



THEOLOGY OF HOSPITALITY FOR INTRA AND INTER-RELIGIOUS HARMONY: AN INDONESIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: *The theme of hospitality has become an emerging theme for recent theological explorations. The theme is prominent in the entire Bible and is relevant to current global issues such as religious pluralism, immigrants, and even ecological challenges. This article seeks to show the centrality of divine hospitality in the Bible and how it is clearly reflected in the Pentecost narrative in Acts 2. Furthermore, this article demonstrates how the theology of hospitality could be relevant to fostering intra and inter-religious harmony, especially in the context of Indonesia. The hospitality of the Spirit, as shown in Pentecost, shapes the body of Christ as a community of hospitality that would use gifts of the spirit not for self-aggrandizement but to serve others. Hospitality is also a theological statement. When Christians are being hospitable towards the religious other, they embody the hospitality of God and thus participate in the mission of God.*

Keywords: *Theology; Hospitality; Pluralism; Harmony; Religion*

INTRODUCTION

One of the leading narratives used by the government and religious leaders related to religious harmony in Indonesia is religious moderation. The term “moderation” is derived from Latin “*moderatio*” which means not too much and at the same time not less. The term implies an attitude of self-control. The official dictionary of Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI) defines the term under two meaning: 1) mitigating violence; and 2) avoiding extremes. A moderate person means a person that is not an extremist, especially but not limited, to religious matters.¹ According to Thomas Pentury, the goal of religious moderation is to foster intra-religious harmony, inter-religious harmony, and harmonious relationship between the religious groups and the government.²

The word moderation in Arabic is *wasath* or *wasathiyah* that has equal meaning with *tawassuth* (in the middle), *i'tidak* (just), and *tawazun* (balanced). A person who applies principle of *wasathiyah* could be called *wasith*. The word *wasith* is adopted in Indonesian word as “wasit” that has three meaning: 1) a middle person in trading context; 2) a negotiator or a peacemaker amid of a conflict; 3) a referee in sport.³ All those three understanding of the word shows a balanced view of a person who has the attitude of moderation.

The theme of religious moderation is relevant to create religious harmony because the attitude of

moderation could be found in many religious traditions. In Islam, a Muslim community could only be called a witness (*syahidan*) only if they have commitment to humanity and they act as an example for other religious groups. In Christianity, moderation could be seen through how Jesus came to the world as a peacemaker. He never incited people to do violence or to do war.⁴ In Catholicism, the document *Nostra Aetate* (a result of the Second Vatican Council) asserts that the Catholic church would not deny anything of other religions that are right and holy.⁵

In Hinduism, the spirit of moderation could be found in the teaching of “susila” that emphasizes a harmonious relationship among human beings. In Buddhism, the concept of “Buddhadharma” refers to the middle way that has become a main characteristic of Buddhist spirituality. Buddhadharma avoids two extremes of self-torture and self-indulgence. Confucianism teaches “yin yang”, a principle of balance and avoiding extremes. In yin yang principle, less is considered as bad as excessive.⁶

This article seeks to make a Christian contribution towards religious harmony by constructing a theology of hospitality. Hospitality has become a theological theme that catches international attention with promising relevance for current issues of religious harmony. The concept of hospitality could give a deeper insight for intra and inter-religious harmony for it does not only evaluate whether a religious community love humanity in general but how do they act towards strangers.⁷ The

¹ Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019), 15.

² In Bahasa Indonesia, the Minister of Religious Affairs coined the term “Tri-Kerukunan Agama”. See Thomas Pentury, “Moderasi Beragama dan Kristen Moderat: Sebuah Tantang-Jawab,” dalam *Mozaik Moderasi Beragama dalam Perspektif Kristen*, ed. oleh Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI (Jakarta: Direktorat Jenderal Bimbingan Masyarakat Kristen & BPK Gunung Mulia, 2017), 15.

³ Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama*, 16.

⁴ Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama*, 27–30.

