With Luce Irigaray, toward a Theology of Hospitality

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IN *AN ETHICS OF SEXUAL DIFFERENCE* Luce Irigaray writes, "It takes two to love. To know how to separate and how to come back together. Each to go, both he and she, in quest of self, faithful to the quest, so that they may greet one another, come close, make merry, or seal a covenant."[1] With these words Irigaray offers, *in nuce*, a description of sexual difference as she conceives and explores it in her later writings. This is sexual difference not as an account of the static nature(s) of man and woman but as an account of the dynamic intersubjectivity that might be instantiated between them as distinct beings. For Irigaray, just as each sexuate being is in perpetual becoming (can never be pinned down as this or that), so also is the relationship between them dynamic.[2] To express this intersubjective dynamism in terms of the above 'programmatic' quotation, even as woman and man learn how to separate (to be at home with the self in its becoming) they might also reach out to one another, come close in greeting and encounter. Each of Irigaray's later writings, in fact, considers this dynamic intersubjectivity from a distinct angle—each work represents a distinct *reprise* on the theme "It takes two to love. To know how to separate and come back together."

Of the various categories or concepts deployed by Irigaray to illuminate and extend her vision of dynamic sexual difference, it is hospitality that preoccupies us here, a concept she takes up in *Sharing the World*. There Irigaray offers a strong critique of what she describes as traditional hospitality and advances her own constructive account of hospitality in difference. The purpose of this article is to engage briefly with Irigaray on the question of hospitality, but to do so from a particular perspective, namely, a theological one. Though the reader may find this a curious way to approach Irigaray, such a starting point can be defended (even if not at length or in detail here) in view of the fact that Irigaray herself consistently situates her thought in relation to the Christian tradition, responding frequently to what she takes to be specifically Christian presuppositions. The purpose of this engagement with Irigaray is itself constructive: to demonstrate that a theologically determined account of hospitality approximates to Irigaray's account in important, even decisive ways.

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Hospitality as constraint

While the earliest works of Irigaray represent a specifically deconstructive moment in her development of a theory and ethics of sexual difference, deconstruction remains important to every phase of her writing.[3] On the specific theme of hospitality, Judith Still has picked up the deconstructive dimension in order to delineate the limits of Homeric hospitality while also highlighting key features of Irigaray's thought. Still demonstrates, for example, that within Homeric hospitality woman is never a host in her own right but is only ever the natural substrate upon which the exercise of hospitality (among men) is predicated. There "women are always already the intimate ground of hospitality even as they are expelled from primary social relations of hospitality."[4] Thus, added to the insult that she may not function as host is the injury that she has no home particular to her as woman. In a related vein, Still argues that Homeric hospitality reveals a destructive, fantasmatic relationship to femininity in the sense that hospitality carries the threat that the guest will be contained and restrained even as he is lavishly nourished—a threat that expresses "the excessive hospitality of the womb-home" (Still 152). Expressed slightly differently, a woman's exercise of hospitality is fundamentally suspect, since she retains a sexual power that threatens to retain or engulf man (Still 154).

In *Sharing the World*, Irigaray picks up the theme of hospitality and, in her own voice, develops an explicit criticism of what she describes as traditional hospitality—a critique that is surprisingly nuanced or qualified. For example, she is willing to acknowledge that giving traditional hospitality "is better than completely closing off one's own home to the other."[5] To this Irigaray adds that "responding to the call of the other at the level of needs is more generous than simply closing one's door" (*Sharing* 22-23). Irigaray is also able to offer what amounts to a backhanded compliment to traditional hospitality when she suggests that we have not yet learned to do better (*Sharing* 23). Nevertheless, these qualified statements on Irigaray's part do not diminish the force of her objection to traditional hospitality. The force of her objection is illustrated when (precisely against the backdrop of traditional hospitality) she argues:

> To be sure, the other will be sheltered, but in an enclosed space, a place already defined by our norms, our rules, our lacks and our voids. The place that we give to the other in fact amounts to a representation of the place that we ourselves occupy—a space apparently open in a closed world. (*Sharing* 23)

