HOSPITALITY VERSUS PATRONAGE: AN INVESTIGATION OF SOCIAL DYNAMICS IN THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN

Igor Lorencin
Zagreb, Croatia

The third epistle of John, a short, seldom-quoted letter attached near the end of the NT, is directed to a church member, thereby pointing to the private character of the epistle. Further, it is the only epistle that does not directly mention the name of Christ. Thus it is not surprising that it has seldom been referred to throughout the centuries.

Modern interest in 3 John began with Adolf von Harnack's ecclesiological approach to the epistle, which proposed that Diotrephes was the first monarchical bishop[1] and that 3 John marks the transition from Spirit-led to an office-led leadership.[2] A distinguishing feature of the ecclesiological approach is its interest in offices and issues of church authority.[3]

In 1925, a theological approach to 3 John was introduced by Hans Hinrich Wendt, who believed the three Johannine epistles to be related and that the Gnostic issues mentioned in 1 and 2 John determine the circumstances of 3 John.[4] On this basis, he believed Diotrephes to be a Gnostic heretic who was fighting orthodox Christianity.[5] Wendt was followed by Walter Bauer, who placed 3 John within the struggle for survival among the various streams of early Christianity.[6] Ernst Käsemann, however, saw the Elder as a heretic and Diotrephes as a defender against heresy.[7]

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[1]Adolf von Harnack, *Über den Dritten Johannesbrief* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1897), 21.

[2]Adolf von Harnack, *The Constitution and Law of the Church in the First Two Centuries* (New York: Williams & Norgate, 1910), 65.

[3]Harnack had many followers, including Günther Bornkamm, "πρεσβυτης," in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1959); Alan England Brooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Johannine Epistles* (New York: Scribner's, 1912); Raymond Edward Brown, *The Epistles of John* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1982); Friedrich Büchsel, *Die Johannesbriefe* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1933); Rudolf Karl Bultmann, *Die drei Johannesbriefe*, 7th ed. (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967); Hans Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969); Alan R. Culpepper, *1 John, 2 John, 3 John* (Atlanta: Knox, 1985); C. H. Dodd, *The Johannine Epistles* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1946); Hans-Josef Klauck, *Der Zweite und Dritte Johannesbrief* (Zürich: Benzinger Verlag, 1992); Rudolf Schnackenburg, "Der Streit zwischen dem Verfasser von 3 Joh und Diotrephes und seine verfassungsgeschichtliche Bedeutung," *Münchener Theologische Zeitschrift* 4 (1953): 18-26; idem, *Die Johannesbriefe* (Freiburg: Herder, 1953).

[4]Hans Hinrich Wendt, *Die Johannesbriefe und das johanneische Christentum* (Halle: Buchhandlung des Waiserhauses, 1925), 23.

[5]Ibid., 27.

[6]Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971, 1934 [German]), 91-93.

[7]Ernst Käsemann, "Ketzer und Zeuge: Zum johanneischen Verfasserproblem," *Zeitschrift*

In 1977, Abraham J. Malherbe inaugurated the social approach to 3 John.[8] His method avoids ecclesiological and theological issues, instead focusing on social circumstances. The custom of hospitality in the ancient world and other relevant social issues are explored.[9]

This article also investigates the social dynamics of 3 John in terms of hospitality and patronage that are alluded to in the Elder's exhortation to the believers. We will begin by examining these allusions in 3 John, followed by a discussion of ancient customs of hospitality and patronage. Then we will contrast these two concepts to help develop a model for church relations that we will, finally, apply to 3 John.

Introducing the Issues: Hospitality and Patronage in 3 John

Two characters are introduced in 3 John: Gaius and Diotrephes. Gaius, who is probably a homeowner with enough resources at his disposal to extend hospitality to itinerants, is praised for his indiscriminate hospitality (vv. 3-8). In vv. 5-6, he is commended for his works of hospitality and encouraged to do even more in the future (ποιήσεις). The culmination is found in v. 8 with a call to practice hospitality, which is expressed with a present progressive (ὀφείλομεν) that calls for continuous action on the part of the doer.[10]

Diotrephes, on the other hand, is opposed to Gaius; nor will he accept letters written by the Elder. Instead, he spreads gossip about him, will not receive itinerants who come to his church, prevents those who are willing to receive them, and throws the disobedient out of the church (vv. 9-10). It

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für Theologie und Kirche 48 (1951): 298. Other supporters of the theological approach, all of whom mix in some aspects of the ecclesiological approach, include Gerd Schunack, *Die Briefe des Johannes* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1982); Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John* (Dallas: Word, 1984); Georg Strecker, *Die Johannesbriefe* 14 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1989).

