

A MENNONITE PERSPECTIVE OF HOSPITALITY IN TIMES OF MIGRATIONS

Hyung Jin Kim Sun

Volume 72, numéro 3, septembre–décembre 2020

De l'hospitalité au temps des migrations

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1071158ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Collège universitaire dominicain, Ottawa

ISSN

0316-5345 (imprimé)

2562-9905 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Kim Sun, H. J. (2020). A MENNONITE PERSPECTIVE OF HOSPITALITY IN TIMES OF MIGRATIONS. *Science et Esprit*, 72(3), 297–309.

Résumé de l'article

Depuis leur origine, les mennonites ont connu des migrations forcées en raison de la persécution religieuse. À partir de de leurs expériences de migration, de leurs interprétations bibliques et de leur compréhension théologique de l'Église et de l'État, je présente une perspective mennonite sur l'hospitalité qui comprend cinq aspects fondamentaux. Premièrement, partout où nous vivons et habitons, cet espace appartient au Seigneur et Dieu est l'hôte ultime qui accueille. Deuxièmement, en tant que migrant, où qu'on puisse arriver, cet endroit représente la providence de Dieu, qu'il soit temporaire ou à long terme. Troisièmement, pour l'hôte, les invités, qui qu'ils soient, sont le peuple de Dieu. Quatrièmement, l'hospitalité signifie partager mutuellement et joyeusement les dons abondants donnés par Dieu à la fois aux hôtes et aux invités. Cinquièmement, si l'Église exerce véritablement l'hospitalité, elle devient un indicateur du royaume de Dieu, une communauté alternative allant au-delà des idéologies dominantes, comme le capitalisme et le nationalisme.

A MENNONITE PERSPECTIVE OF HOSPITALITY IN TIMES OF MIGRATIONS

HYUNG JIN KIM SUN

Introduction

When we listen to or read the news, quite frequently, we hear about migration issues. We are not surprised to hear about migrations because humans have always been moving around different locations. Voluntary migration, where people leave their homeland to find better opportunities and live in a new territory, is not a major topic for news. What is often reported is about forced migration, how Western countries are dealing with refugees and the debates of what their government should do to those who have entered their countries without a “proper” documentation. Based on their years of research, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) shows that by the end of 2017, 68.5 million people were displaced across the world and during 2017 alone, 16.2 million people were forced out from their home. In other words, every two seconds, an average of one person is being displaced.¹ In this alarming situation, unfortunately, more often than not, we hear political leaders making xenophobic and racist comments. We also hear border patrols and police officers treating the “illegal” residents inhumanely and separating them from their family members. Even though 145 states have signed both the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 protocol to help, respect, and protect asylum seekers, some European countries are lacking support for refugees. In this context, how should these issues be dealt with? As Christians, how should we treat forced migrants? What are our obligations and responsibilities? Should we simply let our government decide on these issues or should we actively find ways to welcome refugees?

There are various Christian views on migration issues but in this paper, I offer a Mennonite perspective of hospitality, while not claiming that this perspective is uniquely Mennonite. Several aspects of this perspective are found in different Christian traditions. Yet, primarily relying on various Mennonite

1. <https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2018/6/5b222c494/forced-displacement-record-685-million.html> (accessed May 2020, 2020)

theological resources, I hope to introduce what hospitality means from this tradition to the wider circle. From the 16th century to the end of World War II, Mennonites have experienced several forced migrations due to religious and political persecution. At the same time, they have a long history of supporting and sponsoring refugees from around the world. Consequently, they have in-depth insights to offer to the discourse of Christian hospitality.