If traditional hospitality is conceived as the provision of space for the other within one's own home or context, Irigaray insists that its limitation lies in the

fact that it requires the other to find his or her place within an already defined world. Thus Irigaray suggests that when we offer hospitality:

> To be sure, the other will be sheltered, but in an enclosed space, a place already defined by our norms, our rules, our lacks, our voids. The other will have the possibility of dwelling only in the loop of the interlacing of relations where we ourselves are situated by our culture, our language, our surroundings. (*Sharing* 24)

Within Western culture we have been unable to break out of the logic of the Same and have thus been unable to create a space of encounter, within us or before us, with one who is truly other.

Irigaray's criticism of traditional hospitality is tied closely to her criticisms of Christianity, and it is evident that Irigaray discerns little of value within traditional theological frameworks when it comes to a genuine expression of hospitality between woman and man.[6] She extends her objection to traditional hospitality into the religious realm when she suggests that "[w]e welcome or shelter the other because of some political-cultural paternalism or materialism, some social idealism or ideology, *some religious or moral commandment*" (*Sharing* 22, italics mine). Clearly, Irigaray sees a Christian account of hospitality as inextricably linked with law or command (deontology)—law or command understood as mere external constraint. Instead of arising out of a faithful apprehension of the human as two (a teleological framework), the religious approach to intersubjectivity is defined by duties and obligations heteronomously imposed. Such constraints, Irigaray argues, even if they are personal in nature, cannot bring the woman and man to the place of an open and hopeful expression of human becoming as two (*Sharing* 59). Such a possibility arises only out of the deeply personal desire and feeling of each in relation to their own identity and Being—a desire and feeling that is attentive both to the becoming of the self and the mystery of the other.[7] Thus she summarizes with reference to spiritual or religious communities:

> Spiritual community itself is not without danger. If a personal spiritual becoming ought to go hand in hand with respect for what already exists or could exist, if it remains open with its progress in view, the same seldom goes for a community. The issues there are often already fixed and rigid, having become sorts of imposed dogma that transform the frailty of a personal spiritual energy into an artificially affirmative, and even repressive force. (*Sharing* 26)

For Irigaray, religious dogma is invariably fixed and immutable, and the commands that arise within the context of traditional religious belief systems cannot open women and men to the possibilities that define the human.

It is worth asking, briefly, whether the dichotomy Irigaray sets up between teleology and deontology can be sustained.[8] Here we note, for example, Paul Ricœur's argument that there is a necessary and fundamental confluence between these two approaches to life and relationships. For his part, Ricœur will both privilege the teleological (the ethical) but also insist on the necessity of deontological formulations (moral commands, duties) in daily life. Summarizing Ricœur's argument, Boyd Blundell notes, "The basic, ethical aim is often so deeply embedded in our daily lives that it requires some method of bringing it out into the open so that it can be examined, and the moral norm fulfills this task."[9] To Ricœur's argument we add the parallel suggestion of theologian Oliver O'Donovan that the conflict between teleology and deontology is only an apparent one. In moments of grace, he argues, we may perceive that our fulfillment as a human being requires (teleological language) that we perform some action—an action that is subsequently perceived as a duty for us (deontological language). On the other hand, in situations where we are unable to perceive what human fulfillment looks like (or are unable to pursue it, for some reason), deontological language becomes unavoidable.[10] Thus, while teleology is primary, it cannot come to full expression without deontological reflection and forms of speech.[11]