[8]Abraham J. Malherbe, "Inhospitality of Diotrephes," in *God's Christ and His People* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1977): 222-232. He would actually call his approach a sociohistorical approach. The distinguishing feature of his approach is immersion into ancient culture through the help of ancient texts, inscriptions, and archaeology.

[9]Others who approve of a sociological approach to 3 John include Bruce J. Malina, "The Received View and What It Cannot Do: 3 John and Hospitality," *Semeia* (1986): 171-194. Malina would call his approach the socioscientific approach, as opposed to Malherbe's. Distinguishing features of Malina's approach are modern social-science theories and models that are applied to biblical texts. See also Ruth B. Edwards, "2 and 3 John: Form, Style and Content," in *The Johannine Literature*, ed. Barnabas Lindars, Ruth B. Edwards, and John M. Court (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000): 122-131; Margaret M. Mitchell, "'Diotrephes Does Not Receive Us': The Lexicographical and Social Context of 3 John 9–10," *JBL* 117 (1998): 299-320; J. C. O'Neill, "New Testament Monasteries," in *Common Life in the Early Church* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1998): 118-132.

[10]Malherbe, 223, also points to hospitality as the main subject of 3 John. My own literary investigation of 3 John points toward the presence of a concentric chiasm, with its climax in v. 8, as the main message of 3 John. For a detailed explanation of the concentric chiasm in 3 John, consult my dissertation, "Hospitality versus Patronage: An Investigation of Social Dynamics in the Third Epistle of John" (Ph.D., Andrews University, 2007), 85-93.

is possible that Diotrephes was exhibiting patronal behavior. He might have been supporting the local church of 3 John by opening his house to church gatherings. As a patron and a wealthy homeowner, he might then have felt justified in imposing his own power over the church. Alastair R. Campbell explains the role of patrons in the early church:

> So long as the local church was confined to one household, the household provided the leadership of the church. The church in the house came with its leadership so to speak "built-in". The church that met in someone's house met under that person's presidency. The householder was *ex hypothesi* a person of standing, a patron of others, and the space where the church met was his space, in which he was accustomed to the obedience of slaves and the deference of his wife and children. Those who came into it will have been to a large extent constrained by the norms of hospitality to treat the host as master of ceremonies, especially if he was a person of greater social standing or age than themselves. The table moreover was his table, and if any prayers were to be said, or bread or wine offered, the part was naturally his to play.[11]

As a wealthy patron in whose house the church of 3 John was meeting, Diotrephes could have had enough power to prevent access to the church by whomever he disliked.[12] This is probably the simplest social explanation for his expulsion of members.

The works of Gaius and Diotrephes are contrasted in the context of 3 John in the rhetoric of honor and shame: Gaius is praised and Diotrephes blamed. Two behavioral models are presented: hospitality, which is painted in a positive light, and patronage, which is portrayed in a negative light. In order to better understand the social dynamics entailed in 3 John, it is necessary to examine the ancient customs of hospitality and patronage.

Ancient Customs of Hospitality

Basic to any hospitality encounter is the fact that it is a host-guest relationship. The most prominent OT examples of hospitality are those of Abraham (Gen 18:1-14) and Lot (Gen 19:1-23). On both occasions, hospitality was offered to travelers in a home setting for free. Lot even risked losing his daughters in order to protect visitors in his home (Gen 19:8). These examples point to the sacredness and inviolability of guests in the ancient world.[13] A considerate

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[11]Alastair R. Campbell, *The Elder: Seniority within Earliest Christianity* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1994), 126. Similar ideas are expressed by Ernst Dassmann, "Hausgemeinde und Bischofsamt," in *Vivarium: Festschrift Theodor Klauser zum 90. Geburtstag*, ed. J. H. Waszink (Münster: Aschendorff, 1984), 90. Peter Lampe similarly describes the role of the hosts in early Christian house churches (*Die stadtrömischen Christen in den ersten beiden Jahrhunderten: Untersuchungen zur Sozialgeschichte* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1987], 316-317).