⁵ “Nostra Aetate,” accessed on 7 February 2024, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

⁶ Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama*, 35–37.

⁷ Harls Evan R. Siahaan dan Munatar Kause, “Hospitalitas sebagai Laku Hidup Menggereja

stranger here could be a religious other or a denominational other. Often times, one finds dealing with people of other denominations as strange as dealing with people of other religions.

Hospitality is an old notion, as old as human culture. It has been claimed that civilization begins with a handshake. There are Biblical stories like Abraham and Sarah hosting the strangers under the Mamre tree and how Jesus hosted the strangers on the road to Emmaus. In the present context, hospitality has become an emerging issue due there is real ethical responsibility to open borders to strangers. There are urgent situations related to immigration, refugee crisis, boundary disputes, and ecological challenge. The last issue is also an issue of hospitality since climate emergency demands nature to be our honored guest in every moral conversation on global scale.⁸

This article will seek to demonstrate that a theology of hospitality mainly grounded in the Pentecost event could help to see motif of divine hospitality in the entire Bible. The Pentecost event in (Acts 2) is a restoration of humanity fractured by in the tower of Babel (Gen. 11), and it looks towards salvation that will extend to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8). Furthermore, this article will attempt to show the relevance of divine hospitality towards building intra and inter-religious harmony. This article will also seek to show the potential of theology of hospitality for fostering intra and interreligious harmony.

RESEARCH METHODS

This article uses library research method from the perspective of

dalam Bingkai Moderasi Beragama di Indonesia," *DANUM PAMBELUM: Jurnal Teologi dan Musik Gereja* 2, no. 2 (2022): 235.

⁸ Richard Kearney dan Melissa Fitzpatrick, *Radical Hospitality: From Thought to Action* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2021), 1–3.

systematic theology. According to Smith, systematic theology is an attempt to systematically construct the teaching of the Bible on certain topics.⁹

This research will start with showing the importance of hospitality in the ancient world as reflected in the Old Testament and how the Pentecost narrative could be regarded as the clearest demonstration of God's hospitality in the Bible. Afterwards, this article will proceed with outlining the potentials of theology of hospitality for intra and inter-religious relationship.

RESULTS

The whole Bible is a full-scale demonstration of the divine hospitality which perhaps most clearly reflected in the Pentecost event in Acts 2. While the narrative of the tower of Babel (Gen. 11) shows how human beings became fractured due to sin and self-aggrandizement, the Pentecost narrative (Acts 2) shows how God intends to unite all people in the Spirit for His glory. Thus, the theme of hospitality is of vital importance to be reflected theologically. It is a central motif in the Bible and it is relevant to current pressing issues of the world like immigrants, violence, even ecological issues. This article will focus on the relevance of theology of hospitality for fostering intra and inter-religious harmony.

First of all, this research will elaborate on how hospitality had become a central ethical issue in the ancient world and as it was also reflected in the Old Testament milieu. The hospitality of the Spirit found in the Pentecost narrative is somehow an extension of God's hospitality since the creation of the world. Even the creation itself is a welcome embrace of God as the host towards all created things as the guests. Even though the divine hospitality to all nations are shown perhaps in the clearest

⁹ Kevin Gary Smith, *Writing and Research: A Guide for Theological Students* (UK: Langham Global Library, 2016), 139.

sense in the Pentecost narrative, the entire Bible attests to His hospitality to all peoples of the earth.

Second, this research will show the relevance of theology of hospitality to intra-religious relationship. Denominationalism has paradoxically become an undeniable fact yet a theological problem since the church aims to present the universality of salvation in Christ. Inter-denominational relationship, especially in Indonesian context, is also often times with a lot of tension; attested by the phenomenon called “sheep-stealing”. The hospitality of the Spirit in the New Testament could be a leading narrative towards fostering inter-denominational relationship since the various spiritual gifts endowed by the Holy Spirit serve only one purpose, that is to edify the whole body of Christ.