Like any Christian tradition, Mennonites have diverse theological perspectives but unlike other denominations, they do not have church hierarchies, official doctrines and creeds, or a well-developed systematic theology. For these reasons, it is a challenge to develop a Mennonite theological perspective on hospitality that all Mennonite groups will agree with. Still, based on their migration experiences, biblical interpretations, main values and principles, and some important theological understanding of the church and the state, I propose a Mennonite perspective of hospitality that includes five core aspects. First, wherever we live and dwell, that space is the Lord's and God is the ultimate host who welcomes anyone in God's place. Second, as a migrant, wherever one might arrive, that place is God's providence, whether it is temporary or long-term. Third, as a host, whoever might arrive at one's place, the guests are God's people. Fourth, hospitality means to mutually and joyfully share God's abundant gifts that God has given both to the hosts and the guests. Fifth, as we truly practice hospitality, we become a signpost of the kingdom of God, an alternative community that goes beyond our dominant ideologies like nationalism and capitalism.

Before examining these core aspects further, it is important to have a better understanding of who the Mennonites are and their theological views. Mennonites are part of the Anabaptist movement that began in the 16th century. Anabaptist was first used in a derogatory manner to refer to religious and social dissenters who would get "re-baptized." They believed that the church should be composed of adults who voluntarily commit to believe and be disciples of Jesus Christ. Due to this belief, they did not see their infant baptism as valid and so they would re-baptize adults who are committed to following Jesus.

They also differentiated themselves from Catholicism and Protestantism in their theologies and strongly advocated for the separation of the church and the state.² The Anabaptist movement developed during the Reformation period and while the beginning of the movement was thought to originate in one location, currently, some scholars have come to argue that the movement emerged spontaneously in different places.³ Currently, Anabaptist is also used

2. See Walter KLAASSEN, *Anabaptism: Neither Catholic Nor Protestant*, Waterloo ON, Conrad Press, 1973.

3. William ESTEP, *The Anabaptist Story*, Grand Rapids MI, William B. Eerdmans, 1996, pp. xi-xii.

as an umbrella term referring to the denominations that trace their roots in the movement, which include Amish, Mennonite Church, Mennonite Brethren, Hutterites, and many more.

The Anabaptists who followed their leader Menno Simons, who previously was a Dutch Catholic priest, were later called Mennonites. Menno Simons is not viewed as a founder but rather a major figure who assumed a leadership role in a decisive moment when the Anabaptists were in danger of losing their original identity under the influence of chiliastic and revolutionary leaders like Thomas Münster. By standing against the Münster rebellion and the use of violence, Menno Simons was able to save the people from joining the rebellion. As a marginal religious group, Mennonites were severely persecuted by the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant groups, then later, by political leaders for refusing to join the military where they resided. Consequently, their identity and history are characterized by numerous migration stories in Europe and North and South America. Certainly, their experiences and stories provide profound insights as we ponder on the topic of hospitality in times where forced migrations are increasingly growing. I will now focus on the five core aspects of Mennonite hospitality.

A. First Aspect: God is the ultimate host who welcomes anyone in God's place

A Mennonite view of hospitality begins by confessing and acknowledging that the earth is the Lord's. As it was stated before, during the 16th and 17th centuries, Anabaptists were persecuted by both the Roman Catholics and Protestants due to their radical beliefs and practices. At first, the persecution began by fining, arresting, and forcing the people to leave their homeland, but eventually, the authorities and rulers began to execute them. On one occasion, an Anabaptist called Elsy Bourmgartner was arrested. The rulers told her that they would release her if she promised to leave the city and never return. While they were expecting her to accept this offer, Bourmgartner quoted Psalm 24:1 "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it" (NRSV) and refused to leave by asserting, "God created the earth for her as much as for milords."⁴ Hans Feusi of Günningen was also held captive and was offered the same option. Like Bourmgartner, he also quoted the bible verse and decided to remain. As a consequence, he was drowned in 1529.⁵ Another Anabaptist, Hans Landis, who is assumed to be the last martyr, was

4. Arnold SNYDER and Linda HUEBERT HECHT (eds.), *Profiles of Anabaptist Women: Sixteenth-Century Reforming Pioneers*, Waterloo ON, Wilfrid Laurier University, 1996, p. 44.

