

Having Eyes to See: Hospitality and Early Methodism

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My own research of late has focused on the virtue and practice of hospitality in early Christianity. This work, published in a recent anthology,¹ has identified patterns of hospitality within early Christianity that reinvigorate our notions about hospitality as spiritual discipline that calls us to participate in God's grace. My interest here is to explore the usefulness of hospitality as a lens through which to examine the early Methodist movement in England. Hospitality offers a vocabulary of recognition of strangers, particularly the most vulnerable populations, a vocabulary of gratitude for the grace by which God has welcomed us into the divine life, and a vocabulary for participation with Christ through the stranger. This paper will discuss hospitality within early Christianity, then turn to the welcoming of strangers in early Methodism.

The Christian tradition has much to say about hospitality. Christians for centuries have tried to understand hospitality and its faithful expressions. Brothers and sisters in Christ that have gone before us believed the practice of hospitality was central to the Christian life. They told stories about it, lifted up examples of it, preached about it, praised it. Most importantly, they understood it to be a dynamic of God's household of grace.

The good news is that Christians are rediscovering hospitality as a virtue and a practice within the Christian life. Conversations, scholarship and conferences on hospitality in the last few years have brought attention to the ways a developed notion of hospitality might contribute to Christian community and identity as well as to mission, spiritual growth and even contemporary worship.² The voices lifting up hospitality are

lively and hopeful, and I believe they are on to something. As the conversation broadens, it is important to bring historical voices to the table, listening to what our ancestors learned and lived with regard to hospitality. Like grandparents, aunts and uncles at a family reunion, these voices remind us of who we are as the Christian family, what we have lived and how God has moved among us. Our parents in the faith can shed light as we struggle to discern how to walk the path of hospitality. These ancient Christians struggled, too, and offer a wealth of wisdom not only about the practice of hospitality but about its place as a spiritual discipline in Christian life. As Christians today examine the notion of hospitality in relation to justice, the Eucharist, church growth and interfaith dialogue, we begin to see God's work in the world anew.

This project uses the lens of hospitality to reveal patterns of faith and practice in the developing Wesleyan communities in England in the eighteenth century. As a heuristic device, hospitality may help us see pieces we have not seen or bring into sharper focus practices that have been categorized primarily in terms of piety.

What Is Hospitality?³At the very least, hospitality is the welcoming of the stranger (*hospes*).⁴ While hospitality can include acts of welcoming family and friends, its meaning within the Christian biblical and historical traditions has focused on receiving the alien and extending one's resources to them. Hospitality, then, involves the physical, social and spiritual needs of the stranger, though, as we shall see, those of the host are addressed as well. Early Christian texts pay attention to each of these areas.

On the face of it, hospitality begins with basic physical needs of food and shelter, most powerfully symbolized in table fellowship, sharing food and drink at a common table. Sharing food together more than allows participants to get the nourishment they need to live. Eating together is symbolic of partaking of life itself.⁵ Jesus' own table

fellowship with sinners and socially marginal people witnesses to the power of the hospitality of the realm of God.

In addition to food, hospitality might entail meeting other physical needs, such as a foot washing or bath, medical treatment, shelter, clothing, supplies for the journey and even care of animals. Jesus' final meal with the disciples (Matthew 26:17-30; Luke 22:14-28; Mark 14:12-25) illustrates several of the material features of hospitality, namely, washing feet, a servant host, food and drink.

Hospitality includes social as well as physical needs. An important component of hospitality is helping the outsider or the poor feel welcome. That requires more than food and drink. It may also require a recasting of social relations. Including the other in one's circle of friends or business associates speaks of hospitality. Sponsoring an outsider, welcoming a servant or mentoring an apprentice can be acts of social hospitality. Acts of inclusion and respect, however small, can powerfully reframe social relations and engender welcome.