Third, this research will try to show the relevance of theology of hospitality to inter-religious relationship. As the Spirit shows hospitality not only to Christians but also to those of other religions, Christians could be encouraged to sincerely investigate how the Holy Spirit works in other religions. That does not mean regarding Christianity as exactly the same with other religions, but that does mean that things that are regarded by the Bible as true, beautiful, and just could also be found in other religions. This conviction could lead towards the attitude of tolerance and doctrinal humility.

DISCUSSION

Pentecost and Divine Hospitality

In the ancient world, hospitality is a central ethical issue. The centrality of the issue is comparable to popular contemporary ethical issues such as abortion, marriage, LGBTQIA+, and bio-ethics. In the ancient world, hospitality could be simply understood as a shift of status from a stranger into a

guest.¹⁰

According to Barton, ancient hospitality has three steps. The first step was evaluation from the host whether a stranger could be a guest without destroying a social order of the community where the host belonged and without causing security concern. The second step, should the host saw the possibility, the host would elaborate sets of responsibilities that should be honored by the two parties. And third, the honorable departure of a stranger that had become a guest. It would be an honorable separation because the host had shown an honorable manner of hospitality and the guest had become refreshed and made ready to travel again. This separation would play an important role to foster friendship between the host, the guest, and the community of the host in the future.¹¹

The Pentecost narrative is a clear reflection of God’s hospitality to the world that could not be separated from the context of ancient hospitality in the Old Testament world. Pentecost itself is a fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy, wherein stated that the Spirit of God will be poured out universally regardless of gender, age, social status or race (Joel 2:28-32). In its original context, the Israelites in Joel’s time was facing God’s judgment for they had turned away from Him. Responding to that, God promised that His people would later function as prophets, in resonance with Moses’s wish that all of God’s people will prophesy (Num. 11:29). In that sense, Joel’s prophecy is a divine invitation to salvation for all nations.¹²

¹⁰ Martin William Mittelstadt, “Eat, Drink, and Be Merry: A Theology of Hospitality in Luke-Acts,” *Word & World* 34, no. 2 (2014): 132.

¹¹ S. C. Barton, “Hospitality,” dalam *Dictionary of Later New Testament & Its Developments* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 501–7; cf. Martin William Mittelstadt, “Eat, Drink, and Be Merry,” 132.

¹² Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 434.

Acts 2:5 (NIV) narrates how the Holy Spirit was poured out when the God-fearing Jews stayed in Jerusalem “from every nation under heaven” to celebrate Pentecost. It was not as crowded as Passover, however, since it was only fifty days after Passover, there were still a lot of people attending the festival.¹³ The way Luke used the expression “every nation under heaven” when narrating the Pentecost event shows how his allusion to OT as found in Deut. 2:25; 4:19; 9:14; 29:19 and Ecc. 1:3; 3:1. The OT usage of the expression refers inclusively to all nations on earth.¹⁴

The phenomenon of speaking in other tongues in Acts 2:4 shows God’s hospitality that transcends the wall of separation between Jews and non-Jews, serving as a legitimate ground of God’s welcoming hands towards all nations. The coming of the Spirit in the Pentecost event could be seen as an envoy that gave an eschatological invitation to Israel and other nations, as it is clear in Acts 1:8.¹⁵

Furthermore, when elaborating upon the foreign languages spoken by those who were filled by the Spirit, Luke provided list of nations (Acts 2:9-11) that was an updated version of the list of nations in Gen. 10. By doing that, Luke symbolically conveyed the universal nature of God’s invitation to salvation.¹⁶

The usage of list of nations in Acts 2 is also a demonstration of God’s

restorative work for the fractured relationship of the nations depicted in Gen. 10. While in Gen. 10, the seventy nations experienced confusion of languages and dispersed as a form of God’s punishment in the tower of Babel; the Pentecost narrative shows how the nations are reconciled to one another so they could understand one another and could hear the great things that God had done (Acts 2:11). The Pentecost narrative demonstrates how the fractured humanity is restored in unity through the power of the Holy Spirit.¹⁷

Although Pentecost is perhaps the clearest expression of God’s hospitality, the divine hospitality had started much earlier. As noted in the introduction part that hospitality is as old as human culture, from the theological perspective, it could be said that hospitality is as old as the creation.