Irigaray, sexual difference, hospitality

Through every phase of her writings, Irigaray has worked to disclose the many ways the logic of the same has come to expression in Western culture, as well as its harmful consequences for woman, man, and the natural world. She argues that the logic of the one (male) subject has produced, among other things, "social crises, individual illness, a schematic and fossilized identity for the two sexes, as well as a general sclerosis of discourse."[12] In resisting the logic of the same, Irigaray formulates an account of the human in which the logic of the two dominates. As she puts it (in the context of a discussion of Hegelian logic), "If the negative in speculative dialectic had for its function to reduce difference by integrating it into a more accomplished level of the Absolute, here it has the role of safeguarding difference."[13] Irigaray's negative requires that there be two universals, neither of which can be sublated in favour of *the* universal. In this framework, man must abandon his claim to be the whole, must abandon the singular Divine he has projected, and must abandon his corresponding tendency to define woman in terms of himself. She, on the other hand, is free to become (including in transcendent terms) according to the real that corresponds to her. The fullness of the human is thus defined as the becoming of both man and woman, according to their distinct Being. Correspondingly, an ethics of sexual

difference is an ethics within which this twofold becoming (the distinctive being of man and woman in becoming) is honored and privileged.

This ethics of sexual difference comes to expression, or is instantiated, through a variety of concrete practices, each of which involves both an acknowledgment of the gap (difference) between woman and man and also the possibility that this gap might become a threshold of encounter. To return to the quotation from *An Ethics of Sexual Difference* with which we began, these concrete practices are such that woman and man might be, in the first place, at home with themselves. Thus it is not surprising to find Irigaray arguing that, when it comes to hospitality, "it is advisable to wonder about oneself and one's manner of dwelling. It is important to have a view of one's own faithfulness to that which is proper to one" (*Sharing* 7). Of course the need to be at home with oneself (confident and comfortable in one's own identity) corresponds with the becoming of both woman and man. Yet the need to be at home with oneself is particularly important in view of the fact that every encounter with the other, every expression of hospitality, entails risk. As Irigaray puts it:

> No doubt, opening one's own journey in order to welcome the other as other at the crossing of our paths is not without risk: of losing one's way, of seeing any subtlety in energy vanish or disappear, of reducing transcendence to the facticity of an encounter, of getting lost in the other or wanting to possess this other. (*Sharing* 41)

Another dimension of this risk lies in the fact that one never returns from such an encounter unchanged (*Sharing* 10). According to Irigaray, then, to express hospitality is not to open oneself without hesitation to the one who appears or approaches, but is first to be secure in one's self and sense of self. "If we are not dwelling where we ought to dwell, being what or who we are, we are not prepared for an encounter with the other" (*Sharing* 7).

In considering further the constructive account of encounter/hospitality advanced by Irigaray, we do well to consider Judith Still's summary-description of Irigarayan hospitality, offered at the conclusion of her study of Homeric hospitality:

> For Luce Irigaray, each sexuate subject should be an *hôte* in his or her own place with her or his own natural and cultural identity and both should be involved in creating a third place, a threshold, in-between. This would create a horizontal transcendental between *I* and *You*; you the other (*heteros*) would come within while remaining outside and strange. There would be no exclusion yet also no pressure to integrate. And *I* would be a *you* for *you.* (Still 159)

Here, Still captures the essential features of a constructive hospitality in sexual difference: its attention to the third (the space between two); the pos-

sibility of transcendence (wonder!) between woman and man; the non-coercive nature of the encounter; the possibility of proximity without constraint; and the making available of the self for the other. While this summary is comprehensive in nature, it also displays a degree of ambiguity (formality)—it is not a thick description of the encounter between man and woman. This ambiguity, however, does not owe to any failure on Still's part but is rooted in the fact that a genuine encounter in sexual difference has not yet happened, according to Irigaray. As she puts it, "Welcoming requires an availability for that which has not yet occurred," namely, the advent of the other (*Sharing* 18). Since sexual difference has never been instantiated in human culture, and because we still live within the logic of the same, the possibility of hospitality between woman and man is something that cannot, strictly speaking, be described. It is only a possibility toward which we might reach.