Finally, hospitality encompasses spiritual needs. Prayer features in early Christian texts about hospitality as an acknowledgment of common dependence of both host and guest on God for everything. Prayers of healing and safe travel are frequent, as are prayers of gratitude. Sometimes hospitality means including the stranger in worship, Eucharist or other liturgical acts. Hosts also attend to the spiritual needs of guests through listening to their stories or receiving them into the larger community.

Taken as a feature of Christian life, hospitality is not so much a singular act of welcome as it is a way, an orientation that attends to otherness, listening and learning, valuing and honoring. The hospitable one looks for God's Good News in the other, confident it is there if one only has eyes to see and ears to hear. Hospitality, then, is always a spiritual discipline, opening one's life to God's life and its revelation.

Hospitality as a Moral Category

The word hospitality has lost its moral punch over recent centuries. It has largely been reduced to refreshments at meetings or magazine covers of gracious living.⁶ The moral landscape in which it resides has all but faded into the background. Yet it is this moral and spiritual landscape that early Christian voices can help us recover.⁷

Hospitality is characterized by a particular moral stance in the world that can best be described as readiness. Early Christian voices tell us again and again that whether we are guest or host we must be ready, ready to welcome, ready to enter another's world, ready to be vulnerable. This readiness is expectant. It may be akin to moral nerve. It exudes trust, not so much that one will succeed in some measurable way, but that participation in hospitality is participation in the life of God. Such readiness takes courage, gratitude and radical openness. This moral orientation to life relinquishes to God both the practice of hospitality and its consequences. At the same time, the readiness that opens into hospitality also leads to repentance.

For those who participate in hospitality, a "de-centering of perspective" occurs.⁸ In the experience of hospitality both the host and the guest encounter something new, approaching the edge of the unfamiliar and crossing it. Hospitality shifts the frame of reference from self to other to relationship. This shift invariably leads to repentance, for one sees the degree to which one's own view has become the only view. The sense one has of being at home and of familiarity with the way things are is shaken up by the reframing of reference to the other and then to relationship. One cannot be at home in quite the same way. When we realize how we have inflated our own frame of reference and imposed it on all of reality, we know we have committed the sin of idolatry, of taking our own particular part and making it the whole. This de-centering and reframing that

accompanies hospitality is the very movement the New Testament calls *metanoia*, or turning, usually translated repentance. This turning and repentance occurs not only in the interior landscape of the individual, but also in the exterior landscape of the community. As communities become more hospitable they experience a de-centering of perspective, too, and become more aware of the structural inequalities that exist in and around them and repent.⁹ While we may look at hospitable practices of early Christians and see them as nothing more than good deeds, hospitality was not simply a matter of private virtue. It was embedded in community and a sign of God's presence in that community, and so was an embodiment of a biblical ethic. Both the Old and New Testaments identify a duty of hospitality (e.g., Genesis 18:4, 19:7f., Judges 19:20, Matthew 10:40f., Romans 12:13). Abraham in particular is identified as embodying hospitality when he receives the strangers under the oaks of Mamre (Genesis 18:1-15), the benefits of which extend far beyond himself. Through "entertaining angels unawares" the creation of God's people begins as the birth of Isaac is promised to Sarah. The New Testament continues this theme through the frequent references to the breaking of the bread which symbolizes the presence of sacred community.¹⁰ While texts usually focus on a particular host and a particular guest, there is almost always a larger communal context for hospitality that orients and undergirds it.

One wonders whether, without these injunctions to reach out to the vulnerable, early Christians would have offered hospitality to these groups. Turning attention to vulnerable populations entails risk. One might be exposed to illness, injury, theft or disgrace. It's hard to imagine what incentive anyone would have to extend hospitality when little reward could be expected and danger was likely. It is precisely this circumstance that makes a population vulnerable. But we shall see that it is not the requirement to do good that moves early Christians to practice hospitality, though that

must surely play a part. Rather, it is the location of hospitality within a larger spiritual economy, the *oikos* or household of God, that provides the rationale for hospitality.