The Bible opens up with a story of creation, a story of how God designed the whole cosmos to welcome His creation. The heaven and earth were created accordingly so it could be a home for all creation. All creation is full of signs of God’s hospitality. According to the Judeo-Christian worldview, the story of divine hospitality could be seen under three qualities: first, God’s covenantal care to preserve the creation; second, the regularities of creation that created diversity but dependency among created things; and third, the power of God through the Holy Spirit that animate and move the creation.¹⁸

Saxena argued that God is “the Ultimate Cosmic Host”. While every culture has its own standard and norm of hospitality, God is the highest standard and norm of hospitality. Because human beings are created according to God’s image, they could participate in understanding the notion of hospitality.

¹³ Craig S. Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 322.

¹⁴ C. K. Barret, *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments: Acts 1-14*, ed. oleh J. A. Emerton, C. E. B. Cranfield, dan G. N. Stanton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 118–19.

¹⁵ Mittelstadt, “Eat, Drink, and Be Merry,” 135.

¹⁶ Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 66; cf. Ben Witherington III, ed., “Editing the Good News: Some Synoptic Lessons for the Study of Acts,” dalam *History, Literature and Society in the Book of Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 335–44.

¹⁷ Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 322–23.

¹⁸ Maria Eugenia Reyes Fee, “The Art of Theaster Gates and a Theology of Hospitality” (Fuller Theological Seminary, Ph.D Diss., 2019), 1.

Saxena further argued that the creation narrative is a narrative of divine hospitality because God changed the chaotic earth that had no form and empty (Gen. 1:2) into an order of creation that could protect, grow, and provide all things needed for human beings to flourish. In the creation narrative, human beings are depicted as guest, whereas God is the hospitable host.¹⁹

In the New Testament, a strong motif of hospitality is clearly reflected in the life and death of Christ. The Gospel of Luke shows how divine hospitality could be traced back from the infancy of Jesus Christ until his appearance to the disciples on the road to Emmaus. The Gospel of Luke is full of images of Jesus exposed to tax collectors, strangers, sinners, and crowds. Jesus also showed his hospitality by sharing meals with the outcasts.²⁰ Luke saw that whole life and work of Christ as God's visitation to Israel and the world.²¹

Hans Boersma argued that the cross of Christ should primarily be understood as an act of divine hospitality. The cross of Christ is a demonstration of how God opened his very self to the whole cosmos, even though the world has closed itself from His embrace. Boersma wrote, "Christ's death and resurrection constitute the ultimate expression of God's hospitality and form the matrix for an understanding of all God's actions and as such the normative paradigm for human

actions."²² As hospitality was the calling of Christ himself, it should also be the calling of his disciples. Disciples of Christ, the "hospitable One" are called to embody Christ's hospitality in the world.²³

Intra-Religious Harmony

Christianity believes in the hospitable God. Therefore, there should be intra-religious harmony among Christian churches that embodied the divine hospitality. Unfortunately, relationship among churches is not without tension. Christianity is comprised of many Christian traditions and church denominations, and it is not easy to maintain harmonious relationship.

There is a phenomenon called sheep-stealing, where a particular church is more successful in reaching out to other church members to join it rather than unbelievers.²⁴ This phenomenon demonstrates how relationship among churches had become competitive instead of friendly and moreover, it shows that the competition has become unhealthy.²⁵

Sheep-stealing approach is considered as an illegitimate mission move since it does not contribute towards the expansion of God's kingdom, but barely moving a sheep from a shed to another one. This phenomenon has caused suspicion among Christian churches that might hinder interdenominational

¹⁹ S. R. Saxena, "Otherness and Embrace: Towards a Theology of Hospitality in the Indian Context," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 43, no. 2 (2019): 110.