At the heart of this (ever future?) hospitality, however, is an element that is noticeably absent from Still's summary, an element central to Irigaray's discussion in *Sharing the World*. That element is the *call* of the other. For Irigaray, the encounter between two is rooted in the call that each might extend to the other, a call to which each might remain attentive.[14] Although the exact nature of the call is not specified by Irigaray, it is evident from her description of the call as spoken word that it may have both an active and passive dimension. She writes concerning the call as spoken word:

> Words which approach without forcing the threshold, like a living element that comes from this side or beyond the limits of our dwelling. Such is the case for the light of the stars, the music of the wind, the song of the birds. They do not force us to do anything; rather they give assistance to our existence, put a surplus of life at our disposal, remind us of what or who we are. (*Sharing* 19)

Such a call is not one that we have learned to extend: "Such words are so strange to our culture because relations with the other have seldom been cultivated" (*Sharing* 10). To receive such a call, or to extend such a call, is to find oneself in a relationship or context where words are deployed neither to possess nor control nor define. The call, whether active or passive, goes out as an invitation to encounter (it is an expression of hospitality) that *might* be received in the intimate place of one's being. Indeed, hospitality is only ever inaugurated through such a call.

Desire is a necessary correlate of the call, and it is worth quoting somewhat at length again what Irigaray writes concerning the relationship between call and desire:

> To respond to the call of the other at the level of needs [as often happens in traditional hospitality] is more generous than simply closing one's door, but we are not yet really called into question other than at the level of having. With regard to Being, it is another matter, one having to do precisely with desire. If our desire confines itself to a will for immutability, for permanence of self-identity, for security of dwelling in sameness, our desire remains closed to welcoming the other as other. (*Sharing* 23)

In this passage Irigaray offers a largely negative account of desire—desire as it has come to expression within the logic of the same. And while positive descriptions of desire are more difficult to pin down in Irigaray's writings, it is evident that she sees a fundamental desire operating between woman and man, man and woman. To insist on dynamic sexual difference is, in part, simply to insist on the desire of each for the other. Defining this desire, Irigaray writes, "[A] wish for the other, for the coming of the other and the meeting with the other inside the horizon of my world, inside my most personal and inner boundaries, could be called: desire" (*Sharing* 98). The desire of woman and man for each other is fundamental to the human—and its cultivation beyond animal attraction and beyond the need to possess the other, belongs or will belong to a culture of sexual difference. Desire *with* the other, respecting her unique nature/culture. This desire issues in a call (again, active or passive) to the other, inaugurating hospitality.

If the call is heard, this does not *compel* a response or a welcome on the part of one or the other. As suggested, the call *might* touch a man or woman at the 'heart' of his or her being—at the often-ambiguous point of his or her own desire and sense of self. And it is only if this call resonates within him or her that he or she might venture (out) to the place of encounter—becoming a host by creating room within the self and outside of the self for the other, and also becoming a guest to the other, prepared for the change that the encounter might require. As Irigaray puts it, each will have to listen and discern "whether the call that has been heard corresponds to a call sent out or held in, so that the two could try to make their way towards one another and experience how they could listen to each other, approach one another, exchange with one another, enrich one another" (*Sharing* 20-21). Here again Irigaray pushes somewhat beyond a negative account of the encounter to a more positive description—pointing to the possible exchange (of words, ideas, gifts) between two and to the possible enrichment of the self through the appearance of this sexuate other. Whether sharing a bed, a home or some concrete project, hospitality is instantiated only when a woman or man resonates with a call of the other, responds by acknowledging the other, becomes open to his or her own transformation through encounter, and intentionally sets the other free in his or her own becoming.[15]

The final moment of hospitality is also the first—that of return to the self. The moment of encounter and mutual hospitality is dynamic and thus cannot be fixed or preserved (*ought not*, to deploy deontological language); rather, each must be sent back to his or her own nature/culture and becoming. To fix or capture the moment of hospitality in time and space, in other words, is to betray the dynamic nature of sexual difference:

> To cultivate attraction requires it not being harnessed or paralyzed by already defined habits, norms, surrounding objects, things, gestures and discourses […].The awakening of energy has to remain vigilant and attentive to its source, without letting it be reduced to the anonymity of the "there is"—an already existing desire that is to be lived in one way or another according to the advice of parents, teachers or public opinion. (*Sharing* 73-74)

Attraction, desire, encounter, and hospitality are the essence of a dynamic intersubjectivity in which the relationship cannot be pinned down as "here" or "there"—just as man and woman cannot be pinned down as "this" or "that." To pin the relationship down "here" or "there" (to define it in terms of *this* form of interaction or in terms of *that* shared project) is to defy the nature of the human as two living in freedom.