[12]Klauck, 104, also argues for Diotrephes being a homeowner, in whose house the church described in 3 John would meet.

[13]It is interesting to observe that there were places in the OT where people could flee for protection and security, such as in the case of the OT sanctuary (1 Kgs 1:50-53; 2:28-34; Matt 23:35). Such places were sacred, but in the context of hospitality the guest himself becomes sacred and inviolable.

host would provide food, lodging, and protection for his guest. Not doing so would mean violating the custom of hospitality that was to be indiscriminately offered to every person in need.

Among ancient Greeks, hospitality was also a highly valued custom that was expressed through religious ideas. For example, it was believed that Zeus would pour out his wrath upon the transgressors.[14] In Homer's *Odyssey* there are several elements of hospitality: the host's initial reception of the guest, the seating of the guest inside the dwelling, a feast, overnight lodging, the questioning of the guest about the guest's identity, a bath and gifts for the guest, and an escort to the guest's next destination.[15] A host was not even to ask for his guest's name and business until the guest had been properly received, seated, and fed.[16]

After a hospitality encounter, a guest was obligated to reciprocate in future encounters. "Reciprocity" in host-guest relationships is expressed in the Greek by the use of the term ξένος, which was applied to both host and guest. Andrew E. Arterbury notes that "By failing to demarcate the roles of the host and guest semantically, we can see the degree to which the Greeks (and Romans) considered this social convention to be based upon a fluid and reciprocal relationship."[17] Hospitality called for the exchange of roles. In a future encounter the guest becomes the host, and the host a guest. The reciprocal relationship was intended to benefit both parties and to make hospitality into a relationship of equals. Thus it called for balanced reciprocity. If reciprocity were not balanced, then a relationship of patronage and dependency could occur, thereby leading to a relationship of unequals. Thus host and guest in a hospitality encounter were considered to be equals, with their equality resting in the alternation of roles in future encounters.[18]

Hospitality also involved gift giving and was, in a sense, a gift in itself. Gifts played a special role in antiquity. Gabriel Herman notes that "Gifts beg counter-gifts, and fulfill at one and the same time a number of purposes: they repay past services, incur new obligations, and act as continuous reminders of the validity of the bond. Non-reciprocation is in this context frequently interpreted as a relapse into hostility."[19] Thus the guest's obligation to reciprocity

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[14]Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, trans. Herbert Weir Smyth, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1946), 699-714, 744-749; cf. Austin S. Ashley, "Xenia: A Study of Hospitality in Ancient Greece" (Senior thesis, Harvard University, 1940), 68.

[15]Homer, *Odyssey* 3.4-485; 15.193-214; 5.382-13.187. Cf. Andrew E. Arterbury, "The Custom of Hospitality in Antiquity and Its Importance for Interpreting Acts 9:43–11:18" (Ph.D. dissertation, Baylor University, 2003), 12.

[16]Steve Reece, *The Stranger's Welcome: Oral Theory and the Aesthetics of the Homeric Hospitality Scene* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 26.

[17]Arterbury, 35-36.

[18]Julian Pitt-Rivers, "The Law of Hospitality," in *The Fate of Shechem: Or, The Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 102.

[19]Gabriel Herman, *Ritualised Friendship and the Greek City* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 80.

naturally followed every encounter of hospitality. Marcel Mauss adds: "To refuse to give, or to fail to invite, is 'like refusing to accept,' the equivalent of a declaration of war; it is a refusal of friendship and intercourse."[20] Therefore, according to Arterbury, "Gift exchange within a hospitality interaction inaugurated a permanent, reciprocal relationship."[21] Neglecting the obligation to reciprocity was a primary way to violate the custom of hospitality.