²⁰ Michael Lynn Gregg, "Becoming Strangers: Discovering the Presence of God by Receiving Hospitality in Communities outside Northside Drive Baptist Church" (D.Min Dissertation, Mercer University, 2014), 37.

²¹ Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 4; cf. Gregg, "Becoming Strangers: Discovering the Presence of God by Receiving Hospitality in Communities outside Northside Drive Baptist Church," 37.

²² Hans Boersma, *Violence, Hospitality, and the Cross: Reappropriating the Atonement Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 26; cited in Matthew Kaemingk, *Christian Hospitality and Muslim Immigration in an Age of Fear* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2018), 182.

²³ Kaemingk, *Christian Hospitality*, 182.

²⁴ Maleachi Riwu, "Fenomena Anggota Jemaat Pindah Gereja," *Didaska: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen* 1, no. 1 (2021): 77.

²⁵ Asih R. E. Sumiwi dan Yonatan A. Arifianto, "Tinjauan Roma 15:5-6 untuk Meningkatkan Kerukunan Intern Orang Percaya Masa Kini," *Jurnal Teologi Berita Hidup* 3, no. 2 (2021): 263.

collaborations. Ecumenical efforts such as joint projects, joint worship services, and interdenominational alliances could raise suspicion of concealed niceties towards a sheep-stealing move. Churches have various responses to the phenomenon. Some churches break away from any form of ecumenism by forbidding their members to visit other churches, some others develop a theology that would enable their members to be more independent from wider Christian circles.²⁶ Those responses are in general has a sectarian motif, thus an obstacle for interdenominational hospitality.

Denominationalism²⁷ in Christianity is problematic because it is an empirical reality yet at the same time embarrassing for Christians due to its self-contradictory theological rationale. Christians see denominational difference as unspiritual division, a division that is seen to undermine the universal claims of the gospel of salvation, yet churches face problem to determine whether that gospel is better to be ministered within a particular denominational way or within a universal ecumenical Christian understanding on the person and work of Christ.²⁸

The Pentecost narrative in Acts 2 could be a guiding narrative that leads churches towards unity in the Spirit.

²⁶ Yonatan N. Gez dan Yvan Droz, "The Sheep-Stealing Dilemma," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 47 (2017): 182.

²⁷ The term "denomination" does not only denote particular theological traditions, but organizationally, the term refers to clusters of people who have sort of comprehensive scope of functions. In other words, denominations are developed for their members to exist alongside one another as distinct religious clustes; see Nancy T. Ammerman, "Denominationalism/Congregationalism," dalam *Handbooks of Religion and Social Institutions*, ed. oleh Helen Rose Ebaugh (New York: Springer, 2006), 362.

²⁸ Joseph Webster, "Denominations as (Theological) Institutions: An Afterword," *Anthropological Quarterly* 92, no. 4 (2019): 1124.

Paul explained in 1 Cor. 12 that each Christian received different spiritual gifts yet all of those gifts are from the same Holy Spirit (v. 11) for the church not to be divided but to cooperate on working in the Spirit. As Spurgeon noted, "Thus, these were not gifts to possess or to take pride in; instead, these were the Holy Spirit's gifts to individual Christians, as he wished, to be used for the *common benefit* of the whole church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:7).²⁹

The uniting factor here is not the spiritual gifts itself, but the common benefit or common cause that the Spirit wants Christians achieve. Using spiritual gifts for one's sake is a total misunderstanding, because the diversity of spiritual gifts is aimed to fulfill different needs in the Christian community. Furthermore, the gift is given not for personal pride, but for edification of the whole body of Christ.³⁰ Christians should not abuse the hospitality of the Spirit to their own aggrandizement. Instead, they are called to exercise the spiritual gifts, as a result of the hospitality of the Spirit, to embody hospitality to the whole body of Christ.