A theological account of hospitality

The development of a full theology of hospitality is beyond the scope of this article, yet the outline of such a theology may be given. To this end we consider a brief narrative of encounter/hospitality from the two-volume, first-century biblical text of Luke-Acts. Throughout this text, scenes of table fellowship predominate, involving shared meals, celebration, spiritual encounter, judgment, and joy. An intriguing scene of such fellowship in Luke-Acts is the meeting of Lydia and Paul, a narrative of encounter that is brief yet rich with content and allusions. As we explore this narrative, and thus offer the outline of a theology of hospitality, the goal is not to demonstrate a full confluence between Irigarayan hospitality and a theologically determined vision; rather, it is to demonstrate that a theology of hospitality is more amenable to Irigarayan hospitality than she allows. Further, a theology of hospitality might serve as a precursor to a fuller theological account of sexual difference that approximates to Irigaray's own theory.

Much of the second volume of Luke-Acts tells the story of Paul—his life of alternating itinerancy and residency as he provided leadership among the earliest Christians and as he preached about Jesus as the Son of God. Given his frequent travels, Paul often found himself in different cities, and upon arrival in each new city he would invariably visit its synagogue. Upon arrival

in Philippi, a city in which there likely was no synagogue, Paul instead made his way to an open-air location that seems to have doubled as a meeting place for Jewish worshippers. The narrator (who leaves the impression he was in company with Paul) writes, "On the Sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. A certain woman named Lydia, a worshipper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth" (Acts 16:13-14).[16] Very likely, Lydia was the patron of this group of women gathered in the place of prayer—women who probably shared the work of dying fabrics and who were migrants to Philippi, a city they had come to call home.[17] Sutherland provides the following summary concerning the identity of Lydia:

> [W]e can believe that Lydia was not a wealthy woman who enjoyed the prosperity that came from dealing in luxury goods, but was a freed slave who made her living in a profession marginalized by philosophers and the public alike. She was conscious of what living beyond the city gates as a migrant worker in a foreign land meant for her social and political status; she was a person open to new religious convictions and gathered around her a circle of women, some of whom lived and worshipped with her. (Sutherland 49)

These women gathered, as was apparently their custom, to pray and worship in an open-air context outside the gates of Philippi.

This brief introduction to the narrative raises questions, specific to our inquiry, concerning the nature of the space/territory within which the encounter between Paul and Lydia takes place. As a public meeting ground (though outside the recognized civil space of the city itself), the territory on which they meet may be described as neutral, if only in the sense that this space belongs neither to Lydia nor to Paul. At the same time, it is perhaps appropriate to describe this as a space in which Lydia's community of women finds themselves at home (to a degree that Paul does not). As Sutherland puts it, speaking of the women, "This was *their* place of prayer. They are the hosts of an established religious community that Paul comes into as a stranger, and they receive him as a guest, according him the courtesy of teaching and preaching to them" (Sutherland 47). At the same time, this public space, from which anyone is free to come and go for the purposes of prayer or otherwise, is an open enough space that both Paul and Lydia can find themselves at home here. This is to say that there is no constraint on either Paul or Lydia. At the moment of first meeting, Lydia is not compelled to remain with, listen to or accept the teaching of Paul—the text simply says, matter of factly, that Lydia was there listening. This is not a captive audience, not a group unwillingly

subjected to the proclamations of an itinerant preacher; rather, according to her own intention she listens to the teachings of Paul, formulating her own judgment and response.