5. David J. REMPEL SMUCKER and John L. RUTH (eds.), *Hans Landis: Swiss Anabaptist Martyr in Seventeenth Century Documents*, trans. James W. LOWRY, Millersburg OH, Ohio Amish Library, 2003, p. 75.

an influential leader among the Anabaptists. He was executed in 1624, at the age of 70. Several times, the rulers in Zurich banished him from the land but he persistently refused to leave by citing Psalm 24. He outspokenly stated that the authorities do not have the power to ban or expel someone out of territory since the earth was the Lord's.⁶

These witnesses illustrate that early Anabaptists strongly believed that ultimate authority belongs to God. By citing Psalm 24, they were confessing that God is the ultimate host. And as God "makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous," God welcomes anyone to be Her guests (Matt. 5:45, NRSV). God is the ultimate host who decides if someone should stay or leave and He has decided to welcome everyone. As a result, it is not up to the kings, princes, lords, and political leaders who judge to expel or welcome. This interpretation of God is clearly identified in the testimonies of Elsy Bourmgartner, Hans Feusi of G uningen, and Hans Landis. Although they were ordered to leave, they rejected it and stayed. This decision cost their lives but their understanding of God as the ultimate host remains the same. While it is not written in their writings, it is likely that they thought that to leave would mean to accept that the territory belongs to the princes and the rulers and not to the Lord. This would also mean that by leaving, they would no longer confess that the earth is the Lord's. As a result, they were resolute to remain.

This confession that the earth is the Lord's is not only a belief from the early Anabaptist movement. It is still deeply connected to the broadly accepted Mennonite perspective of the lordship of Jesus. During their early establishment in North America, Mennonite groups lived in separation from mainstream society – geographically and socio-politically – in order to maintain their particular identity. This intentional nonconformity and willingness to live as separate people was rooted in their history of persecution. Living as a secluded people, they developed what is called a two-kingdom view, a theological perspective that there is a clear-cut boundary between the church and the world.⁷ This view teaches that Christians should focus on the church and withdraw from the world as much as possible and have nothing to do with the realm of the state. If the state authorities require us to obey certain laws, we should obey, unless they demand something that stand against the teachings of Jesus. This interpretation also communicates that there are two moral stan-

6. David J. REMPEL SMUCKER and John L. RUTH (eds.), *Hans Landis*, pp. 105-109.

7. While this two-kingdom view has some theological points that overlap with the two kingdoms doctrine found in Martin Luther's writings, they are different theological discourses. There is no doubt that the two-kingdom view embraced by the Mennonites has been profoundly influenced by Luther's writings but still, it is a distinct theological concept that is found within Mennonite tradition. It would be great to compare how this concept developed in their engagement with different Christian traditions but for this article, I will limit to examine on the theological discourse of contemporary North American Mennonites.

dards, one for the church and another one from the state. However, starting from the 1960s, Mennonites have started to accept the lordship of Christ in all realms and because Jesus is the Lord of the church and the state, there is only a single moral standard.⁸ This theological view does not deny the difference between the church and the state. It actually sharpens the two, those who accept Jesus' lordship and those who don't, and empowers the church to witness to the state to live according to the moral standard that Jesus has given to all people. This perspective has been encouraging numerous North American Mennonites to be more involved in social and political realms and to obey primarily to the teachings of Jesus instead of the state authorities.

From the early Anabaptists, at least from the three people whom we have observed, they had this strong conviction of the Lordship of Jesus in all realms. For this reason, while it was ruled by the authorities to leave their land, they refused to obey them. Even though leaving the land was not committing any sin, they were determined to stay because they believed that God was the ultimate being with authority and it was up to God to decide if they should leave or not.

Several circumstances force people to migrate, whether it is economic, religious, political, or environmental reasons. To name some, they are religious persecution, war, climate change, famine, and high crime rate. When opportunities are given to escape, most people will readily migrate. Yet, there are some who are determined to remain for various reasons, and we should not easily dismiss their decision. There are people who decide to stay because they want to speak the truth, transform the situation, restore the place, and serve those who cannot escape. We should not merely consider them as people who are not flexible or could not make a wise decision. If we truly believe that the earth is the Lord's, then, why should we move? If we move because the external forces and authorities pressure us to do so, then, are we not accepting that they have the final word and not the Lord?