One biblical example is Agabus. As a prophet of God, he proclaimed God's word to the church. And when the Spirit revealed to him a famine that was to come, he shared the prophecy with the church in Antioch (Acts 11:27-30). But that prophecy was not given only for the sake of the Antioch church. The prophecy was given so the Antioch church could help the poor in Judea. And readers should note Luke's emphasis here, that he was attempting to show how the famine could be a means to bind together the Jewish believers in Judea and the newly converted Gentiles in

²⁹ Italics mine; Andrew B. Spurgeon, *Twin Cultures Separated by Centuries: An Indian Reading of 1 Corinthians* (Carlisle: Langham Global Library, 2016), 221.

³⁰ R. C. Sproul, ed., *The Reformation Study Bible* (Orlando: Reformation Trust, 2015), 2034.

Antioch.³¹ This example shows how the hospitality of the Spirit should shape the church to be a hospitable body of Christ.³²

Inter-Religious Harmony

Not only for intra-religious harmony, theology of hospitality is also relevant towards building inter-religious harmony, a crucial issue that needs to be addressed by churches in Indonesia.

From 1990 until 2008, there were 832 conflicts of religion in the country. In average, there are 46 conflicts related to religious matters per year.³³ The attitude of intolerance has become a serious social problem that would threaten harmony among religious groups. Actions caused by intolerance are embodied in actions such as intimidations towards the religious other, protests against building worship places of other religions, and even terrorism.³⁴

The attitude of tolerance is indispensable to create and maintain inter-religious harmony. Tolerant people would honor the freedom of others who are different than him or her, and a tolerant society would essentially be comprised of mutual respect, acceptance,

and appreciation amid of cultural and religious diversity.³⁵

Theology of hospitality could help to foster the attitude of tolerance. In general, the Pentecost narrative shows the Spirit's intention to unite the world's inhabitants regardless of religion, race, social, or political differences. In the narrative of tower of Babel, everybody wanted to exalt oneself, thus disharmony occurred. But in the Pentecost event, the Spirit caused the people to speak "God-exalting tongues" that brought public attention to God and his intention to unite the people under Him, an intention that will last for generation and generations to come.³⁶

More specifically, the hospitality of the Spirit enables Christians to see that there are goodness, justice, truth, and beauty in the people of other religions. Kärkkäinen argued that hospitality towards other religions requires spiritual discernment of role and value of non-Christian religions.³⁷ It is an invitation to see other religions in a pneumatological perspective. The experiences of the Spirit in the light of Scripture could be a guide to discern "differentiated experiences of faith and the multifaceted phenomena of religious traditions."³⁸ In short, understanding divine hospitality encourages Christians to engage in interreligious dialogue and friendship.

³¹ Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 446.

³² A current example of common cause for interdenominational cooperation is Covid-19. The post-pandemic situation could be a chance for churches to join their hearts and hands in revitalizing worship that had been affected by the pandemic; see Hengki B. Tompo, David Kristanto, dan Adri P. Wicaksono, "Revitalizing Worship In The Post-Pandemic Church: Towards A Liturgy Of Thanksgiving," *Manna Rafflesia* 8, no. 2 (2022): 685–705, https://doi.org/10.38091/man_raf.v8i2.249.

³³ Izak Y. M. Lattu, "Beyond Interreligious Dialogue: Oral-Based Interreligious Engagements in Indonesia," dalam *Annual Review of the Sociology of Religion, Volume 10: Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. oleh Giuseppe Giordan dan Andrew P. Lynch (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 74.

³⁴ Novie Indrawati Sagita, "Pelaksanaan Urusan Pemerintahan Umum dalam Membina Kerukunan Beragama oleh Pemerintah Kota Bandung," *Jurnal PENAMAS* 31, no. 1 (2018): 47.

³⁵ Yonatan Alex Arifianto dan Kalis Stevanus, "Membangun Kerukunan Antarumat Beragama dan Implikasinya bagi Misi Kristen," *HUPERETES: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristen* 2, no. 1 (2020): 42.