In considering this encounter between Lydia and Paul, it is important to note that within Luke-Acts there is a consistent pattern of reversal of the roles of guest and host.[18] Thus Jesus, for example, is characterized both as host in relation to those who are his disciples (and those who are not, for that matter) and as a guest (on the receiving end of hospitality).[19] In fact, it is in his role as guest, rather than as host, that Jesus most decisively announces and enacts the kingdom of God. Inhabiting the margins, and dwelling among the marginalized, Jesus himself embodies the presence of God's kingdom for those who receive him, and those in company with him, as guest. In view of this reversal, Yong argues:

> Each member [of the church], following the lives of Jesus and the early Christians, is a recipient and a conduit for the hospitality of God, and that precisely through ever-shifting sets of human interrelationships […]. [T]here is not only a continual reversal of roles, such that hosts become guests and vice versa, but, sometimes, we play both roles simultaneously, discerning through the Holy Spirit how best to respond and react in each case. (Yong 106-07)

Paul also, in the course of his life and travels, invariably finds himself both guest and host—and in the encounter with Lydia he is found predominantly in the role of guest. But perhaps Lydia also, even as she serves in the role of host, functions to some extent in the role of a guest as Paul presides in offering a particular teaching. The question arises, in fact, whether the poles of guest and host could ever be safely or clearly distinguished from each other in a theology of hospitality.

This exchange of roles is particularly instructive from the perspective of Irigaray's account of hospitality, according to which woman has been prevented from adopting the role of host and has always been only the natural ground of encounter between male subjects. Lydia is not a host within a masculine space (the home of a father or brother), merely facilitating encounter and exchange among men. Rather, she is presented as a subject in her own right, as a leader within a company of women/colleagues, and as one who will listen to the teaching of the itinerant apostle according to her own freedom and intention. As the narrative puts it simply: "She was listening to us" (Acts 16:14). Lydia is thus a subject in the sense that she moves fluidly between the two poles of host and guest, inasmuch as she (perhaps precisely as a woman on the margins) is free to listen and respond according to her own volition or intention.

More than her merely hearing the message, the brief narrative of encounter between Lydia and Paul suggests that she also accepts the message he has proclaimed—her open heart (as the narrator puts it) to *hear* the message translates into an open heart to *embrace* or *accept* the message that is spoken. And it is in the wake of her acceptance of the message that theological reflection may push a little deeper. "When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.' And she prevailed upon us" (Acts 16:15). Here the text demonstrates a direct link between the rite of entry into Christian faith/community (the rite of baptism, portrayed also as union with Jesus Christ) and the practices of hospitality. For Lydia, Paul's message, and her embrace of it, has as a necessary correlate her right and opportunity to serve as a host. Thus, in view of the fact that Paul is without a place to stay in Philippi, she indicates her wish, intent, and even obligation to serve as host to him. It is her right and opportunity to serve in this way by virtue of their shared belonging to the Body of Christ. This outsider—a woman, and a marginalized woman whose body marks her as such (purple arms from dyeing fabric)—claims her right to serve as host, to exist as a subject in her own right and in her own home.[20] "Come and stay at my home." And there is no reason to think that this act of hospitality is offered at only the physical level, since Lydia has a clear interest in the message itself, thus signaling that it is her privilege to continue the discussion of this message with the itinerant preacher.

The question arises whether the narrative presents Lydia as having a mere duty to serve as a host—whether this territory of hospitality may be demarcated only through deontological formulations. This is clearly not the case. As indicated, expressions of hospitality are central to the narrative of Luke-Acts, and such expressions are essential to (and constitutive of) the "salvation" proclaimed within the narrative. Moments of hospitality, and the "table-fellowship" that corresponds to them, are perceived as joyful affirmations of the new life—expressing forgiveness, the healing life of the Spirit, and community—that are true of and for women and men on account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ.[21] Expressions of hospitality (and the joyful "table-fellowship" that corresponds with them) are fundamental to the new life that is given through Christ, since in Christ the hospitality of God in relation to the human is on display. As Koenig suggests, "Apparently, then, Jesus considered himself and his followers to be a kind of parable of how people live together [in feasting, celebration and joy] from God's abundance. As the vanguard of a restored Israel, symbolized by Jesus' core group of twelve dis-

ciples, they extend a constant invitation to God's home and plenty" (Koenig 29). Thus, when Lydia is "compelled" to provide for Paul's physical needs, and to provide a context for conversation and prayer, she gives expression to the hopeful and joyful essence of Paul's own message concerning the Christ. This hospitality is not merely commanded—it is an expression of what it means to be truly alive as a woman or man.