B. Second Aspect: As a migrant, wherever one might arrive, that place is God's providence

As it is seen by other early Anabaptists, confessing that the earth is the Lord's does not mean that one should always remain in one's place. It can also be interpreted as an affirming passage to leave one's location. Experiencing severe persecutions, numerous Mennonites migrated to different parts of the world, without knowing where they would end up. Migrating to different locations did not mean that they were safer to travel than to remain. They did not know

8. Leo DRIEDGER and Donald KRAYBILL, *Mennonite Peacemaking: From Quietism to Activism*, Waterloo ON, Herald Press, 1994, p. 122.

what they would encounter on the road, how to settle in the new place, and whom to trust and relate. However, they found consolation in Psalms 24, for this passage spoke to them that wherever they end up going, that that place also belongs to God and that God welcomes anyone. The forced migrants found this passage so comforting that many had this bible verse written on the walls of their houses and worship spaces.⁹

Mennonites are filled with migration stories. Often, due to religious, political, and social reasons, they were forced to migrate to different parts of the world. Not only did they move around European countries, but they migrated to the U.S., Canada, and South America countries as well. In the history of Canadian Mennonites, there have been several waves of migration. The first wave happened during 1785-1825 where Mennonites from Pennsylvania came to Canada to live under British rule and to search for new farmland. They are called “Swiss Mennonites,” Mennonites who had Swiss ancestry, and during this period, around 2,000 Mennonite settled in Ontario. The next wave occurred between 1874-1880 where around 8,000 Russian Mennonites settled in Manitoba. They migrated mainly because Mennonites were no longer exempted from military service and because they could no longer have control over their education. Later, after the Russian Revolution in 1919, more Russian Mennonites moved to Canada through the assistance of the Mennonites who were already in Canada. Around 22,000 Mennonites migrated between 1922-1930. Another major wave of migration happened during World War II where approximately 7,000 moved to Canada.¹⁰ Mennonites who already lived in Canada also emigrated to other countries like Mexico and Paraguay because they no longer could have autonomy in education. It is recorded that around 7,700 Canadian Mennonites emigrated to these countries from 1922 to 1926 but later, in the 1950s, many returned; around 50,000 to Ontario alone.¹¹

A renowned Mennonite historian, John Roth, recounts of a personal encounter that describes well a small part of the larger migration history of the Mennonites and how they have settled in different parts of the world. He narrates that on one spring day he arrived at an isolated Costa Rican province of San Carlos. There, at the outskirts of a small village of Pitál, he met a Mennonite family with the last name, Penner. Roth learned that the patriarch of the family grew up in Manitoba and his wife from Chihuahua, Mexico and that they moved to Spanish Lookout, Belize, and later, to this village. In their

9. John ROTH, “Blest be the ties that Bind’: In Search of the Global Anabaptist Church Lecture Two: What Hath Zurich to do with Addis Ababa? Ecclesial Identity in the Global Anabaptist Church,” *Conrad Grebel Review*, 31 (2013), p. 37.

10. Derek SUDERMAN, “*Coming to Canada*,” Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, 1998, <http://www.mhsc.ca/index.php?content=http://www.mhsc.ca/mennos/hcanada.html> (accessed March 5, 2020).