³⁶ Youngmo Cho dan Hyung Dae Park, *Acts: New Covenant Commentary*, ed. oleh Michael F. Bird dan Craig Keener (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2019), 50–51.

³⁷ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Theology of religions: Divine hospitality and spiritual discernment," dalam *The Routledge Handbook of Pentecostal Theology*, ed. oleh Wolfgang Vondey (New York: Routledge, 2020), 443.

³⁸ Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Theology of Religions* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 24.

That kind of openness does not lead towards relativistic understanding of truth or to give up Christian truth claims as found in the Scriptures. It is rather a sincere effort, which often times painful and requires a lot of patience, to investigate real differences and similarities.³⁹

Through dialogue, not only Christians could learn from other religious groups, Christians could also be enriched in their Christian faith by explaining it to people of other religions. D'Costa argued that Christians should appreciate other religions as vital and important as they help the church to go deeper into the divine mystery. While Christians testify salvation in Christ to the religious other, they could also see that the Spirit is already working outside of the church and be encouraged in faith.⁴⁰ Acknowledging the work of the Spirit in the religious other could lead Christians to grow towards doctrinal humility.⁴¹

During Jesus's last days, he told them to take nothing on their journey (Mark 6:8). That is his way to encourage the disciples to depend on the hospitality of strangers.⁴² This parable could help us to see the theological possibility of Christians to learn from the religious other. While interreligious dialogue serves as an embodiment of divine hospitality, the Spirit would also encourage Christians to receive something from the hospitality of the

strangers.

Hospitality also has a missional dimension. When Christians offer hospitality to the people of other religions, they are making a theological statement of what kind of community are they. What they believe and live in, and what they aspire and want to share.⁴³

CONCLUSION

This article has attempted to show how the entire Bible is a witness of God's hospitality to all creation. The very first page of the Bible, the creation narrative depicts God as a hospitable host that receive all created things in the cosmos as His guest. His hospitality is extended to his guests by providing them a shelter to live and to flourish.

In the Gospels, the whole story of Jesus Christ shows exchanges of hospitality from His infancy to resurrection. Through incarnation, God visits humanity, showing His hospitable attitude. Christ's death shows hospitality in the sense that He invited the world to the divine embrace by His atonement. After Christ's resurrection, He extended hospitality to the disciples who were on the road to Emmaus. He invited them for a meal. Through His action of breaking the bread for the disciples, He once again shows an act of hospitality (Luke 24:13-32).

The Pentecost narrative (Acts 2) shows the hospitality of the Spirit that intended to embrace all people regardless of their status, gender, or religion. Thus, Christians, embraced by the hospitality of the Spirit should embody the divine hospitality as the body of Christ. Hospitality in itself helps to shape the church to grow in the direction of the likeness of Christ. Furthermore, hospitality is also a theological statement to those outside of the church. The missional dimension of hospitality is vividly embodied in the

³⁹ Kärkkäinen, "Theology of religions," 450.

⁴⁰ D'Costa Gavin, *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2000), 109.

⁴¹ Catherine Cornille, "Conditions for Inter-Religious Dialogue," dalam *The Willey-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, ed. oleh Catherine Cornille (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 21–22; cf. Tony Salurante, David Kristanto, dan Moses Wibowo, "Common grace as theological encouragement for interreligious dialogue," *Acta Theologica* 43, no. 1 (2023): 145, <https://doi.org/10.38140/at.v43i1.6456>.

⁴² Crystal Meletiou, "Spirituality in Contemporary Hospitality: A Practical Theological Approach" (University of Pretoria, Ph.D Diss., 2016), 56.

⁴³ Andrew Francis, *Hospitality and Community after Christendom* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012), 48.

mission of Christ himself in the Gospels.

For further research, it is important to investigate how the theme of hospitality has shaped the church liturgy, preaching, and teaching. And in a more academic setting, it is also important to investigate how hospitality has been researched in formal theological education. Another feasible direction for further research is to explore hospitality from different theological traditions such as from Baptist, Reformed, Pentecostal, and other Christian traditions.

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