Extending this observation slightly, we can consider Paul's seeming hesitation to accept Lydia's expression of hospitality.The basis of his hesitation is not made clear in the text, and so perhaps he hesitates for personal reasons or on principle, since she is a woman and a marginalized one. Alternatively, and more likely, Paul hesitates to accept her as host on account of how such a relationship would be perceived (negatively, no doubt, since she is an unmarried woman) within the traditional religious communities to which he brings his message concerning the Christ.[22] In the face of his hesitations, however, Lydia makes a forceful appeal: "And she prevailed upon us" (Acts 16:15). Whatever the basis of his hesitation, Lydia's appeal (her call) breaks down Paul's reticence or hesitance. We might say that Paul needed to hear the language of duty/obligation in order to apprehend what is necessary for the fulfillment of the human. In any case, he accepts that her service as host, and her identity as subject in her own right in the community of God's people, is a necessary correlate of the very gospel he proclaims—the new humanity that is instantiated in Christ does not permit a refusal of her appeal. The encounter between them, their sharing in joyful hospitality and interchange where she serves as host, is of the essence of the message proclaimed by Paul; it is of the essence of "salvation."

Conclusions

Evidently, this theological account of hospitality does not fully coincide with the vision of hospitality in difference articulated by Irigaray. To mention just a few points of divergence, this sketch does not embrace the independent becoming (nature and culture) of woman and man, does not broach the question of desire between two, displays little reticence to pin down and describe the moment of hospitality, and is not preoccupied with hospitality as a means of sending the other back to her- or himself in becoming. Nevertheless, this theological account of hospitality is also not as far removed from Irigaray's account as her own writings suggest it might be. The encounter between Lydia and Paul takes place on a ground that is at some level neutral to them. It is territory open to each and within which each may function as guest/host. Furthermore, in this encounter Lydia functions as subject/host in her own right,

and not merely as the natural presupposition of encounter between male subjects. She responds to Paul's teaching according to her own intention and as subject in her own right. If there is any hint of deontology here it comes to expression in Lydia's insistence that she has the right to serve as host (that Paul "must" come to her home). Yet in this case deontology is secondary, rooted in a teleological framework in which the exercise and reality of hospitality is the truest expression of the human.

Not only does this theological account of hospitality closely approximate Irigaray's ethical vision, it might also serve as a precursor to the establishment of broader respect for sexual difference. Although this theological account of hospitality is driven by an alternative teleology to that of Irigaray—is does not begin from, nor is it rooted in, an account of the human as two—its account of human fulfillment and becoming ("in Christ") is such that the reality of sexual difference might be honored and instantiated intersubjectively within it. That the message of Luke-Acts—and of the kingdom instantiated by Jesus—is such that (the marginalized, the woman) Lydia may function as host/guest in her own right and according to her own intention, suggests a refusal to define her, or relate to her, within the logic of the same. It suggests that the necessary, generalized reversal of roles (each as host/guest) is such that subjectivity is re-construed under terms that undermine the privilege and singularity of the male. Each finds his or her own place and being only upon a "neutral" ground of encounter, a ground from which each is free to come and go, and in the context of which each is free to listen and respond according to his or her freedom. Moving beyond this sketch of theological hospitality to a broader theological ethics of sexual difference would require much work (some of which I have undertaken elsewhere[23]), yet it should come as no surprise, now, that within the context of a traditional religious framework we are in the territory of just such an ethics.