11. “*More about Mennonites*,” *Mennonite Archival Image Database*, <https://archives.mhsc.ca/More+about+Mennonites> (accessed March 5, 2020).

house, there were pictures of their great-grandparents born in Tsarist Russia and they were among the Russian Mennonites who emigrated to Canada in search of religious freedom. Then, with other Mennonite people in the village, they attended a worship service and to his surprise, hanging on a wall, he saw Psalm 24:1 “Del Señor, es la tierra y su plentitud” (The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof).¹²

From these migration stories, we can see that Mennonites have been quite mobile. Their histories are filled with numerous stories of how they have struggled to settle in new places but kept on trusting that God was with them and guiding them. They believed that all places are the Lord’s, whether one is welcomed or not by the residents, whether the language and cultures are different or not, and whether one has enough funds or not. Observing the migration history of the Mennonites, Roth states that these “groups have continued to grow in virtually every country where they have settled; and in some countries – namely, Belize and Paraguay – they have come to exert a national economic and political influence far out of proportion to their numbers.”¹³ In seeking places to worship God and live out their faith, they were determined to move around and settle where they can stay because of their belief that all places belong to the Lord.

C. Third Factor: As a host, whoever might arrive at one’s place, they are God’s people

To the hosts, a Mennonite perspective of hospitality asserts that the migrants are God’s people whom God is leading. Therefore, they should be treated respectfully and offer support. A Mennonite biblical scholar, Waldemar Janzen writes that God is the divine host to all human beings and all the people are guests to the Host’s house. Consequently, all guests are expected to follow “God’s example and share their livelihood, their life, with their fellow guests on God’s earth.”¹⁴ Following God’s example, the hosts need to welcome their guests and viewing them as God’s people, as our brothers and sisters in Christ, especially those who are forced migrants.

Canadian Mennonites are known for their hospitality, particularly in helping refugees. When Canadian Mennonites heard about other Mennonite groups suffering persecution in the Soviet Union, as early as 1874, they assisted in helping the refugees to settle in Canada as many as 8,000 people.¹⁵ During

12. John ROTH, “Blest Be the Ties That Bind,” pp. 41-43.

13. John ROTH, “Blest Be the Ties That Bind,” p. 29.

14. Waldemar JANZEN, “Biblical Theology of Hospitality,” in *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology*, 3-1 (Spring 2002), p. 10.

15. Derek SUDERMAN, “*Coming to Canada*,” Mennonite Historical Society of Canada, 1998, <http://www.mhsc.ca/index.php?content=http://www.mhsc.ca/mennos/hcanada.html> (accessed March 5, 2020).

the 1920s, they gathered resources and collaborated to help 21,000 Mennonites migrate to Canada and to settle into the new land. After World War II, Canadian Mennonites assisted 7,800 Mennonite refugees from Europe as well.¹⁶ Then, from 1979, the Mennonites went beyond helping other Mennonites. Through the private refugee sponsorship work of the Mennonite Central Committee Canada, Canadian Mennonites sponsored people from Southeast Asia, Central America, and South America. By 2019, the organization, with the active support of local Mennonite churches, has settled 12,500 refugees.¹⁷

As it can be seen through these acts, Mennonite understanding of hospitality is more than a simple entertainment of family and friends. They went beyond people of their ethnicity and religion and extended their hands to those who are in need, especially to the forced migrants. They have not only brought them safely to Canada but also, helped them to settle in Canada by finding a home to live, helping them to access social services, and connecting to different jobs so that they be financially independent. Through these acts, most importantly, they have formed new relationship. They are welcoming and respectfully serving the “guests” and sharing as much as they can so that the refugees can settle into the new location. They recognize that they were once refugees and all their possessions are God’s. With that faith, they have welcomed the strangers and continually sponsor refugees as if they are sent by God.

D. Fourth Factor: Hospitality means to mutually share God’s abundant gifts

In the discourse of hospitality within Christian circle, while the practice of hospitality is valuable, there are criticisms that by not properly applying it, the practice can create a “dichotomy between givers and receivers, between guest and host, which enables claims concerning ownership and belonging.”¹⁸ This is problematic because as Thomas Reynolds notes, the practice can end up becoming a paternalistic act where it heightens the position of the host, the giver, and characterize the guest as a passive receiver, where one’s freedom and agency are denied.¹⁹ Therefore, it should be practiced carefully and Jesus shows how to practice it properly.