Wesley and Welcoming the Stranger

Interestingly, Wesley specifically notes the virtue and practice of welcoming strangers when he praises various African peoples for their upright and commendable behaviors. This occurs in the context of his denouncing slavery as he labors to show that African people display the highest virtues in their customs and cultures. Europeans apparently noted quite carefully when Africans were welcoming of them, a practice they unfortunately did not reciprocate.

The inhabitants of the Gold and Slave Coast likewise, when they are not artfully incensed against each other, live in great union and friendship, being generally well-tempered, civil, tractable, and ready to help any that need it. In particular, the natives of the kingdom of Whidah are civil, kind, and obliging to strangers; and they are most gentleman-like of all the Negroes, abounding in good manners toward each other.¹¹

And again:

The natives of the kingdom of Benin are a reasonable and good-natured people. They are sincere and inoffensive, and do no injustice either to one another or to strangers. They are eminently civil and courteous. . . . And those that are utterly helpless they keep for God's sake; so that here also are no beggars. The inhabitants of the Congo and Angola are generally a quiet people. They discover a good understanding, and behave in a friendly manner to strangers, being of a mild temper and affable carriage.¹²

Why does Wesley note this particularly humanitarian characteristic? For Wesley, the profound identification with the helplessness of the stranger was paradigmatic for the Christian life. All we are and all we have are gifts from God, the Proprietor of the universe. We are guests here, residing through divine invitation to share in the divine life. That means each of us are strangers, made guests, indeed, even children of God.

Hospitality, understood as a spiritual discipline which recognizes our own gratitude at being received into God's life and, in turn, receiving others, describes many of the activities of the early Methodist movement. The Methodist Societies themselves became welcoming places for those economically marginalized.¹³ Wesley called upon Methodists to receive the poor into fellowship, to make bonds that not only welcomed but pulled them into fellowship. Wesley argued for welcoming the poor in the way God has welcomed us:

If you cannot relieve, do not grieve the poor. Give them soft words if nothing else; abstain from either sour looks or harsh words. Let them be glad to come, even though they should go empty away. Put yourself in the place of every poor man, and deal with him just as you would God would deal with you.¹⁴

The identification of hospitality to the poor with God's hospitality to each of us is a key claim of early Christian hospitality. The stranger status at the heart of Christian identity has biblical roots as well as cultural and political ones. Remembering that "we were strangers in Egypt" is central to Christian identity because it is central to the salvation history told in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁵ God saved His people from their alien, slave status in Egypt. In delivering them, God reminds them of who they truly are, His own chosen people far from home. Salvation history reinforces a central aspect of identity as alien, foreigner enslaved in a strange land or sojourner wandering in a foreign desert. Recognizing one's own status as a stranger is a first step to offering hospitality. Wesley implies awareness of this as he appeals to the way each of his listeners desires to be welcomed by God. God's initiating welcome brings each of us as strangers into the household of grace.

The activities of the Methodist societies in caring for the sick, the poor, orphans, the imprisoned, the hungry and the stranger were well known. The many schools, training houses and infirmaries that sprang up mid-century may be seen through the lens

of hospitality. Moreover, education itself became a ministry of hospitality among Methodists. Education programs for children and adults alike invited those who had long stood outside the walls of learning looking in to enter as welcomed guests who could belong and share in the benefits of education. This welcome brought these strangers into new relationship and offered them a new home in the scheme of things.

In the latter decades of the eighteenth century, Methodism took on a particularly focused ministry of hospitality in the Strangers' Friend Society. It was a lay Methodist, John Gardiner, who founded the Strangers' Friend Society in 1785.¹⁶ Gardiner was a member of the London Methodist Society and John Wesley was one of the charity's first subscribers. The aim was to render assistance to the "destitute sick poor, without distinction of sect or country, at their own habitations."¹⁷ The Stranger's Friend Society was devoted to extending hospitality to those who did not have food or lodging or who needed connection to get a foothold on a job, what we would call networking today. Helping people regardless of their religious beliefs or affiliation is a mark of open-handed hospitality.