Josephus reports on the Essenes' hospitality to their members from other places, which seems to have parallels to Christian hospitality:[22]

> They occupy no one city, but settle in large numbers in every town. On the arrival of any of the sect from elsewhere, all the resources of the community are put at their disposal, just as if they were their own; and they enter the house of men whom they have never seen before as though they were their most intimate friends. Consequently, they carry nothing whatever with them on their journeys, except arms as a protection against brigands. In every city there is one of the order expressly appointed to attend to strangers, who provides them with raiment and other necessaries.[23]

Hans Conrad Peyer comments on the *Regula Magistri*, a document which deals with the proper procedure for welcoming guests into Christian monasteries: "Guests are welcomed by monks of the monastery with blessing and prayer, kneeling down, bending down, and with a kiss of peace."[24] Subordination of the host to the needs of his guest is emphasized here. There is a well-known Arab couplet expressing a similar idea: "O Guest of ours, though you have come, though you have visited us, and though you have honored our dwellings // We verily are the real guests, and you are the Lord of this house."[25] This element of subordination is found in 3 John 8, where it is expressed with the main verb for hospitality (ὑπολαμβάνειν).[26] Just as with the practice of reciprocity, the custom of hospitality involved an element of

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[20]Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Function of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (London: Coehn & West, 1954), 11.

[21]Arterbury, 33, quotes examples from Homer's *Odyssey* 1.311-318; 15.536-538; 17.163-165; 19.309-311.

[22]Malina, 188, might be correct when he talks about "community reciprocity" instead of individual reciprocity in Christian hospitality encounters. But, whether community or individual reciprocity, the principle stays the same.

[23]Josephus, *Jewish War*, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray, LCL, 2.124-126.

[24]Translation mine. Original German reads: "Gäste werden von den Mönchen des gastlichen Klosters mit Segen und Gebet, Niederkniend, Neigung des Hauptes und Friedenskuß empfangen" (Hans Conrad Peyer, *Von der Gastfreundschaft zum Gasthaus: Studien zur Gastlichkeit im Mittelalter* [Hannover: Hahnsche, 1987], 120).

[25]H. R. P. Dickson, *The Arab of the Desert: A Glimpse into Badawin Life in Kuwait and Sau'di Arabia* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1949), 118.

[26]Other examples of the usage of the same Greek verb in the context of subordination include Herodotus (*Herodotus*, trans. A. D. Godley, LCL, 1.24), who uses the participle ὑπολαβόντα; Plato, (*Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey, LCL, 5.453D), who uses the infinitive form ὑπολαβεῖν; and Josephus (*Against Apion*, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray, LCL, 1.247), who uses the form ὑπολαβὼν. See also *Wisdom* 12:24, where the Greek originally used a present participle of ὑπολαμβάνω.

subordination of the host to the needs of his guest that the guest will, in turn, reciprocate in future encounters. Subordination in the context of hospitality was always done with an attitude of deference of one party to another.

Ancient Custom of Patronage

Patronage is a patron-client relationship. The term is derived from the Greek and Latin terms for "father" (Gk. πατήρ; Lat. *pater*), which seem to point toward a kinship quality. The entire Roman system of government was set up as a patronal network, with the emperor at the top of the pyramid. The emperor's governors were his clients, but, at the same time, they were also patrons to others below them. Richard A. Horsley believes that "patron-client relations supply part of the answer to how such a large empire was governed by so small an administration."[27] The Romans exported this patronal system of government throughout the empire, as S. N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger describe in their seminal work:

> From the fourth century B.C., Rome claimed and successfully exercised the right to extend its alliance to free states situated beyond Latinum, on the fringes of its area of influence, and to protect them against their enemies, even when an attack on them preceded the alliance. The relationship between those *civitates liberae* and the Roman state has been described as a case of "extralegal dependence of the weak on a strong protector, founded on gratitude, piety, reverence and all the sacred emotions and patron's power to enforce them.[28]

This social structure in the Greco-Roman world extended to the land tenants, clients of landowners, who needed their patrons for the purpose of bare survival. The intention of the patron was to use his clients for the purpose of increasing his own wealth, popularity, and power. John H. Elliott lists a number of benefits that patrons secured from their client:

> The client, in return [for the patronage of the landowner], is obligated to enhance the prestige, reputation, and honor of his patron in public and private life, favor him with daily early-morning salutations, support his political campaigns, supply him information, refuse to testify against him in the courts, and give constant public attestation and memorials of his patron's benefactions, generosity, and virtue.[29]

On the other hand, there were services that clients received from their patrons:

> The influence of the patron can be enlisted to secure for the client a diversity of "goods" including food, financial aid, physical protection, career advancement and administrational posts, citizenship, equality in or freedom from taxation, the inviolability of person and property, support

[27]Richard A. Horsley, *Paul and the Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg: Trinity, 1997), 88.