Notes

1. Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, Carolyn Burke and Gillian Gill, trans. (New York: Cornell U P, 1993).
2. The title of Canters and Jantzen's study of Irigaray's *Elemental Passions* comes to mind. See Hanneke Canters and Grace M. Jantzen, *Forever Fluid: A Reading of Luce Irigaray's "Elemental Passions"* (Manchester: Manchester U P, 2005).
3. It is in an interview with Hirsch and Olsen that Irigaray herself offers the three-phase account of her writings. See Elizabeth Hirsch and Gary Olson, "Je-Luce Irigaray: A Meeting with Luce Irigaray," *JAC: A Journal of Composition Theory*, 16:3 (1996): 346.
4. Judith Still, "Hospitality and Sexual Difference: Remembering Homer with Luce Irigaray," in *Rewriting Difference: Luce Irigaray and "the Greeks,"* Elena Tzelepis and Athena Athanasiou, eds. (Albany: SUNY P, 2010), 151.
5. Luce Irigaray, *Sharing the World* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 22.

6. I have traced something of Irigaray's positive relationship to the Christian tradition in my "Sharing Air: Becoming Two in the Spirit," in *Luce Irigaray: Teaching*, Luce Irigaray and Mary Green, eds. (London: Continuum, 2008), 142-55.
7. Irigaray also writes, "Traditional morality will be of little use to us here. It does not teach us how to let the other follow his or her own path, meet with whomever he or she desires, go where he or she wants. And a mere injunction, be it a personal one, will not be sufficient" (Irigaray, *Sharing*, 59).
8. A *teleological*, ethical framework emphasizes the end or goal of human life—it focuses on what human fulfillment looks like. Ethics, then, is about developing habits or pursuing actions that might lead to such fulfillment (see Aristotle's ethics). A *deontological* or moral framework, on the other hand, emphasizes duty—the obligation to follow commands and laws. Morality, then, is about discerning such laws (rationally or religiously, for example) and obeying them (see Kant's moral theory).
9. Boyd Blundell, *Paul Ricœur between Theology and Philosophy: Detour and Return* (Bloomington: Indiana U P, 2010), 116. For Ricœur's full analysis of the relationship between teleology and deontology, see what Ricœur refers to as his "little ethics" in Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another*, Kathleen Blamey, trans. (Chicago: Chicago U P, 1992), 169-296.
10. Oliver O'Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order: An Outline for Evangelical Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 139.
11. With the question of Irigaray's refusal of deontology in mind, it is also worth asking whether the Christianity she describes bears any great resemblance to contemporary expressions of that religious tradition. Speaking from within the tradition, I can affirm that while there may well be expressions of Christianity that approximate this oppressive, command-oriented version, Irigaray seems not to account for the profound theological diversity of Christianity or for significant theological developments of the past fifty years.
12. Luce Irigaray, *Éthique de la différence sexuelle* (Paris: Minuit, 1984), 129. Quoted in Gail Schwab, "Sexual Difference as a Model: An Ethics for the Global Future," *Diacritics*, 28:1 (1998): 81.
13. Luce Irigaray, *The Way of Love*, Heidi Bostic and Stephen Pluháček, trans. (London: Continuum, 2002), 101.
14. See the section entitled "How to Welcome the Call of the Other?" in Irigaray, *Sharing the World*, 17-24, in the context of which she introduced the language of hospitality.
15. Irigaray writes, "Rather than inviting the other to share the same world, the question is of releasing them from the world—mine, but also his or hers—in order to return them to a freedom that lies before any confinement in a network of relations that imprison them in an inextricable fate" (Irigaray, *Sharing*, 110).
16. All quotations from the Bible are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version*, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America (1989).
17. Arthur Sutherland, *I Was a Stranger: A Christian Theology of Hospitality* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006), 48.
18. John Koenig, *New Testament Hospitality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 114-20.
19. Amos Yong, *Hospitality and the Other: Pentecost, Christian Practices, and the Neighbour* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008) 101-03. I follow Yong's argument closely in the remainder of this paragraph
20. On the possibility that her body was stained by the purple dye see Sutherland, 48.
21. Here I am following Koenig, 114-20.
22. My thanks to Professor Ian Henderson (Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill) for this observation.
23. See my "Wonder Between Two: An Irigarayan Reading of Genesis 2:23," *Modern Theology* 24:1 (2008): 51-74.