In the last two decades of the century other such societies emerged across the country. In a letter to Adam Clark dated February 9, 1791, John Wesley says briefly in passing; "You have done right in setting up the Strangers' [Friend] Society. It is an excellent institution."¹⁸ Extant in the Methodist archives is the "Cash Book of Manchester Branch of the Strangers' Friend Society, 1791- 92." It details the receipt of funds from donor and the disbursement of those funds by "visitors" to the poor.¹⁹ Similarly, a book entitled, "The Report of the Strangers' Friend Society (instituted in the year 1786) for the purposes of visiting and relieving the sick and distressed strangers and other poor at their respective habitations, for the Year, ending February 29th, 1804, Bristol," chronicles individual cases of strangers. The Society was made up largely of Methodists, though others participated as well. One case reported is that of Mary Ann Reilly:

. . . a native of Ireland, on her journey to London, to receive some Prize-money, due to her deceased husband, was detained by a severe fit of sickness, in a house in Temple-street, in this City;-- application being made to the Society, she was attended and properly relieved, until she recovered sufficiently to pursue her intended journey; she was found in absolute want of every necessary.²⁰

Another case reports:

William Dyer, a native of Shepton-Mallet, was visited by the recommendation of a Subscriber. He labored under an asthmatic complaint, and with much difficulty was enabled to gain a few shillings per week, to help support his wife and four children; his complaint being increased, his family stood in need of additional assistance, and during this period, his wife was thrown into premature labor, through a fright, occasioned by

some sudden alarm.—The calamitous situation of a family in such a case can better be conceived than described; the visitors provided them with necessary assistance, and through the Good Providence of God, they were restored to health, and the capacity of providing some means of subsistence.²¹

Finally, this pathetic case dramatizes the vulnerability and concrete needs of those to whom the Strangers' Friend Society ministered:

Mary Mais, a native of St. George's, near this city, was found in a state truly deplorable:-- Her husband had been in the employ of several Tradesmen as a Tyler and Plaisterer and in an unfortunate moment involved himself and innocent family in ruin, by a deviation from the paths of rectitude: he paid the full price of his fault, by suffering the penalty inflicted by the laws of his country;--his wife with one child and very forward with another, was left to struggle with the very severe circumstances of her case; she had, previous to her marriage, lived as an upper servant with some of the first families about the City, with much credit, and was now reduced to the lowest distress; she subsisted on the pittance produced by the sale of her apparel, until that source was exhausted; she was then cast on the humanity of a person with whom she lodged, and to whom she already owed arrears of rent; the critical day of labor arrived, without any provision, medical or otherwise; with the assistance of a soldier's wife in the neighborhood, she was delivered of a living child:--Her distress at length was made known to the Strangers' Friend Society, who visited her; she appeared in the extremest state of poverty, emaciation, and despondency; the ability of the Institution was never more acceptable to an object of their notice, nor to their own feelings, than in this case, her gratitude for their aid was unbounded, and the hope of relief afforded by their means contributed to effect her recovery. . .²²

John Wesley had a keen sense of the suffering of those who were strangers in

society, those on the outside of the economic system looking in, those dehumanized in a class system that rendered their most basic human needs invisible, those who were strangers to the grace of the gospel. His writings comment frequently on the sea of human misery arising from human failure to address the needs of “the least of these” within our midst. The notion that hospitality extended to a stranger is hospitality extended to Christ is one that is found throughout early Christianity. Early Christians appeal again and again to Matthew 25:

And when was it that we saw you a str “Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? anger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the king will answer them, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”²³

If the first step of living in hospitality is remembering who we are as Christians, the second step is recognizing who the stranger is. Prerequisite to the practice of hospitality is the ability to recognize the other, the stranger, standing before us.²⁴ On first glance, the poor at the gate or the stranger at the door may seem to be just that, the supplicant wanting something. The stranger may seem suspicious or even dangerous. The very presence of the stranger can be disorienting.²⁵ But if we look a little closer, we will see our initial reading of the situation is wrong.