[28]S. N. Eisenstadt and L. Roniger, *Patrons, Clients, and Friends: Interpersonal Relations and the Structure of Trust in Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 62-63.

[29]John H. Elliott, "Patronage and Clientelism in Early Christian Society: A Short Reading Guide," *Forum* 3 D (1987): 43.

in legal cases, immunity from expenses of public service, help from the gods, and in the case of provincials, the status of *socius* or "friend of Rome" (*proxenia*).[30]

Thus while the relationship between a patron and a client was reciprocal, the roles were fixed and never changing. Inequality of status was the main characteristic of a patron-client relationship. Benefits coming out of a patronal relationship were different for the two parties involved. The client received a socially lower level of benefits that aided in bare survival, while the patron received benefits that contributed to his honor and prestige in society. M. Peter Blau believes that "providing needed benefits others cannot easily do without is undoubtedly the most prevalent way of attaining power."[31] Further, John J. Pilch defines power as the "ability to exercise control over the behavior of others."[32] In patronal relations a patron was clearly the one who had power, who dominated his client, and thus had him in his control.

Since the main characteristic of patronage is inequality of the participants, it might be beneficial to compare it to a relationship of equals. Herman shows how hospitality as a relationship of equals could easily turn into a relationship of unequals and end up as patronage:

> If initially it had been a relationship of equality, in the course of time it could have shaded off into a relationship in which one partner attained a position of strength, the other a position of weakness. In other words, a horizontal tie linking together social equals may have been transformed into a vertical patron-client bond. Goods then would tend to be repaid by services, protection by loyalty, and willing co-operation turned into coercive dependence.[33]

Eric R. Wolf describes the process by which friendship could be turned into patronage: "When instrumental friendship reaches a maximum point of imbalance so that one partner is clearly superior to the other in his capacity to grant goods and services, we approach the critical point where friendships give way to the patron-client tie."[34]

Thus patronage is an imbalanced type of relationship. A. Zeba Crook discusses how gift exchange may lead to an unbalanced relationship:

> If a gift is made, but the receiver is unable to reciprocate with something of equal or greater value, the recipient becomes a client, and the giver becomes a patron, and status difference is either created by the imbalance or inscribed; conversely, if the receiver is able to repay with something of

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[30]Ibid., 42-43.

[31]M. Peter Blau, *Exchange and Power in Social Life* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964), 118.

[32]John J. Pilch, "Power," in *Handbook of Biblical Social Values*, ed. John J. Pilch et al. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), 158.

[33]Herman, 39.

[34]Eric R. Wolf, "Kinship, Friendship, and Patron-Client Relations in Complex Societies," in *The Social Anthropology of Complex Societies*, ed. M. Banton (London: A. S. A. Monographs, 1966), 16.

equal or greater value, the status symmetry is inscribed, and the exchange remains that of a gift.[35]

The imbalance in exchange led to a dependent relationship, which allowed the patron to begin dominating and exploiting his client. Blau finds that social exchange "tends to give rise to differentiation of status and power."[36] In that sense, hospitality could easily turn into a relationship of patronage.

A Contrast between Hospitality and Patronage

Even though there are many possible definitions of hospitality and patronage, I will now propose definitions based on my research, which emphasizes elements that seem to be indispensable in any traditional definitions of hospitality and patronage. Hospitality is a host-guest relationship between unrelated individuals who deferentially alternate their roles by practicing balanced reciprocity, which, in turn, brings them into a state of equality. Patronage, by contrast, is a reciprocal patron-client relationship based on social inequality of the parties involved, where the patron uses his power to benefit his client as well as to benefit himself through that relationship, and the client looks for ways to satisfy his own needs, while being of use to his patron. This definition leads to the conclusion that patronage involves more than a little selfishness.

I do not pretend that my list of features and differences between the models is exhaustive. Hospitality can indeed be perverted, while patronage can be offered unselfishly. But hospitality cannot be abused unless it is devoid of the element of voluntary subordination on the part of the hosts. The description of hospitality and patronage in this investigation is based on my research above, which is interested in a general understanding of ancient customs. The following chart presents major features of the two opposing models that have been developed in this investigation:

Hospitality	Patronage
Host-Guest	Patron-Client
Role reversal in future encounters	Fixed and never-changing roles
Reciprocity—similar benefits	Reciprocity—different benefits
Equality	Inequality
Subordination	Exploitation
Deference	Domination

First, hospitality is a host-guest relationship, while patronage is a patron-client relationship. There is a role reversal in future host-guest encounters, while roles are fixed and never changing in patron-client relationships. Both

[35]A. Zeba Crook, "Reflections on Culture and Social-Scientific Models," *JBL* 124/3 (2005): 519.

