciousness in a fallen and inhospitable world. Thank You for brilliant pictures of a welcoming Abraham, an open-hearted Solomon by the temple, a comfortable guest at so many suppers in the Person of Your Son, and a suffering host at his last one, and the gentle urgings toward ongoing hospitality by Peter, Paul and the Hebrews author. Thank You for the archipelago of early Christian homes, of later monasteries, and of numerous homes since then that have furthered the cause of the gospel and radiated warmth and light in situations often cold and dark.

Thank You for the joyful challenge of open hearts and open homes still, and that we all can use the simple things You've entrusted to us as first steps to involvement in Your world wide mission.

Lord, help us to see and experience our attempts at faithful hospitality as appetizers, and foretastes of that great heavenly meal. How long, O Sovereign Lord, before You show us in an eternally intimate way what hospitality is really like...?

I found it hard (in fact, impossible!) to resist adding the following meditation as a postscript to this paper. It was written by a blind pastor in one of our churches who has an unusual ability to 'see'.

When I started seminary in the fall of 1960, only part of the new seminary building on the Knollcrest campus - the classroom wing - was ready. The other two wings, the chapel and the administration section, held mostly a chaos of construction materials and promise. That's an awkward time in the life of a building.

A new building may be consecrated to the Lord at two different times. You may hold a groundbreaking ceremony after all preparations are finished and the moment to begin construction has come. Or you may hold a dedication service when the building is finished and all the rooms and furnishings are ready for service to the Lord. But what do you call this business of moving in before the building is ready?

Pentecost has similar options, and maybe that is why we don't make as much of it as we do of other Christian anniversary celebrations. On Pentecost the Lord moved into his new house, the church, before it was finished. Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter are like groundbreaking, for "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). His return will be like the dedication, for "how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life" (Rom 5:10). But Pentecost is neither the beginning nor the end of construction.

Still, when you think about it, moving in is what a building is for. If on Pentecost God decided that it was time for him to move into his new home even though it wasn't yet finished, and if from that time on the new building has been serving as his home, then we know for sure that he will complete the building! Then we truly do have something decisive to celebrate each Pentecost Sunday. In truth, this is exactly what Pentecost means.

Pentecost means that God has moved into his home, the church. From eternity God elected us unconditionally to be his people. Then, before any life was in us, he decisively redeemed us through his death and resurrection. And on Pentecost he

displayed his sovereign, irresistible grace by taking possession. The Pentecost account is full of the massive and masterful might of God rather than the minute movements of humans. All the thoughts, hopes, and prayers of the people he moved into had as little to do with his moving as the creaks and leaks of the houses we move into have to do with our moving into them.

Further, in a way that was never true before, Pentecost means that since that day we the church continue to serve as God's home. It may seem that the part of God's home we know best is so unfinished that only in the furnace room does it offer a little warmth, power, and light. We wonder; can God really live here? But the more we glimpse the parts of his home nearing completion, the more we realize that God really is living here! We realize that being possessed by the sovereign God is a wonderfully uplifting, free, natural, and joyful truth. Never could the disciples have said and done what they did without the Spirit, but when he moved them to say and do what they did, they were more truly themselves than they had ever been before. We too, by the time we finally become like Christ, will no longer resist doing his will.

Finally, Pentecost means that God's home will be completed on schedule and according to plan. That's what the Bible means when it calls the Holy Spirit a "deposit guaranteeing our inheritance" (Eph. 1:14). God is already home here in the church; he has made it clear that he doesn't plan ever to move or to begin building somewhere else. He works everywhere in the big, wide world, but His church is his only home. Only God knows how long it will take him to finish building. Only God knows how big his home will be. But, since Pentecost, we know that he will finish his home and that it will be his forever (Vander Laan 1984:7).

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