Early Christian voices continually remind us to be prepared for surprises. The apparent stranger is not simply the poor, the stranger, the widow, the sick who knock, but Christ himself. For those with eyes to see, hospitality offered to another is always hospitality offered to Christ. In receiving others, we receive Christ. In rejecting them, we

reject Christ.²⁶

In order to recognize Christ, one must have eyes to see. To recognize Christ in the guest at the door is not easy. It is rarely the Christ we expect or the Christ of our imaginings. The Matthew passage emphasizes that the Christ who comes will be needy, hungry, thirsty, a Christ known by “the least of these.” Eyes that can only see Christ in the triumphant or powerful will fail to recognize the Christ present in the stranger or the poor. This recognition changes everything, for now it is Christ with whom we are dealing. Only proper recognition makes union with Christ possible. Jesus’ followers on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35) powerfully portray this experience of surprised recognition when they unexpectedly encounter Christ as traveler and guest.

It is no surprise, then, that Wesley appeals to the imperatives of Matthew 25, just as early Christians did, to authorize practices of hospitality. From Wesley’s sermon, “Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount (VI)”:

1. And, First, with regard to works of mercy. “Take heed,” saith he, “that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: Otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.” “That ye do not your alms:” -- Although this only is named, yet is every work of charity included, every thing which we give, or speak, or do, whereby our neighbour may be profited; whereby another man may receive any advantage, either in his body or soul. The feeding the hungry, the clothing the naked, the entertaining or assisting the stranger, the visiting those that are sick or in prison, the comforting the afflicted, the instructing the ignorant, the reproving the wicked, the exhorting and encouraging the well-doer; and if there be any other work of mercy, it is equally included in this direction. ²⁷

Wesley ties together this familiar list of commands from Matthew 25 to the Sermon

on the Mount. He expands the notion of charity to include all works of mercy. While in this sermon he does not explicitly cite the identification of the “least of these” with Christ as the Scripture does (“When you do it unto the least of these who are members of my family, you do it unto me”) in another sermon he preaches over the beatitudes, Wesley is careful to make that connection:

4. But in the full extent of the word, a peace-maker is one that, as he hath opportunity, "doth good unto all men;" one that, being filled with the love of God and of all mankind, cannot confine the expressions of it to his own family, or friends, or acquaintance, or party, or to those of his own opinions; -- no, nor those who are partakers of like precious faith; but steps over all these narrow bounds, that he may do good to every man, that he may, some way or other, manifest his love to neighbours and strangers, friends and enemies. He doth good to them all, as he hath opportunity, that is, on every possible occasion; "redeeming the time," in order thereto; "buying up every opportunity, improving every hour, losing no moment wherein he may profit another. He does good, not of one particular kind, but good in general, in every possible way; employing herein all his talents of every kind, all his powers and faculties of body and soul, all his fortune, his interest, his reputation; desiring only, that when his Lord cometh He may say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

5. He doth good, to the uttermost of his power, even to the bodies of all men. He rejoices to "deal his bread to the hungry,"

and to "cover the naked with a garment." Is any a stranger? He takes him in, and relieves him according to his necessities. Are any sick or in prison? He visits them, and administers such help as they stand most in need of. And all this he does, not as unto man; but remembering him that hath said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." 28

Clearly Wesley appropriates the passage from Matthew 25 to identify the "least of these" with Christ and calls for the concrete practices of hospitality among his listeners.