[36]Blau, 14.

types of relationships require reciprocity for the relationship to continue. Reciprocity in hospitality relationships is based on future host-guest role reversals, which assures similar types of benefits for both parties. Reciprocity in patronal relations does not include role reversals, but fixed roles with different types of benefits for the parties involved. This means that a client always received a socially lower level of benefits, while being equally obligated to the relationship as the patron.

Further, reciprocal hospitality exchanges bring host and guest into a state of equality, even when they do not belong to exactly the same social stratum. On the other hand, patronage is a relationship of inequality, in which in spite of their continual exchange patron and client can never reach a state of equality. A relationship of equals is usually an enjoyable relationship, while relationships of unequals can easily become a burden.

Finally, hospitality includes an element of subordination of the host to his guest. On the other hand, the patron does not need to subordinate himself to his client, but to subordinate his client to himself for the purpose of exploiting him. While hospitality puts an emphasis on deference toward the other person, patronage puts an emphasis on domination.

Application to 3 John

In 3 John, the Elder discussed two models of behavior: hospitality and patronage. The Elder urged the church to develop a relationship based upon hospitality. Gaius modeled hospitality and was urged to continue. Diotrephes, by contrast, was chastised for his inhospitality (vv. 10-11). The Elder's purpose in writing the epistle may have been to bolster Gaius's courage in the face of opposition from Diotrephes. Gaius might have become insecure in the face of Diotrephes's actions and been in danger of following him and supporting his actions (vv. 5-6).

The Elder's encouragement to continue acting hospitably by sending the itinerants "in a manner worthy of God" probably refers to supplying them with food and other necessities until they reach their next destination. Why would Gaius need to be encouraged to practice hospitality if he was already doing so? It seems that Gaius had become hesitant because he had seen some of his fellow church members being thrown out of the church because of their hospitality (v. 10). To assure Gaius that he was acting correctly in showing hospitality, the Elder emphatically designated Diotrephes's works as evil (v. 11).

To aid Gaius in his hospitable works, the Elder strongly recommended a partner, Demetrius, who might have been one of those who had already been thrown out of the church by Diotrephes after showing hospitality to the itinerants (v. 12).[37] The Elder invited Gaius to join forces with the isolated Demetrius and continue with his good works.

[37]The following authors support the view that Demetrius was a member of the church of Gaius and Diotrephes: Campbell, 208; Frederick W. Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis: Clayton, 1982), 491; J. H. A. Ebrard, *Commentary on the Epistles of St. John* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1860), 404; Harnack, *Über den Dritten Johannesbrief*, 12;

The main message of 3 John is found in v. 8: "We ought therefore to show hospitality to such people so that we might work together for the truth," which is expressed with a progressive present (ὀφείλομεν) that calls for continuous action on the part of the doer. Hospitality needs to be a continuous attitude of the church.

If Demetrius was an expelled member of the church of 3 John, then his recommendation points to the fact that even though hospitality was directed primarily toward itinerants coming from outside, it also needed to be practiced toward members inside the local church. Thus an attitude of hospitality also needed to be shown to Demetrius. Church members were to continue showing hospitality toward outsiders, while not neglecting to practice it among themselves.

Conclusion

Hospitality, as a reciprocal relationship, calls for serving others, while, in turn, being served by others. Such balanced reciprocity produces equality among all participants. A patronal attitude with inequality, exploitation, and domination has no place in a Christian community. Instead, equality, subordination to the needs of each other, and deference to everyone is what a church needs; this is the context in which the Elder argued in 3 John for hospitality rather than patronage.

Heinrich Julius Holtzmann, *Evangelium, Briefe, und Offenbarung des Johannes* (Freiburg: J. C. B. Mohr, 1891), 245; Ignace de La Potterie, *La vérité dans saint Jean* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1977), 900, n. *; O'Neill, 130-132; Bernhard Weiss, *Die drei Briefe des Apostel Johannes*, 5th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1899), 193.