In the Bible, while there is the command for hosts to be hospitable toward the guests, through the life of Jesus, we see Jesus inverting the roles between

16. William JANZEN, “The 1979 MCC Canada Master Agreement for the Sponsorship of Refugees in Historical Perspective,” in *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, 24 (2006), p. 212.

17. Jason DUECK, “Consider it (re)settled: MCC’s 40 years of refugee resettlement in Canada,” MCC, Feb. 28, 2019, <https://mcccanada.ca/stories/consider-it-resettled> (accessed March 5, 2020).

18. Andrea BIELER al. (eds.), *Religion and Migration: Negotiating Hospitality, Agency and Vulnerability*, Leipzig, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2019, p. 11.

19. Thomas REYNOLDS, “Beyond Hospitality? Unsettling Theology and Migration in Canada,” in Andrea BIELER al. (eds.), *Religion and Migration*, p. 115.

hosts and guests and challenging the binary between the two. Janzen states that in the life of Jesus, we can observe the “guest who is offered hospitality turns into the host from whose blessing the hosts-turned-guests can live a new life.”²⁰ An example of this is in the story of Zacchaeus. At Zacchaeus’ house, Jesus is invited as a guest but then, he becomes a guest at God’s table (Luke 19:1-10). Another example is from the story of Lazarus. Lazarus repeatedly hosted Jesus but then, Lazarus “receives his very life at the hands of his guest.”²¹

When guests become hosts and when hosts become guests, this binary between the two groups blurs out. In the initial stage of a relationship, the binary might exist but when one truly practices the hospitality that God demands, it later becomes mutual hospitality. Thomas Reynolds explains that hospitality is

Not only about the host welcoming, but welcoming the guest’s way of welcoming, as a companion with equal dignity in humanity and whose presence may bring unanticipated transformation. Created is a liminal zone of mutuality, a kind of covenantal exchange happens: both receive and give. A larger mutual indebtedness and interdependency emerges in which both host and guest remain fundamentally distinct yet connected, distant yet proximate.²²

Mutual hospitality means that the guests also have gifts to share with the hosts. Subsequently, when true hospitality is played out, it is hard to know who’s the guest and who’s the host, and all of them share their gifts joyfully. And both parties acknowledge that their gifts are from the Lord. As Jesus showed what mutual hospitality is like, Mennonites who place Jesus as their prime model to imitate, we also pursue a mutual practice of hospitality.

This mutual practice of hospitality can be identified in the current reality of the global Mennonite church. Before 1970s, Mennonites were primarily white European descendants but now, they have become much more diverse. In 2007 there were at least thirteen languages spoken and forty-three local churches in Mennonite Church Canada alone, whose first language is neither German nor English.²³ In 2015, Mennonite World Conference reported that 35 percent of people in its member bodies lived in the Global North, whereas 65 percent resided in the Global South.²⁴ By welcoming and accepting people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, the church has become much more global and diverse. Furthermore, these newly joined people, with their many gifts, they are diversifying our ways of worship, deepening our theological

20. Waldemar JANZEN, “Biblical Theology of Hospitality,” p. 12.

21. *Ibid.*

22. Thomas REYNOLDS, “Beyond Hospitality?,” p. 118.

23. See Robert SUDERMAN, *God’s People Now! Face to Face with Mennonite Church Canada*, Waterloo ON, Herald Press, 2007, p. 18. Mennonite Church Canada is the largest Mennonite conference in the country.

24. See MWC World Directory 2015 Statistics. www.mwc-cmm.org/sites/default/files/website_files/mwc_world_directory_2015_statistics.pdf. (accessed March 5, 2020).

understandings, and enriching the community life. The white Mennonites are not only welcoming people from diverse background, but they are also being transformed by receiving gifts from the people.

E. Fifth Aspect: By truly practicing hospitality, we become an alternative community

The fifth aspect is that, when we truly practice hospitality based on mutuality, we become an alternative community. Definitely, the practice of hospitality must not be limited among the same religious or social groups. Yet, when Christians practice it among themselves, we are creating an alternative community and also, witnessing to the world what God desires from all people. This theological perspective is interconnected with a Mennonite ecclesiology.