The Methodist Society at Tetney is a striking example of the way having eyes to see Christ in the stranger issues in practices of hospitality. Wesley reports that when visiting the society at Tetney he noticed their extraordinary giving:

I observed one gave eightpence, often ten pence, a week; another thirteen, fifteen or eighteen pence; another sometimes one, sometimes two shillings. I asked Micah Ekmoor, the Leader, (an Israelite indeed, who now rests from his labor), "How is this? Are you the richest society in England?" He answered "I suppose not; but as we are all single persons, we have agreed together to give ourselves, and all we have, to God. And we do it gladly, whereby we are able to entertain all the strangers that from time to time come to Tetney, who have often no food to eat, or any friend to give them a lodging."29

For the society at Tetney, giving to strangers was giving to God. They could recognize Christ in the "least of these." Wesley and those in the movement continue the connection between giving to the poor and giving to Christ explicitly at many points. In his sermon,

“The Good Steward,” Wesley states,

In what manner didst thou employ that comprehensive talent, money? . . . first supplying thy own reasonable wants, together with those of thy family; then restoring the remainder to me, *through the poor*, whom I had appointed to receive it; looking upon thyself as only one of that number of poor, whose wants were to be supplied out of that part of my substance which I had placed in thy hands for this purpose. . .? Wast thou accordingly a general benefactor to mankind? Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, comforting the sick, assisting the stranger, relieving the afflicted?³⁰

Wesley poses the question reminiscent of the king in Matthew 25, identifying giving to the poor with giving to God, “restoring the remainder to me, through the poor. . .”

Hospitality calls for a radical openness to the other rooted in a deep awareness of the gift of God’s grace in one’s own life. Welcoming the stranger is a powerful vocabulary for the practices and claims of the early Methodist movement. When strangers are welcomed, Christ is recognized and we are able to participate more deeply in God’s household of grace. Hospitality calls us into the new creation.

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

² . In 1983 in *Social Aspects of Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press) Abraham J. Mahlerbe wrote, “The practice of early Christian hospitality has received some attention in the last decade, but its theological implications as perceived by the early church still await serious attention” (67). That can no longer be said. The most recent book by Christine Pohl reflects this trend, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

³ . Many contemporary writers have offered extended discussion on the nature of hospitality, its definition and characteristics. For more developed reflection see: Thomas W. Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1895); Christian D. Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1999); Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Image Books, 1975); Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1981); John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Mission and Promise* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).

⁴ . Interestingly, language itself provides the strong connection between host and guest. In Latin *hospes* can refer to either host or guest. The Greek *xenos* carries the same double meaning, as does *hote* (French) and *ospite* (Italian).

⁵ . Koenig argues that Paul uses feast as the image for new life in Christ, so that everyday meals become signs of life in Christ as feast. See 52-57.

⁶ . For a thoughtful discussion of the trivialization of the notion of hospitality, see Pohl, 3-8, 36-39; Nouwen, 46-7.

⁷ . For discussion of hospitality as a moral category in early Christianity, see Ogletree; Rowan A. Greer, “Hospitality,” chapter 5 in *Broken Lights and Mended Lives: Theology and Common Life in the Early Church* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), 119-140.

⁸ . Paul Ricoeur, *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, trans. Erazim V. Kohak (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1966), 126.

- 9 . Thomas Ogletree offers an insightful discussion of the way hospitality reveals the moral bankruptcy of the community's/one's frame of reference and leads to repentance. See 1-10.
- 10 . For a case study on the notion of hospitality in the New Testament see G. C. Nicholson, "Houses for Hospitality: *1 Corinthians* 11:17-34," *Colloquium* 19, no. 1 (1986), 1-6. Greek and Roman cultures both had highly developed concepts of hospitality as well. See Ladislaus J. Bolchazy, *Hospitality in Early Rome: Livy's Concept of Its Humanizing Force* (Chicago: Ares Publishers, 1977), particularly pp. 1-34.
- 11 . John Wesley, "Thoughts Upon Slavery," *The Works of John Wesley* 3rd ed. T. Jackson, ed. (London, 1872) 11:78. Reprinted AGES Digital Library, 1997.
- 12 . "Thoughts Upon Slavery," 11:79. Also see 91f.
- 13 . For a discussion of the societies as fields of "social probation" for the poor see Manfred Marquardt, *John Wesley's Social Ethics: Praxis and Principles*, tr. John E. Steely and W. Stephen Gunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 33f.
- 14 . *Ibid.*, 34.
- 15 . For other references in the Hebrew Bible to stranger status see Genesis 23:4, 47:4, 9; Leviticus 19:34, 25:23; 1 Chronicles 29:15; Psalm 39:12.
- 16 On-line exhibit, *British Methodism and the Poor, 1739-1999, An Exhibition by the Methodist Archives and Research Centre*. <http://rylibweb.man.ac.uk/data1/dg/methodist/poor>
- 17 . *Ibid.*
- 18 . John Wesley, letter to Adam Clark. *The Works of John Wesley* 3rd ed. T. Jackson, ed. (London, 1872) 13:140. Reprinted AGES Digital Library, 1997.
- 19 . *British Methodism and the Poor, 1739-1999, An Exhibition by the Methodist Archives and Research Centre*. <http://rylibweb.man.ac.uk/data1/dg/methodist/poor/meth04.html>