A well-known Mennonite theologian, John Howard Yoder, asserts that Jesus brought the new age of the kingdom of God and taught his disciples how to live as a people of this new creation.²⁵ For this reason, those who seek to follow Jesus should live according to the teaching. And the people who live in this new way of life are called the church or the messianic community.²⁶ In this new age, Jesus is now both the Lord of the world and the church, which means that there is only one standard of ethic instead of having a dual ethic, one for the church and another for the world. Yoder recognizes the core difference between the world and the church is that the world does not recognize Jesus' lordship and therefore, it will not live according to the rule of Jesus. Hence, the "Church and world are not two compartments under separate legislation or two institutions with contradictory assignments, but two levels of the pertinence of the same Lordship. The people of God are called to be today what the world is called to be ultimately."²⁷ To witness the lordship of Jesus to the world, the church is called to be the royal priesthood. Instead of withdrawing from the world, the church has to be an "evangelical nonconformist," which means not conforming to the world but rather holding on to the teaching of Jesus and engaging and witnessing the world of this new creation.²⁸

According to Yoder, Jesus began his "original revolution" not by recruiting armed fighters like Zealots or by starting a secluded spiritual group like the Essenes, or in any other ways, but by creating a distinct (messianic) commu-

25. I am aware of the sexual abuses and other abuses of power that Yoder committed and therefore, failed to live as a faithful disciple. Yet, as an influential theologian who has broadly made known of Mennonite theological perspectives to the wider church, I still think some of his insights are useful. Hence, I cautiously refer to a few of his theological views.

26. John Howard YODER, *The Royal Priesthood: Essays, Ecclesiological, and Ecumenical*, ed. Michael CARTWRIGHT, Grand Rapids MI, William B. Eerdmans, 1994, pp. 146-147.

27. John Howard YODER, *Body Politics: Five Practices of the Christian Community Before the Watching World*, Waterloo ON, Herald Press, 1992, p. ix.

28. John Howard YODER, *The Royal Priesthood*, pp. 217-218.

nity with its own deviant set of values and its coherent way of living out the teachings of Jesus.²⁹ This community is a new humanity, a new society in which one joins voluntarily pledging allegiance to Jesus and commits to living in an interracial (between Jews and Gentiles) community where people are mixed ethnically, culturally, and economically. Instead of relating to each other based on the norm of the world, the members follow a new way of life and a pattern of relationship between different groups. Yoder writes that Jesus taught them new ways of “dealing with one another, with ethnic differences, with social hierarchy, with money, with offenses, with leaderships, and with power.”³⁰ For Yoder, Christians genuinely practicing the new way of life that Jesus taught within a community is related to witnessing and mission. Since the teachings and the new norm that the church has received from Jesus are actually what Jesus requires for the larger society to live, living out the teachings becomes a concrete way of witnessing to the world on how to live according to God’s will.

We live in a society where we are divided among race, skin colour, educational background, social status, and others. The real estate market draws lines where the rich should live and where the poor should stay. The immigration officers decide who is “legal” and who are “illegal.” Nationalism makes each political leader consider first the interests of their own countries. All these divide people, create the dichotomy of “us” vs “them.” In this context, when Christians practice hospitality toward one another, whether one has a different cultural, national, racial, economic background, this act is living out an alternative lifestyle and also witnessing to the world. Jesus said in John 13:35, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (NRSV). In the same vein, when the disciples truly practice hospitality toward each other, everyone will know that we are Jesus’ disciples. When the church practices hospitality, she is being an alternative community, a witnessing community, and a signpost of the coming of the kingdom of God. She is living out what “the world is called to be ultimately.”

Conclusion

In this paper, I have offered a Mennonite perspective of hospitality mainly based on Mennonite theological resources and explained that this perspective includes five core aspects. The five factors are a) wherever one lives and dwells, that space is the Lord’s and that God is the ultimate host who welcomes anyone; b) as a migrant, wherever one might arrive, that place is God’s providence, whether it is temporary or long-term; c) as a host, whoever might arrive at one’s place, the guests are God’s people; d) hospitality means to mutually and

29. John Howard YODER, *For the Nations: Essays Evangelical and Public*, Grand Rapids MI, William B. Eerdmans, 1994, p. 175.

30. John Howard YODER, *For the Nations*, p. 179.

joyfully share God's abundant gifts that God has given both to the hosts and the guests; and e) when we truly practice hospitality, we become a signpost of the kingdom of God, an alternative community that goes beyond our nationalism, politics, and capitalistic society. This perspective of hospitality has been developed by integrating several Mennonite resources, like their biblical interpretation of Psalm 24, experiences of forced migrants, the practice of hospitality toward refugees, and their understanding of the church.

In proposing a Mennonite perspective of hospitality, I have indeed included Mennonite experiences and examples that are mostly noble. I am aware that there have been negative examples of hospitality done by Mennonites as well. For example, in the past, they have excluded each other through the practice of ban. Also, I recognize that these five aspects are not enough to solve all the complicated and complex situation of the forced migrations happening globally. Nonetheless, I believe that Mennonites have theological insights, lived experiences of serving those who are in need, and aspiring moral imagination that can teach us on how to welcome better the strangers and marginalized people, and to expand our Christian understanding of hospitality. And again, I would like to emphasize that even though Mennonites these core aspects are based on Mennonite theological resources, they are also found in different Christian traditions and practiced in various ways. Hence, these aspects are not exclusively Mennonite practices.

I hope that this Mennonite perspective of hospitality provide a small contribution to the discourse of Christian hospitality and encourage other churches to actively practice hospitality, especially in the time where more and more people are displaced and where more nation-states are shying away to assist the forced migrants. I hope it reminds us that we are simply guests in the house of the Host and that the Host has given us gifts to share joyfully and mutually. Without being blinded by the dominant ideologies like nationalism and capitalism, let us remember that the earth is the Lord's and that we are called to share and love one another, as Jesus has shown to us in his death and resurrection.

Toronto, ON

SUMMARY

From their beginning, Mennonites have experienced forced migrations due to religious persecution. Based on their migration experiences, biblical interpretations, and theological understandings of the church and the state, I offer a Mennonite perspective of hospitality that includes five core aspects. First, wherever we live and dwell, that space is the Lord's and God is the ultimate host who welcomes anyone in God's place. Second, as a migrant, wherever one might arrive, that place is God's providence, whether it is temporary or long-

term. Third, as a host, whoever might arrive at one's place, the guests are God's people. Fourth, hospitality means to mutually and joyfully share God's abundant gifts that God has given both to the hosts and the guests. Fifth, as the church truly practice hospitality, we become a signpost of the kingdom of God, an alternative community that goes beyond our dominant ideologies, like capitalism and nationalism.

SOMMAIRE

Depuis leur origine, les mennonites ont connu des migrations forcées en raison de la persécution religieuse. À partir de de leurs expériences de migration, de leurs interprétations bibliques et de leur compréhension théologique de l'Église et de l'État, je présente une perspective mennonite sur l'hospitalité qui comprend cinq aspects fondamentaux. Premièrement, partout où nous vivons et habitons, cet espace appartient au Seigneur et Dieu est l'hôte ultime qui accueille. Deuxièmement, en tant que migrant, où qu'on puisse arriver, cet endroit représente la providence de Dieu, qu'il soit temporaire ou à long terme. Troisièmement, pour l'hôte, les invités, qui qu'ils soient, sont le peuple de Dieu. Quatrièmement, l'hospitalité signifie partager mutuellement et joyusement les dons abondants donnés par Dieu à la fois aux hôtes et aux invités. Cinquièmement, si l'Église exerce véritablement l'hospitalité, elle devient un indicateur du royaume de Dieu, une communauté alternative allant au-delà des idéologies dominantes, comme le capitalisme et le nationalisme.