20 . On-line exhibit, *British Methodism and the Poor, 1739-1999, An Exhibition by the Methodist Archives and Research Centre*. <http://rylibweb.man.ac.uk/data1/dg/methodist/poor/meth17.html>

21 . Ibid.

22 . Ibid.

23 . Matthew 25:37-40 (NRSV).

24 . The presence and identity of the stranger has been addressed with insightful reflections by several recent writers. See Christine D. Pohl, "Hospitality, Dignity and the Power of Recognition," chapter 4 in *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), 61-84. Also see Thomas W. Ogletree, *Hospitality to the Stranger: Dimensions of Moral Understanding* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1895); Parker Palmer, *The Company of Strangers: Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1981); Henri Nouwen, *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1975); John Koenig, "Hospitality, Strangers, and the Love of God," *New Testament Hospitality: Partnership with Strangers as Mission and Promise* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 1-14; *Christianity and the Stranger: Historical Essays*, ed. Francis W. Nichols (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).

25 . Ogletree reminds us not to romanticize the stranger for that trivializes the genuine risk of hospitality. See 41-43.

26 . The identification of the stranger with the divine is commonplace in classical literature. Visitation of gods disguised as humans, or *theoxenia*, is a frequent motif in Greek literature. See J.H. Rose, "Divine Disguisings," *Harvard Theological Review* 49 (1956), 63-72; S. Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987); "The Theme of Divine Visits and Human (In)Hospitality in Luke-Acts: Its Old Testament and Graeco-Roman Antecedents," in *The Unity of Luke-Acts*, ed. J. Verheyden (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1999), 263-268; Julian Pitt-Rivers, "The Stranger, The Guest and The Hostile Host: Introduction to the Study of the Laws of Hospitality," in *Contributions to Mediterranean Sociology: Mediterranean Rural Communities and Social Change*, ed. J.-G. Peristiany, Acts of the Mediterranean Sociological Conference, Athens, July 1963 (Paris: Mouton & Co: 1968). For treatment of this theme in an eastern religious tradition, see Teigo Yoshida, "The Stranger as God: The Place of the Outsider in Japanese Folk Religion," *Ethnology* 20 (1981), 87f.

27 . John Wesley, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount (VI)," *The Works of John Wesley* 3rd ed. T. Jackson, ed. (London, 1872) 5:398. Reprinted AGES Digital Library, 1997.

28 . John Wesley, "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount (III)," *The Works of John Wesley* 3rd ed. T. Jackson, ed. (London, 1872) 5:352-3. Reprinted AGES Digital Library, 1997.

29 . John Wesley, "History of the Methodists," *The Works of John Wesley* 3rd ed. T. Jackson, ed. (London, 1872) 13: 398. Reprinted AGES Digital Library, 1997.

30 . John Wesley, "The Good Steward," *The Works of John Wesley* 3rd ed. T. Jackson, ed. (London, 1872) 6:162-3. Reprinted AGES Digital Library, 1997.